Dear Growers,

After a couple of years of drought we finally had some rain in 2009. Too much rain. It delayed us getting our plastic laid and transplants in, then it rained during harvest so we couldn’t get in the field, then we were under water. Strawberry growers were also rushing to harvest on non-rainy days and delayed for planting in the fall.

When I first started my job with Extension during the drought, many growers told me “a drought year will scare you, but a wet year will starve you”. I also had a grower explain to me during this wet, rainy season that farming is a risk. He told me “We farm in the river bottoms because the soil is fertile, but we know it is a risk.” The grower was trying to be optimistic, but his sentiment was right on. As farmers, you like the challenge and excitement of growing a successful crop. You like seeing the symmetry of the thousands of tomato stakes lined up in the field and the challenge of getting all of those cucumbers and strawberries picked.

We don’t know what the weather will prove to be in 2010. Will it be wet or dry, warm or cool? I am sure a few of you have your theories. One thing we do know is that it is becoming increasingly difficult to do what we love to do. There is new food safety legislation on the way and restrictions on fumigant use coming in the next year or two. For those who can stick it out, how will the markets be in 2010?

One thing is sure: you are innovative and resilient. I have learned so much from you in 2009. There isn’t a day that goes by that I don’t appreciate you for putting food on my table and for my job (if it wasn’t for you, I would be unemployed!). So let me take this opportunity to say “Thank you, thank you, thank you”. My Papa Pasquale always says thank you three times. If you asked him, though, he would say that he says thank you “tree times”.

In 2010, we have many educational opportunities lined up for you to learn about the latest in Vegetable Production at the NC Tomato Growers Winter Vegetable Conference and 42nd Annual meeting (page 2-3), Fresh Produce Safety (page 4), Marketing Opportunities (page 5) and Agritourism (page 6).

Plus, much more to come!

Have a Happy and Safe 2010!

Sincerely,

Susan J. Colucci
The Winter Vegetable Conference & 42nd Annual Meeting

February 17 & 18, 2010

Crowne Plaza Resort in Asheville, N.C.

Exhibits will be open continuously throughout the conference. Come visit early!
Continuing pesticide recertification credits and continuing education units for Certified Crop
Advisers will be offered

Topics for 2010 Include:

Tomato Breeding Update
Combating Late Blight and Other Foliar Diseases of Tomato
Methyl Bromide Alternatives and EPA Regulation Changes
Labor Issues and H-2A Program
Fresh Produce Safety, Traceback and Recall
Insect Control in Sweet Corn
Vegetable Weed Management and New Herbicides
Pepper Production
Marketing—What are Produce Managers Looking For?
Tomatillo Production and Management
Grafting Tomatoes and Other Vegetables
Insect Control in Tomatoes
Importance of Pollinators for Vegetables

Special Session: High Tunnels!
High Tunnel Fertility and Soil Management
Economics of High Tunnels—Does it really pay?
Types of High Tunnels, Production and Management

Registration opens at 9:30 on February 17th.
Educational sessions will begin at 1:00 pm.

Contact Information
Registration, Exhibitors, Sponsors & Associate Members:

Melinda James
President
828-526-3989
osagem@msn.com

Ellen Sprague
Executive Secretary
828-685-3989
ellen_moss@yahoo.com

More information can be found at: www.nctomatoes.com
PRE-REGISTRATION FORM

The North Carolina Tomato Growers Association’s
Winter Vegetable Conference & Trade Show
Crown Plaza Resort, Asheville, NC
February 17-18, 2010

Please complete the following information and enclose a check made payable to NC Tomato Growers Association.

Pre-Registration Fee: $20.00 / per person/ before February 5th, 2010
(Registration will be $25.00/per person at the door)

NAME______________________________________________
FARM NAME________________________________________
ADDRESS___________________________________________
CITY__________________STATE__________ZIP__________
TELEPHONE (     )_______-________

Others for which I am enclosing $20.00 each for registration fee: ($25.00 if after 2/5/10)

NAME______________________________________________ADDRESS________________________________________
NAME______________________________________________ADDRESS________________________________________
NAME______________________________________________ADDRESS________________________________________

TOTAL AMOUNT $___________

PLEASE INDICATE NUMBER ATTENDING THURSDAY’S LUNCHEON_____

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: NC Tomato Growers Association
RETURN TO: Ellen Sprague, Executive Secretary, NCTGA, 2491 St. Paul’s Road, Hendersonville, NC 28792

We will be donating the following items for “SILENT AUCTION”
Please bring these items on Wednesday for display

Item_____________________________________________Retail Value_________________
Item_____________________________________________Retail Value_________________
Fresh Produce Safety Training, Jan. 11, 25 and Feb. 8

*N.C. MarketReady Fresh Produce Safety – Field to Family* is a new N.C. Cooperative Extension program developed to educate fruit and vegetable growers about measures to minimize food safety risks. The training focuses on Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and what it takes to obtain GAPs certification.

