



PENNSYLVANIA VEGETABLE MARKETING & RESEARCH PROGRAM

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Fresh Ideas

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The Pennsylvania Vegetable Marketing and Research Program is a state-wide marketing order established by a grower referendum, governed by a grower board and funded by grower assessments. The Program's sole purpose is to serve the vegetable growers of Pennsylvania by promoting Pennsylvania-grown vegetables and funding practical vegetable production research.

PLAN NOW FOR 2020 PA PRODUCE MONTH

Now is the time to begin planning how your on-farm market or farmers market will celebrate PA Produce Month in August. This will be the 15th year that the Pennsylvania Vegetable Marketing and Research Program will be promoting the bountiful supply of Pennsylvania vegetables available in August with the PA Produce Month promotion.

As part of a Specialty Crop Block Grant, the Program will be developing a five-year marketing plan and begin implementing it this year. That will include

producing a new PA Produce Month video to highlight the August promotion for consumers. In addition, a webinar to help growers make the most of the Produce Month promotion in their markets will be offered.

The Program will be using its social media outreach on Facebook and Instagram throughout the year to keep Pennsylvania vegetables in front of consumers but will be ramping things as the season progresses to put the spotlight on PA produce in August. The outreach will include original posts with engaging copy, photos, and graphics for consumers. The Program will also share/like/repost appropriate farmer posts and interact with farmers and consumers via social media to generate excitement

about PA Produce Month. Social media posts will also highlight PAVeggies.org web resources for consumers.

The Program will be creating press releases about PA produce throughout the season but focus on August as PA Produce Month – working with media outlets to make consumers aware of PA Produce Month and hopefully feature local growers. A Produce Month press event will also be planned. *(continued on page 2)*



PA PRODUCE MONTH *(continued from page 1)*

The newly re-designed PA Produce Month point-of-purchase materials introduced last year will be distributed to growers, sold to market owners at the produce auctions and shipped to supermarkets requesting them.

Farmer Resources

The ultimate success of PA Produce Month depends on the active participation by growers across the state who retail their produce. The

Farmer's Toolkit on the Program's website at www.paveggies.org includes ideals and videos on how growers can make the most of PA Produce Month to boost their sales plus Facebook graphics, graphics for print and website use, infographics, press release templates, and tips. Be sure to make the most of these materials that are designed specifically for your use and feel free to share the blog and recipes on the website with your customers. *(continued on page 4)*

PICK 1 (OR MORE) TO INCREASE AUGUST SALES

1. Farm Stand and Market Contest

Start ASAP by distributing "contest tickets" that customers can only "scratch off" in August to reveal their one prize from a range of prize options. The range of prizes should include mostly ordinary discounts with a few big wins sprinkled in. For example, you could offer 100 contest tickets with the following 4 prize options and corresponding winnings:

- 75 customer win one free vegetable
- 4 customers win a \$25 gift card.
- 20 customers win \$10 off their order
- 1 customer wins a \$100 gift card

You can adjust the total number of contest tickets, types of winnings, and corresponding winning tickets to your liking. Customers must be on-site when they reveal their winnings in order to qualify. A stapled and sealed envelope works well for this to prove there was no tampering prior to the opening in PA Produce Month.

2. If Your Name Is..._____ Promotions

Customers like to feel special. What's more special than our very own names? It's likely you've seen these types of promotions and possibly even tried them yourself - offer something special to individuals with a particular name. Be sure to showcase the "Name of the Day/Week" into your roadside signage and digital messaging, too. You could also alter the promotion to feature another unique feature like a profession - if you're a nurse, a teacher, etc. Have fun with it!

3. Impulse Sales Displays

Consumers spend up to \$5,400 a year on impulse purchases alone. Impulse sales displays are your chance to capture a percentage of those sales! You see, impulse sales displays work well because it's suggestive selling - when a customer is already making a purchase, they're more likely to buy additional products as well. That's why showcasing low price point items near your store's checkout or displaying salad dressing next to the lettuce is an effective way of up-selling.

4. Local, Local, Local - The Word That Works

A recent Nielsen (NLSN: NYSE) study found the local label on packaging is tied to \$239 million in consumer packaged goods sales. Better yet, **produce topped the list** of most important local products, with 58 percent of consumers seeking local fruits and vegetables most often. Don't shy away from using the term "local" in your marketing, especially in visual displays. If you depend on a lot of digital transactions (an online store, a CSA), you should consider using the term local and terms of the areas you service (town names, county names) as much as possible on your website. A blog is always a great way to keep your site regularly updated with these beneficial terms and improve your search engine ranking.

