

Northeast Mississippi Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association

January/February 2015 Newsletter



Dr. Jeff Wilson – Regional Horticulture Specialist

Well a new year is here and I hope you all had a great holiday season. There are a lot of horticulture activities planned for this year at the NMREC, in Verona. It all begins with the **6th Annual Northeast MS Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association Conference & Trade Show**. This 2 day event will be February 12th & 13th. More info about this conference is attached. I hope all of you will make plans to attend. Please send in your registration early if you know you are coming!!

In the last newsletter, Dr. Barickman described some of the research he has conducted in the short amount of time he has been with us. He will be covering some of this research at the conference and he will be wanting to hear from you about future research in Verona.

I attended the SE Region Fruit & Vegetable Conference in Savannah, GA earlier this month. WOW. There were @400 vendors and over 3,000 people attended. I heard educational programs on blueberry, blackberry, muscadine, strawberry, watermelon, and a few others. If you have never been to this conference it would definitely be worth a trip. The conference is always in Savannah in early January.

UPCOMING EVENTS

****** Northeast MS Fruit & Vegetable Growers Conference ******

We will have the Fruit & Vegetable Conference on February 12th & 13th in Verona, MS at the Magnolia Building (Lee County Agri-Center). I am attaching a registration form to this newsletter. I urge you to go ahead and send in your registration if you plan to attend. It will make your check-in process much quicker on the day of the conference. I will also be attaching an agenda. Please tell anyone you think might be interested in this event.

North American Raspberry & Blackberry Conference

This conference will be February 24-27 in Fayetteville, AR. There are great tours and educational programs lined up. I cannot attend this year but hope to go in 2016. Anyone who grows these 2 crops should definitely consider attending. You can visit www.raspberryblackberry.com to get more detailed info.

Grape & Muscadine Short Course

This one day event will be **February 26** here at the **NMREC in Verona**. There will be a full day of educational session followed by a hands-on pruning event at a local vineyard. I am attaching the registration form for this event also. You **must register in advance**.

Fruit Tree Grafting Workshop

This one day event will be **March 26** here at the **NMREC**. There will be an afternoon of programs followed by a hands-on session on grafting. Each participant will be able to take home the trees they graft. Seating is limited and you **must register in advance**.

GAP/GHP Cost-Share Program Available

The MS Department of Agriculture and Commerce is currently offering a cost-share program to provide financial assistance to fruit and vegetable farmers receiving Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP) Certification. Eligible farmers will receive reimbursement for 75% of the certification costs up to a maximum of \$500. To receive reimbursement, farmers must submit a completed application with proper documentation of costs incurred. Only audits completed by an approved USDA certifier will be eligible for reimbursement. A list of auditor contacts is available at www.ams.usda.gov/gapghp. Funds are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Funding for this program is provided through the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. For more information about this program or to obtain an application, visit www.mdac.ms.gov, call Michael Lasseter at (601) 359-1120 or email michaelL@mdac.ms.gov.

TRANSPORTING NUTRITION TO FOOD DESERTS

CSX and The Conservation Fund today announced a program of grants aimed at improving the transportation and distribution of fresh, healthy food to communities in need. More than 23 million Americans across the country have limited or no access to fresh produce, dairy, meats and seafood. One of the contributors to these so-called “food deserts” is the lack of infrastructure to distribute fresh food to markets. To support local distribution and help address this need, CSX and The Conservation Fund, a national nonprofit dedicated to finding conservation solutions that balance environmental and economic needs, teamed up to create a program that will help farmers and distributors enhance their delivery capabilities.

Grants ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000 will be made available to entities that distribute fresh produce/perishable food in the 23 states where CSX operates. The grants can support a range of activities related to transportation such as: acquiring refrigerated vehicles for direct delivery to markets; financing “veggie vans” to bring fresh food to isolated communities; providing better access to food hubs or other sites where produce, dairy, seafood and meats can be stored safely for distribution; or purchasing produce boxes and cold storage bins to keep unsold food fresh for the next day's farmers market or wholesale purchase. Grant applications are due by October 1, 2014. To download a grant application and see more information about the program, please visit <http://www.conservationfund.org/partner-with-us/corporate-partners/profiles/csx/> or contact Margarita Carey at mcarey@conservationfund.org.

New Pilot Program Offers Coverage for Fruits/Vegetables, Organic and Diversified Farms

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced a new risk management option that will be available for fruit & vegetable growers and producers with diversified farms. The policy, called Whole-Farm Revenue Protection, will provide flexible coverage options for specialty crop, organic and diversified crop producers. The program will be implemented in counties across the country and will expand in availability over the next several years.

Whole-Farm insurance allows farmers to insure all crops on their farm at once, rather than insuring commodity by commodity. This allows farmers greater flexibility to make planting decisions on their land. More flexibility also empowers farmers and ranchers to make a broader range of decisions with their land, helping them succeed and strengthening our agriculture economy."

This policy is also part of USDA's [commitment to small and mid-sized producers](#) managing diversified operations. It offers coverage levels from 50 to 85 percent; recognizes farm diversification through qualification for the highest coverage levels along with premium rate discounts for multiple crop diversification. The Market Readiness Feature, as outlined in the Farm Bill, simplifies insurance coverage for producers under the Whole-Farm Revenue Protection pilot policy by allowing the costs such as washing, trimming, and packaging to be left in the insured revenue instead of having to adjust those amounts out of the insured amount.

As part of the pilot, Whole-Farm Revenue Protection will be available where AGR and AGR-Lite are currently offered, and will expand to other counties as data are available for underwriting and actuarial ratemaking. RMA will release information on the policy later this summer when it becomes available. This information will be announced on the RMA website at www.rma.usda.gov.

MSU-ES Contact info:

Below are the contact names and numbers that are directly related to the association and your production issues. Please start with your local county Extension agent to help find answers to your questions. They are capable of handling your request and have access to all of our resources

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