

N.Y. Vegetable Conference Attracts 1,300

ITHACA, N.Y. — The 1998 New York State Vegetable Conference Feb. 10-12 was another outstanding event for New York's vegetable industry. More than 1,300 growers, processors, and allied industry representatives came from around the state, the Northeast, and Canada to attend this major event that, now in its 10th year, is consistently one of the top vegetable industry conferences in the Northeast.

It is co-sponsored by Cornell Cooperative Extension/NYS College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the NYS Vegetable Growers Association, the Empire State Potato Club, and the Associated NYS Food Processors Association. New at the Conference this year were the annual meetings of the NYS Berry Growers Association, adding more than 100 attendees to the first day.

These educational meetings for fresh market and processing vegetable producers have been the focus of this statewide conference since its inception in 1989. In general, for each crop covered, talks include information on new varieties and plant breeding research updates; weed, pest and disease control options; soil and fertility management; marketing; and a wide variety of related key topics of concern to commercial producers.

This year, the all-day educational sessions this year focused on potatoes, berries and other small fruits, transplants, and onions. The half-day sessions included sweet corn, cabbage, snap beans, soil fertility, leafy greens, pesticide application technologies, biological controls, organic matter management, culinary herbs, pumpkins and greenhouse tomatoes.

Several important vegetable-related organizations also hold meetings during the conference, in addition to the Processing Commodity Advisory Committees at their specific commodity sessions. The NYS Seed Potato Growers met for their statewide meeting prior to the first day of the conference, with a full program and excellent speakers. Donald Shardlow of Cornell University is the program's manager. Special sessions were held on the latest in tomato late blight research and controls, updates on labor regulations for the coming year, and the many opportunities that on-line services and related technology resources offer for the coming year offer for growers. In addition, an all-day meeting was held with nationally-known researchers on the golden nematode problems in potatoes.

"What's New from Industry" speakers who were exhibitors in the trade show or sponsors of the conference gave updates on the new items and services from their companies in many of the sessions.

Both Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) credits for advisors in New York and New England and NYS pesticide recertification credits were given for topics on each of the three days in the sessions.

Conference attendees had many opportunities to visit about 80 exhibitors with the latest in seeds, biological and chemical crop protectants, packaging, irrigation supplies, vegetable equipment and machinery, computer applications, refrigeration and storages, business services, safety equipment and many other resources vital to commercial vegetable pro-

duction — for fresh markets as well as processing growers, and for operations large and small. As in the past, tables loaded with industry publications, catalogs, brochures and related resources for growers to pick up were a part of the trade show.

A press conference was held at noon on Feb. 10 by Dr. Darryl Lund, dean of the NYS College of Agriculture & Life Sciences at Cornell University, and Dr. James Hunter, director of the NYS Agriculture Experiment Station at Geneva, N.Y., to announce the release of six new varieties of fruits and vegetables. It was unusual since new varieties are the result of long-term collaboration among researchers and industry, sometimes taking as long as 10-15 years to breed, test and evaluate, with another 10-20 years before they are commercially accepted. Lund and Hunter credited the potato, vegetable, and berry growers for helping the public and the college to fund the long-term research necessary for the development of these new varieties.

The two new red raspberries — "Prelude" and "Encore" — bred by John Sanford and Kevin Maloney will extend the production season for NYS berry growers, enabling New York consumers to eat locally produced berries from June through September, rather than those shipped in from elsewhere. The "Whitaker" Cocolle-type summer squash and "Onondaga" Ithaca-type head lettuce, bred by Richard W. Robinson and Joseph W. Shail, are remarkable for their disease resistance, which came from hundreds of crosses from wild species known for their resistance characteristics. Robert Plaisted, Cornell's highly-respected potato breeder, introduced his new "Salem" and "Reba" varieties. "Salem" is an early-emerging, mid-season potato with high-yielding ability, bred for table stock, while "Reba" is a mid- to late-season potato bred for both the potato chip market and table use. One of Plaisted's hallmark contributions to the New York potato industry is that all potatoes released by his program are resistant to the golden nematode — a pest that is unique in the U.S. to New York, can significantly impact yield and marketing of the crop. In addition, certified seed for both of these new varieties will be available for the 1998 growing season.