5. Grow Your Contact/Email List

It's never too late or too early to find NEW customers. But how? We often spend a lot of time marketing to customers who are already loyal to our brand and would shop there regardless of what we say or give to them. These customers should continue to be conversed with and treated special but it's important to put some eggs in another basket - you know, that basket of people who aren't aware you exist but would be excited to give you business. This year, the PVMRP will conduct a webinar to teach you how to reach new customers, obtain their contact information, and turn them into loyal customers. Make sure you're signed up for the PVMRP farmer emails to receive updates on the date, time and registration for this webinar. Email angela@kitchentableconsultants.com to be added.

TEN RESEARCH PROJECTS FUNDED FOR 2020

The Vegetable Marketing and Research Board approved \$20,000 in assessment funds for vegetable research in 2020. In cooperation with the Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association (PVGA), which will be contributing an additional \$60,000 from its General Fund, the two vegetable growers organizations will be funding ten different projects. The Association's research funds are earned by the members at the Farm Show Food Booth and other Association events.

The projects approved for funding and their objectives are listed below.

Impact of Management Practices on Soil Health Indicators in Conventional and Organic Vegetable Cropping Systems \$8,000

Dr. Gladis Zinati, Rodale Institute

- to demonstrate to vegetable growers the role of management practices on soil health over time.

Overlapping Dual Magnum Programs for Weed Control in No-Till Pumpkins \$5,000

Kurt Vollmer and Kelly Nichols, Univ. of Maryland Extension, Dwight D. Lingenfelter and John M. Wallace, Penn State Univ.

- to evaluate potential of Dual Magnum as an overlapping residual approach for pumpkin production throughout the Mid-Atlantic Region.

A Survey to Determine if Soilborne Pathogens Are Potentially Limiting Yields in PA Tomato High Tunnel Production \$6,000

Beth K. Gugino and Elisa Lauritzen, Penn State Univ.

- to conduct a wider-scale sampling of tomato high tunnels across PA focusing on those that have been in continuous tomato production for at least three years or more.

Assessment of Nitrogen Input Requirement of Grafted and Non-Grafted Fresh-Market tomato Grown in High-Tunnel \$9,932

Francesco Di Gioia, Elsa Sanchez and Claudia Schmidt, Penn State Univ. and Timothy Elkner, Penn State Extension

- to evaluate the response to nitrogen inputs of determined- and indeterminate-type fresh-market tomato varieties grafted or non-grafted onto commercial rootstocks and grown on mulched beds with drip irrigation in high-tunnel production systems at two locations: South East and Central Pennsylvania.

HPPD Herbicides for Weed Control in Sweet Corn \$4,897

Dwight D. Lingenfelter and Dr. John M. Wallace, Penn State Univ. and Dr. Mark J. VanGessel, Univ. of Delaware

- to find out how postemergence HPPD herbicides differ in weed control efficacy.
- to find out how weed control efficacy and weed control spectrum differ when postemergence HPPD herbicides are applied with and without atrazine.
- to find the effect of postemergence HPPD herbicides on the establishment rate of various post-harvest seeded cover crop species.

Implementing On-Farm monitoring Tools for the In-Season Sustainable Management of Soil Fertility and Health in High Tunnel Conventional and Organic Vegetable Production Systems \$10,000

Francesco Di Gioia, Penn State Univ. and Leah Fronk, John Esslinger, Thomas Butzler and Thomas Ford, Penn State Extension

- to test the proposed on-farm (site-specific) in-season nutrient and soil health monitoring method in high tunnels at commercial scale and transfer the method to Extension Educators, growers and crop consultants.

Breeding Fresh-Market Tomatoes for Production in PA \$8,000

Majid Foolad, Penn State Univ.

- to further develop large-size fresh-market (FM) tomato hybrids and breeding lines, including those with late-blight resistance.
- to re-evaluate 17 selected grape tomato F₁ hybrids, and production and evaluation of a total of 48 new grape tomato F₁ hybrids.

Breeding Processing Tomatoes for Production in PA \$6,000

Majid Foolad, Penn State Univ.

