

NEW YORK FRUIT QUARTERLY

Editorial

A question I have been hearing recently, and often, is whether or not public Cooperative Extension Fruit programs are still needed in today's world. After all, there are crop consultants specializing in fruit production who have more timely and relevant information specific to the farms, there is the Internet with information and discussion forums online that can answer just about any question that comes up, we have chemical salesmen, equipment dealers, fruit storage operators, packers and shippers, along with a bevy of outstanding support organizations such as the NY Apple Association, the NY Horticultural Society, and the NY Farm Bureau that we already pay for. In our counties and towns, we are supported by our local legislators who understand the importance of our industry. And all the information and support provided is not only useful but essential for our businesses. With increasing pressure to find more funds and increasing costs, can't we do without Cooperative Extension?

I may be biased but my answer to that question is a resounding NO. Very few have a complete picture of what Cooperative Extension does. Most visibly, CCE in the counties provides a direct link to the University and the latest and best information. And that information is unbiased. We do not have a product to sell or promote. Much of our research and information is designed to answer questions that cannot be answered easily by private industry. Some of it provides a reality check for existing information. Sometimes CCE is just a shoulder to cry on or a sounding board for grower innovations. We often provide encouragement for growers to try something new. And frequently, we are the catalyst for change for the better.

Currently, beneficial extension and research efforts cover a wide array of areas that benefits the fruit industry. These include pest control, planting systems, new products, production techniques and economics, labor issues, formation and guidance of organizations, equipment and genetic engineering, food preparation techniques for our products, starting a business, farm management and storage issues, just to name a few.

Our organization is not perfect. We work within financial and time constraints like everyone else. Sometimes we don't know the answer, sometimes the answer we have is not correct within a certain context and in today's charge-ahead world we are not as nimble as people would like. Perhaps we do need to be more focused and not try to be everything for everyone as we have in the past.

Those who want Cooperative Extension to remain a consulting service are missing the point. Cooperative Extension is an idea-generating organization, a testing laboratory, a cheerleader for adoption of new and different ideas and opinions. Many of the practices you see around you today are ones originally researched and promoted by CCE. A few examples - ones that growers use every day -include the development of the principles and techniques for reliable pest scouting, high density planting systems, and all the new materials for pest control and growth regulators for tree and crop control. There is always something new that needs to be examined, tried, proven and adopted.

Perhaps if our industry was wildly profitable we wouldn't need this system. But when improving the efficiency of production remains the only way to continue to remain profitable, I believe we need it even more than ever.

Many of you know by now that I will be moving to the Hudson Valley to assume the position formerly held by Dr. Jim Schupp at the Hudson Valley Laboratory in pomology. I will now be working with the Hudson Valley Team, Dave Rosenberger, Peter Jentsch, Mike Fargione, Kevin lungerman and Steve McKay to research ways to improve the efficiency of fruit production for the entire fruit industry in New York. I will have statewide responsibility so I hope to keep in close contact with my many friends in Western NY. I couldn't turn down the opportunity to be able to spend more of my time conducting applied research that will have immediate benefits for the entire NY fruit industry. I hope you believe in our system as much as I do and will support it when you have the chance!

Steve Hoying

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FRONT COVER: (top) High tunnel
planting on October 22, 2005.
(bottom) Row covers used to protect
raspberry plants on extremely cold
nights in November.

BACK COVER: Honeycrisp apple tree on M.9
killed by fire blight infection of the root-
stock. Insets: fire blight-infected M.9
rootstocks showing dark ooze

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