

Marketing News You Can Use

Delaware Department of Agriculture
Marketing Section



A MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

Dear Fellow Farmers:

As with the rest of the country, Delaware's economic situation is grim according to the latest revenue estimates from the Delaware Economic & Financial Advisory Council (DEFAC). This significant decrease in revenues has led to a hiring freeze and will require significant budget cuts; additional cuts may be needed if revenues continue to worsen. These measures will certainly impact some of our programs and services; I am sure that many of you are feeling the effects as well. However, I want to assure you that our excellent staff will continue to maintain DDA's quality services to you and all of our constituents while taking the necessary steps to address the budget situation.

On a more positive note, the holiday season is here, a time when we can rejoice and share with each other. I hope that you and your families have a very happy Thanksgiving as you enjoy the delicious bounty from our fields and forests. Be a "locavore" and add some local apples, sweet potatoes, greens, Brussels sprouts, and turnips to your table this year.

If you are planning to decorate a tree this year, I urge you to consider choosing a locally grown tree from one of Delaware's Christmas tree growers. When you buy from a local grower, you know that you are getting the freshest tree possible. You and your family will also enjoy the experience of visiting a Delaware Christmas tree farm and the fond memories of looking for that perfect tree. To find a grower near you, check DDA's agritourism map at www.dda.delaware.gov/publications/tourismmap.pdf, or call DDA's Marketing Section at 800.282.8685 (DE only) or 302.698.4500.

There are also many local places to find other festive decorations for your homes and gifts for family and friends. In our on-line *Farm Market Directory*, http://66.173.241.168/dda/farm_market.html, you can find on-farm markets and other outlets in each county that are open through the holidays. Select "Christmas items" under "Product" and find a nearby market or shop.

Best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season.

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Inside this issue:

Message from the Marketing Man-	2
Cranberry Harvest Celebrates Eighth Harvest	3
Delaware Farmer Receives Award	4



Marketing Quote:

Many a small thing has been made large by the right kind of advertising.

*Mark Twain -
Writer, Humorist, Lecturer*

A Message From YOUR Marketing Manager

Dear Fellow Farmers:

Jo-Ann (Walston), Lisa (Falconetti), and I recently returned from the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) 2008 Fresh Summit held in Orlando, Florida.



For those of you wondering exactly what a Fresh Summit is - it's one of the largest international events solely dedicated to fruit, vegetables, and floral. This show draws more than 17,000 attendees from 70 countries annually. Those are amazing statistics and the Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA) was right there in the thick of things!

There were so many amazing displays as you can see from the photos. I was especially impressed with what the other states had to offer. The popular concept was to book an entire row (or more!) and set up various commodity groups and farmers with their own booth on that row under the general heading of the state. I see our future booth progressing to that point. We currently have a 10'x10' booth but I know in a few years we'll have several 10'x10' booths for our farmers and commodities groups. For more information please contact Jo-Ann at (302) 698-4523 as she is our PMA Coordinator.



Not only were there many interesting displays to see, there were many interesting retailers to talk to! All of them requested the same thing – a copy of our newly printed Wholesale Producers Buyers Guide which we were happy to give them. I was able to meet with representatives from Krogers, Wal-Mart, Sam's Club, ACME, and Harris Teeter. During the course of the two-and-a-half day show we collected over 200 business cards! Those 200 people are being mailed a copy of our Wholesale Produce Buyers Guide this month – I can't wait to see what comes of that.

The PMA 2009 Fresh Summit will be held in Anaheim, California October 2-5.

Fresh Summit is an amazing show and an experience I would love to be able to share with each and every one of our farmers. Won't you consider joining us?

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Cranberry Farm Celebrates Eighth Harvest

Thanksgiving dinner would not be possible without the farmer. Everything is raised or grown on the farm: turkeys and hogs, potatoes, assorted vegetables, and pumpkins and apples for pies.



All pictures courtesy of Delaware State News

But there's another staple to the Thanksgiving menu that's missing from this delicious list, and believe it or not, Delaware grows them, too... cranberries.

"It's kind of like a hobby for me," Tim Johnson of Felton said recently regarding his eight year passion for growing cranberries near Smyrna. "I don't make much from it, but we're doing ok."

In October, Johnson and his farmhands celebrated their eighth harvest of cranberries, a journey that begins early each spring with replanting and ends in mid-October before the first frost. This season they harvested three bogs, each about two acres in size. Each acre netted approximately 30,000 pounds of fruit.

Johnson then trucks the cranberries to a processing plant in Chatsworth, NJ, where the berries are eventually pressed and made into juice for Ocean Spray. He is the only cranberry grower in Delaware, and is part of a cooperative with members growing in New Jersey, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Canada and Chile.

"They (cranberries) grow wild in Delaware, so it is a native plant," Johnson added. "Once you plant them they will stay alive forever."

Johnson pointed out that cranberries do not grow in water, which many people believe to be the case. They are grown from vines planted in 'bogs', which defined, are soft, marshy pits usually found near wetlands. In Johnson's case, he had to excavate areas located on his 105 acre farm located on Woodland Beach Road.

