

OARDC Researcher Receives Tomato Award

FREMONT, Ohio — David Francis's tomatoes are redder, more nutritious and highly resistant to diseases. Now, they are also award-winners.

A scientist with the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC) in Wooster, Francis is the recipient of the 2002 Tomato Achievement Award, an honor conferred by the Mid-America Food Processors

Association as a way of recognizing outstanding contributions to the development of the tomato industry.

The award ceremony took place in August during the Vegetable Crops Field Day at OARDC's Fremont branch.

OARDC is the research arm of Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences.

"I'm surprised and truly honored," Francis said. "Considering the great work done by past recipients of this award, I hope it has been given to me for potential and not for accomplishments."

Jim Hudson, executive director of the Mid-America Food Processors Association, highlighted Francis's efforts toward the development of new tomato varieties that will greatly benefit the

processing industry in the Mid-West and Mid-Atlantic states.

Francis, who is also a professor of Horticulture and Crop Science, has been searching for tomato breeds that offer more resistance to diseases and yield a high-quality product in a humid environment, such as that of the Great Lakes region.

OARDC's breeding program has already made important contributions to the tomato industry. Two breeding lines (Ohio 9816 and Ohio 9834) tolerant to race T1 of the harmful bacterial spot have recently been released. Likewise, Francis has noticed improvements in yield and fruit size, firmness and field storage, and color uniformity.

Since color is a defining attribute of quality for fresh and processed tomatoes, one of Francis's goals is to obtain genotypes that consistently produce fruit with a red, dark and saturated color.

According to Francis, color disorders (such as yellow shoulder) are the top nemesis of tomatoes intended for whole-peel and diced products, affecting as much as 65 percent of the crop.

Deep-red tomatoes are not only appealing and profitable; but also more nutritious. The pigments that make tomato red are pro-vitamin A and lycopene, a compound that has been found to fight cancer.

Francis has a doctorate from the University of California at Davis (1991), where he also worked as a postdoctoral research associate before joining OARDC in 1995.

"My biggest satisfaction," Francis told farmers who attended the field day, "is working with an industry that consists of family-owned businesses, many of which have been around for three generations."

New Effort To Boost Hydroponic Production, Marketing

BOWLING GREEN, Ohio — Ohio and Michigan hydroponic vegetable growers are joining forces to boost production and marketing, build stronger working relationships and increase consumer awareness through a new hydroponic marketing association and cooperative.

The Great Lakes Hydroponic Association and Marketing Cooperative, expected to be in place by spring, were born out of the Ohio State University Extension Hydroponic Vegetable Program. The program is designed to increase profitability of hydroponic greenhouse vegetable businesses by providing horticultural, marketing, business planning and greenhouse design support.

Mary Donnell, an Ohio State Extension agent for the Agricultural Business Enhancement (ABE) Center in Bowling Green, Ohio, will present details of the Great Lakes Hydro-

ponic Association and the Marketing Cooperative to growers at the Ohio Fruit and Vegetable Growers Congress on Jan. 16 from 9:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. at the Toledo SeaGate Centre in Toledo, Ohio.

The annual conference and tradeshow will be conducted Jan. 15-17.

Donnell will introduce attendees to the new organization, which focuses on an association of hydroponic supporters seeking to inform and educate, as well as a cooperative of hydroponic vegetable growers looking to increase profits and be more competitive through market expansion.

"The association will conduct monthly meetings which will continue to strengthen the relationships among hydroponic growers in the Great Lakes region. Growers help one another by exchanging information on marketing and greenhouse production," said Donnell.

"The association will also bring in speakers to increase growers' knowledge of horticulture, greenhouse design and business planning."

"Through the cooperative, growers would work together to have enough product to be able to market to grocery store chains, consistently deliver the highest quality vegetables, as well as command a premium price through superior quality, long shelf life and skilled salesmanship," said Donnell.

For more information on the Great Lakes Hydroponic Association and Marketing Cooperative, contact Mary Donnell at (419) 354-6916 or donnell.8@osu.edu.

For more information on the Ohio Fruit and Vegetable Growers Congress, log on to www.ohiovegetables.org or <http://www.ohiofruit.org>, or contact Jennifer Hungerford at (614) 246-8292 or e-mail growho@ofbf.org.

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