KVGA Newsletter

June 2020

Vol. 1. No. 2



Greetings from the middle of a strawberry field! Not really, but it seems like that is where I need to be at the moment. I hope that everyone has been able to remain safe from Covid-19 and been able to carry on with their farming as normally as possible. Though this situation has turned the world upside down, the farming community has carried on without blinking an eye. The situation has shown the majority of Americans that farmers are essential workers. Most of us were already experts on "social distancing" because you don't have too much of a crowd around while you're staking tomatoes or picking beans.

During this lockdown I have had conversations with farmers in Florida, North Carolina, and Virginia and all have been impacted in one way or another. Florida went through 3 weeks of either dumping produce or not even harvesting. Farmers there actually switched from wholesale to making up mixed boxes of vegetables to sell retail to the general public. Also, talking to people from all over the south, there has been an explosion of the "buy local" movement. I can say that with our own operation the demand for strawberries has blown us away and just about everyone buying berries has asked if we will have other produce this summer. Greenhouses are selling out of plants of all types, people are lining up to buy produce, and CSA membership is growing. A few farms have started online stores and are having tremendous success with sales.

The weather has not been cooperative as we would like but crops across the state are starting to grow. Here in western Pulaski County, we had a low of 24° on April 15 and 26° on May 9. Some parts of the state have experienced large amounts of rain in a few hours but we are all adapting and moving forward.

Horticulture producers are innovative and flexible and that is what we all need to be as we try to venture through this phase in our history. Now is our time to shine and show that we can persevere and produce the

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food needed to sustain the products needed to fulfill the consumers' demand. Be safe and keep on doing what you do best, showing that we can feed the country.

Joel Wilson

President, Kentucky Vegetable Growers Association

Do you have a question about production, marketing or another veggierelated topic? Send in your question and you may see



it answered in a future newsletter!

Info@KyVGA.org

KVGA Officers

President

Joel Wilson

Wilson's Cedar Point Farm (Nancy)

606-305-8762

cedarpointfarm@aol.com

Vice President

Kirby Overman

Overman's Bluegrass Fruits and Vegetables (Lancaster)

571-264-5256

kirbyoverman@gmail.com

Secretary

Nathan Truesdell

Circle T Farms (Salvisa)

606-584-1401

nhtrue01@gmail.com

<u>Treasurer</u>

Ron McMaine

McMaine's Riverhaven Farm, (Salvisa)

859-533-3768

rmcmaine@gmail.com

KVGA Board Members

Zeldon Angel, Angel Farms (Winchester)

Jonathan Berkshire, Berkshire Farms (Glencoe)

Sandi Deutsch, Deutsch Farm (Taylorsville)

Nathan Howell, Need More Acres (Scottsville)

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Susan Miller, Miller's Farm (Stanford)

David Neville, Capstone Produce Auction (Campbellsburg)

Brad Reid, Reid's Orchard (Owensboro)

Shubin Saha, Kentucky Fresh Harvest (Stanford)

Jacob Sharpe, Homegrown Direct (Georgetown)

Ben Wilson, Dragonfly Hollow Farm (Richmond)

KVGA Advisors

Ryan Burnette, Kentucky Department of Ag (Frankfort)

Dr. Cindy Finneseth, Kentucky Horticulture Council (Lexington)

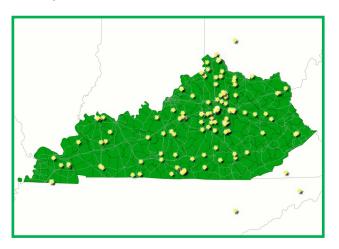
Dr. Rachel Rudolph, UK Department of Horticulture (Lexington)

Dr. John Strang, UK Department of Horticulture (Lexington)

Dr. Shawn Wright, UK Department of Horticulture (Jackson)

KVGA Member Map

Do you wonder where other KVGA members are located? KVGA currently has 155 members, up from 134 in 2019. Growers are located all across Kentucky and even in a few other states!



KY Horticulture Research Initiative (KHRI)

In 2017, the KVGA Board of Directors created the *Kentucky Horticulture Research Initiative (KHRI)*, a fund to finance specific, industry-identified research. We believe the fairest way to generate funds is for everyone in the industry to contribute a small amount, rather than only KVGA members supporting research that benefits the entire industry. Other states have grower organizations that have been funding research for decades.

KVGA has asked every Kentucky farmers market to collect \$10 from each vendor and each produce auction to collect \$10 from every seller and buyer to fund industry-identified research needs. If every buyer, seller, and vendor participates, our estimate is that between \$40,000 and \$50,000 could be raised each year to fund research projects.