N.C. Cooperative Extension agents from the West District will conduct the Tier 1 *N.C. MarketReady* training workshop at the Mountain Horticulture Research and Extension Center located at 455 Research Dr. in Mills River, NC. Tailgate market vendors and others selling directly to consumers are encouraged to take part in the training.

The seven-hour training will be divided into three sessions on **Mondays January 11, January 25 and February 8** from **9-11:30 am**.

The fee for the training is only **$15/person**. Checks can be made payable to “NCCES” and mailed to NCCES 740 Glover Street, Hendersonville, NC 28792

To Pre-Register or for more information please call 828.697.4891.

Tier 1 will address GAPs that are directly related to field production and harvest. The training will include an introduction to common food-borne pathogens and diseases as well as recognizing points of potential contamination, proper use of biosolids as a nutrient source, effective hand-washing procedures, packing facility cleanliness and verifying water quality for field application and postharvest handling.

Anyone involved in handling fresh produce, from farmers and field hands to packing house employees and truckers will benefit from the training by learning to identify and prevent contact between sources of contamination and fresh produce. Attending this training session will result in growers moving towards compliance of pending fresh produce safety legislation. Upon completion of the seven-hour training, attendees will receive a certificate of attendance that they can post at their tailgate market booth and their name will be posted on the *N.C. MarketReady* website (http://www.ncmarketready.org/), allowing end markets and consumers to find growers that have completed the training.

GAPs certification requires establishing a food safety plan and passing a third-party audit that assesses the strength of the food safety plan and ensures that it is properly implemented. Currently, GAPs certification is voluntary for North Carolina farmers, though outbreaks of food-borne illness in other parts of the country have resulted in increased pressure for all farmers to become certified.

**Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food (KYF²)**

Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food (KYF²) is a USDA-wide effort to create new economic opportunities by better connecting consumers with local producers. It is also the start of a national conversation about the importance of understanding where your food comes from and how it gets to your plate. Today, there is too much distance between the average American and their farmer and we are marshalling resources from across USDA to help create the link between local production and local consumption.

The KYF² website includes information on loan programs, grant opportunities, strengthening rural communities and protecting natural resources. The site also include photos and YouTube videos of farms and farmers. The site also aims to empower consumers to make smart decisions about what they eat and to promote Farmers Markets and Community Food Projects. The easiest way to access the website is to Google ‘Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food’ or through searching the USDA’s website www.usda.gov
Marketing Opportunities for Farmers Conference

*Training and networking for farmers who want to grow their business by growing for local markets*

Farmers who get to know the needs of local customers and buyers can thrive, given the right business and marketing skills. Join the Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP), local farmers, agriculture professionals, and marketing specialists for a day-long conference on marketing. For serious farmers, those seriously interested in farming, food buyers, and high school age FFA students.

Potential buyers of locally-grown goods can attend the full conference, or attend the lunch at no charge for networking only. Contact Megan Ray at 828-236-1282 for details.

**WORKSHOPS INCLUDE:**

- Farm Promotions and What they Cost
- Services for Farmers
- Beginning Quickbooks
- Quickbooks for Farms
- Farmers Tailgate Market Management
- Sell More! Tailgate Market Basics
- Farm to Institution
- CSA: Farm Subscription Marketing
- Farm to Grocer
- Farm Business

**COST:** $30, or $45 per two farm partners if you register before February 1st
$35, or $50 per two farm partners after February 1st

Price includes light breakfast, local foods lunch, and resource notebook

8:40p.m.-5:15p.m. Check in: 8:00-8:40a.m.

**Three ways to register now:**

- Call 828-236-1282
- Visit: asapconnections.org/MOFF2010.html
- Mail in the simple form below and send with check to:
  ASAP Marketing Conference
  729 Haywood Rd., Asheville, NC 28806

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Name: ___________________________________________ Additional Person: _______________________

Farm or Business Name ____________________________ Email: ________________________________

Address __________________________ City _____________ State _____ Zip ____________

Phone _____________________________ Vegetarian lunch? [ ] y [ ] n

How would you like to receive your confirmation packet? [ ] email [ ] mail
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Business Side of Agritourism Workshop Jan. 28

*The Business Side of Agritourism* workshop will take place on **January 28, 2010** at the **Lake Logan Episcopal Center** located just outside of Waynesville, NC (www.lakelogan.org). The cost for the full-day workshop is $25 per person ($35 after January 8, 2010) and includes lunch and resource materials. On Wednesday January 27, a field trip to a local agritourism business, followed by dinner and a grower social featuring local products will be provided for overnight guests. Accommodations are available at the Lake Logan Episcopal Center for folks who would like to spend the night. Accommodations are also available in nearby downtown Waynesville.

*The Business Side of Agritourism* workshop is **FIRST COME FIRST SERVED**. If you are thinking of incorporating agritourism activities into your farm operation or looking to expand and improve your agritourism business, then this conference is for you. Come spend the day with us and learn what you need to know about *The Business Side of Agritourism*.

