

VegNet Vol. 11, No. 6, March 31, 2004

In This Issue

In This Issue

1. Crop Reports

2. Notes from the winter meetings 4. Trends: Whats Hot, Whats Not

Crop Report

by Brad Bergesford for South West and South Central Ohio

The second planting of tomatoes continues in high tunnels with the first of these plantings having been in the ground almost 1 month now. Seeding of lettuce in high tunnels continues with early plantings, now about 3 weeks old, showing first true leaves. Chisel plowing, moldboard plowing, spreading fertilizer, spreading manure, working ground, making beds and equipment maintenance have been the main chores of the week. Seeding of vegetables continues in the greenhouse, with main and late season tomatoes, peppers, and cabbage being seeded. The first of the melons and watermelons have been seeded in the greenhouse. Direct seeding of spinach, radishes and lettuce to the field has begun. Onion sets and onion plants are being planted. Strawberry plants were transplanted to the field over the weekend (3/27 -28).

The Bainbridge Produce Auction will begin the 2004 season opener on Friday April 16 beginning at 3:00 pm. The auction is located approximately 5 miles south of Bainbridge, Ohio (East of Chillicothe, Ohio) on State Route 41 South. New buyers and growers are always welcome!

Notes from the winter meetings 4. Trends: Whats Hot, Whats Not

From a presentation by, Paul Dietmann, Saulk County, University of Wisconsin, Extension Agricultural Agent

Thinking of changing or modifying your business to keep up with todays trends. Here are some ideas presented by Paul Dietmann. One of the first things Paul says to keep in mind is a quote from Rene Dubos, Trend is not destiny

**HOT TRENDS**

Small is beautiful

Small, unique, artisan companies are very popular with more affluent customers.

Large customers are trying to look small.

Locally Produced Foods

A product claim that cannot be made by many chain stores. Gives OH producers an edge.

#### Farmers Markets

Number of markets increased 63% in last decade. Sale per customer: \$17.30 per week, \$306 per year. Sales per vendor: \$11,773. A 34% increase in customers from 1996 to 2000. Sixty percent of the customers live within 10 miles of their market. Source: USDA-AMS U.S. Farmers Markets; A Study of Emerging Trends.

#### Consumers Demanding Trace ability

Food Scares have led to concern about food sources. Consumers want some sort of warranty of food safety: e.g. Direct from the farm.

Cheap Food and very cheap commodities widely available

Makes higher priced, value added agricultural products affordable for consumer and profitable for farmers.

#### Consumer Preferences

80% of Americans say that environmental safety of a product influences buying decisions. Older people are more likely to research eco-practices and more likely to buy from eco-friendly companies. Young people (under 35) are most apathetic about eco-products.

People are more likely to buy sustainable foods

Products that are perceived as genuine and trustworthy. The products address their concerns about pesticides and similar issues. The labels are understandable. Price, taste, quality and convenience expectations are met.

#### People Looking for Opportunities to Visit a Farm

Ideas include: Bus Tours school groups and seniors, On-farm weddings, Roadside stands, rent out a guest house, Farm based bed and breakfast, On farm educational workshops, Farm tours and gift shop, On farm processing with demonstrations, Off season activities such as sledding, cross country ski trails, and lease hunting and fishing rights.

#### Making More Effective Use of Existing Customer Base

Developing mailing lists and create trade area maps. Sharing customer lists with other farmers e.g. a vegetable producer sharing a list with a beef producer. Periodic mailings to keep customers from forgetting about you. Other new customer incentives such as special mailings when special products are in season.

Offering new products or services according to consumer trends

Gift baskets, Ready to eat farm products, processed products, Branded products, Anything featured on the Food Network, Establishing a presence on the WWW and accepting payment by credit card.

#### Finding Alternatives to Direct Market

High-end wholesaling by selling high quality, small volumes to retailers. Marketing in collaboration with other farmers.

#### Organic Production and Marketing;

The market has been growing more than 20% per year for a decade. In 73% of the supermarkets nationwide. Large companies are entering the market.

#### Eco Labels

Certification process similar to organics but looks at sustainability factors rather than chemical use. Can be expensive: Initial fee of \$500 plus yearly sliding fee that starts at \$350.

NOT SO HOT

Selling bulk wholesale

U-pick

Consumers buying in large volumes

Newspaper advertising

Corn mazes as a stand alone activity

Organic certification for direct market sales

What's New At The VegNet Web Site

Online 2003 Research Reports, Go To the Home Page

Ohio Vegetable Production Guide Survey

We want to know what you think about the content and format of the guide. Take this on line survey available on the home page and let us know. It only takes a few minutes. <http://vegnet.osu.edu>

[Return to Vegetable Crops Homepage | Ohio State University Extension](#)

Where trade names are used, no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by Ohio State University Extension is implied. Although every attempt is made to produce information that is complete, timely and accurate, the pesticide user bears the responsibility of consulting the pesticide label and adhering to those directions.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Keith L. Smith, Director, Ohio State University Extension.

All educational programs and activities conducted by Ohio State University Extension are available to all potential clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, sex, age, handicap or Vietnam-era veteran status.