- to re-evaluate a total of 28 selected elite regular processing tomato F₁ hybrids.
- to re-evaluate a total of 9 selected elite late-blight-resistant (LBR) processing tomato F₁ hybrids.
- to look at large-scale seed production (in Costa Rica) and evaluate a total of 12 NEW LBR processing tomato F₁ hybrids.

(continued on page 3)

PRODUCE MONTH *(continued from page 2)*

PA Veggies.org Website

The Program's website at www.paveggies.org is a critical part of the Program's Produce Month promotion as well as throughout the year. Last year the Program used Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) funding to develop some additional website. These videos featured two growers sharing vegetable recipes. Another video highlighted the value of a community farmers market. The purpose was to strengthen consumers interest in purchasing local produce along with preparation ideas they can use to increase or vary their use of local produce. The Program also worked with chefs to develop new custom recipes for PAVeggies.org. The recipe pages of PAVeggies.org continue to be some of the most highly visited pages on the site.

The Program also used Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) funding last year to have its online consumer directory of retail farm markets, community farmers' markets, and CSAs upgraded to a more user-friendly format in an online searchable database. Likewise, the Program created a similar online database directory for the wholesale growers searchable by crop.

Help Us Help You

At the end of the day, one of the best gifts we can offer you is an echo. We understand each grower is a unique business but our commonality as Pennsylvania farmers is a powerful one. This is why we strive to be more than marketing tools and research results. We

2019 RESEARCH REPORTS AVAILABLE

The reports from most of the 13 research projects sponsored by the Program and the Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association in 2019 are now available. They are available on the Program's website PAVeggies.org under the Farmer Resources tab. For growers who do not have access to the website, you can order paper copies on the back of the enclosed WHITE assessment form.

want you to think of us as a call line for your questions and an influencer in your community. We are always doing our best to represent the industry as a whole as well as reiterate your individual achievements and characteristics to a greater audience. That being said, there are a lot of you. And not many of us. We can support a lot of Pennsylvania farmers but we simply don't know what we don't know. Help us know more. "Reach out" to us now and then. Sending an email, making a call, tagging #paveggies - these are just a few ways to let us know what you're up to. We promise to keep chugging along on our end and advocating for the hard, honest, and important work that you all do. Feel free to contact us at 484-955-3817 or angela@kitchentableconsultants.com

2020 RESEARCH *(continued from page 3)*

Cover Crops as a Solution to High Soluble Salt Levels in High Tunnels **\$8,360**

Elsa Sanchez, Penn State Univ. and Tom Ford, Penn State Extension

- to evaluate using cover crops to extract soluble salts from high tunnel soils.
- to test 20 cover crop types in a greenhouse in soil with high soluble salt levels to determine drawdown.
- to determine which specific cover crop types are best for drawing down salt levels.

Keeping PA Vegetable Growers Profitable: Statewide Cabbage Cultivar Trials **\$15,000**

Elsa Sanchez and Francesco Di Gioia, Penn State Univ. and Tim Elkner, Tom Butzler and Bob Pollock, Penn State Extension

- to evaluate up to 25 cultivar and selections of fall cabbage in a conventional plasticulture system.

In addition to the above ten projects funded by the Vegetable Marketing and Research Program and PVGA, the Association's Simply Sweet Onion Committee is funding the following project:

Onion Variety Trial **\$6,539**

Tom Butzler, Jeff Stoltzfus and Tim Elkner, Penn State Extension and Mike Orzolek, Penn State Univ.

2020 ASSESSMENTS NOW PAYABLE

Enclosed with this newsletter is your Assessment Statement Form for 2020. The assessment for the 2020 growing season is now payable. **Remember, high tunnel production is considered greenhouse vegetable production and is assessed by the 1,000 sq. ft. of production area rather than by the acre. Also, growers that have both field production and greenhouse/high tunnel production simply add the acres of field production and the number of 1,000 sq. ft. of greenhouse/high tunnel production together to determine their total number of production "units" to calculate their assessment.**

For general information about the assessment and the crops to which it applies, see the back of the pink Assessment Statement. The assessment is NOT DUE on small fruits like strawberries, brambles or blueberries OR on white potatoes.

If you are growing less than an acre of vegetables this year and less than 1,000 sq. ft. of greenhouse or high tunnel vegetables and expect to sell less than \$2,000 worth of vegetables, please indicate at the bottom of the form which statement best states your circumstance and return the form. This will enable us to update our records.