To learn more about this event or to register, contact me at 828.697.4891 or sue_colucci@ncsu.edu.

**Topics to be covered include:**

- **Experience in an Agritourism Business in Tennessee** with Bob Schmidt, Owner of Maple Lane Farms
- **Self and Market Assessment**
- **Understanding Sales Tax on Value-Added Products**
- **Types of Agritourism Enterprises**
- **Minimizing On-Farm Risk and Liability**
- **Rules and Regulations for Food and Activities for Agritourism Businesses**
- **Using Your Chamber of Commerce and Travel and Tourism Department**
- **Collaborations and Collective Marketing**
- **Social Networking and Websites**
- **How to Incorporate Education into Your Agritourism Business**

Sponsored by NC Cooperative Extension and the Southern Region Risk Management Education Center

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**Did You Know?**

That the most popular fruit is the **TOMATO**. More than 60 million tons of tomatoes are produced per year, 16 million tons more than the second most popular fruit, the banana. Apples are the third most popular (36 million tons), then oranges (34 million tons) and watermelons (22 million tons).

The French called the tomato "**the apple of love**," the Germans "**the apple of paradise**."

**Pomodoro** is Italian for tomato and its literal translation is “**golden apple**”. The first tomatoes in Italy were a yellowish color.
North Carolina Strawberry Association Receives Marketing & Promotion Grant

The North Carolina Strawberry Association (NCSA) recently received a USDA Specialty Crop Block grant for $20,000 for a project called “Developing and Implementing a Comprehensive Campaign for Strawberry Marketing and Promotion.” The project will brand locally produced North Carolina strawberries, make use of new communication technologies, and provide marketing tools to individual growers.

The USDA funds are divided among the 50 states and administered by each state’s department of agriculture. This project is one of 28 in North Carolina sharing the $1.09 million the state received. Though this is a one-year grant, NCSA intends it to kick off a long-term strategic marketing campaign.

Source: North Carolina Strawberry Association

Crisis Communication Workshop

On November 16 a group of blackberry growers, extension agents, agricultural professionals and others attended a crisis communication workshop at the new Research Campus in Kannapolis, NC.

Specialists from NCSU, including Dr. Trevor Phister, Dr. Ben Chapman, Dr. Chris Gunter, Diane Ducharme and Rod Gurganus conducted the workshop. The workshop was an interactive program that took growers and those working with raspberries and blackberries, through a food safety outbreak. The specialists simulate how a food safety outbreak unfolds and how all the different agencies (CDC, FDA, news channels, etc) interject themselves into the incident.

This workshop took participants through an outbreak of Hepatitis A from the initial report where no specific commodity was implicated, to the source being from your produce on your farm. The alarming reality is that food safety crises evolve very rapidly and everyone wants answers. Even if your farm is not implicated, local news media may be calling you! The bottom-line is that we need to be prepared if a food safety crisis occurs.

Here are a few takeaways that we received from this training:

- **Gather as much information as possible.** Contact your local health department to learn about the foodborne pathogen in question, how it spreads, etc. When did the individuals get sick, could your produce be implicated?
- **Contact your local commodity organization.** Chances are they are investigating, too. They may even have prepared statements for growers to use if contacted by the media. These statements need to provide a clear, consistent and proactive message.
- **Never use the word ‘safe’.** Even GAP certification does not mean your product is ‘safe’. ‘Safe’ is a guarantee. We can’t guarantee safety, we can only minimize the risk of a foodborne illness outbreak.
- **Personalize it.** If the media comes to your farm for a statement, eat your product on camera. Better yet, show your family eating your product.
- **In a crisis, people trust the farmer first.** This is powerful. Be prepared to answer the tough questions.

I highly suggest that all growers attend a crisis communication training. There will be an intensive Crisis Communication Workshop in Raleigh **March 16-18.** At this training you will be taught what not to say, how to handle the tough questions, how to develop key message points and how to stay on message. Most importantly, you will walk out of the training with a crisis communication plan. More details to come soon...
Upcoming Events and Deadlines


**January 8, 2010**—WNC AgOptions proposals must be postmarked by this date. [www.wncagoptions.org](http://www.wncagoptions.org) for details.

**January 11, 25 and February 8, 2010**—Fresh Produce Safety Training at the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research and Extension Center in Mills River, NC. 9–11:30 am. See page 4 for details.

**January 20-23, 2010**—Practical Tools and Solutions for Sustaining Family Farms Conference. Chattanooga Convention Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee. For more details visit [www.ssawg.org](http://www.ssawg.org)


**February 10, 2010**—Winter Apple School. Quality Inn, Hendersonville, NC. Contact Ivy Olson at 828.697.4891 or ivy_olson@ncsu.edu for details.

**February 17-18, 2010**—Western NC Winter Vegetable Conference. Crowne Plaza and Resort, Asheville, NC. See page 2-3 for details.

**February 27, 2010**—Marketing Opportunities for Farmers Conference. Warren Wilson College, Swannanoa, NC. See page 5 for details.