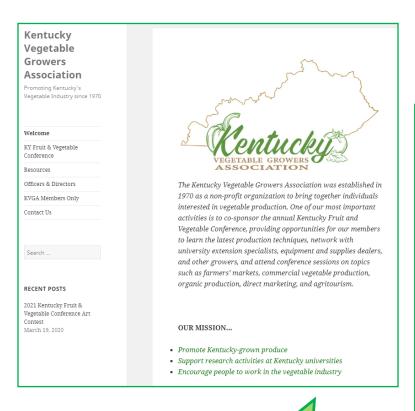
We need your help to increase participation! Please consider a tax-deductible donation and encourage your markets to contribute. Donations can be made online: https://kyhortcouncil.org/product/kentucky-horticulture-research-initiative-khri-voluntary-donation/ or by mailing a check to KHRI c/o Ron McMaine, 450 Hawkins Lane, Salvisa, KY 40372.

KVGA Website Refresh

The KVGA website—www.kyvga.org—has a fresh, new look you may have noticed when reading the last newsletter.

A lot of great content from the old site was migrated over and some exciting new features have been added including the "Members Only" section. A frequently requested enhancement we have been able to bring to KVGA members with this new site is online posting of presentations from the 2020 KY Fruit & Vegetable Conference. Now, you can easily refresh your memory on sessions you attended or review presentations you missed!

KVGA also owns the kyvga.com domain that immediately redirects visitors to the .org site. Be sure you use KY in the address when searching or typing it in or else you will get the Kansas Vegetable Growers Association!



2020 Fruit & Vegetable Conference Presentations

Pre-Conference Events

- · Farmers Market Short Course
 - · KDA updates- Nancy Monroe, KY Dept of Ag
 - Starting a Farm RX Voucher Program Robert Doyle, Menifee County Farmers' Market
 - Double Dollars Program Brittany Steffey, Community
 Farm Alliance
 - Farmers Market Support Program (FMSP) James Cochran, Community Farm Alliance
 - Recruiting Volunteers and Establishing a "Friends of the Farmers Market" – Heather Housman, Franklin Co Farmers Market; Birch Bragg, Franklin Co Farmers Market
 - Visual Merchandising Brett Wolff, UK CCD
- Farm Food Safety Plan Writing Workshop
 - Produce Safety Rule (PSR) Resources Paul Vijayakumar,
 UK FSIC
- Fruit Roundtable Discussion

Opening Session

- Kentucky Department of Agriculture Update Melanie McPartlin, KDA
- <u>Kentucky Small Fruits Initiative</u> Cindy Finneseth, Kentucky Horticulture Council
- A Modern Farm Family Michelle Howell, Need More Acres
- Growing for Institutions: Challenges and Opportunities –
 Ashton Potter Wright, Bluegrass Farm to Table
- Kentucky Farm Bureau Certified Farm Market Program Joe Cain and Fran McCall, Kentucky Farm Bureau

50 presentations from 2020 F&V now online!

Pesticide Safety: Spill Kits

Do you have a pesticide spill kit readily available in case of an accidental spill on the farm? Do you know what to do if a spill occurs?

- ♦ Clean up spills immediately
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) when handling pesticides
- ♦ Be sure you know what the label says about handling a product spill

Take a few minutes to review what you have on hand and then stock up on essentials. It's a good idea to have a spill kit in the shop where you store products and any vehicles you use to transport materials. Below are Pesticide Environmental Stewardship recommendations for a shop kit and a vehicle kit. Always read and follow the product label!

Shop Kit

1 55-gallon open-head drum

4 pairs nitrile gloves

2 pair goggles

2 respirators and pesticide cartridges

2 aprons (chemical resistant)

2 pairs rubber boots

2 pairs of cotton coveralls

1 dustpan

1 shop brush

1 square-point 'D' handle shovel

1 dozen polyethylene bags w/ties

1 push broom with synthetic fibers

1 gallon liquid detergent

3 gallons household bleach

80 lbs absorbent material

1 bung wrench

1 drum spigot

1 l-3/8' open-end wrench

1 drum pump (manual)

30 ft ½" polyethylene tubing or 1 25

-ft garden hose

blank labels

Vehicle Kit

15-gallon pail

2 pairs of nitrile gloves

1 pair goggles

1 respirator and cartridges

1 pair coveralls

1 dustpan

1 shop brush

10-30 lbs absorbent

material

1 pint liquid detergent

6 polyethylene bags w/ties

1 portable eyewash

blank labels

1 first aid kit

1 pair rubber boots

1 apron

Don't forget to replenish supplies after a clean-up!

