



Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

Agricultural Diversification and Market Development Bureau

IOWA GROWERS' NEWS

May 15, 2007

Issue 1

Here for You

The Agricultural Diversification and Market Development Bureau seeks to strengthen and expand the marketing of Iowa grown products. It is our goal to provide growers with information on marketing opportunities currently available while also attempting to help create new and profitable ones. Whether you are planting tomatoes in a greenhouse, using plastic mulch on your strawberries, implementing organic methods, or planting your

crops the traditional way, we are offering a tool to aid you in your efforts. By publishing this semi-annual newsletter, we hope to touch on issues that will benefit you and your operation. This will include crop production and will continue through the marketing phase. If you have ideas or suggestions for our publication, please do not hesitate to share them with us.

Iowa Growers' View

In each edition, we plan to offer a segment entitled "Iowa Growers' View." We are still recruiting volunteers to help us with this effort. We are looking for growers around the state who are willing to give us a personal crop report. We hope to get information such as rainfall, pest problems (or lack thereof), or any other information that you can provide that will depict the crop condition in YOUR area. We plan to tie this information to-

gether with statistical data provided to us by Harry Hillaker, the State Climatologist. We can then share the information in the most positive light with the media and the rest of the state. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer reporter, please contact Tammy Stotts at tammy.stotts@idals.state.ia.us or you may call 515-281-7657.

The Benefits of Wind

During our recent bout of excessively warm weather followed by the week of sub-freezing conditions, we had one thing working in our favor, and that was the wind. According to Dr. Paul Domoto, a Professor of Horticulture at Iowa State University, wind can be very helpful. He says that critical temperatures are based on radiation freeze conditions when plant tissue becomes colder than the air tempera-

ture. With wind (advection freeze) the plant tissue will be warmer or drop to the air temperature. Wind draws off moisture from the buds to help reduce the chance of ice formation. Wind, by vibrating the branches greatly reduces the chance of super cooling - the plant tissue drops well below freezing without ice formation, and then ice forms almost instantly.

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FEATURE CROP

Each edition will feature articles on different crops in order to serve more of our audience. Whether you are a veteran grower, or just getting started, we hope to include information that will be useful to all readers.

The feature crop for this edition is Asparagus. At the time of this printing, the asparagus season will be in its prime. While we have no control over the weather, there are things you can do to improve your asparagus crop.

The following tips printed by the Michigan Asparagus Advisory Board may prove beneficial to your next asparagus crop:



Burn off weeds that have emerged during the harvest season. Vigorously attack (spot spray) small infestations of perennial weeds before they take over the entire field.

Identify the weeds present; if you are not qualified to do this, find a chemical rep or consultant who can.

Plan your weed control program on a field by field basis. Match herbicide combinations to weeds currently present and those expected for that particular field.

Have the appropriate materials on hand so that you can take advantage of good spraying conditions. We are now blessed with excellent sources of weed control products and practices, both organic and conventional, that with good product knowledge can be used to effectively treat most weed problems. Planning is the key and remember,

if using herbicides, to always follow the label instructions.

A s p a r a g u s



QUICK & EASY ASPARAGUS RECIPE

1 bunch asparagus

1 onion sliced into wedges and separated

Olive oil

Salt

Place asparagus and onion wedges in a single layer on a cookie sheet. Drizzle olive oil over the top and sprinkle with salt.

Bake at 400° for 10 minutes.

Enjoy!

DO I QUALIFY AS AN EXEMPT ORGANIC FARMER?

Please be aware that if you are making an "organic" claim and are not certified as organic, you must comply with all rules and requirements as stated in NOP Regulations, Section 205.101 and complete an Annual Declaration of Exemption which does include a \$20 processing fee. If your gross sales from the

sale of all organic agricultural products are less than \$5,000, and all sales are directly to the end user, you may be eligible for an exemption. You can obtain additional information by going to our website or calling Mary Nieland at 515-281-7656.

Help is Available

Des Moines – Governor Culver is asking the USDA, State Farm Service Agency to assess the impact the late spring freeze has had on Iowa's agricultural commodities.

Preliminary reports indicate that fruits, vegetables and alfalfa hay were particularly hard hit. This assessment will provide the Governor, state FSA officials, and the State Emergency Board with a more detailed account of all types and amounts of damage sustained across the state. The assessment data will be used to determine whether a request for a U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Disaster Declaration is warranted at this time. This type of disaster declaration would provide FSA Emergency Loans to growers in the affected counties who qualify for the programs. All growers who sustained losses are encouraged to contact their local county FSA office.

