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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.*

## **10<sup>th</sup> PA Produce Month Celebrated**

The Vegetable Marketing and Research Program conducted its tenth annual celebration of August as Pennsylvania Produce Month this season. The promotion is designed to focus extra attention on Pennsylvania vegetables at the height of your season. The Program shipped Produce Month point-of-purchase kits to individual growers, to auctions for sale to their market customers and to supermarket chains. A press release was distributed to newspapers and television stations across the state. The Governor officially proclaimed August as Pennsylvania Produce Month and the Program's website, [www.paveggies.org](http://www.paveggies.org), was updated with new directories of retail farm markets, farmers' markets and CSAs as well as a new directory of wholesale growers. And, for the first time, the Program launched a full-fledged social media campaign on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest – all with the PAVeggies label.

The Program's press release about PA Produce Month was referred to in 32 newspapers or websites reaching over 864,000 print and online readers. In addition, 11 more articles reaching 142,000 readers referenced the presentation of the Governor's proclamation by Sec. of Agriculture Russell Redding. The media value of these articles was listed at over \$85,000.

To encourage greater participation in Produce Month, the Program mailed six small PA Produce Month posters to each grower ordering point-of-purchase orders from the Program. About 47 of these growers ordered the Produce Month kit in addition which included two large posters and 20 special Produce Month price cards.

Over 220 Produce Month kits were shipped to the various produce auctions across the state where they were available to growers and to the non-grower marketers who purchase produce at the auctions.

The Program again offered PA Produce Month point-of-purchase materials to supermarket chains in the state. Posters and price cards were requested for about 243 stores by Supervalu, ShopRite (Wakefern), Four Seasons Produce, Redner's Warehouse Markets, Lancaster Family-Owned Markets, and Karns Quality Foods.

## **Point-of-Purchase Items Sent to Growers**

The Program shipped point-of-purchase materials to 365 growers for the 2015 season. Items shipped included 26 banners, 109 rolls of binwrap, 20 restaurant signs, 106 roadside signs, 569 crop stickers for the roadside signs, 81 packs of clip-on price cards, 241 packs of price cards, 298 packs of small price paddles, 65 packs of large price paddles, 29 packs of brochures, 121 rolls of price stickers, 43 shirts, 37 hats, 32 sets of recipe cards and 357 pads of "How to Use" cards. The informational "How to Use" cards on less well known crops (beets, eggplant, kale, leeks, spaghetti squash, summer squash, Swiss chard, and winter squash) were shipped for the first time last year and have been well received. The Program also supplied growers with 263 cases of plastic "T-shirt" shopping bags that were imprinted with a vegetable graphic and "Fresh Local Vegetables" in dark green on one side and the PA Preferred logo in blue and gold on the other side. These bags are provided at cost to growers.



*Grown in PA. It makes a difference.*

## Grower Education Efforts Undertaken

The Program distributed a weekly two- to six-page IPM update on tomato fungicide and sweet corn insecticide scheduling and cucurbit disease information to 228 persons by electronic mail, 52 by fax and 118 growers by mail plus the produce auctions during the 2015 growing season.

In cooperation with the Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association, the Program also conducted five conference calls June and October that allowed growers to ask Penn State Extension personnel about production issues they were encountering in their fields.

## New Board Officers Elected for 2016

At their November meeting, the Vegetable Marketing and Research Program Board elected Christopher Powell of Strasburg as chairman, Scott Hoffman of Northumberland as vice chairman and Kenneth Metrick of Butler as secretary-treasurer. They also welcomed Laverne Nolt of Martinsburg to the Board as a grower representative from the western region of the state.

The Program's Board, which includes twelve grower members, has the primary decision-making authority for the Program. The Secretary of Agriculture appoints the Board members from nominations submitted by growers. The Secretary of Agriculture and a representative of the sales agents required to collect the assessment also sit on the Board. The Board members are entitled to per diem payments for their services but they have voted to refuse any payment for their service other than reimbursement for travel expenses.

## 2015 Financial Statistics

### Area Reported in Assessment Forms for the 2014 season

Fresh Market	18,817 acres	68%
Processing	5,830 acres	21%
Greenhouse	3,112 M sq. ft.	11%

### Source of Assessment Income for the 2014 season

Fresh Market	\$46,274	73%
Processing	\$9,849	16%
Greenhouse	\$7,330	12%

### Income for the 2015 Fiscal Year

Undesignated Assessments	\$37,585
Assessments Designated for Research	\$16,436
Assessments Designated for Promotion	\$8,066
Specialty Crop Block Grants	\$6,206
Point-of-Purchase Materials	\$9,165

### Spending for 2015 Fiscal Year

Research	\$17,000
Promotion	\$45,454
Planning/Evaluation (funded mostly by grants)	\$2,701

## Program Helps to Fund 12 Research Projects

The Vegetable Marketing and Research Board allocated \$17,000 in assessment funds for vegetable research in 2015. In cooperation with the Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association, which contributed an additional \$56,000 from its General Fund, the two vegetable grower organizations funded 12 different projects. The Association's research funds are primarily earned by the members at the Farm Show and Ag Progress Days Food Booths. The approved projects total \$73,000.

The projects studied control of diseases and weeds in snap beans; tomato insect and disease control; tomato breeding for disease resistance; tomato, watermelon and broccoli variety trials; sweet corn insect pest monitoring and the persistence of *E. coli* under field conditions.

The reports from the research projects will be posted on the Program's website at [www.paveggies.org](http://www.paveggies.org) as the reports become available. Growers who do not have access to the internet can order paper copies of the projects of interest to them – **see separate blue order form** or call the Program at 717-694-3596.

## Marketing Statistics

The following statistics were gathered from the marketing questions asked of fresh market growers on the assessment forms for the 2014 growing season.

		% of all	
Total Responses	1,060		
Sell Retail	769	73%	
Sell Retail Only	305	29%	
Sell Wholesale	755	71%	
Sell Wholesale Only	291	27%	
Retail Outlets		% of all	% of retail
Roadside Market	617	58%	80%
Comm. Farmers Mkt.	238	22%	31%
CSA	63	6%	8%
Other	88	8%	11%
Wholesale Outlets		% of all	% of whsle
Auction	608	57%	81%
Chain Store Warehse	123	12%	16%
Direct Store Delivery	137	13%	18%
Wholesaler/Broker	137	13%	18%
Restaurant	87	11%	12%
Cooperative	75	7%	10%
Other	60	6%	8%
Growing Method			
Certified Organic	45	4%	
Sustainable	279	26%	
Conventional/IPM	740	70%	