Tips from Ric Bessin, UK Extension Entomologist, for Safe Storage of Pesticides on the Farm

- Store pesticides in original containers
- Store pesticides in a locked cabinet, room, or building
- Use pesticide-warning signs to alert others
- Keep the area well-lit and dry
- Keep area uncluttered
- Use a storage area with an impervious floor
- Keep storage area wellventilated
- Have materials on hand to clean up spills and leaks
- Have single-use towels, soap, eye-wash supplies and a change of clothes available
- Keep an inventory of pesticides in storage
- Place smaller containers in plastic totes
- Review storage requirements of each of the pesticides in storage

Read his full article here: https://www.uky.edu/ hort/sites/ www.uky.edu.hort/files/ documents/ FFJanFeb20.pdf

Food Safety Q&A

What does FSMA "covered produce" mean?

Covered produce are the crops that determine if FSMA applies to your farm. FDA has identified a list of crops classified as "rarely consumed raw". Because these crops are generally not eaten raw, and have a "kill step" (cooked before eating) they are exempt or not covered by the rule. Crops grown in Kentucky from the list include:



dried beans (lima, wax, etc...) beets (roots and tops) sour cherries asparagus collards dill (seeds and weed) horseradish sweet corn eggplants hazelnuts okra pumpkins peppermint potatoes peanuts pecans winter squash sweet potatoes

See the full list of crops here: https://www.fda.gov/food/food-safety-modernization-act-fsma/fsma-final-rule-produce-safety. ALL other produce crops are subject to FSMA!

How can I get the FSMA training right now?

The Food Systems Innovation Center (FSIC) at UK's College of Ag is going to offer online Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Grower Training. Two future trainings have been scheduled —



Thursday, July 16 or Thursday, July 30 — from 8 am to 5 pm (eastern).

You have to register early to get all the materials before the training. Registration deadlines for the training sessions are by 5 pm on Tuesday, June 16 for the July 16 training and Tuesday, June 30 for the July 30 training. After you register, you will get a Zoom link and directions to connect for the training.

Trainers will spend about 7 hours covering the content contained in the seven key modules:

- ♦ Introduction to Produce Safety
- ♦ Worker Health, Hygiene, and Training
- ♦ Soil Amendments
- ♦ Wildlife, Domestic Animals, and Land Use
- ♦ Agricultural Water
- Opening A Postharvest Handling and Sanitation
- ♦ How to Develop a Farm Food Safety Plan

The training is FREE for Kentucky growers and cost for out of state participants is \$100. Details and registration information for both trainings is available online https://www.uky.edu/hort/sites/www.uky.edu/hort/sites/www.uky.edu/hort/files/documents/PSA Grower Training Online June July 2020.pdf. Questions can also be sent to Badrinath Jagannathan (badrivj@uky.edu) or Paul Priyesh Vijayakumar (paul.v@uky.edu) or call 859-218-4387.

Vegetable IPM

Do you have an IPM strategy? IPM or Integrated Pest Management is the practice where you evaluate your crops to determine if pest controls are necessary.

For those of you new to IPM, the first step is to set <u>Action Thresholds.</u> Determine the point when you are going to take a pest control action. Your decision will be based on the pest and its potential impact on yield and quality and the cost of the control measure. For example, if you scout a sweet corn field and find one active European corn borer on a few plants in the early whorl stage, you may forego a treatment and accept the risk of a 5% yield loss. If you scout the field when plants are in the pre-tassel stage and find two active borers on average per plant — knowing this level of infestation could cause a 10% yield loss — you may choose to immediately apply an insecticide treatment.

The second step is to <u>Monitor and Identify Pests</u> since not all insects, weeds, and other pests require control measures. Here is where identification is important to ensure what you are seeing is the destructive target pest and that the control product you use is effective against the pest you intend to control. For example, Consider our sweet corn example, inspect 20 consecutive plants in 5 areas of your field. Do you see feeding damage or frass, a sign of infestation? Is it consistent with European corn borer damage or does it look like it may be cause by something else? Does the level of damage meet the action threshold?

