



UMASS
EXTENSION



Vegetable Notes

For Vegetable Farmers in Massachusetts

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VEGETABLE NOTES SURVEY

The semi-annual Vegetable Notes survey is drawing to a close. We'd like to thank the many of you who've taken the time to respond, and to gently encourage those of you who haven't responded to take a few moments to support the program by filling out the survey. The address is <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/KF8CSRV>. We've had an excellent response rate so far but would like to push closer to the 100% mark so we know that everyone's opinion is represented.

EQIP ORGANIC INITIATIVE

The deadline to apply for the exciting and evolving Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) Organic Initiative is coming up fast. USDA has allocated \$50 million for the Organic Initiative in 2011, which is available for all three of the following: certified organic growers, those transitioning to organic farming systems, and farmers exempt from formal certification.*

The Organic Initiative offers financial and technical assistance to farmers and ranchers to implement new conservation practices, like cover cropping, pest management, crop rotation, stream buffers, hedgerow planting, and various other practices. First implemented in 2009, many farmers and ranchers have taken advantage of the program, including Iowa farmer Gary Otto who conventionally farmed corn and soybeans for 35 years before beginning the organic certification transition process in 2008. Read his success story with the Organic Initiative at <http://www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov/news/successstories/Otto.html>.

In addition, growers interested in signing up for the pest management practices are eligible to receive training and assistance from UMass Extension. Contact Andy Cavanagh at 413-577-3976 or acavanagh@psis.umass.edu for more details.

To sign up, visit your USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) local service center website (see <http://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?agency=nrcs>).

Eligible Applicants

The Organic Initiative is available to agriculture producers who are:

- Just beginning or already in the process of transitioning to certified organic production;
- Existing certified organic farmers (or exempt*) who are transitioning additional acres or herds;
- Existing certified organic farmers (or exempt*) who need to adopt additional conservation measures to fully address particular natural resource and environmental concerns;
- Existing certified organic farmers (or exempt*) who want to both transition additional production AND adopt additional conservation measures on existing certified organic ground (a combination of the third and fourth bullet point).

*Also included are "exempt producers," whose gross agricultural income from organic sales total \$5,000 or less annually but who still comply with the applicable organic production, handling, and labeling requirements mandated for certified organic producers.

Payments

Farmers and Ranchers who receive EQIP Organic Initiative contracts with NRCS are paid 75 percent of the cost for the organic conservation measures they implement. Beginning, limited resource, and socially disadvantaged producers (those considered “historically underserved” by the USDA) are paid up to 90 percent. The program provides up to \$20,000 per year with a maximum total of \$80,000 over six years.

March 4, 2011, is the last day to submit your application for this year’s funding. The process can be complicated, so we urge you to start now.

Please see the NRCS 2011 Guidance Document, which is the USDA’s directive to each state’s NRCS office to implement the EQIP Organic Initiative in 2011 (available online at <http://salsa.wiredforchange.com/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=8dWXFkMSkcu1MN%2B7dqDp15w4MoT%2F0X8>).

MAKING REDUCED TILLAGE WORK ON YOUR VEGETABLE FARM

Growers who have tested deep zone tillage have found savings in labor (between 25 and 60%) and fuel costs (between 25 and 70%) compared to their conventional tillage systems (moldboard plow plus other passes). While cost savings are significant, growers report the most important benefit of reduced tillage (RT) is the greater flexibility afforded early in the season. By speeding up primary tillage and field preparation, growers can be timelier with planting, be more efficient with labor, have lower equipment maintenance needs, and improve early-season cash flow. All growers we have worked with plan to expand RT acres on their farms. In some cases, growers have been able to expand total farmed acres because of the efficiencies and benefits afforded by reduced tillage systems.

Trying to find equipment to test RT has been a barrier for many growers. To help, UMass has purchased a 2-row zone builder. We are willing to work with a limited number of growers who are interested in using this equipment to try RT on their own farms. Spring will be here before long!

Opportunities to Learn about Reduced Tillage for Vegetables

Join our Videoconference

This videoconference will focus on both annual and perennial weed control, residue management and equipment in reduced tillage systems. We will have a panel of seasoned and new to reduced tillage growers to discuss weed control, cover crop and residue management, equipment, attachments and fertility. Robin Bellinder and Rich Bonnano will address specific grower questions on weed management in reduced tillage. Cornell, Cooperative Extension and grower experience will be shared at this meeting and there will be ample time for interaction with the speakers and for discussion. Lunch will be provided. The event takes place on Friday, February 11 2011, 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Space is extremely limited so please reserve a spot as soon as possible if you’re interested in attending.

