UPCOMING WORKSHOPS, MEETINGS, TOURS

August 11, 2009. Local Food Networks Meeting. Jacksonville, NC.

August 18, 2009. NC Department of Agriculture Commissioner’s Food Safety Forum. 9:00 AM – 2:30 PM. Kerr Scott Building, NC Fair Grounds. For more information and to preregister go to: www.ncagr.gov/ncfoodsafetyforum/


October 20, 2009. Regional Farmers Market Meeting. Duplin County Extension Center, Kenansville, NC. 9 AM – 3 PM. Call Mark Seitz at the Jones County Extension Center, (252) 448-9621 for more information.

Oct. 27-28, 2009. NC Greenhouse Vegetable Growers Association Annual Conference. Wake County Ag. Center, Raleigh, NC. For more information call (919) 334-0099, fax (919) 877-0940, mobile (919) 413-9544 or email cathyprice09@yahoo.com

November 8-10, 2009. NC Strawberry Expo. Sheraton Imperial Hotel, Raleigh, NC. For more information email the NC Strawberry Association at: info@ncstrawberry.com

November 30-December 2, 2009. Southeast Vegetable Expo. Kingston Plantation Embassy Suites Hotel, Myrtle Beach, SC. For more information call (919) 334-0099 or email Cathy Price at: cathyprice09@yahoo.com
BUSINESS PLANNING

Strategic Planning vs. Project Implementation: Ideas to Ponder

Which is more important to you? A well-designed strategic plan or a well-executed project?

I recently read an article written by Dr. James Heskett titled *Can Business Schools Teach the Craft of Getting Things Done?*

The article focuses on whether business schools spend too much time teaching strategic planning versus teaching execution, implementation and application. The flurry of responses from professors all over the US suggested too much emphasis was being given to planning and not enough to implementation. Many however also argued that schools did not have the time to teach implementation.

What’s that got to do with agriculture? I have said many times in this newsletter that you can learn a lot by studying another business or industry (benchmarking!!) and while there aren’t too many professors at Harvard or a lot of other universities that would be highly versed in production agriculture methods, they are familiar with a lot of businesses and business strategies that we can all learn from.

Strategic implementation is the process of putting a plan in place and following through with it. This is a task that is simple to do on paper but harder to do when the temperatures are in the upper 90s, when Mother Nature just threw five inches of rain on you or when an irrigation pipe has exploded and the water is flooding your crop. The fine line between planning an implementation is a hard one to walk, particularly when the operation is small and when there aren’t enough hours in the day to do everything you need to do.

While strategic planning can help you figure how to get where you want to go in the next five or ten years, without implementation, even the best plans won’t work.

Marketing is no different. Marketing books talk about implementation as being the key to a marketing plan. The best theories in the world won’t pick up the telephone to call a client or won’t drive to the farm or restaurant to close the deal.

As business managers, your job is to make sure the implementation gets done. A simple spreadsheet can help you keep track of the: who, what, when, where, why of your plan.

In the book *Guerrilla Marketing in 30 Days*, the authors recommend creating a simple accountability spreadsheet with the following column headers:

“Date, action, details, cost, person responsible, target completion date, date completed and resources required.”

A spreadsheet like this helps you manage your time, resources and people more effectively and gives you information you need in a quick simple report. The challenge for everyone is making sure you take time to record what you are doing and what is being done, so the strategic plan in the coming month(s)/year(s) has good information to put into it.

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There is an old saying in the computer programming industry, “Garbage in, garbage out”. The same applies to strategic implementation. If you don’t have a good plan to begin with and don’t have anyone designated to implement it, nothing will get done.

**Value-Added Cost Share Grant Program**

*Apply now! New cost share program announced for N.C. farmers*

The North Carolina Value-Added Cost Share Program (NCVACS) was recently announced. The NCVACS complements the USDA Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) by offsetting the costs (by approximately 50 percent) to value-added producers for professional services and equipment purchases. **Applications for the NCVACS must be submitted by *September 1, 2009.***

The professional services supplemented by the NCVACS in Fall 2009 and 2010 are 1) VAPG grant writing and 2) enterprise feasibility assessment and business plan development. Equipment purchases, which cannot be funded by a VAPG, will be eligible for funding through the NCVACS in Spring of 2010 and 2011. *Applicants for the NCVACS must also be planning to apply for a VAPG.*

NCVACS is funded by the N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission and administered by N.C. Cooperative Extension and the N.C. State University Value-Added & Alternative Agriculture Program at the N.C. Research Campus in Kannapolis, NC.

