

Tomato Luncheon Honors Producers Who Reach Harvest Milestone

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Editor

HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.)
— Even the processed tomato growing industry lays its claim to “firsts.”

For Furman Foods, Jim Kohl remembers a timeline of firsts, beginning in 1944, when 10 tons per acre of tomatoes were handpicked.

In the 1960s, the 20 tons-per-acre plateau was reached. In 1986, that level had risen to 30 tons. In 1989, growers fought their way to 40 tons.

In 1989, Kohl, Furman Foods vice president, made a major announcement: he would offer a crisp, brand-new \$100 bill to the first producer to break the 50-tons-per-acre harvest barrier.

Finally, about 14 years later, one producer — Eric Charles — came through.

“He didn’t go over it — he jumped over it,” said Kohl.

Kohl spoke to two dozen producers and industry representatives at the annual Tomato Awards Luncheon in early February at the 2003 Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center.

Charles, Lancaster, claims good, dry weather, lots of sunshine, and good irrigation contributed to the 54.9 tons-per-

acre average yield. He won under Class V, 15-30 acres size, and harvested 873.6 tons of usable fruit with an average A grade of 68.2 percent and ranking value of 37.3.

Eric noted that he watched the plants closely and provided a good nutrient balance on soil tests. Eric used Heinz 9035, what he calls a good mid-season tomato variety. Charles grows his own transplants.

“We really take our hats off and acknowledge the tremendous crop that Eric had,” said Kohl.

Also at the recognition luncheon, Bill Troxell, executive director of the Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association, was honored with a special industry award.

Kohl said that Troxell is a “tremendous asset to the industry, not only in Pennsylvania, but in other states.”

Following are descriptions of the individual tomato growers honored at the luncheon.

Class I (More Than 100 Acres)

Furman Farms

Furman Farms, Northumberland, won the award for the highest tomato yield in Class I for growers with 100 or more acres. Furman Farms harvested 9,969.8 tons of us-



Jim Kohl, vice president of Furman Foods, in back at left, honored tomato growers for outstanding production. Standing with him are Cliff and Eric Charles. Front, from left, are Jim Wentzel, Mike Jordan, Barry Page, Jacob Heisey, Dan Ziegler, and Ike Martin. Photos by Andy Andrews, editor

able fruit for Furman Foods on 300.3 acres for a 33.2 tons-per-acre average yield. Their average A grade was 62.1 percent and ranking value was 19.9.

Varieties grown included Heinz 9423, Heinz 9704, Heinz 9035, Heinz 9706 and Gem 611. Furman Farms used transplants from Georgia as plugs, from New Jersey as plugs, and some local transplant plugs at a population of

11,800 plants per acre.

Single rows are planted on a 9-inch plant spacing in the row and 56 inches between rows. They were planted from May 7 through June 7, 2002.

Tomatoes are rotated in a 3-year program with corn in year one followed by two years of sod. Lime and fertilizer were applied according to soil test recommendations. Calcitic lime was applied at the rate of 2,000 pounds per acre prior to field preparation. Muriate of potash was plowed down at the rate of 300 to 500 pounds per acre depending on individual field requirements. N-P-K was supplied with the application of 60 gallons per acre of 28 percent N. There was no manure applications to any of the fields.

Weeds were controlled with a preplant lightly incorporated treatment of Dual Magnum at 0.8 pints per acre. A post tankmix application of Sencor at 3 ounces per acre, Matrix at 2 ounces per acre, and Kinetic at 2 pints per 100 gallons of water was applied for weed control. The most difficult weeds to control in 2002 were eastern black nightshade, morningglory, and lamb-quarters.

Dithane at 2 pounds per acre and Bravo at 2-3 pints per acre were used in rotation with Quadris at 6 ounces per acre on a 7 to 10 day schedule to control diseases. There were also several applications of Nucop liquid at 2 pints per acre during the growing season.

Insects were controlled with the following insecticides applied during the growing season; Warrior at 3.75 ounces per acre and Dimethoate at 1 pint per acre. The most difficult disease to control in 2002 was bacterial spot and the most difficult insect to control in 2002 was worms.

Ethrel was applied at 0.5 to 1.5 pints per acre according to temperature recommendations 12 to 18 days before harvest.

Class II (60-100 Acres)

Cliff Charles

Cliff Charles, Lancaster, has won the award for the highest tomato yield in Class 2 competition for growers with 60 to 100 acres. He harvested 3,682.9 tons of usable fruit for Furman Foods on 86.3 acres

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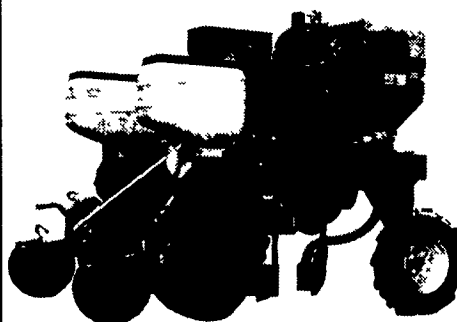
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