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**Executive Secretary**  
William Troxell  
815 Middle Road  
Richfield, PA 17086  
717-694-3596  
[pvmrp@embarqmail.com](mailto:pvmrp@embarqmail.com)

# 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.*

## Get Ready Now to Celebrate August as PA Produce Month

The Vegetable Marketing and Research Program is excited to celebrate August as Pennsylvania Produce Month - what better time to highlight the bounty of PA Vegetable Farms! The Program will concentrate its promotion efforts on the month of August and we invite you to join in the opportunities to promote your PA grown vegetables. The purpose is to focus consumer attention on the abundant supplies of quality, fresh Pennsylvania produce that are available in farmers' markets, roadside farm markets and even supermarkets during the month of August.

Based on the success of last year, August is PA Produce Month will again partner with Penn State Extension to focus on social media engagement. New to the program this year is a partnership with Kitchen Table Consultants to develop new messaging and promotional opportunities, tips and tricks for driving sales and interest during this peak season. As many of you have experienced, August can bring a bounty from the fields, but a drop off of sales as customers head to their summer vacations, so let's get creative and work together to build momentum and awareness across the state of all the produce available to our residents, at home or on the go. August as PA Vegetable Month will be designed to help match the product with the consumer.

**Stay tuned for a full roll out of this year's innovative new tools in the June issue of the Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers News as promotional activities begin in July, peak in August, and continue through October.**

The Program will also be updating its directories of both retail markets and wholesale growers on its website – [www.paveggies.org](http://www.paveggies.org). Growers who have not yet filled out the pink "We Need Your Help" form that was mailed with the Program's Annual Report this spring are asked to fill it out as soon as possible (another copy is included with this mailing). This will help the Program accurately list roadside markets, CSAs, and community farmer's market on the website for retail growers. Wholesale growers who did not complete back of the pink "We Need Your Help" form are likewise asked to complete it so we can list your crops in a directory of wholesale growers on the Program's website.

The Program will be providing the following support to markets and growers to enable them to promote and hopefully profit by PA Produce Month:

1. ALL growers who order ANY point-of-purchase materials in 2016 prior to August will automatically receive six small (8.5" x 11") full-color "August is PA Produce Month" posters.
2. A Produce Month grower kit will be available to all growers at a nominal cost of \$2 per kit. This kit will include two large posters (about 18" x 24"), and twenty 7" x 11" price cards – both in full color plus a sample press release. These kits can be ordered directly from the Program. Growers will also be able to order additional small posters for \$0.50.
3. A series of statewide press releases on Pennsylvania vegetables and PA Produce Month will be issued to news media across the state plus various social media postings.
4. One or more media events will be scheduled to highlight PA Produce Month. Farmers' markets, or even roadside markets, interested in hosting one of these events, should contact the Program.

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## PDA to Host FSMA Produce Safety Rule Town Hall Meetings

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety rule is now final, and the earliest compliance dates for some farms begin one year after the effective date of the final rule. The rule establishes science-based minimum standards for the safe growing, harvesting, packing and holding of fruits and vegetables grown for human consumption. The new standards include requirements for agricultural water quality, employee health and hygiene, animals, biological soil amendments of animal origin (such as compost and manure), and equipment, tools, and buildings. The rule also includes a number of key definitions, exemptions, and variances.

Implementation of the Produce Safety rule is dependent on partnerships between FDA, states, and farmers, both to deliver education and technical assistance and to provide on-going inspection, compliance and oversight. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture recently applied for funding through FDA to implement the Produce Safety rule. The funding can be utilized for planning, infrastructure building, training and education, and other related activities.

State-level implementation of the Produce Safety rule will require the help of organizations such as the Pennsylvania Vegetable Marketing and Research Program, and produce growers like you. We are seeking your partnership to provide feedback and input on how the department can most effectively deliver education and technical assistance, and to provide on-going inspection and compliance. We value your feedback, and also want to make ourselves available to answer your questions.

## GAP/GHP Certification and Cost Share Available

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) offers farms and packinghouses the opportunity to be certified for Good Agricultural Practices for farms and Good Handling Practices for packinghouse operations. For further information on the certification program, contact the Department at 717-787-4315.

The Department is also offering a GAP/GHP Cost-Share Program for the 2016 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 \$400 per year to cover the costs of *one* successful initial USDA GAP or GHP audit. For information, contact Kyle Heffner, at 717-836-3973 or [kyheffner@pa.gov](mailto:kyheffner@pa.gov).

