Title: Sustainable Vegetable Production and Marketing

Leader: Ruth Hazzard

Overview

Vegetable farming in Massachusetts and New England has remained vital in recent decades through constant and creative change: more direct marketing, diversification, selection of high value crops, and adoption of new technologies. The twenty thousand Massachusetts acres used to produce vegetables (worth over $80 million in farm-gate value and over $240 million retail value) are a resource for food, open space, environmental quality, economic vitality, and quality of life in the Commonwealth. Vegetable farmers are key players in the state's 100 plus farmers markets, 150 farm stands, 50 plus Community Supported Agriculture farms, and the wholesale food distribution system. Dairy, livestock and fruit farmers are diversifying by growing more vegetable crops.

Sustainable vegetable production requires new technical solutions to problems of cropping systems and rotations, crop nutrition, soil health, water use and conservation, energy sources and needs, and pest management. As Massachusetts undergoes cultural, economic and climactic changes, both new and established growers must learn to use practices that are economically, environmentally and socially sustainable, and to adapt cropping systems to new market opportunities in Massachusetts. The Sustainable Vegetable Production and Marketing project will undertake research and extension to address key problems and opportunities facing the industry and the public.

Project: Sustainable Vegetable Production: Beginning Farmers

Through our mainstream programs as well as events that specifically target beginning farmers, we offer ways for new farmers to build skills and knowledge. The goal is to evaluate growers: to increase knowledge and use of advanced IPM, we used three general categories of IPM practice: pest scouting, trapping, monitoring, forecasting, and identification, including weather data; cultural practices to maintain crop health and prevent pest damage, including biological controls and pesticide practices such as spraying by thresholds, using reduced risk products, and rotating chemistries to prevent resistance.

Activity Summary

- Online Publications (Vegetable Notes, Vegetable IPM Facebook page, website, fact sheets) (25)
- Workshops, meetings, and conferences for beginning farmers (12)
Activity Summary - 2014

- Bio control on-farm Demonstrations (2)
- Maintain on-farm weather stations (3)
- Pheromone trapping network for sweet corn and other pests (10)
- Twilight meetings (28)
- On farm consultation (130)
- Collaborations with USDA/Natural Resource Conservation Service (2)
- Web site development (1)
- New England Vegetable Management Guide - Print version (1)
- New England Vegetable Management Guide – Online Version (1)
- Vegetable Notes - Newsletter (25)
- Social Media - Post IPM information to Facebook page (25)
- Conference Presentations (4)
- Workshops for growers on weed management practices (2)

Total educational contacts for all projects

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<th>Adult Contacts</th>
<th>Youth Contacts</th>
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<td>In Person</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indirect Contacts (Print, Web, etc...)</td>
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Collaborating Organizations

- NRCS
- Regional New England Extension Educators
- Eastern Massachusetts CRAFT
- South Eastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnerships SEMAP
- New England Vegetable and berry Growers Association NEVBGA
- Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources MDAR
- Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture CISA