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) administered through the USDA, Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides financial assistance to producers of non insurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory or prevented planting occurs due to natural disasters.

The closing dates to apply for the 2007 NAP crops that would have been affected by this late spring freeze have past. For those Iowa FSA County offices with producers that purchased a 2007 NAP insurance contract by the sales closing date and feel they have suffered a loss, should file a Notice of Loss, in writing, at their local county FSA office. In order for the notice of loss to be considered timely, it must be filed within 15 days of the date the loss occurs or first becomes apparent.



LOOKING FOR BUYERS?

What good is your bumper crop if you don't have a market for it? A key element is to plan ahead. There are many outlets for your products. Farmers markets are an excellent marketing opportunity. The IDALS website has information on farmers markets available. In addition, if you are interested in the Farmers Market Nutrition Program, you will find this information on the IDALS website at <http://www.agriculture.state.ia.us> or by calling 515/281-3632.

Who says you can't get something for nothing? Free advertising does exist. There are many free on-line marketing tools that will allow you to post your name, address and often times the hours along with the varieties of crops you have available. The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship offers this type of site. You may register on-line by going to our website. Another site to consider is the Market Maker offered by Iowa State University Extension. Market Maker is an interactive mapping system that locates businesses and markets of agricultural products in Iowa, providing an important link between



producers and consumers. To obtain more information, or to register your farm, you can go to their website at: <http://ia.marketmaker.uiuc.edu/index.asp>. Still other options exist offering free listings as well as those for a fee depending on the level of advertisement you are seeking. Choose Iowa™ promotes value-added Iowa ag-based retail enterprises. Choose Iowa™ is sponsored by the Iowa Agriculture Innovation Center and offers a variety of benefits including free and fee-based directory services. You can learn more by contacting them at 515-281-7825 or going to their website at: <http://www.chooseiowa.com/contactus.php>. There are also many opportunities to join organizations that promote the fruit and vegetable industry such as Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (IFVGA). Benefits of joining an organization typically include networking, field days, workshops and newsletters among their list of perks. To learn more about this organization or their June 25th field day, you may go to their website at: <http://www.iafruitvegetablegrowers.org/index.html> or call Deb Smith at 515-465-5992.

LEGISLATIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS

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Pending the signature of Governor Culver, the bill known as Senate File 551, allocates funds for additional staff persons and program money within the Agricultural Diversification and Market Development Bureau. A State Apiarist will be hired for the purposes of administering and enforcing apiary law. Funding was also received to hire an additional staff person to help



administer the rapidly growing IDALS Organic Program. The third and final victory is an appropriation for a "Farm to School" program, which is designed to link farmers with schools to provide children with fresh fruits and vegetables. We are very pleased with the new additions and the ability to better serve the specialty crops program as a result of this increased funding.

2007 FARM BILL PROPOSALS

Washington Post columnist Jeffrey Birnbaum reports that "After years of derision and obscurity, the nation's fruits and vegetables are finally getting the respect they deserve. Long dismissed as mere "specialty crops" and all but ignored by the powerful lawmakers who fashion the federal government's massive farm bill every five years, fresh produce is now promoting itself in a major way and is positioned to be a big winner in this year's legislative sweepstakes."

News release number 1031.07 published by USDA and listed on the Economic Research Website quotes Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns in a speech given to the Organic Trade Association and the United Fresh Produce Association in a recent meet-

ing in Chicago, Illinois. The farm bill proposal for specialty crops seeks \$5 billion in additional targeted funding. The Secretary states "We listened when producers told us that farm policy should distribute support more equitably. Specialty crops are now nearly equal in market value to program crops, yet these producers receive no direct cash support."

Components of the specialty crops package include: Trade Title, Nutrition Title, Commodity Programs Title, Conservation Title, Rural Development Title, Energy Title and Research Title.

You can read the news release in its entirety by going to: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Features/FarmBill2007/> and clicking on USDA 2007 Farm Bill Proposals.

IMPROVING THE AWARENESS AND USE OF IOWA SPECIALTY CROPS

The Agricultural Diversification and Market Development Bureau, along with the Horticulture and Farmers Market Bureau, will be receiving funds through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The scope of this project includes eight subgrantee

awards of up to \$4000. A few of the other projects will include the development of media kits, chef demonstrations at farmers markets and display equipment for promotions.