Please keep the pink copy of the form in your records for three years. Return just the white copy. Payments are due by January 31, 2021, at the latest. You are encouraged to pay the assessment and order any point-of-purchase materials by July 31, 2020.

You Have a Choice

You have the opportunity to designate on your Production Verification Statement how much of your assessment you want to see used for marketing activities and how much you would like to see used for research. Marketing activities include sponsoring PA Produce Month in August and printing and shipping of point-of-purchase materials. Over the past five years, the Program has spent about 49% of grower assessment dollars on research and 51% on marketing activities. It should be noted that these percentages do not take into account the money spent on general administrative expenses nor the grant funds the Program has received.

HELP THE PROGRAM SAVE MONEY

If you use email, PLEASE include your email address on your Assessment Statement Form at the place indicated to the right of your name. The Program is planning to do more of its communications to growers by email which saves the Program greatly in postage and printing costs.

IPM INFORMATION ONCE AGAIN AVAILABLE

Sweet corn, tomato and curcurbit integrated pest management (IPM) weekly updates will again be available to growers in several forms this year, including email, fax or regular mail. For the last twenty-three years the Program has offered this information to growers in the PA Vegetable IPM Weekly Update. PVGA supports the sweet corn trapping with grants as needed.

The IPM Weekly Update will be offered again this year from mid-June through August. The regular mail version will only be sent to growers who request it. Please return the form by June

30 or call 717-694-3596 as soon as possible to get on the list for the weekly mailings, faxes or emails. Please note that faxes will normally be sent during the nighttime hours.

Growers can also obtain IPM and additional information on a toll-free recorded telephone message that is available 24-hours-a-day by calling 1-800-PENN-IPM. The weekly reports will also be posted on the Program's website at <https://www.paveggies.org/farmers/ipm-weekly-updates/>



FREE RECORDED WEBINAR

Too often business owners are asking “What strategies should I have in place to convince my customers to buy?”.

This is not the wrong question. It’s simply a loaded question.

Yes, it is possible to find a relatively perfect mix of marketing techniques for your business. But your marketing technique is only half of the equation.

Don’t forget about the individual on the other end of that technique.

Ever hear a really great story? Not so great the second or third time around is it?

Similarly, there is an expiration date on marketing techniques IF the customer on the receiving end was already exposed to that technique more than once.

In fact, over-selling to a current customer can actually lead to CUSTOMER LOSS.

Lose customers? Certainly now we have your attention?

WHO'S THE WEBINAR FOR? Pennsylvania vegetable farms, farmers markets, purveyors of PA produce

HOW LONG IS IT? 30 minutes

WHY SHOULD I MAKE THE TIME? If you want to make sure you’re not turning current customers off, while also understanding how to grow a new customer base, you need a lesson in funneling.

HOW DO I VIEW THE WEBINAR? Thanks for asking. After June 2 there will be a link for the webinar at

<https://www.paveggies.org/farmers/farmers-toolkit/>

COVID-10 INFORMATION

The following websites have links to various sources of information for growers relative to dealing with the coronavirus crisis:

PA Department of Agriculture -

www.agriculture.pa.gov/Pages/COVID-19.aspx

Penn State Extension - extension.psu.edu/coronavirus

PA Farm - pafarm.com/resources/covid-19-resources/

If you do not have access to the internet, call the Program at 717-694-3596 – we can mail you some appropriate information.

POINT OF PURCHASE MATERIALS AVAILABLE

The Program will be again be offering a selection of various point-of-purchase materials for growers who retail their produce. Growers receive a credit of half of their assessment (up to a maximum credit of \$25) toward their order of point-of-purchase. See the enclosed description and order sheets.

GAP CERTIFICATION COST SHARE AVAILABLE

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) offers farms and packinghouses the opportunity to be certified for Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) for farms and Good Handling Practices (GHP) for packinghouse operations. For further information on the certification program, contact Audra Mata at 717-831-6059 or amata@pa.gov.

The Department is also offering a GAP/GHP Cost-Share Program for the 2020 calendar year. Growers that successfully complete one initial USDA Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) or one initial USDA Good Handling Practices (GHP) audit are eligible to apply. Qualified applicants may receive up to a maximum of \$500 per year to cover the costs of *one* successful initial USDA GAP or GHP audit. For information, contact Michele Brookins, at 717-787-5319 or mbrookins@pa.gov.