

# NEW YORK FRUIT QUARTERLY

## Editorial

### Better Communication Bears Fruit

The Northeastern and Mid Atlantic States have the long tradition of producing delicious fruits for both fresh consumption and processing. Recognizing this fact, the USDA Agricultural Research Service research programs have maintained a strong focus on the needs of growers in this region. The Genetic Improvement of Fruits and Vegetables Laboratory (formerly the Fruit Laboratory) in Beltsville, Md., and its worksite in Chatsworth, N.J.; the Plant Genetic Resources Unit in Geneva, N.Y.; the Appalachian Fruit Research Station in Kearneysville, W.Va., and the Grape Genetics Research Unit in Geneva, N.Y., have all been developing new technologies for fruit production systems, plant protection, mechanization of harvesting, post-harvest handling of fruit, and supplying genetically improved cultivars and rootstocks. Some of the other ARS research units—such as Food Safety Intervention Technologies in Wyndmoor, Pa., and the Produce Quality and Safety Laboratory and the Food Safety Laboratory, both at Beltsville, Md.—also devote a part of their effort to research on fruits.

These programs strive to maintain close linkages to the industry and university scientists. In the early 1980s, I had the privilege of working in the Fruit Laboratory in Beltsville and also the AFRS in Kearneysville and witnessed this openness toward our customers and stakeholders. We believe, however, that in recent times these close linkages have reached an even higher level.

The creation of a Stakeholder Focus Group (SFG) at the AFRS in Kearneysville may serve as an example of this phenomenon. The Focus Group consists of growers and representatives of fruit growers' organizations from the North and Mid Atlantic States and even as far away as Washington State. Additionally, growers from Michigan, Oregon and California have expressed interest in joining the group. The group is chaired by Mr. Paul Baker, the Executive Director of the New York State Horticultural Society. The Focus Group has initiated regular meetings and plans to continue to do so in the future. Last summer, the Stakeholder Focus Group participated in a very successful field tour of our research plots at the AFRS Research Farm in Kearneysville. A somewhat similar model of communication with our customers and stakeholders has also been developing in the newly established Grape Genetics Research Unit in Geneva, N.Y. ARS customers and stakeholders benefit from these interactions through: 1) improved communication with AFRS scientists; 2) more efficient technology transfer; 3) enhanced stakeholder and customer input into our research program; and 4) enhanced relevance and impact of AFRS research. There are also numerous benefits to ARS, the chief among them being: 1) increased relevance and impact of the AFRS research program; 2) continued assessment of AFRS customer and stakeholder satisfaction; 3) a strengthened relationship between the AFRS and the American fruit industry customer and stakeholder base; and 4) a broadened base of stakeholders and customers.

Superimposed on strong linkages between ARS programs and the industry is the growing multidisciplinary collaboration between ARS scientists with our university colleagues in a number of states. With the passage of time this will lead to scientific discoveries with impact. We have tremendous scientific talent and infrastructure devoted to fruit research that exists in the Northeastern and Mid Atlantic United States in both universities and ARS. Also, ARS has very unique and precious germplasm resources in our Geneva location. By tapping all these resources and by working together, ARS and university scientists can accomplish so much more than working separately. There is a very strong commitment on the part of all research institutions in the region to strengthen these collaborations. In the last several years, the industry, ARS and university scientists have invested lots of energy and time to discuss fruit industry needs and research priorities as part of the National Tree Fruit Technology Roadmap and its off-shoots, the Rosaceae Genomic Initiative and most recently the Engineering Solution for Specialty Crops. These investments pay off by creating cohesive scientific communities which are able to better leverage resources, identify priorities and existing research opportunities. In times of limited resources, this is especially important. With proper care, fruit trees bear fruit—but so do also better communication, cooperation and collaboration.

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**FRONT COVER: A bumper crop in NY in 2007 resulted in some fruit being left on the tree until winter.**

**BACK COVER: Three types of pheromone dispensers for mating disruption of internal apple worms.**

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