

Conference Set For Ohio Fruit, Vegetable Growers

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Seagate Centre and Radisson Hotel in Toledo, Ohio will be the site of a conference for fruit and vegetable growers and direct agricultural marketers, Feb. 7-9.

Growers, marketers, Ohio State University faculty and staff, and exhibitors have worked hand in hand to plan an event that features educational sessions and a trade show.

An addition to this year's conference is a track on greenhouse vegetable production featuring Rick Snyder, nationally known hydroponic tomato expert from Mississippi State University.

The Ohio Fruit Growers Society (OFGS), Ohio Vegetable & Potato Growers Association (OVPGA), Ohio Direct Agricultural Marketing Association (DAMA) and Ohio State University are cosponsoring the event. More than 100 exhibitors will be part of the trade show that allows growers and marketers to learn more about the latest products and services for their businesses.

General sessions will include a "Managing Farm Labor" presentation in which farm employers will share recruiting, hiring, and employee supervision practices. "Crop Protection Products — Availability, Politics and Economics" will have a panel featuring Gregory Storey product stewardship manager with the Buyer Corporation.

Elizabeth Pivonka, president of the Produce for Better Health Foundation, a representative of the U.S. Apple Association, and Gary Stoner with the Ohio State

James Cancer Hospital will share how "Fruit + Vegetables = Health" and how growers and marketers can better share that message with customers and the public.

Ron Pelger, produce consultant, columnist for Produce News and former director of produce merchandiser and procurement for A&P/Foodmart, will share consumer and wholesale trend that growers and marketers need to know.

OFGS and OVPGA are conducting an information technology survey of growers that will result in a presentation by Stan Ernst, communication specialist with OSU's Department of Agricultural, environmental, and Developmental Economics. The Ohio Department of Agriculture will explain the new retail food establishment licensing and inspection program that is likely to affect all direct marketers who sell processed foods in addition to fresh fruits and vegetables.

Karen and Chris Watt, owners and managers of 100-acre Watt's Orchard in Albion, N.Y. will be keynote speakers for direct marketers on Feb. 8. Specifically, they will share some of their marketing strategies and how they made the transition from wholesaling to direct marketing and retailing. Their market is located between Rochester and Buffalo, New York. Karen is president of the North American Farmers Direct Marketing Association.

Pam and Dave Bosserd of Marshall, Mich. will be the direct marketing featured speakers on

Feb. 9, speaking on their transition from a conventional grain and livestock farm to an innovative farm market. Their farm operation includes retail sales of a wide variety of vegetables, a petting zoo, school tours, greenhouse, and corn maze.

The processing vegetable and truck crops programs will kick off with a vegetable seed quality workshop. Growers, processors, seed company representatives, and Ohio State researchers will share insights on how to define, measure, and manage seed quality.

The tomato-pepper session on

Thursday features Andy Clock of Terra/Land-O-Lakes and grower-processor Dan Noble speaking on site-specific management. Richard Derksen with the USDA-Agricultural Research Service will cover new pesticide application technology. The cabbage-cucumber session on Friday features Walter Stevenson, Department of Plant Pathology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, covering Phytophthora management in cucumbers. Also, Jim Gorny of the International Fresh-Cut Produce Association and Bill Schene of Primus Labs, Inc. will provide up-to-date information on how growers and processors can meet rising concerns about food safety including the use of third party audits.

The Potato program will be Wednesday evening and Thursday with Walter Stevenson handling the topic, "Disease Management for Potatoes." Robin Taylor in Ohio State's Department of Entomology will speak about the role of spray quality on effectiveness of pesticides and Steven Slack, director and associate dean of the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, will address the importance of using quality seed potatoes.

James Hancock with the Department of Horticulture at Michigan State University will focus on strawberries in the areas of physiology, plasticulture, and producing high yields.

industry issues from a national perspective. Tree fruit growers will have a half-day combined session with direct marketers.

For more information, contact the Ohio Fruit and Vegetable Growers office at (614) 249-2424 or growohio@ofbf.org.



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