The Annual Meeting of the Empire State Potato Club also was on Feb. 10. Officers re-elected were John Meyer of Cohocton as president, Ralph Child of Malone as vice president, and Larry Bowman of North Collins as secretary/treasurer. Gary Pryputniewicz of Waterville was re-elected to the board as well. Melanie Wickham of Stanley continues as executive secretary of the Empire State Potato Club and show manager of their huge, annual Empire Farm Days held each summer in August.

Nearly 200 attended the informal Social Hour on Wednesday, Feb. 11. Special guests and legislators were introduced by Larry Eckhardt, president of the NYS Vegetable Growers Association, followed by several speeches and awards. Dr. James Hunter, director of the NYS Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva, addressed what's ahead for the station and Cornell University and

the importance of the private-public sector partnership and industry support for research, particularly in light of the continued funding uncertainties from Albany.

Two awards for outstanding work in integrated pest management were made during the Conference's Social Hour. Dr. James Tette, director of the IPM Program at the NYS Experiment Station, presented awards to Tim and Colleen Stanton of Feura Farm at Feura Bush, N.Y., for their rotational practices, use of resistant varieties, conservation tillage and other IPM method, and to Richard Wildman, president of Agricultural Consulting Services of Rochester, a private crop-consulting firm in the state offering production advice to some 70,000 acres of vegetables and field crops. In addition, Curt Petzoldt, assistant director of the IPM Program and vegetable IPM coordinator for NYS, was honored for not only his work with the IPM Program but also for being a co-founder with Timothy Weigle of the Northeast Weather Association (NWA), a non-profit membership organization that provides growers with timely weather data and pest forecasts to aid growers in determining when diseases and pests need to be controlled and to what extent. Starting this year, the NWA will offer this information to producers of orna-

mentals and field crops.


Frank Wiles of the 160-member NYS Berry Growers Association, a long-time berry and vegetable grower as well as a former Cornell cooperative extension agent, was also honored for his leadership and achievements with IPM and berry growers statewide, through scouting, selection of disease-resistant varieties, and cropping practices. A two-year grant from the Pesticide Environmental Stewardship Program has helped to initiate the NYS Berry IPM Labeling Program for New York.

The NYS Vegetable Growers Assoc., held its Annual Meeting and Breakfast on Wednesday, Feb. 11. Business of the association was conducted, along with the election of officers and board of directors for 1998. Re-appointed were Larry Eckhardt of Stephentown as president, Mark Henry of Eden as vice president, and Ed Hansen Sr. of Stanley as treasurer. Four of the five board members re-elected to three-year terms were Larry Eckhardt, Jack Gill of Hurley, Jeff Green of Whitney Point, and Jeff Kubecka of Kirkville. Jackie Gurda of Gurda Gardens, Goshen, N.Y., was elected as a director on the board for a three-year term, replacing outgoing director Gregory Yurchuk Jr. of Florida. Jean Warholc of Freeville continues as executive secre-

tary and newsletter editor for the Association.

Those present at the breakfast were given an update of association activities, updated on the new Fresh Market Vegetable Research Fund's first round of grants and projects in 1997, and other major projects that had been of primary focus in the past year. Laura Pedersen of Cornell Cooperative Extension/Ontario County gave an update on the summer tour being planned for EPA and other key officials. Progress in dealing with the forthcoming Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) was discussed. Gary Fitch of Agricultural Affiliates gave a brief summary of what's ahead for labor in the vegetable industry in 1998.

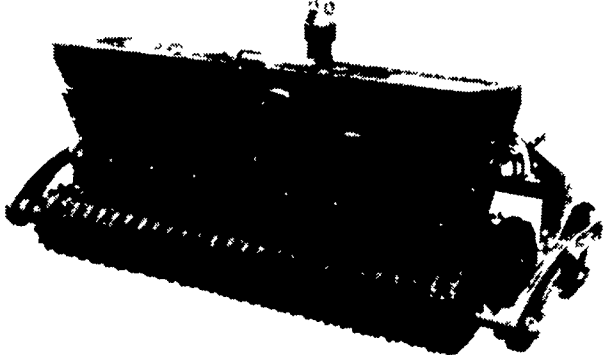
Gary Fitch of Agricultural Affiliates and a panel of growers, along with representatives from the NYS Department of Labor, held sessions on Feb. 11 and 12 on what's ahead for NYS labor in the 1998 season, along with a review of the latest INS activities and the new enforcement mode by NYS DEC for the federal Worker Protection Standards. The unpredictable labor supply for the coming season continues to be among the top concerns for many growers around the state. Labor-related legislation pending in Albany and in Washington, D.C. was also discussed.



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