Join the videoconference at one of the five locations:

- UMass: OIT Video Conferencing Classroom, Engineering Lab II, Room 115, University of Massachusetts, Amherst MA 01003. Contact Andy Cavanagh, 413-658-4925 or acavanagh@psis.umass.edu.
- Eastern NY: Cooperative Extension – Columbia County, 479 NYS RT 66, Hudson, NY. Contact Chuck Bornt, 518-859-6213 or cdb13@cornell.edu.
- Central NY: B08 CCC Building, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. Contact Betsy Leonard, 607-254-8943 or bai1@cornell.edu. Please email Betsy for a map and parking permit by February 5.
- Western NY, Cooperative Extension – Genesee County, 420 Main St, Batavia, NY. Contact Carol MacNeil at 585-394-3977x406, 585-313-8796, or crm6@cornell.edu. Please leave your name and phone number. From I-90 exit 48/ Batavia, take Rt. 98 south to W. Main St/Rt. 5, Batavia, and turn left. Stay on Main St/Rt. 5 ~1 mile. CCE is past Pizza Hut on the right at Masse Place.
- Long Island: LIHREC, 3059 Sound Ave. Riverhead, NY 11901, Riverhead, NY. Contact Meg McGrath, 631-727-3595, or mtm3@cornell.edu.

Do an On-Farm Trial

If you are interested in testing reduced tillage on your farm, please contact Andrew Cavanagh at 413-658-4925 or email at acavanagh@psis.umass.edu. We are looking for growers who simply wish to try the system using our equipment, and also growers who would be interested in a 2-year split field trial that will provide some detailed information about your soil health and how it is being affected by your tillage system.

This project is possible in part due to grant funds from the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program

GRANT PROPOSALS FOR RENEWABLE ENERGY AND EFFICIENCY PROJECTS

Workshop on technical assistance and financial incentives for farms and forest product businesses.

Want to learn more about funding available for your renewable energy or energy efficiency project? Attend the last of a series of free workshops for farmers and forest products business owners about financial incentives available through state and USDA programs including: Rural Development Rural Energy for America Program (REAP); Natural Resources Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP); Farm Service Agency loan programs; MA Clean Energy Center; and MA-Dept. of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) Agricultural Energy Grant Program (AgEnergy). These workshops are sponsored by the MA Woodlands Institute (MWI), Berkshire-Pioneer Resource Conservation and Development Area (RC&D), Patriot RC&D, Pilgrim RC&D and the Massachusetts Farm Energy Program (MFEP). MFEP is a statewide collaborative initiative that provides technical and financial assistance to Massachusetts farmers for reducing their energy demand and increasing their profits. Workshop and information sessions include a brief overview of technical and financial assistance programs, eligibility requirements, and anticipated application announcements. Small group discussions will allow participants to ask questions about the specifics of their project.

These programs support energy efficiency projects and a diverse range of clean energy technologies. In 2010, REAP awarded 20 Massachusetts rural small businesses and farmers \$2,149,583 in grants and loans for 15 photovoltaic systems, 1 wind turbine and 4 energy efficiency projects. EQIP awarded \$494,714 for 9 solar projects and 5 greenhouse efficiency practices. AgEnergy awarded \$450,000 for 20 energy efficiency and 22 renewable energy projects.

One more workshop will be held:

Friday, February 11, 9:30 am - 12:30 pm, Lanesborough Town Hall, Community Room, 83 N. Main St, Lanesborough, MA

To register, please contact Emily Boss, Massachusetts Woodlands Institute, at 413-397-8800 or emily@masswoodlands.coop

MFEP staff reviews project plans, makes referrals for technical and financial assistance, provides audits, and REAP grant assistance, as applicable. Energy audits and/or renewable energy assessments are required prior to applying to most programs and often take 1-2 months so it is important to plan early. Eligibility information is posted at the MFEP website.

Technical support and grant application assistance is available to commercial agricultural producers eligible for REAP grants on a first-come, first-served basis. Applications are being accepted on a rolling basis. The final deadline for application for REAP grant assistance through MFEP will be announced in the spring.

