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

Upcoming Workshops, Tours & Meetings

PESTICIDE APPLICATOR TRAINING MONTH!!

September 18, 2006. Season Extension of Vegetable Crops Workshop. 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM. CEFS, Goldsboro, NC. Call CEFS at (919) 513-0954 for more information.


October 4, 2006. Sweet Potato Field Day. Horticulture Crops Research Station, Clinton, NC. Registration 3:30 PM, Program – 4 PM. Dinner – 6 PM. Call (910) 675-2314 to register and for more information.

October 16, 2006. High Tunnel Greenhouse Production Workshop. 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM. CEFS, Goldsboro, NC. Call CEFS at (919) 513-0954 for more information.

November 9-11, 2006. Southeast Strawberry Expo. Sea Trail Resort & Conference Center, Sunset Beach, NC (between Wilmington & Myrtle Beach). Contact ncrestawberry@mindspring.com to receive more info or go to www.ncstrawberry.org to register.
November 10-12, 2006. 21st Annual Tomato Disease Workshop. Mountain Horticultural Research & Extension Center. Fletcher, NC. Registration deadline October 23, 2006. Fee $50, $60 at the door. Contact Dr. Kelly Ivors at Kelly_Ivors@ncsu.edu for more information.

December 2006. SE Vegetable Growers Conference. Myrtle Beach, SC.

December 2006. Certified Crop Advisor Training. Onslow County Extension Center.

General

Newsletter Survey

I have received a few replies to the survey I sent last month. Please take a minute and fill this out and return it. It will help me get a better idea of what topics are important to you. If you do not have a copy you can go online to the Jones County Extension website, fill it out and mail it to me at the Jones County Extension Center or email me the response at Mark_Seitz@ncsu.edu.

Business Planning & Management

What can I grow to make money?

How many of you have asked that question before? How many of you have asked your County Extension agent that question? How many of you have considered this question before growing a new crop?

In the past two years, I have received a lot of questions regarding blueberries, muscadine grapes & wine making, vegetable production, and indirectly, prawn (freshwater shrimp) production. I have heard this question many times from people interested in these and other ventures in my short tenure with Cooperative Extension. The question, “What can I do to make money?” is a somewhat rhetorical question, and yet one that must be taken very seriously before you invest.

So how can this question be answered? Unfortunately, the answer usually comes in the form of more questions. Every crop and every industry is different. Each has its own challenges its own unique customer base, its own headaches with production, processing and packaging.

Below is a short checklist of things that you should get answers to before starting any new venture.

- **Market size.** How large is your county population (Jones Co. = 10,311, Lenoir Co. = 57,961, Craven Co. = 90,795, Onslow Co. = 152,440, Wake Co. = 748,815). Where is the best market opportunity going to be? That depends on the product and the type of customer you are trying to reach. Dr. Bob Usry from NCSU at a recent talk said, “You are not trying to sell to every car that travels down NC Hwy 58, but to the customer that stops and that knows you!”

- **What kind of economies of scale are you competing with?** Global companies? Regional companies/retailers? Local markets?

- **Scope and scale of the players already in the business** – are they local, regional, global? If you are in business today you are competing globally in some fashion. However to be a truly global competitor you have to have the scope and scale to be able to supply a global customer base. Are you or is your farm ready and willing to do that?

- **How fast is that particular segment of the industry growing?** Industries (or segments of an industry) with rapid growth rates are usually the most profitable. Organic produce…? Muscadine grapes… what is happening with muscadine grapes compared to viniferous grapes being grown in the rest of the US and around the world. What are the trends? Are people getting into the business? Are they getting out? If they are getting out this is usually an indication that they are losing money.
• How many buyers are in the industry and where are they located? Can you get product to them at a profitable rate?

• How are you going to get the product to the market? Are you going to be the hauler or hire this task out to someone? What is the mission of your company: to be the best sweet potato producer in North Carolina or to provide the lowest cost transportation of sweet potatoes to the retail industry?

