

## Vegetable Conference Research Examines Stake System, Transplants, Planters

## Stake System Provides Better Tomatoes, Income For Growers

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higher percentage of red fruit.

#### Carousel Planter Grower Experiences

Dwight Hess, a grower for Furman Foods in Marietta, moderated a panel that discussed tomato grower experiences using carousel planters.

All agreed there was a definite and significant advantage to using

either six-cup or eight-cup transplants over the finger method.

Tomato growers at the panel included Ken Martin, farm manager, Furman Foods, Northumberland; Dale Frank, Elizabethtown; Dan Mower, Marietta; and Cliff Charles, Lancaster.

Hess said that he uses a 288-cell tray, with tomato plants sown in greenhouses about 4-6 weeks prior

to field planting. The plants are "hardened off" outside the greenhouse 1-2 days prior to transplanting.

Using a carousel planter is advantageous because it provides more uniform row placement and, most importantly, saves on labor and time compared to the finger placement method.

Circular carousel planters used

by the panel include one eight-cup, two six-cup, and one four-cup.

The growers agreed that the planters allow the growers to use less transplanting water, do a better job of sealing the soil around the plant, and provide more uniform stand. But the growers had to make sure the seedbed was loose and even and the transplanter timing was checked periodically.

Mower indicated that the old finger method allowed 8,000 plants per hour placement in the field. Using a six-cup unit, 11,000 plants per hour are placed in the field. Soaking the transplants allowed more faster dropping and movement of transplants from carousel to the shoe.

Editor's note: More conference coverage next issue.

## Growers Achieve Honors At Vegetable Conference

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##### Lancaster Farming Staff

##### HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.)

Awards were presented to several state vegetable growers during banquets held Tuesday at the 1995 Pennsylvania Vegetable Conference and Trade Show.

At the Tomato Awards Luncheon at noon, awards were presented to the 1994 tomato growing champions by the Champion Tomato Growers' Club. Top growers in different classes received an engraved plaque for high tomato production and record-keeping practices during the "Tomato Day" session of the vegetable conference.

The following winners were recognized at the luncheon:

- Class 1 Machine Harvest (60 or more acres): Cliff Charles, Lancaster, won the award for the highest tomato yield in this class. He harvested 2,734 tons of usable fruit for Furman Foods on 100 acres for a 27.3 tons per acre average yield. Varieties grown included Early Pear, Peto 696, Ohio 8245, and Heinz 9478. The 288 and 338 plug transplants, grown in his own greenhouses, were planted with a Lanner cup planter at a population of 13,000 plants per acre. The double rows are planted on 66-inch centers with a 15-inch spacing in the row and 19 inches between rows. The transplants went into the fields from April 25-May 25. Tomatoes are rotated in a three-year program with corn or small grains in double-crop soybeans. Some fields had a small application of manure and generally all fields had fertilizer applied in a 1-2-3 ration of N-P-K in the spring. If additional nitrogen was required, calcium nitrate was applied at 20 pounds/acre. Tomato yields varied greatly because of excessive moisture.

- Class 2 Machine Harvest (40-59 acres): Dale Frank, Elizabethtown, harvested 1,170 tons of usable fruit for Furman Foods on 50 acres for a 23.4 tons per acre average yield. Peto 696, Heinz 9478, and LaRossa were grown from tray transplants at a population of 10,000 plants per acre and transplanted on May 2-13 with a three-row rotary planter. Tomatoes were not grown on beds, and the single rows were spaced five feet from center and plants were 10 inches in the row. Tomatoes are rotated in a three-year program with corn or small grains in double-crop soybeans. The rotation consists of tomatoes-corn-corn or tomatoes-double crop barley/soybeans-corn. Lime was applied. Tomatoes are sidedressed with liquid nitrogen at 30 pounds per acre. A high phosphorous starter fertilizer (10-54-4) was applied at 15 pounds per acre at planting.

- Class 3 Machine Harvest (25-39 acres): Clyde Kreider and Rohrer, Lancaster,

harvested 737 tons of usable fruit for Furman Foods on 26 acres for a 28.3 tons per acre average yield. Transplants of Peto 696 were planted May 12-19. The tomatoes were grown in single rows at a population of 11,000 plants per acre with a five-foot spacing between rows and 9.5 inches in the row. A three-year crop rotation is followed which includes soybeans-corn-tomatoes. Lime was applied. Also, 8,000 gallons per acre of cow manure was used to fertilize the tomato crop in 1994.

- Class 4 Machine Harvest (15-24 acres): Nissley Brothers, Mount Joy, Darwin and Bernard Nissley harvested 555 tons of usable fruit for Furman Foods on 19 acres for a 29.1 tons per acre

average yield. Peto 696 transplants were grown at a population of 10,000 plants per acre and transplanted May 20-25. The tomatoes were not grown on beds and the single rows were spaced five feet from center and plants were 10 inches in the row. A four-year crop rotation is followed, corn-soybeans-corn-tomatoes. Lime was applied. Steer manure was applied at 10 tons per acre and plowed down prior to final soil preparation on eight acres. All 19 acres had 200 pounds per acre of phosphorous and potassium prior to planting. Both fields were sidedressed with liquid nitrogen between 30 and 60 pounds per acre after planting.

