

KVGA Newsletter

September 2020

Vol. 1. No. 3



Greetings,

I hope that this finds everyone staying well and sane. I know that this year has been very trying for everyone but if you are reading this then you are still surviving the trials that we all are experiencing. I'm grateful that the numbers of cases and deaths from Covid-19 are not as high as we were expecting but even one case or death is tragic to that person's family and friends. Please stay safe and practice the guidelines that you are comfortable with. Hopefully, in a few months we can get pass this mess.

Due to the circumstances that we are facing we have had to make the decision not to have the annual Fruit and Vegetable conference in person this year. It is very disappointing in many ways. For me personally, I am disappointed that we are not going to bring the conference closer to our members in western Kentucky. If the virus slows down and restrictions are lifted, we are planning on being in Bowling Green in January 2022.

Marketing has been all over the place this year with record high prices for some products at various times and at other times not being able to find markets for everything. The folks that I have talked to around the state doing mostly direct to consumer marketing are having outstanding sales years while some of us that do wholesale are experiencing the normal peaks and valleys that happen during the

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summer. The closures or diminished seating in restaurants has had an enormous effect on sales this year. People are eating at home more and they are also canning and freezing things that they normally would not. I you don't believe me try and find canning lids and rings.

I'm hoping that we all adjust and overcome the obstacles that we are facing to be more prepared in the future. My advice is to get your seed and supplies secured as early as possible. If our current situation continues, more and more people will be trying to grow more of their own food next year

Stay safe and be good stewards of what God has given us to take care of.

Joel Wilson

President, Kentucky Vegetable Growers Association

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

j.kirbyoverman@gmail.com

Secretary

Nathan Truesdell

Circle T Farms (Maysville)

606-584-1401

nhtrue01@gmail.com

Treasurer

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)

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Nathan Howell, Need More Acres (Scottsville)

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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)

Spring and Summer Produce Prices

In a recent [UK CCD Newsletter](#), Brett Wolff provided insight on the influence of COVID-19 on pricing at local farmers markets and produce auctions.

Vendors at farmers markets were able to sell produce at higher prices and we heard many reports of vendors selling out before or soon after setting up on market days. For some crops, there were reports of extremely high prices at produce auctions as well. Many growers who relied on restaurant and institutional sales showed high resiliency by quickly pivoting to online and direct to consumer sales.

According to [Vegetable Grower News](#), as of July, fresh produce sales are up 11% over last year, with vegetables specifically up 16%.

For the first half of 2020, the top 10 selling vegetables have been:

1. Lettuce
2. Tomatoes
3. Potatoes
4. Peppers
5. Onions
6. Cucumbers
7. Mushrooms
8. Corn
9. Carrots
10. Broccoli

As you wrap up this season and begin planning for next year, you may be thinking about adding new crops to your production plan. CCD has several [crop-specific resources](#) that will assist you as you work through operational costs and inputs.

Possible Fee Increase for Commercial Food Manufacturers

An email notification was sent by the Kentucky Department for Public Health, Food Safety Branch (FSB) on June 4, 2020 to businesses with current commercial manufacturing permits outlining [proposed new regulations](#) that, if passed, will change inspection fees for these facilities.

A commercial food manufacturer formulates and processes food for wholesale distribution and includes grain storage facilities and food storage warehouses. According to the KY FSB, this includes businesses that “do not have a retail store front that manufacture value-added packaged food products, or a firm that produces “high-risk” packaged items for retail sales (like pickled products)” and operations that “primarily wholesale their product (sales to another wholesale or retail outlet) or engage in internet sales.”

A virtual public hearing was held on August 24, 2020. About 50 people were on the call during which KY FSB listened to comments from elected officials, agencies, and producers. Written comments were also accepted through the end of the month.

The Kentucky Horticulture Council (KHC) conducted a survey to better understand the potential impact this regulatory change could have on specialty crop growers. Key points from the survey include:

- 32 individuals completed the survey, including food manufacturers, warehouses, cosmetic manufacturers, and prospective producers of value-added products who manufacture products from locally-grown produce and ornamentals.
- More than half (52%) of the respondents stated the fee increase as proposed will cause them to go out of business and 10% will no longer manufacture foods.
- Most respondents have extremely small facilities; 30 (94%) of the facilities are less than 1,000 sq ft.
- Products being manufactured include: produce; jams, jellies; sorghum, maple syrup; baked goods; candy; cosmetics; sauces; pickles; and other value-added products.
- Many (41%) of the respondents have an annual revenue of <\$5,000 and all respondents who stated revenue were below \$50,000.
- In addition to the commercial food manufacturers permit, respondents also have related expenses of commercial kitchen licenses, health department inspection fees, microprocessor fees, food vendor permits, HACCP fees, third-party GAPs audit costs, market fees, and local business licenses. In addition to other operating costs.

