Conference Selects Tomato Growing Champions

HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — The state's top tomato growers were honored recently during the "tomato day" portion of the Pennsylvania Vegetable Conference at the Hershey Convention Center.

The State Champion Tomato Growers' Club annually recognizes growers who produce outstanding yields of tomatoes for processing in 1995, sponsored by Penn State and Furman Foods.

In Class 1, machine harvest size, 60 or more acres, Cliff Charles, Lancaster, won the award for the highest tomato yield. Charles harvested 3,484.9 tons of usable fruit for Furman Foods on 107 acres for a 32.5 tons per acre average yield.

For Charles, varieties grown included Early Pear, Peto 696, Ohio 8245, Ox 42 and 88, and Heinz 9422, 9423, and 9478. The 338 plug transplants grown in his own greeenhouses were planted with a Lannen plug planter at a population of 13,000 plants per acre. The double rows were planted from April 29 through May 25 on 66-inch centers with a 15-inch spacing in the row and 19 inches between rows.

Tomatoes are rotated in a three-year program with corn or small grains in double-crop soybeans. The rotation consists of tomatoes-corn-small grains. Lime and fertilizer were applied according to soil test. Some fields had fall application of manure and, if additional nitrogen was required in some fields during the growing season, calcium nirate was applied.

Charles also made use of various herbicide treatments. Fruit was harvested from Aug. 7 to Sept. 9.

In the Class 2, machine harvest size, 40-59 acres, winner was R. Stewart Ramm, Lock Haven. Ramm harvested 1,398 tons of usable fruit for Furman Foods on 41.6 acres for a 33.6 tons per acre average yield.

Ramm used Peto 696, Heinz 9478, and LaRossa varieties, grown from tray transplants at a population of 10,250 plants per acre and transplaned on May 25-29. 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.

Tomatoes are roated in a three-year program with corn or small grains in double-crop soybeans. Rotation is tomatoes-corn-wheat/soybeans. Lime was broadcast at a rate of 1 to 1.5 tons per acre and fertilizer was used in three different formulations, depending on soil tests. Tomatoes were sidedressed with liquid nitrogen based on nitrogen test at 30 pounds per acre. A high phosphorous starter fertilizer (10-54-4) at 15 pounds per acre was applied in the water at transplant time.

Weeds and insects were controlled with a combination of herbicides and insecticides. First harvest was Sept. 22 and last harvest was Oct. 3.

In the Class 3 machine harvest, 25-39 acres size, winner was the Nissley Brothers, Mount Joy. They harvested 972.5 tons of usable fruit for Furman Foods on 25 acres for a 38.9 tons per acre average yield.

Locally grown transplants of Peto 696 were planted from May 24 through May 27. The tomatoes were grown in single rows at a population of 10,500 plants per acre with a five-foot spacing between rows and 10 inches in the row.

A four-year crop rotation is followed, which includes corn in year one, soybeans in year two, corn in year three, and tomatoes in year four. Fifteen tons per acre of steer manure was applied in the fall of 1994 and soil/tissue tests indicated no additional fertilizer was necessary.

Weeds were controlled with a preplant herbicide, and diseases were controlled by various combinations. Fruit was harvested from Aug. 30 through Sept. 13.

Fred Kistler, Bloomsburg, won the Class 4 machine harvest, 15-24 acre harvest size. Kistler harvested 772 tons of usable fruit for Furman on 20 acres for a 38.6 tons per acre average yield.

Heinz 9478 and Peto 696 transplants were grown at a population of 11,000 plants per acre and transplanted on May 18. The tomatoes were not grown on beds, and the single rows were spaced 56 inches from center. Plants were 11 inches in the row.

A three- or four-year crop rotation is followed, which includes soybeans. Soil pH was adjusted and fertilizer was banded to provide 80 pounds nitrogen, 100 pounds phosphorous, and 250 pounds potassium per acre prior to planting.

Weeds were controlled with a combination of herbicides. Fungicides were also used.

In the Class 2 hand harvest, 6 to 14 acres size, Robert MacBeth took home the honor. MacBeth, Biglerville, harvested 413 tons of usable fruit for Furman on 14 acres for a 29.5 tons per acre average yield.

Plug transplants of Ohio 7681 were planted on May 6 through May 8 at a population of 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 sod in year one, wheat in year two, hay in year three, and tomatoes in year four. Nitrogen was applied at 84 pounds per acre, broadcast and plowed down prior to planting. A sidedress application of 8-24-8 at 526 pounds per acre with minor elements was applied after plants were well established.

Weeds were controlled by various herbicides. Insecticides were applied on the same spray schedule as the fungicides.

Reuben K. Esh won the Class 3, hand harvest size, 2-5 acres contest. Esh, Loganton, harvested 52.19 tons of usable fruit on two acres for a 26.1 tons per acre yield.

Esh used Ohio 8245 tomato variety.

Nissley Brothers won Class 3, machine harvest size, 25-39 acres, at the tomato contest. From left, James Kohl, Furman Foods; Bernard Nissley; Darwin Nissley; and Dwight Hess, Furman Foods.

Cliff Charles, center, won Class 1, machine harvest, 60 or more acres size, at the recent tomato contest. From left, James Kohl, Furman Foods; Charles; and Dwight Hess, Furman Foods.

Fred Kistler won Class 4, machine harvest, 15-24 acres size, at the tomato contest. From left, James Kohl, Furman Foods; Steve Kistler; and Gary Krum, Furman Foods.

R. Steward Ramm, center, won machine harvest size, 40-59 acres, at the tomato awards contest. From left, James Kohl, Furman Foods; Ramm; and Gary Krum, Furman Foods.

Robert MacBeth, center, won the hand harvest class, 6-14 acres, at the tomato awards contest. From left, James Kohl, Furman Foods; MacBeth; and Dwight Hess, Furman Foods.

Pro Ag's Board Reorganizes

MESHOPPEN (Wyoming Co.) — Dennis Boyanowski, dairy farmer from Laceyville, has been re-elected president of the Progressive Agriculture Organization (Pro Ag). Boyanowski will be starting his third year as president.

During Pro Ag's reorganization meeting held Feb.14 in Tunkhannock, John Pardoe, a dairy farmer from Forksville, was re-elected vice president of Pro Ag.

Other officers re-elected were Yvonne Arnold of Elk Lake (Susquehanna Co.) as secretary and Mrs. Louise Rinker of Sullivan County as treasurer.

Two new directors took their seats on Pro Ag's eight-member board of directors. Kirk Rhone, a dairy farmer from Starruca, becomes the director representing District I (Wayne County). Rhone is a partner in Bucks Dairy Farm in Starruca. John Tewksbury, a dairy farmer from South Auburn, is the new Pro Ag director from District II (Susquehanna County).

The executive committee of Pro Ag consists of President Boyanowski, Vice President Pardoe, Secretary Arnold, Treasurer L. Rinker, Assistant Treasurer J. Tewksbury, and Assistant Secretary Carl Hibbard.

President Boyanowski said, "Pro Ag is still dedicated to improving the welfare of farmers in the rural area. The only way we can improve the welfare of farmers is by implementing a relationship between the cost of producing an agriculture product and the price received by the farmers."

Pro Ag is continuing to work with other farm organizations in an attempt to improve prices to area farmers through the 1995 Farm Bill.

Boyanowski reports that the membership of Pro Ag is now growing in other areas. During 1995, Pro Ag has expanded into Northampton, Berks, Washington, and Westmoreland counties.