Funding for this free workshop series has been provided through a USDA-RD Rural Business Enterprise Grant. The Massachusetts Farm Energy Program is supported by NRCS and MDAR. Berkshire-Pioneer Resource Conservation & Development, the administrator of the MFEP, and MWI are equal opportunity employers. For more information about MFEP services, please contact Ann Gibson agibson@berkshirepioneerred.org or Jess Cook jesscook@berkshirepioneerred.org at 413-256-1607. Additional MFEP information can be found at www.berkshirepioneerred.org/mfep/

Directions to Lanesborough Town Hall, 83 N. Main St, Lanesborough, MA:

From Pittsfield Center, follow US 7 North. Road becomes North Main St. Town Hall is on the left at 83 North Main St. Parking is available in the Town Hall parking lot, behind the building. Use the lower door to access the Community Room.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

New England Vegetable and Berry Growers' Association and New England Cooperative Extension

FIVE HUNDRED SEVENTY-NINETH MEETING

Saturday, January 29, 2011

Concord Lodge of Elks

221 Baker Avenue, Concord, MA

PROGRAM

9:30 Registration: There is a \$10.00 Registration Fee. This fee is waived for members of NEV&BGA

10:00 Update on Insect, Disease and Weed Management. Jude Boucher, UConn, Bess Dicklow, UMass and Rich Bonanno, UMass.

11:30 Marmorated Stink Bug: A New and Dangerous Pest. George Hamilton, UNH

NOON Lunch. Chef DuJour will provide us with one of his great meals. Lunch is \$16.00. To order lunch contact the Secretary by January 25, 2011. Call (413)665-3501 or email howell@umext.umass.edu. If you order lunch and cannot attend, please call to cancel. We will have to bill you for unpaid meals.

1:00 Business meeting and elections.

1:20 What's New at the Farm Service Agency. Lynn Vozniak, Executive Director, Essex County Office

1:35 Using and Choosing Cover Crops; Options, Managing Cover Crops, What They Contribute to the Soil and Subsequent Crops. Frank Mangan, UMass.

2:15 Deep Zone Tillage: What Is It and How It Can Be Used to Advantage and Grower Experiences. Andy Cavanagh, UMass; Jude Boucher, UConn; Wally Czajkowski/Mike Zigmont, Hadley; Allan Zuchowski, Hadley

3:15 Tips on Dealing With Changes in Diesel Fuel. Will Shattuck, Devon Lane Farm Supply

NOTE: We anticipate pesticide recertification credit for this meeting

Directions to Concord Lodge of Elks: Go east on Rt 2 from the Concord rotary (by the Prison) for about 1/2 mile. At the light, turn right onto Baker Ave. Extension. The road curves to the left and ends at a stop sign. This is Baker St. Turn left and the Elks Lodge is a short distance on the right.

Growing a Better Beer in the Granite State.

Saturday February 5, 2011

Radisson Hotel, Manchester NH.

9:00am-2:00pm. Registration fee \$30.

This program is intended for farms looking to diversify into crops for NH's beer brewers and for the serious home brewer who wants to become even more involved with the brewing process. We will cover the basics for growing grains and hops that are used for making beer, and we'll provide input from professionals who can comment on what brewers are looking for and how people might be able to meet these opportunities. For info, contact Carl Majewski at 603-352-4550 or carl.majewski@unh.edu.

NOFA-Mass Advanced Growers' Winter Seminar: Systematizing a Diverse Vegetable Operation.

Saturday February 5, 2011

Barre Congregational Church, Barre MA.

8:30am-5:30pm. Registration fee \$90; early bird and NOFA/MOFGA discounts exist.

The seminar will be presented by Jean-Paul Courtens and Jody Bolluyt from Roxbury Farm in Kinderhook, NY. The morning portion of the seminar will focus on Soil & Plant Health from a Whole Farm Perspective, and the afternoon will focus on Planting and Harvesting Procedures, Record Keeping, and Financial Analysis. For info, contact Ben Grosscup at 413-658-5374.

New England Ag Marketing Conference & Trade Show.

Tuesday-Thursday March 1-3, 2011.

Sturbridge Host Hotel, Sturbridge MA.

9:00am-2:00pm. Registration fees vary, see conference website for info.

This unique marketing conference targets New England farmers interested in learning new marketing ideas as well as fine-tuning strategies for business success. Five themed tracks with over 25 workshops will be offered covering a wide range of marketing and business planning topics, including using social media, funding, customer relations, value added, agri-tourism and more. The five conference tracks include Growing your business, Funding your business, Selling your product, Marketing your product, and Adding value to your product. For info, contact Jaime Smith at 860-713-2559 or jaime.smith@ct.gov.

Vegetable Notes. Ruth Hazzard, editor and Amanda Brown and Andrew Cavanagh, assistant editors. Vegetable Notes is published weekly from May to September and at intervals during the off-season, and includes contributions from the faculty and staff of the UMass Extension Vegetable Program, other universities and USDA agencies, growers, and private IPM consultants. Authors of articles are noted; author and photographer is R. Hazzard if none is cited.

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