Suggested fee structures have been based on square footage (current method), revenue, or a formula including footage x revenue. A farmers exemption has also been proposed.

Questions about the final regulation can be directed to the KY FSB at 502-564-6746.

Note: If 75% or more of your product sales are retail (direct-to-consumer), your business is most likely not considered a food manufacturer and would only be permitted and inspected through the local health department. *There are some exceptions.*

A listing of products by risk level:

HIGH — Low Acid Canned Foods (FACF); Juice Products with HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point); Seafood Products with HACCP; Acidified Foods; Sandwiches; Salad Processors; Produce – processed raw, refrigerated or frozen; seed sprouts; Peanut Butter; Rabbit or Other Non-amenable species; Repackaged TCS (Time Controlled for Safety); Other Ready-to-Eat (RTE); Wholesale Salvage Food Processors.

MEDIUM — Candy; Snack Food Processor or Re-packer; Bottled Water; Carbonated Beverages; Repackaged Food from Food Banks; Cereals; Most Jams and Jellies; Sugar and Sorghum; Non-exempt Honey; Ice; Baked goods; Repackaged or Blended Edible Oils; Repackaged non-TCS (Time Controlled for Safety); Dry Blending Processors; Other food non previously listed that are either/or, but not both, time/temperature controlled and RTE; Maple Syrup; Beer Cheese.

LOW — Grain Elevators; Milling Plants; Dry Bean Cleaning and Packaging; Coffee or Tea Dry Packaging; Food Warehouses (ambient, refrigerated or frozen); Food Banks that do not process; Exempt Honey; Cosmetics; Other processors of foods not time/temperature controlled, not listed above

List provided by: Anita Travis, Department for Public Health, Food Safety Branch.

Food Safety Q&A: How do I write an SOP?

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are a written list of directions that describe how to do a task. It includes personnel, tools, and individual steps that anyone could follow to perform the task.



How to Write a Good SOP

The SOP should include:

- Name of author and a title (if they have one).
- Date written or revised.
- Purpose of the SOP (can be as simple as a title).
- Why: sometimes including details on a task is necessary and can help create a culture of food safety.
- Who is responsible.
- Tools needed for the job and where they are located.
- Exact measurements, for example of a sanitizer or detergent.
- Recordkeeping requirements (post recording template near the SOP and mention the names of those records on the SOP).

Need suggestions for formatting and display?

- Write each step as clearly as possible. Try for fewer than 10 steps.
- Use bullets or numbers.
- Pictures can be useful. For farms with low-literacy workers or speakers of other languages, a full pictorial SOP might be best.
- Translate into the languages that your workers use.
- Print in a readable font and laminate if the environment is wet.
- Display the SOP where the worker will need to do the job. You may also choose to keep a master binder with all of your SOPs. Clear plastic sleeves let you keep all of your SOPs together and protect them so you can bring them into the field or washing space.

Finally, test the SOP:

- Have someone who has never done the job before and someone who has go through the SOP. Revise as necessary to clarify and accurately reflect the task.
- Change the SOP whenever you need. For example, as you upgrade tools or equipment, buy new types of product, or make other changes to the task.

Based on the National Young Farmers Coalition's A Small Farmer's Practical Guide to Food Safety: https://www.youngfarmers.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Food_Safety_Guide_Web-1.pdf

You can find sample SOPs at: <https://www.youngfarmers.org/foodsafety/>

Sample SOP: Hand Washing

Revision: 2.0
Date: 07/16/14

1—Purpose

Describes the correct method for hand washing while working or visiting the farm.

2—Scope

Applies to all farm personnel including farm owners, and workers, and farm visitors.

3—Responsibility

Everyone on the farm should understand and practice proper hand washing, regardless of their job or activities on the farm.