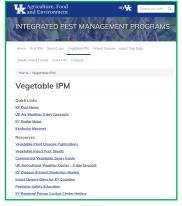
Choose your <u>Control</u> method. Start with the least risky pest control option first—trapping or using a highly selective product may reduce populations to an acceptable level. Keep non-selective broadcast sprays as a last option for treatment. You will also need to be familiar with the pest's life cycle to ensure the control method is effective against the pest at that specific life stage. In our European corn borer example, a treatment intended to control adult moths may not be very effective against actively feeding caterpillars. The treatment could be a waste of money and not actually control the pest.

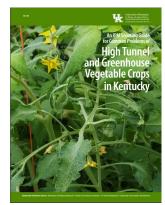
Prevention is a great pest management strategy—use all practical cultural methods like resistant varieties, crop rotation, and sanitation.

IPM strategies are valuable to minimize environmental risks, lower control costs, and reduce health hazards . Remember in IPM pests are managed not eliminated—so you will still see some in and on your crops.

Not sure where to start? Lots of universities publish IPM guides—go online or contact your local Extension office to get copies of Kentucky versions. Also, put the Veggie IPM hotline on speed dial for weekly updates on what to be thinking about and looking for.







Marketing Matters: Online Sales Platforms

Have you made the switch to online marketing or thinking about it? Not sure where to start?

Our friends over at the UK Center for Crop Diversification have hosted a series of online sessions related to online marketing. Visit their webpage (https://www.uky.edu/ccd/) to watch any of the following webinars:

Nice, Easy Graphics and Advertisements

COVID-19 + Farmers Markets: Best Practices for Managers, Vendors, & Patrons

Components of a Facebook Business Page

Promoting Your Product for Online Sales
Building a Simple Online Store
Low-tech Preordering Options

<u>Pick-up, Delivery, and Shipping for Direct Marketers: Key Considerations</u>
<u>Adding Your Business to Google Maps</u>

Oregon Tilth recently presented a webinar on different platforms (Barn2Door, Harvie, Local Food Marketplace, Food4All and Open Food Network) for direct-to-consumer sales: https://tilth.org/education/resources/online-sales-platforms-for-farmers/.

The National Young Farmers Coalition has created a list of links, features and pricing for many online sales platforms: https://www.youngfarmers.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Farm-direct-sales-software-1.pdf

No platform mentioned or reviewed in these resources is endorsed by KVGA. This information is provided to help you identify options to review and select the best tool for your operation, depending on your needs and those of your customers.

Here are some questions to start with as you think about which online marketing platform may be right for you:

- How long has the platform been in use?
- How many farmers is currently use it?
- What is the cost
- How easy is it to get started?
- How does it integrate with your current systems (website/social media/ accounting)?
- How do you enter/ manage products, pricing, inventory?
- How does a customer shop/ pay?
- How do payments work?
- Is there IT support?

Slugs & Snails! Oh, my!

Wet weather is favorable for slugs and snails, especially prolonged wet weather. Watch for these critters in crop residue and weedy fields.

Signs of slug and snail damage include the slime trail, loss of small seedlings, and large feeding holes in leaves. You may find slugs and snails at dusk or dawn or by using slug traps.

The first line of defense is sanitation—clean up plant debris or other materials near fields that can be hiding places. Some products are labeled for control. Read labels carefully because of toxicity to non-target humans, pets and wildlife. Other controls include traps and physical barriers.



Gray Field Slug (Photo Credit: UK Entomology)

Optimum Storage Temperatures for Produce

Have you heard the term "maintaining the cold chain"? This refers to controlling the temperature and relative humidity of produce in storage after harvest. Proper post-harvest storage conditions can extend the quality and longevity of your produce. A single storage environment may not be adequate as the best conditions are crop-specific. Three things to consider:

<u>Temperature.</u> For many crops, between 32 and 36°F is the optimal storage temperature. Some crops, like tomato and basil, are chilling sensitive and should be stored at warmer temperatures. The tables below divide several commonly grown crops into groups with similar recommended storage conditions. At optimal storage temperatures, the expected storage life can be several weeks. If only a single storage environment can be maintained, 38-40° is a common recommendation for storing produce for less than one week.

<u>Relative Humidity.</u> Water loss decreases produce quality. Group 1 produce needs a higher relative humidity (90-98%) than Groups 2 and 3 (85-95%). Reducing temperature can increase relative humidity in storage. Coated boxes also help maintain relative humidity in storage.

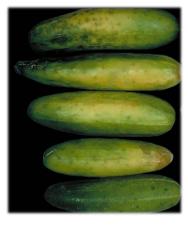
<u>Ethylene</u>. Exposure to ethylene can increase deterioration by accelerating ripening to cause softening and color changes. Levels can be lowered by segregating ethylene-sensitive produce from ethylene-producing crops (tomatoes). Ventilating can help reduce ethylene in storage.