• What is the initial capital investment requirement to get into the business? Will it cash-flow and how fast will it cash flow?

• If it does not succeed, how quickly can you get out of the business (sell assets and equipment) and do something else?

• How much integration in the supply chain is there going to be? Integration of the supply chain in an industry makes it very difficult for a new venture to compete.

• Are you in a location where customers are generating a strong demand? This is related to market size. Example: organic produce – in urban areas this is a rapidly growing industry, in rural areas where many homeowners still have gardens, the demand is not as strong.1

These and other considerations must be taken into account before you invest in any new crop or new venture. As the saying goes “Rome was not built in a day…” and neither will any new produce business you start. You have to start small and develop a reputation as a reliable, high quality supplier in whatever market you wish to be in before you can conquer the world.

1 The general concepts for this article were adopted from the text, Thompson A. and Strickland, A.J. 2003. Strategic Management: 13th Edition. Pg. 77.
4. *Consider that transport of your product is the physical link between you and the buyer.* Often the buyer’s first and last impression of you is the quality of the boxes and containers they receive.

5. *Maintain the appropriate temperatures.* Suitable cooling must be done to remove field heat from the crop. Room cooling of sweet potatoes is sufficient to remove field heat from sweet potatoes. The optimum temperature for sweet potato storage is 55°F at 85% humidity. These conditions should allow for sweet potato storage for 6-12 months.

There are numerous problems and challenges that you must consider with sweet potato storage and handling as well as all other produce. Paying attention to the small details, keeping good records and reviewing them to track the performance of your harvest crews and handling methods will help you maintain your status as a high quality, reliable supplier for many years to come.

For more information on storage and handling of sweet potatoes and other fresh produce call your NC Cooperative Extension Service office and as for publication AG-414-9: *Postharvest Transport of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables.*

**Sweet Potato Insecticide Supplemental Label**

A supplemental label for the insecticide Intrepid 2F has been issued for control of Lepidoptera insects in sweet potatoes. According to Dr. Ken Sorensen at NCSU, “This [product] is for worms and primarily the beet armyworm where needed. A full Federal label should be forthcoming in a year or two. Flights [of this moth in 2006] have been low and no reports of problems have been received or seen in my travels and contacts.”

Intrepid has a 7 day PHI (preharvest interval) and will control armyworm, cabbage looper, saltmarsh caterpillars, and webworms. Application amounts are 6 – 10 oz. (0.09 – 0.16 lb. active ingredient per acre), with a maximum of 0.48 lbs ai/acre per season. Do not make more than three applications per season.

*A copy of the supplemental label is included in this newsletter. You must have a copy of this supplemental label on file if you are going to use this product. This is a restricted use pesticide (RUP), which limits its purchase and use to people with private or commercial pesticide applicator licenses. Be sure to refer to the full label for all safety, pre-harvest intervals and handling guideline.*

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**Peach Tree Borers Rest on Their Laurels**

Peachtree borers are caterpillars of a clear-winged moth. The moths closely resemble paper wasps, but of course the moths do not sting. These moths emerge throughout the growing season, but the great majority of them are in flight between August 15 and September 15. Consequently, most of the borers can be preventatively controlled by spraying the trunk with cyfluthrin or other pyrethroid around August 15 and again around September 1. The moths lay eggs at the base of peaches, plums, cherry laurels, and ornamental cherries.

From these eggs hatch tiny, white caterpillars that bore into the bark and tunnel in the cambium at the base of the tree. If many borers infest a tree, the cambium may be completely girdled beneath the bark, and the tree will die. The borers pupate inside the infested tree during late spring and summer and then emerge as moths a few weeks later. The prevailing recommendation is a spray to prevent further borers from invading the tree if this is a problem. There is not a simple method to control larvae already boring in the wood.
If you have questions about any of the 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.

Sincerely,

Mark Seitz
Extension Area Specialized Agent
Agriculture– Commercial Horticulture