4—Materials

- Sink
- Water
- Soap
- Single-use paper towels
- Trash can (preferably with a lid)

5—Procedure

Procedure to be completed before the beginning of work, after each break, after eating or smoking, after using the toilet, at the end of the day, and at any other time hands become dirty.

1. Wet hands with water.
2. Apply soap and lather. Be sure to wash the front and backs of hands as well as in between the fingers. Rub hands together for AT LEAST 20 seconds.
3. Rinse hands thoroughly.
4. Dry with a paper towel (and turn off faucet with used paper towel).
5. Throw the paper towel in the trash can.

Cleaning and Sanitizing Surfaces, Tools, and Equipment

Created by: Valeria Rodgers, Farm Owner and Manager
Date: 07/22/19
Revision: 1.4

PURPOSE AND WHY:

Describes how food contact surfaces, tools, and equipment are to be cleaned and sanitized so that they don't transmit pathogens.

WHO:

All farm owners, managers, employees, or volunteers.

RESPONSIBILITY:

Workers are responsible for following the SOPs to properly clean and sanitize food contact surfaces. Farm owners and food safety managers are responsible for training the workers on proper technique, providing necessary resources such as tools, detergents and sanitizers, and making sure the cleaning and sanitizing steps are followed correctly.

MATERIALS OR TOOLS:

- **Simple Green Industrial** from blue spray bottle (Ratio **Simple Green** to water of 1:10; see SOP on mixing **Simple Green** if bottle is low)
[Sanitizer name, brand, and concentration]
- **Sanidate 5.0** from red spray bottle, (1.6 fl. oz. **Sanidate 5.0** to 5 gallons of potable water; see SOP on mixing **Sanidate** if bottle is low)
[Detergent name, brand, and concentration (labeled for use on food contact surfaces)]
- Light blue tall cylinder container for dunking knives and scissors
[Container(s) as needed for mixing and using detergent(s) and sanitizer(s) for washing tools]
- 7 inch blue scrub brush for tables, smaller round blue brushes for knives and scissors
[Brushes, sponges, or towels for scrubbing tools and equipment]
- Clean water (microbial equivalent to drinking water)

PROCEDURE:

- Brush the surface of tables, tubs, or tools and rinse with running water to remove visible dirt and debris.
- Apply the prepared **Simple Green** from the spray bottle (about 10 sprays on the stainless tables or tubs and one to each side of the knives) and scrub the surfaces until lather forms.
- Rinse the surface with clean water until all soap suds are rinsed off the table.
- Apply the **Sanidate 5.0** solution so that the entire surface is contacted (about 20 sprays on tables and dunk the tools in the **Sanidate** bucket.)
- Allow knives or scissors to soak for more than one minute. Remove and lay in rack to the right of the handwashing sink labeled "clean tools."
- Let the surface air dry.

2021 Kentucky Fruit & Vegetable Conference Call for Presentation Proposals

The 2021 Kentucky Fruit & Vegetable Conference Planning Committee is seeking proposals for educational presentations. This year, the virtual conference will have mini-sessions (15 minutes speaking and 5 minutes for Q&A).

Local growers are specifically invited to submit topics!

Session topics should be highly focused for produce growers in Kentucky. Topics can address production methods, business management strategies, and best practices.

Are you doing something particularly well or novel? Other growers would appreciate you sharing your expertise!

The deadline to submit proposals is September 15, 2020. Presentation date and time will be confirmed with speakers by October 15, 2020. The full agenda with registration details will be published in late October.

We encourage you to consider submitting a proposal to share your knowledge, passion, and innovation with others or suggest speakers you'd like to hear! Submit proposals at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2021FruitVegConfProposalCall> or info@kyhortcouncil.org.



Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule (FSMA PSR) Online Training

Do you need FSMA Produce Safety Rule training?

UK's Food System Innovation Center (FSIC) is hosting an online training session on

Thursday, October 20 from 8:00 am—5:00 pm (eastern).

The training is free for Kentucky growers but space is limited!

Register by Wednesday, September 9.

Registration Details:

https://uky.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0GqBxuZ2ioX8FKZ

Questions:

Paul (paul.v@uky.edu) or Badri (badrivj@uky.edu).