**Questions?** Call the Program at 717-694-3596 or email us at [pvmp@embarqmail.com](mailto:pvmp@embarqmail.com).

To kick-off this process, state Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding will host two FSMA Produce Safety Rule Town Hall meetings in June. Please join us on *Thursday, June 23 from 8 – 10 a.m.* or on *Monday, June 27 from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.* in room 309 at the Department of Agriculture, located at 2301 N. Cameron St., Harrisburg, PA 17110. RSVP to Erin Smith, Policy Director, at 717-772-4365 or [erins@pa.gov](mailto:erins@pa.gov).

## PA Produce Month *(continued)*

5. A Produce Month market kit for non-grower markets will be available at most produce auctions across the state. These kits will include one large poster (about 18" x 24"), six small posters (8.5" x 11"), and twenty 7" x 11" price cards – all in full color.

6. The Program will also make posters and price cards available to supermarkets across the state to support their sales of local produce.

Growers or farmers' markets who want to participate in PA Produce Month can do so by using any of the following suggestions:

1. Order a Produce Month grower kit.
2. Use PA Produce Month in your print advertising during August.
3. Run a special coupon in your advertising for use at your market during PA Produce Month. Make it a percentage off coupon or a given dollar amount discount. Or you could make the coupon a frequent buyer offer where the customer receives the specified discount if they visit the market every week or four times during August. These could be handed out at your market during the end of July and early August.

4. Offer a PA Produce Month special during August.

For example:

- Pick 5 Get 10 - Buy 5 different vegetables and get a 10% discount
  - 15 ears of sweet corn for the price 12
  - Free tomato with a \$5 or \$10 purchase
  - Free cantaloupe with \$10 or \$15 purchase
- Be creative and offer a different special each week of the month. If your peppers are overproducing, make them the giveaway item. Use any special that has worked for you in the past.

5. Hold a PA Produce Month special event – like a Sweet Corn, Tomato, Watermelon, or Cantaloupe Festival. If you already have special event planned for August, incorporate PA Produce Month into your plans and publicity for that event. If you would like your special event to be considered for one of the Program's media events, contact the Program.

The key to the success of Pennsylvania Produce Month is the support and participation of growers and markets across the state. We hope growers will use this campaign to highlight the availability of their crops during August.

## 2016 Assessments Are Now Payable

Enclosed with this newsletter is your Production Verification Statement for 2016. The assessment for the 2016 growing season is now payable. **Remember, high tunnel production is now 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 Production Verification 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, 2017, at the latest. **You are encouraged to pay the assessment and order any point-of-purchase materials by July 15, 2016.**

### 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 56% of grower assessment dollars on research and 44% 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 Us Help You

Like last year, this year's form includes several questions that will enable the Program to serve you better, especially if you are a fresh market grower. The questions ask whether your operation is certified organic, sustainable or conventional, if you sell your produce retail or wholesale, what form of retail sales you use, and what forms of wholesale outlets you use.

This information will serve two purposes. It will allow the Program to determine how many growers use different growing and marketing methods. This will help us to plan our promotion and marketing activities better. Second, the Program will be better able to inform you as a grower when new marketing opportunities that might

interest you are available. **We are also asking you to include your email address if you have one.** Obviously, that is quickest and most cost-effective method of contacting you.

## Monthly Grower Conference Calls

In the fall of 2014 it was suggested that we conduct grower conference calls during the season to allow growers to talk about problems they are experiencing during the season – and hear recommendations from Penn State experts for solving them. These calls were successful last year and we will continue them in 2016.

**The calls will be on the following Tuesday evenings from 8:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.:**

<b><u>June 14,</u></b>	<b><u>July 12,</u></b>
<b><u>August 9,</u></b>	<b><u>September 6, and</u></b>
<b><u>October 4.</u></b>	

**To participate in the calls, call toll-free 1-877-643-6951 and then enter pass code 55835024#** at the scheduled time. All callers will be able to speak if they wish or they can just listen in on the discussion. **Please do not call the toll-free number at other times – no one will answer. For any questions, contact the Program at 717-694-3596.**

## IPM Information Once Again Available

Sweet corn, tomato and curcubit integrated pest management (IPM) weekly updates will again be available to growers in several forms this year, including email, fax or regular mail.

The Program has funded IPM research at Penn State for tomato disease control and sweet corn insect control for many years. The Board feels it is important to provide this IPM information to growers during the season when they can use it to time fungicide and insecticide applications. For the last nineteen years the Program has offered this information to growers in the PA Vegetable IPM Weekly Update. Besides being sent to individual growers, it is posted at many of the produce auctions.

**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 on the enclosed yellow form. Please return the form by July 15, 2016, 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 information a toll-free recorded telephone message that is available 24-hours-a-day by calling 1-800-PENN-IPM. The IPM information will also be available on the Penn State Extension Vegetable, Small Fruit and Mushroom website at <http://extension.psu.edu/plants/vegetable-fruit>.

