Commercial Horticulture:
Future Cooperative Extension Programs, Business Planning and Crop Production Issues & Alternative Crops

This newsletter is intended for people interested in commercial fruit and vegetable production, business planning and North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service meetings throughout North Carolina. For back issues of this newsletter please go to the Jones County Extension website and click on the Commercial Horticulture, Nursery & Turf menu option on the left side of the website. The website address is: http://jones.ces.ncsu.edu

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Upcoming Workshops, Tours & Meetings

December 4-6, 2007. Certified Crop Advisor Training. Onslow County Extension Office. Contact Curtis Fountain at the Duplin County Extension office (910) 296-2143 for more information.

December 12-13, 2007. SE Vegetable & Fruit Expo. Myrtle Beach, SC. For more information or to register, please contact Bonnie Holloman or Cathy Price at the N.C. Vegetable Growers’ Association, (919) 334-0099 or email bhollom@bellsouth.net. You can also visit the web site at http://www.ncvga.com for a complete program.

December 20, 2007. USDA-Rural Development Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) Workshop and Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Program, 1pm. Onslow County Extension Center, Jacksonville, NC. Call (910) 455-5873 to RSVP. This is an excellent opportunity for farm families seeking funds for planning or working capital for their new value-added ventures and for energy conservation.

January 10-13, 2008. SE Vegetable Growers Conference, Savannah International Trade & Convention Center, Savannah, GA. Conference information can be found online at: http://www.gfvga.org/conferences/2008FVWC/Conferenc e/InfoPage.htm. I will be attending this conference and will be leaving late in the day on January 9 and returning late in the day on January 12. If anyone would like to attend and wishes to ride with me, let me know ASAP.

January 29, 2008. Putting Small Acreage to Work. Brunswick County Extension Center, Bolivia, NC. Contact Martha Warner at (919) 253-2610 to register or for more information.


February 26, 2008 or March 4, 2008. Hold one of these two dates. Regional Farmers Market Managers Meeting. Location & time to be determined.
Business Planning & Management

Entrepreneurs

“A real entrepreneur is somebody who has no safety net underneath them.”

urved Kravis


What kind of entrepreneur are you? Whether you consider yourself an entrepreneur or not, farmers historically are some of the most innovative entrepreneurs in the world. Whether by design or out of necessity, the production practices and methods developed in agriculture came from innovative people like you.

The biggest difference between you and venture capitalists like Henry Kravis, is that in agriculture the venture capital you utilize to the fullest comes in the form of human capital. Human capital is something that does not easily translate into monetary wealth.

In the book International Agricultural Development, (pg. 273), Dr. James Bonnen, professor emeritus of Michigan State University’s Agricultural Economics Department, writes about the value and importance of human capital and how it applies to entrepreneurs in agriculture. Dr. Bonnen states,

“Continuous technical change makes traditional practices obsolete, and to achieve efficiency requires a conscious system of management decisions based on economic as well as biological and physical science knowledge – that is, farm management.”

Translation: Farmers and agricultural entrepreneurs are very good at taking the latest technological innovations and ideas and turning them into profit making ventures because they have the hands-on experience to know how to apply the technology on their farms. Applying human capital takes effort, planning and perseverance. and if you as a farmer or agricultural entrepreneur were not good at it, you would be out of business.

In addition to finding ways to fully utilize human capital, entrepreneurs need information to stimulate new ways of thinking to make the products consumers want. Entrepreneurs find ways to: offer customers something the big box stores cannot offer. For most farmers in today’s economy what is different is the local connection you have with your customers.

Are there risks involved in doing this? Certainly. Can they be managed? Yes. Entrepreneurs manage risk by taking time to become, or continue to be, good farm managers. This requires you to pay attention to the details of your operation. It requires you to be good at everything from personnel to seed purchases, to accounting, to marketing. Failing to pay attention to the details makes you, the human capital of your business, ineffective and inefficient.