2021

Kentucky Fruit & Vegetable Conference Update

Educational tracks normally held at the annual conference will be each Tuesday in January from 9:00 am—3 pm (Eastern)

January 5 — General Session / Production Technologies

January 12 — Organic Production / Beginning Vegetable

January 19 — Advanced Fruit / Business Management

January 26 — Advanced Vegetable / Beginning Fruit

Program and registration details will be published November 1

Check the event webpage: <https://kyhortcouncil.org/2021-ky-fruit-vegetable-conference/>

How to become a USDA vendor

Did you know the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) purchases a variety of products from growers? These “USDA Foods” are delivered to schools, food banks and households. Several online tools exist to help you determine if this market is for you.

Webpage

Visit the webpage to review tools and resources on becoming a vendor: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/selling-food>

- Lists of commonly purchased foods.
- Review the announcements
- Become an eligible USDA vendor
- Contact new vendor/small business coordinator

Video

Watch the video on how to become a USDA vendor: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_e36KkRDzo

KVGA Insurance Benefit

Did you know that as a member of KVGA, you have a no-cost **\$2,000 Accidental Death & Dismemberment** benefit? This benefit is provided KVGA and American Income Life Insurance Company (AIL).

Last month, you should have received a letter and response card in the mail. This year, you also receive a no-cost membership in the **AIL Plus program**, a connection to convenient discounts on dental care, prescriptions, diabetic supplies, vision care and supplies, telemedicine, chiropractic care and more.



Unsolicited Seeds in the Mail

Were you one of those “lucky” recipients of packets of seed from China?

Don't plant the seeds and report it!

Most have been identified as ornamental, fruit, vegetable, herb and weed species. Regardless, don't plant them!

Put seeds in a sealed bag and send to United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services' division of Plant Protection Quarantine:

USDA-APHIS PPQ
P.O. Box 475
Hebron, KY 41048

got seed?



APHIS 12August2020

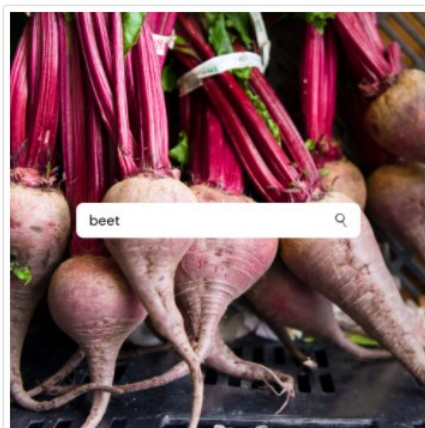
Seasonal Eating Resource Hub

The Food Connection at the University of Kentucky has created a Seasonal Eating Resource Hub.

Several crops are featured on the site including: Lettuce, Beet, Radish, Strawberry, Kohlrabi, Peas, Squash Blossoms, Tomatoes, Asparagus, Broccoli.

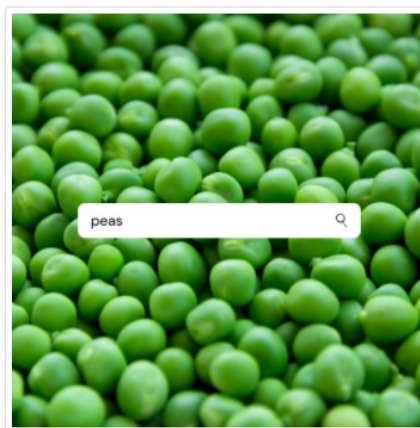
Each crop has a combination of recipes, social media graphics, downloadable photos, and videos that you can use to promote your products.

Visit the webpage: <https://foodconnection.ca.uky.edu/seasonalhub>



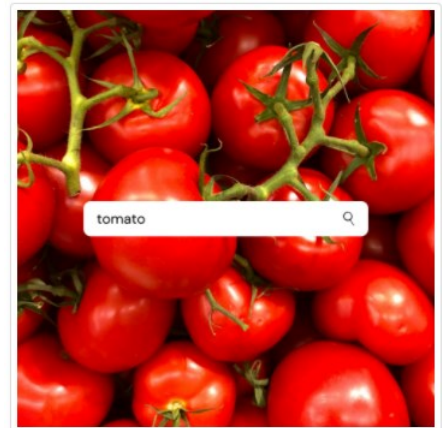
Beet

- [Social Media Graphics with Beet Tips](#)
- [Downloadable Beet Photos](#)
- [Kentucky Proud Beet Salad Video Demo](#)
- [Beet Salad Recipe](#)



Peas

- [Social Media Graphics](#)
- [Downloadable Pea Photos](#)
- [Fresh Pea Dip - Video](#)
- [Pea Preparation - Video](#)
- [Creamy Pea Soup - Video](#)



Tomatoes

- [Social Media Graphics](#)
- [Downloadable Tomato Photos](#)

Prevent Pests With Good Storage Practices

Good storage practices will prevent a variety of pests including diseases, rodents, and insects. General sanitation and length of time in storage as well as storage conditions will influence pest development. Attention to good storage practices will help you minimize product loss due to pest damage.