"And Delaware has good soil for cranberries since they do well in sandy soil," Johnson noted. "If the PH level is 5.1-5.5 you're good to go."

The only other requirements are fertilization and irrigation. Johnson said his bogs need an average of an inch of water per day throughout the growing season.

Once the berries are ready for harvesting, special equipment is utilized to remove the berries and collect them. The process starts by filling each bog with about 10 inches of water, then using a 'knocker' machine to agitate the berries until they gently fall off the vines. It is a process that demands patience, and can take up to seven days to complete. Otherwise the fruit may become damaged.



Then an oil slick boom is used to move the berries to a harvester where they eventually are cleaned. Johnson hopes to expand his operation in the future, dig out additional bogs and plant more vines which he receives from a grower in Wisconsin. "The vines aren't too expensive," he said, "but I also have to pay the freight."

Cranberries are currently at an all-time peak in popularity. They are used in juice, cranberry jellies, sauces and salsas, and currently as a competitor to raisins ("Craisins") as a snack. They are low in fat and healthy, too, being high in antioxidants, Vitamin C and flavonoids.

In a state where soybeans, corn and grain crops rule the roost, niche crops do exist and flourish. Just ask Tim Johnson, who every October is up to his waistline in tasty cranberries!



Hurd Creating A Buzz with Pollinator Conservation Award



It may have been the need for bees to pollinate his pumpkins, cucumber, squash and other crops that launched Chuck Hurd of Lister Acres into a new vocation for which he has just received a

national award.

The North American Pollinator Protection Campaign and National Association of Conservation Districts presented the “Farmer-Rancher Pollinator Conservation Award” in ceremonies at the Organization of American States in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 22.

Noting that former recipients have mostly had Ph.D after their names, Hurd said he was “humbled by the honor.” He added that it was a great honor for Delaware to be recognized for its “pollinator-friendly practices.”

Dr. Faith Kuehn, administrator of the Delaware Department of Agriculture Plant Industries Section, nominated Hurd in recognition of his efforts on behalf of DDA’s long-term bee conservation project. In 2005, she said, Hurd offered DDA the use of three-quarters of an acre of Lister Farm to plant a native wildflower meadow for use as a bee survey study site.

“As part of his agritourism program, he thought it would be a great learning experience for the children to walk through a field that was alive with butterflies and other insects,” she wrote.

DDA developed a pollinator seed mix that Hurd planted in the plot and continues to maintain, even though the farm’s focus is no longer on agritourism. The plot contains 17 native species.

Earlier, in 2000, Hurd had installed 14 acres of Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) filter strips, which he delays mowing until after most of the flowering plants have stopped blooming, thereby preserving season-long forage for pollinators.

“Natural plant community succession continues to introduce a number of native bee forage plants into the filter strips,” Kuehn said.

Hurd smiled broadly as he recalled how he’d “planted” black-eyed Susans on the CREP acres. “I had collected a 5-gallon bucket full of seed,” he said. “And on a windy day, I just drove along the filter strips tossing seed into the wind.”

The tiny seeds had taken hold and yielded a bounty of flowers for honeybees and other pollinators.

He recalled, too, that he had asked to take steps, when the CREP acreage was originally installed, to make sure the crop of vegetation was successful.

Farmers now are allowed to employ such management skills in the first year, he added.

Hurd got into beekeeping by default, he said. In 1995, he moved to the farm started by his great-aunt and uncle, Matilda and Joshua Lister, in 1927. Farm production in recent years has included cucurbits, lima beans, tomatoes, peppers, onion and cabbage, as well as mums and strawberries. A few years ago he opened his pumpkin patch to the public and added an elaborate corn maze. Originally he had a hobby beekeeper tend the hives needed for pollination, then a commercial beekeeper for a while, later retuning to the services of another hobbyist. “But I found I was caring for them more and more myself,” he said.

When Caron learned of the award, he called to congratulate Hurd and said he was sending a tie. Unsure of what sort of tie an entomologist of 40 years would send, Hurd was pleased to receive one decorated with butterflies, another native pollinator. Now Hurd is the one moving hives around. He rescued a number of swarms and built his own hive boxes.

The honey is being marketed casually by Hurd and his wife Suzanne as the bee population grows. One of Suzanne’s friends was an early recipient of the sweet, golden product. “Your honey’s honey!” she exclaimed, and Suzanne adapted the name to its present form: “My Honey’s Honey.”

In 2006, two weeks into a seven-week cycle of mum production, Hurd considered keeping up the pace for five more years. He quickly made up his mind to make it five more weeks — until the mum crop was sold.

For now the Hurds are taking a break from intensive agritourism and farm stand marketing — which has been in addition to off-farm careers — to spend more time with their five grandchildren and parents.

Hurd continues to tend a large garden for the family — and the bees — and he shares the bounty with friends. He said the pick-your-own strawberry operation will continue at the farm on Route 14 between Harrington and Milford.

This article was written by Carol Kinsley and appeared in the Nov. 11 edition of the Delmarva Farmer