Group 1 32—36°F		Group 2 45—50°F	Group 3 55-65°F
Beet	Carrot	Cucumber	Winter squashes
Sweet Corn	Blueberry	Eggplant	Pumpkins
Blackberry	Peach	Bell Pepper	Tomato
Raspberry	Herbs	Summer Squash	Onions
		Watermelon	Melons

Ethylene Sensitive Crops

Asparagus, Broccoli, Cabbage, Carrot, Cucumbers, Leafy Greens and Herbs, Rhubarb, Zucchini

Ethylene damage on cucumbers (Photo credit: UC Davis)



Chilling injury on eggplant (Photo Credit: UC Davis)

Chilling Injury: Freeze or chilling damage on produce may appear as dull color, water-soaked areas, pitting, rubbery texture, and other signs. Symptoms may only appear after the produce is returned to warmer temperatures.

USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP)

From the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service

Specialty crops producers can now apply for USDA's Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), which provides direct payments to offset impacts from the coronavirus pandemic. The application and a payment calculator are now available online and USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) staff members are available via phone, fax and online tools to help producers complete applications. Applications will be accepted through August 28th, 2020.

Through CFAP, USDA is making available \$16 billion for financial assistance to producers of agricultural commodities who have suffered a 5% (or greater) price decline due to COVID-19 and face additional significant marketing costs as a result of lower demand, surplus production, and disruptions to shipping patterns and the orderly marketing of commodities.

The program is structured to ensure the availability of funding for all eligible producers who apply. In order to do this, producers will receive 80% of their maximum total payment upon approval of the application. The remaining portion of the payment, not to exceed the payment limit, will be paid at a later date nationwide, as funds remain available.

Producers can download the CFAP application and other eligibility forms from <u>farmers.gov/cfap</u>. Also, on that webpage, producers can find a payment calculator to help identify sales and inventory records needed to apply and calculate potential payments. Producers can also call 877-508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee.

Looking for more Coronavirus resources like guidance for farmers markets, youpick operations, etc.? Check out the KY Horticulture Council's COVID-19 webpage: https://kyhortcouncil.org/covid-19-coronavirus-information-and-resources/

We've been told growers should call their local FSA office to leave contact information and a specialist will get back quickly to go through the program.

Do you need to find your FSA office? It may not be in your home county. An interactive map is available online: https://offices.sc.egov.usda.gov/locator/app?state=us&agency=fsa or call the state office at 859-224-

7601.

Producers of specialty crops are eligible for CFAP payments in the following three categories:

- 1. Had crops that suffered a five percent-or-greater price decline between mid-January and mid-April as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic,
- 2. Had produce shipped but subsequently spoiled due to loss of marketing channel, and
- 3. Had shipments that did not leave the farm or mature crops that remained unharvested.

Visit farmers.gov/cfap/specialty for more information on CFAP eligibility and payment details related to specialty crops.

• Specialty Crops

- Fruits: apples, avocados, blueberries, cantaloupe, grapefruit, kiwifruit, lemons, oranges, papaya, peaches, pears, raspberries, strawberries, tangerines, tomatoes, watermelons
- Vegetables: artichokes, asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, iceberg
 lettuce, romaine lettuce, dry onions, green onions, peppers, potatoes, rhubarb, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, taro
- o Nuts: almonds, pecans, walnuts
- o Other: beans, mushrooms

Upcoming Industry Events

6/16 - Registration deadline for 7/16 FSMA training

6/30 - Registration deadline for 7/30 FSMA training

7/16 – FSMA Produce Safety Alliance Training (online)

7/30 - FSMA Produce Safety Alliance Training (online)

8/28 - USDA CFAP Application Deadline

Save-the-Date

2021 Kentucky Fruit & Vegetable Conference

Jan. 3 — Pre-Conference Short Courses

Jan. 4-5 — Conference Sessions

Jan. 6 — Post Conference Direct Marketing Summit



2021 Kentucky Fruit & Vegetable Conference

Art Contest

Submit your artwork to be featured on the front cover of the 2021 Kentucky Fruit & Vegetable Conference Program.



July 1, 2020

Deadline to submit artwork to info@kyhortcouncil.org or P.O. Box 21736, Lexington, KY 40522-1736.

August 1, 2020

Winner will be notified

In addition to having their artwork featured on the conference program, the winner will receive a \$100 cash prize!