For more information about the NCVACS or to download an application, visit [www.ncvalueadded.org](http://www.ncvalueadded.org).

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**FOOD SAFETY:**

Keep in touch with your Congressional representatives in the coming months. There is a lot going on in Washington that will have an impact on agriculture in some way, shape or form.

Along with Health Care, on-farm food production and food safety are two of the many issues that Congress will be voting on. House Bill 2749 was voted on and passed 283-142 on July 30 and now goes to the Senate to be voted on.

This bill, if passed by the Senate will affect how food production is regulated in the US and this regulatory process would be handled by the Food and Drug Administration.

There is a lot in this bill that you need to look at. Here is an Internet link to what this bill would do: [http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-2749](http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h111-2749)

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**CROP PRODUCTION**

**Fusarium Wilt in Watermelon**

Fusarium wilt (*Fusarium oxysporum* sp.) is a soil fungus that is an economically important disease in cucurbits that growers encounter – meaning it can deliver significant crop losses once established on a farm. There are at least six known species of the disease that attack cucurbit plants, i.e, watermelon, cucumber and squash. *F. oxysporum* sp. and they attack the xylem, thereby reducing the ability of the plant to move water and nutrients from the roots to the leaves.

*Fusarium oxysporum* sp. is commonly found in light, sandy soils with low pH (5.0-6.0) and with
low to moderate water holding capacity. Practices used to increase soil pH can help reduce the effect of this disease on these crops. Nitrogen fertilizers in the nitrate (NO$_3^-$) form may also help reduce the incidence of this disease. Calcium nitrate not only can provide some pH benefit but it is also a necessary element in your fertilizer program to reduce the incidence of blossom end root from forming in the watermelon crop.

At this time, there are no known fungicides available to contain or eradicated this disease. Therefore, crop rotations between 4-5 years is needed to reduce the incidence of this disease while a 10 year crop rotation is ideal. Obviously for most growers a 10-year rotation is unattainable so the next best option for controlling Fusarium oxysporum is the use of varieties with resistance to the disease.

**To combat Fusarium:**

**Crop rotation (4-5 years) + resistant varieties**
[plus perfect weather + good soils + good market prices + low input prices, etc.] = **Successful crop!**

**Pesticide Safety**

Pesticide application safety is an on-going challenge for all farmers. Whether you apply pesticides, synthetic or organic, or you supervise workers who apply pesticides or whether you have pesticides applied for you, the bottom line is these products can be a hazard to your health when improperly handled or applied. Therefore safety is essential.

Pesticides (herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, miticides, etc.) are designed to kill. They kill insects, disease organisms, weeds, mites, etc., by attacking certain biological processes in the target organism. This point or process is called the MOA-mode of action of the product.

The MOA is the method by which the chemical attacks the life cycle of the target organism. Continuous use of products with the same MOA is what eventually leads to chemical resistant populations of insects, disease and weeds on your farm.

Keeping track of and rotating products with different MOAs in your spray program is now easier for two reasons. One, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) mandates that products have the MOA listed on the product label. Two, the NC Agriculture Chemcials Manual and the Southeastern US Vegetable Crops Handbook recommendations all have the MOA listed next to the list of products available to tackle weed, insect and disease problems.

When not applied properly, pesticides can and do create problems and or death to the applicator and or consumer. The most important thing of all to remember – **SAFETY**! Be cautious, be respectful and do not forget to attend your pesticide applicator recertification training classes.

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If you have questions about any of the information, upcoming meetings, business strategies, or crop production management issues, please call me at the Jones County Extension Center at (252) 448-9621. I can also be reached by email at: Mark_Seitz@ncsu.edu

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