



Newsletter Extension

Fruit ICM News

Volume 4, No. 44
December 29, 2000

In This Issue:

[Calendar](#)

[Review of Government Fruit Programs](#)

[Are Bioengineered Strawberries in Our Future?](#)

Calendar

January 8-9, 2001: Kentucky State Horticultural Meeting. For more information contact John Strang, University of Kentucky (606) 257-5685.

January 9-10, 2001: Great Lakes Vegetable Growers Convention, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. For information and registration for the program contact Dave Smith, Michigan Vegetable Growers Association and program coordinator, at (734) 848-8899. As part of the convention, a "Plasticulture School" will follow the regular meeting and will be offered on January 11. Dr. Ron Goldy, Extension Vegetable Specialist, will be coordinator and contact for the program. Ron can be reached at (616) 944-1477. Please note that pre-registration for the plasticulture meeting will be required.

January 20, 2001: Raspberry Pruning Demonstration in Seville, Ohio. Contact Sandy Kuhn at 1-800-297-2072 for details.

January 29-31, 2001: Indiana Horticultural Congress, at the Adams Mark Hotel in Indianapolis. The Congress is for participants; let them know what issues you would like them to address. Check the website often for updates: <http://www.hort.purdue.edu> and follow the link for Indiana Horticultural Congress.

February 7-9, 2001: Ohio Fruit Growers Society Congress, in conjunction with the Ohio Vegetable and Potato Growers Association, Ohio Direct Marketing Association, and The Ohio State University will be held in Toledo at the Seagate Centre and Radisson Hotel.

USDA Offers Three Separate Programs to Assist Apple Growers

Submitted by John Wargowsky, Executive Director, Ohio Fruit Growers Society

1. USDA Announces Special Apple Loan Program

USDA has announced that low interest loans will be made available to apple farmers suffering from low prices for their fruit. Loan funds may be used to:

- refinance debt;
- pay costs associated with reorganizing a farm to improve profitability;
- pay annual operating expenses;
- purchase farm equipment or fixtures;
- acquire, enlarge, or lease a farm;
- make capital improvements to a farm;
- purchase stock in a cooperative for credit, production, processing or marketing purposes; and
- pay closing costs on debt re-financing.

To qualify, applicants must have produced apples for market in either 1999 or 2000 on a minimum of 10 acres. Eligible applicants may obtain loans of \$300 per acre for apple trees in production in 1999 or 2000, to a maximum of \$500,000. Interested farmers should contact their local FSA offices for more information. Applications are currently being taken. A USDA fact sheet may be obtained at the following web link: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas/publications/facts/html/apple00.htm>

2. USDA Announces \$100 Million in Apple Market Loss Assistance

- Will provide relief for loss of markets
- Payment is based on higher of each farm's 1998 or 1999 production
- Producers can self-certify production; will need to provide production evidence only if selected for spot-check
- Payment is limited to 1.6 million pounds per apple operation
- One application per apple operation
- No gross income limit (no means test)
- Similar in concept to market loss assistance for wheat, feed grains, cotton, and rice
- Sign up to begin January 18, 2001 with payments expected to be issued March 2001
- One payment rate nationwide will be announced for all varieties of apples

3. USDA Announces \$38 Million Apple and Potato Quality Loss Assistance

- Covers a producer's quality loss for apples and potatoes in both 1999 and 2000
- Quality loss must be weather related or due to fireblight
- Apple quality payment based on fresh, processed and juice marketings
- No payment limitation
- No gross income limit (no means test)
- Crop does not have to be harvested
- Producers may also be eligible for quantity losses under a separate crop loss program
- Sign up expected to begin in February 2001

Genetic Engineering of Strawberries Won't be Easy Task

By Ryan Whirty, New York Correspondent, The Fruit Growers News, 343 South Union Street, PO Box

Scientists in upstate New York are trying to bring gene technology to the state's strawberry industry, but a professor at Cornell University says it might not be easy.

Marvin Pritts, a professor of horticulture at Cornell, said there are legal hurdles to overcome, and a growing distrust of genetically-engineered foods might also become a factor as experts try to produce Roundup-resistant strawberries in New York. Still, he said, strawberry growers would like to see the technology come to fruition because it would help them deal with pesky weeds.