## Program to Help Fund 13 Research Projects in 2016

The Vegetable Marketing and Research Board approved up to \$25,000 in assessment funds for vegetable research in 2016. In cooperation with the Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Association (PVGA), which will be contributing an additional \$56,000 from its General Fund, the two vegetable growers organizations will be funding 13 different projects. The Association's research funds are earned by the members at the Farm Show and Ag Progress Days Food Booths and other Association events. The approved projects total \$80,750.

The projects approved for funding and their objectives are listed below. Projects marked with an asterisk "\*" were only approved for partial funding.

### Managing Corn Earworm While Conserving Aphid Biocontrols

Shelby J. Fleischer Penn State Univ. **\$4,500**

- Test the efficacy of Gemstar against corn ear worm in conditions in Pennsylvania.

### New Herbicide Options for Weed Control in Sweet Corn

Dwight Lingenfelter, Penn State Univ. and Mark VanGessel, Univ. of Delaware **\$3,000**

- Examine various new herbicides in sweet corn to determine their effectiveness on weed control and evaluate them for sweet corn injury and yield impact.

### Evaluation of Select Seed and In-Furrow Treatments for the Management of Soilborne Pathogens of Snap Bean.

Beth K. Gugino, Penn State Univ. **\$4,891**

- Evaluate select seed and in-furrow treatments for the management of soilborne pathogens of snap bean.

### Efficacy of Fungicides for the Management of White Mold in Snap Bean in Pennsylvania

Sarah Pethybridge, Cornell Univ., New York Agricultural Experiment Station, and Beth K. Gugino, Penn State Univ. **\$7,676**

- Quantify the efficacy of fungicides and biofungicides in different resistance groups (FRAC codes) for the control of white mold in snap bean. Biofungicides will be included to provide options for organic growers.

### Reflex for Pumpkins: Does it Have a Fit?

Dwight Lingenfelter, Penn State Univ. **\$2,000\***

- Evaluate pumpkin safety of fomesafen (Reflex) with four common pumpkin varieties.
- Evaluate herbicide effectiveness when fomesafen is used alone and in combination with Curbit and/or Command herbicide.
- Determine the effect of Reflex when used in combination with a rye cover crop.

### Keeping Pennsylvania Vegetable Growers Profitable: Statewide Pumpkin Cultivar Trials

Elsa Sánchez, and William Lamont, Penn State Univ.; Timothy Elkner, Thomas Butzler, and Robert Pollock, Penn State Extension **\$12,000**

- Evaluate up to 25 cultivars of 15 to 25 pound orange, smooth-faced pumpkins at three locations: southwestern Pennsylvania, central Pennsylvania and southeastern Pennsylvania.

### Breeding Tomatoes for Disease Resistance and other Desirable Horticultural Characteristics for Production in Pennsylvania

Majid R. Foolad, Penn State Univ. **\$12,000**

- Development and evaluation of experimental F<sub>1</sub> hybrids with high yield, early blight (EB) resistance, and other desirable horticultural characteristics including high fruit quality.
- Development of inbred lines of processing and fresh-market tomatoes with late blight (LB) resistance
- Field evaluation of Penn State advanced processing and fresh-market tomato breeding lines

### Bacterial Diseases of Tomato: Developing and Augmenting Current Management Strategies.

Beth K. Gugino, Penn State Univ. **\$4,091**

- Expand the collection of bacterial pathogen isolates, identify them to genus and species and characterize their sensitivity to copper.
- Evaluate the efficacy of select products and programs for the management of bacterial spot on tomato with a field trial.

### Control of Thrips in High Tunnel Tomato Production with Natural Enemies and Entomopathogenic Fungi.

Cathy Thomas, PA Department of Agriculture and Sarah Pickel, Penn State Univ. **\$5,000**

- Utilize one-on-one training with an IPM/biocontrol specialist to help growers integrate a biological control program for management of thrips
- Reduce the use of conventional and high-risk pesticides of participating growers by at least 50%.

### Fresh Market Slicer Tomato Variety Evaluation Including Advanced PSU Selections

Timothy Elkner, Penn State Extension and Majid Foolad, Penn State Univ. **\$7,350**

- Evaluate disease resistance, yield and fruit quality of commercially available slicing tomato varieties and compare them with several advanced selections from Dr. Foolad's breeding program.

### High Tunnel Tomato Leaf Mold Management Evaluation

Timothy Elkner, Penn State Extension and Beth Gugino, Penn State Univ. **\$7,750**

- Evaluate currently labeled chemicals as well as combinations of alternative products in a replicated trial to improve control of this disease. A spring screening trial will be conducted in a greenhouse followed by a larger-scale tunnel evaluation of promising treatments in the fall using both resistant and susceptible tomato varieties.

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