Good storage practices include:

- **Use a first in / first out system (FIFO).** The longer produce is in storage, the more likely it is to become infested and loose quality. Make sure that earlier harvests are brought out and sold first. Monitor inventory closely to remove any produce that is declining in quality or infested with pests.
- **Inspect incoming produce.** Produce can be harvested and brought into storage with pests on them. Before placing new harvests in storage, check for pests and sort out any infested produce. Handle carefully to prevent cuts or bruising that can promote post-harvest decay.
- **Maintain a sanitation aisle along exterior perimeter walls.** When storage space is at a premium, it will be difficult to maintain a space along exterior walls. It is important to inspect and use traps as needed in these areas. Mobile carts can help facilitate inspection and control of pests.
- **Keep storage areas clean and tidy.** Clean areas regularly to remove any spills or debris. Produce and debris can slip underneath shelves and behind pallets.
- **Protect the storage area.** Inspect seals and other structural elements (especially drains) to prevent intrusion of rats, mice, cockroaches, ants, birds, and other stored product pests.

Monitoring for pests does not have to be complicated and time-consuming. With regularly scheduled inspections and quick attention with biological, cultural, physical and chemical controls, damage caused by pests can be minimized. Store products in a secure location and always follow label instructions.

Pumpkin with bacterial spot. Sort out these and any others with fruit rots and do not put in storage. (Photo: MSU Extension)



Cleared perimeter in cold storage. Photo: KoolJet



October is National Farm to School Month

The USDA Farm-to-School Program was established in 2010. The last census was conducted in 2015 and at that time 48% of the US school districts surveyed participated in farm to school activities. In Kentucky, this impacted:

- 77 districts
- 907 schools
- 421,420 students

At that time,

- \$8.86 million was being invested in local food
- 3% of school food spending was on local products
- 62% of school districts were buying vegetables
- 59% of schools stated an interest in increasing local food purchases.



Are you interested in selling produce in the farm-to-school market? The Kentucky Horticulture Council is hosting two webinars (Oct. 6@10 am and Oct. 8@6 pm) to cover farm to school basics. Details: <https://kyhortcouncil.org/f2s/>

Instagram Marketing

Visual content is a great way to market your business to customers. Instagram is an image sharing social media platform.

This marketing tool has more than 60 million photos posted each day and over 800 million monthly users active on the site.

A few tips if you are thinking about using Instagram:

1. Use a business profile rather than a personal profile — you get more features and it's free and easy to set up.
2. Find the sweet spot where you post enough and at the right times to engage your customers.
3. Add hashtags which allow users to search posts.
4. Engage influencers to feature your farm or products. These are people who have built a social media following. Carefully choose an authentic and trustworthy personality — maybe a local chef who would create and feature a dish using your ingredients.
5. Monitor your metrics using the free features to track engagement and review follower demographics



The cool kids call it "IG" or "Insta"

Upcoming Industry Events

- 9/11 – USDA CFAP Application Deadline (extended from 8/28)
- 9/15 – Registration deadline for 10/15 FSMA training
- 9/16 – Produce Marketing Association Virtual Town Hall
- 10/6 – Farm-to-School Webinar (AM)
- 10/8 – Farm-to-School Webinar (PM)
- 10/15 – FSMA Produce Safety Alliance Training (online)

Do you have a question about production, marketing or another veggie-

related topic? Send in your question and you may see it answered in a future newsletter!



Info@KyVGA.org

Save-the-Dates

2021 Kentucky Fruit & Vegetable Conference

Jan. 5 — General/Production Technologies

Jan. 12 — Organic Production / Beginning Vegetable

Jan. 19 — Advanced Fruit / Business Management

Jan. 12 — Advanced Vegetable / Beginning Fruit