"A lot of growers think this would be a very good thing," Pritts said. "Weeds are one of the biggest problems in growing strawberries." He noted that researchers in California led the way in developing biotechnology in strawberries. In November 1999, officials at DNA Technology Corporation, an Oakland-based company, announced they had grown strawberries that were resistant to the herbicide glyphosate, commonly known as Roundup.

DNA representatives said they had introduced mutant forms of the enzyme EPSPS into strawberry crops to induce tolerance to glyphosate. Dozens of lines of both Selva and Camarosa berries were injected with EPSPS. Company representatives said such technology would allow strawberries to survive sprayings of Roundup and could be used as a methyl bromide replacement within a few years.

"The technology is proven," said one company official in a November 1999 issue of Pesticide and Toxic Chemical News. "We're trying to make Roundup-ready strawberry plants."

DNA Technology also announced that it had entered an agreement with the chemical company Monsanto to market the new technology to strawberry growers. "That," Pritts said, "creates a host of legal issues for scientists and growers elsewhere in the country." He said researchers in New York cannot simply copy what was done in California because, in many cases, gene technology is owned by the companies that created it. "The big limitation isn't so much developing the technology," Pritts said. "It's the legal issues."

But scientists at Cornell are trying to come up with their own solution. At the university's Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, NY, assistant professor Courtney Weber is working to develop gene technology in local strawberries. Weber, who serves as the ag station's small-fruit breeder, started with the university in the spring of 1999.

"I hope to release many improved raspberry and strawberry cultivars for the Northeastern grower so the industry will expand," Weber said when he arrived at Cornell. "The more initial success I have, the easier it will be to be more successful in the future. Success feeds upon itself."

Even if Weber is successful, New York strawberry growers might face other hurdles. One challenge, Pritts said, could be a sudden rush to grow strawberries, which would result in an oversupply. "This would make strawberries easy to grow, so a lot of people would want to get in," he said. "Initially, it's great, but soon everybody does it, the supply goes up, and prices fall."

Then there's the growing popular protests against genetically-enhanced foods. Pritts acknowledged many scientists and researchers do not fully investigate the issue of food safety as they develop new technology. "No one looks at the negatives," he said. Added to that is the fact that many consumers have an inherent skepticism about food that isn't produced through traditional methods.

"When people buy a product at the market and they learn it's been modified, there's something about that that would be a violation of trust to a lot of people," Pritts said. Plus, he said consumers often can't discern any difference between traditionally grown foods and enhanced foods.

"All of these modified products have benefitted the companies and the farmers, but there's been no benefit to the consumer at all," Pritts said, describing the viewpoint of many consumers. "Monsanto sells more herbicide, farmers have an easier time dealing with weeds and can cut their costs, but the consumer doesn't get anything out of it. I can understand why there's a backlash."

In February, Pritts will speak at the New York State Berry Growers Association annual meeting, where he will discuss the possibility of modified strawberries as well as the positives and negatives of such a development. Researchers and growers need to wrestle with the legal, economic, and ethical issues raised by biotechnology, he said. No one doubts that modified berries would help growers in many regards. The question is, will it also hurt them?

The Fruit Growers News website offers a sampling of articles and features from each month. Subscribe to get all the news offered in The Fruit Growers News delivered right to your home! Permission is granted for reprinting material, except for commercial or advertising purposes, provided The Fruit Growers News is given full credit.

<http://www.fruitgrowersnews.com>

The Ohio Fruit ICM News is edited by:

Ted W. Gastier
Extension Agent, Agriculture
Tree Fruit Team Coordinator
Ohio State University Extension Huron County
180 Milan Avenue
Norwalk, OH 44857
Phone: (419)668-8210
FAX: (419)663-4233
E-mail: gastier.1@osu.edu

Information presented above and where trade names are used, they are supplied with the understanding that 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 responsibility of consulting the pesticide label and adhering to those directions.

Copyright © The Ohio State University 2000

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

Keith L. Smith, Associate Vice President for Ag. Adm. and Director, OSU Extension.

TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868

| [Back](#) |