To overcome some of these obstacles:

- Stay up with the latest trends. Know what is going on around the region/country by taking time to read trade magazines. If you do not, there is a good chance your competitors are – both in the US and around the world.
- Attend professional workshops and conferences – preferably Extension conferences that are related and even unrelated to your business. You never know when or where your next great idea or opportunity might arise.
- Visit other farmers well outside your home location as you travel and ask questions. People like to tell about their farms, their families, themselves. Take advantage of their knowledge. Share time / news with your employees when you return and watch what kind of new and creative things will happen.

Value Added Producer Grants are Back

I received a call yesterday from Dr. Blake Brown, NCSU Agriculture & Resource Economics professor, who wanted me to help promote a meeting on USDA Value-Added Grants and the Section 9006 Energy Grants. This program will be held in Onslow County on December 20, 2007, at 1 PM.

The goal of this meeting is to give you some background on the Value-Added & Energy grant programs and give you a better understanding of the application process. I attended a similar program in November 2006 and I hope some of you will take advantage of this opportunity. This is a good grant program and an opportunity to finance a new venture.
I have included a copy of the program outline for you to peruse, so please review it and call the Onslow County Cooperative Extension office at (910) 455-5873 to reserve a space.

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**Crop Production**

**Topic - strawberry advisory on spider mites and scouting**

*Note: The following information has been provided by Dr. Hannah Burrack, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist, Department of Entomology, NCSU.*

Spider mites have been observed in North Carolina strawberries this fall. If you haven’t already done so, you should begin to scout for spider mites. Two spot spider mites are the most common pest mites found on strawberries, but carmine spider mites may also occur here. Predatory mites may also naturally occur in your fields, and it is important to distinguish between pests and predators when scouting for spider mites. Photos of a two spot spider mite and one of the most common predators (Phytoseiulus persimilis) are attached. These images are greatly magnified; the mites themselves are less than one millimeter (mm) long.

There are few ways you can scout for spider mites in your strawberries. This time year, direct leaf observation for mite presence or absence may be sufficient. Sample at least 10 leaflets per acre, randomly selected throughout the block. If more than half of these leaves have spider mites (as observed with at least a 10x hand lens), treatment may be warranted. Orange-colored two spot spider mites are in diapause – *[a period of physiologically enforced dormancy between periods of activity]* – for the winter and will not be laying eggs. If mite eggs are present, consider using a miticide with ovicidal (egg killing) activity. These include the active ingredients bifenazate (Acramite), etoxazole (Zeal), hexythiazox (Savey), and spiromesifen (Oberon). Spider mite eggs are round and a translucent, pearly white. A more precise sampling method involves the use of a mite brushing machine, which allows you to count the number of spider mites and predators. Contact Dr. Burrack if you are interested in learning more about mite brushes and their use.

If predator mites are observed or if you intend to conduct augmentative releases during the growing season, select miticides that will have the least impact on these beneficial insects, such as bifenazate or spiromesifen, and be sure to wait the recommended interval between miticide application and beneficial release. It is particularly important for growers who plan on using row covers this winter to access their mite populations now. Once row covers are applied, control becomes difficult to impossible and temperatures under these row covers may favor mite activity for a greater part of the winter. Spider mites are found on the undersides of leaves, and miticide applications should be targeted to these areas.

Stressed plants are more susceptible to mite infestations, so maintaining plant moisture is also important for mite control. It's great to see some rain today, but that will not make up for the previous lack of water. Once spring rolls around, you should be scouting for spider mites weekly. When fruiting has begun, the plants can handle higher mite densities before treatment is required.

Hannah J. Burrack  
Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist

This is the last newsletter of 2007. I have enjoyed working with all of you this year and I look forward to working with you in 2008. If you have any questions, suggestions for field research, programs or other comments about programs you would like me and my colleagues at Cooperative Extension to offer, please let me know. Happy Holidays, and I’ll see you next year.

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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.