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: Winter production and sales

This USDA/NE-SARE (Northeast - Sustainable Agricultural Research & Education) funded project focused on Expanding Winter Harvest and Sales for New England Vegetable Crops. The specific goal was to assess and facilitate the expansion of the number of growers in New England who produce and/or sell vegetables during the winter months.

Activity Summary

- Twilight meetings with growers (7)
- Website development (1)
- Educational programs on winter production, storage and sales of vegetables (2)
- Annual report to sponsor (1)
- Fact Sheets on post-harvest curing and storage of winter squash and sweet potato (4)
Total educational contacts for all projects

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<tr>
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<th>Adult Contacts</th>
<th>Youth Contacts</th>
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<tr>
<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