- Class 1 Hand Harvest (15 or

more acres): Robert MacBeth, MacBeth, Biglerville, harvested 442.3 tons of usable fruit for Furman Foods on 16 acres for a 27.6 tons per acre average yield. Plug transplants of Ohio 7681 were planted May 10-16 at 8,500 plants per acre. The tomatoes were grown in single rows with a 46-inch spacing between rows and 16 inches in the row. A four-year crop rotation is followed, which includes wheat-hay-corn-tomatoes. No lime was applied. Nitrogen was broadcast and plowed down at 84 pounds per acre, and a sidedress application of 8-24-8 was applied at 526 pounds per acre with minor elements after the plants were established.

- Class 3 Hand Harvest (2-5 acres): Clyde Sensenig, Port Tre-

verton. Sensenig harvested 91 tons of usable fruit for Furman Foods on 2.5 acres for a 36.4 tons per acre average yield. Fruit was harvested from August 22-Sept. 12. Additional information was not available.

The Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association honored two members with lifetime memberships at the banquet held Tuesday evening. The awards were presented by James Kohl, president of the association. Receiving awards were Donald Daum, University Park and Tom Jurchak, Clarks Summit.

Richard Pallman, Pallman Farms, Clarks Summit, presented a special award to James Kohl, president of the state vegetable growers, at the banquet.

## Get Back Your Milk Assessment Money If...

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they are owed.

According to Jennifer Hershey, director of the Consolidated Farm Service Agency (CFSA) office in Lebanon County (which used to be called the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service), the application program is relatively simple, and the process has not changed since the program started in 1990.

The dairy assessment program is one in which an assessment has been placed on the commercial sale of raw milk. The USDA, through its Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) collects the money out of the producer's milk check and refunds the money to those who have kept their milk production and sales at previous-year levels or lower.

The amount of refunds made sets up the rate for which further assessments are made, consequently making it more costly to constantly expand production.

By law, all who sell milk are required to have the deduction taken off of their milk check.

The amount of money owed to an individual producer can be significant.

The rate of assessment has varied for 1994. In January, it was 10.12 cents per hundredweight (cwt.) of milk sold. Then in February, the assessment jumped to 11.25 cents per cwt.

In May, the assessment almost doubled and was 19.28 cents per hundredweight.

All those who kept their milk production at the previous year's level, or reduced production, are entitled to a full refund of the assessment collected.

For many family farmers, the amount owed to them is what they paid in, and it can range from about \$1,000 to more than \$3,000.

To apply for their money, dairy farmers should take evidence of their monthly milk marketings, the amount of milk produced, and the

amount of assessment paid to the CCC, to the local CFSA office, or call ahead if uncertain that the proper paperwork is in hand.

The comparison of production, for the sake of the refund, is between production during the immediate past year to production during the previous year (two years earlier from the year of filing for a refund).

Also for the purposes of the refund, the "year" is the calendar year, not records-keeping or financial "years."

The requirement for the refund more or less bolsters the advice that farmers should probably keep track of their herd's production — if not for their own herd and business management, then to make sure they don't lose refund money.

The program doesn't just look at end-of-year totals, but also "... when compared to the equivalent months and days of the immediately preceding calendar year or base period."

Those who have not exceeded milk marketings over the previous year can enjoy the full refund of their money.

There are some built-in guidelines in the program to help prevent fraud, such as attempting to claim a refund on an existing herd's production, while ignoring additional marketings that were made by expanding under a new name.

Under that strategy, considered fraud, a person could expand a dairy operation and lose less money by sacrificing assessments paid on the new herd, rather than losing all paid assessments for the entire operation.

Under the law, the identification of family members, and the amount of interest a producer can own in another milk production operation is among the eligibility considerations for a refund.

According to a news release that the USDA has not had to update for several years, "Producers are eligible to receive refund pay-

ments of withheld amounts, if evidence is provided that the producer, and all dairies in which that producer has an interest, did not increase milk marketings ..."

There are definitions of who is "family," and what constitutes a "related person."

A "family member" is the "... parent, grandparent, or legal guardian; the spouse of a parent of grandparent; spouse; the son, daughter, grandson, or granddaughter, or the spouse of any of these persons; siblings and the spouses of these siblings."

A "related person" is, "The spouse and minor child of the person (claiming a refund); guardian or parent of a minor child; any corporation in which the person is a stockholder, shareholder, or owner of equal to, or greater than, 10 percent interest in the corporation; any partnership, joint venture, or other enterprise in which the person has an ownership interest or financial interest; any trust in which the person seeking the refund payment, or any person listed above, is a beneficiary or has a financial interest; any estate. An estate shall be treated the same as the deceased individual."

According to the news release, if an individual farmer applies for a refund for the farm, the agency will only request information on the first level of relation.

On the other hand, a multi-interest dairy producer, not an individual, that applies for a refund

is to report all first-level and second-level related people. The second level people are determined by listing all the related persons for the first level of related persons.

The assessment program was a result of the 1990 Farm Bill (Food Agriculture, Conservation, and Trade Act of 1990 and 1991 amendments) and the federal Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990, as authorized under the national Food Security Act of 1985. This round of refunds is the second to the last one in the program.

The program is scheduled to stop after 1995, which means there will be one more refund period, in early 1996. Whether or not the program is reauthorized in the 1995 Farm Bill, or new legislation, remains to be seen.

In the meantime, Jennifer Hershey said individual producers in Lebanon County have been mailed a notice which outlines the types of records necessary in order to successfully apply for a refund on dairy assessments.

Other producers in other counties should have received a similar notice. If not, then they should contact their local CFSA office.

Details of the program have changed little since the program started. The application period continues through to a final deadline of March 15.

For more information, contact a local CFSA office or cooperative extension office.

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