Program Update - Michael Fargione

Cornell Cooperative Extension Hudson Valley Regional Fruit Program (HVRFP)
Supervising County – Ulster Programming Period: 9-14-07 through 3-21-08

Highlighted Activities Completed During Reporting Period:

Apple Quality Project – I collaborated in a 2-years study of orchard factors and fruit condition at harvest in order to better understand their impacts on fruit quality coming out of long-term storage. Collaborating growers: Yonder Farms, Fix Bros., Bartollatta Bros., G. Saulpaugh & Son, Dressel Farms, Crist Bros., W. G. Minard & Sons, B. Trapanni, Porpiglia Farms; Cornell collaborators: T. Robinson, S. Hoying, D. Breth, C. Kahlke, K. Iungerman. I set up 26 orchard plots; collected tree data, soil, leaf and fruit samples; during each fall I analyzed fruit maturity and internal ethylene levels on a weekly basis. Data is currently being analyzed by T. Robinson.

Apple Harvest Maturity Evaluation Program - This program helped growers optimize the timing of apple harvests to improve fruit quality and storability. Fruit samples were collected from grower blocks in different parts of the region and the maturity of sampled fruit were evaluated. Eleven reports were prepared this fall and distributed to growers via email or recorded answering machine.

2008 Empire State Fruit & Vegetable Expo – I planned and facilitated one session of the Tree Fruit Program held February 14, 2008 in Syracuse. There were approximately 100 growers present who learned about issues dealing with tree fruit production in a warming climate.

2008 Hudson Valley Fruit Grower's School – The School was held February 26-29, 2008 at the Holiday Inn, Kingston, NY. Attendance was: Day 1 Tree Fruit – 171; Day 2 Tree Fruit – 115; Day 3 Berries – 48; Day 4 Grapes – 69.

Tree fruit session highlights: growers learned about apple pest management and production issues from Cornell scientists (Agnello, Jentsch, Rosenberger, Robinson, Watkins). Business management and marketing issues and opportunities were discussed (by NY Apple Association staff and by Nettleton, CCE NYC). Visiting scientists spoke about apple (Dr. Duane Green of UMass Amherst) and stone fruit (Dr. Jerome Frecon of Rutgers) cultivars adapted for our area. Mediation practices for heat stress of apples were discussed (Hoying of Cornell HVL) as part of CCE's continued effort to educate growers about climate change impacts on agriculture. A trade show with 33 vendors provided opportunities for growers to interact with agri-businesses.

In addition to meeting organization, I co-presented a talk on electronic tools for teaching fruit IPM.

Special Permit Training Sessions were held on March 18 (HVL, Highland) and March 19 (Hudson). Debbie Breth (CCE LOFT) collaborated to prepare the materials, while Steve McKay (CCE Columbia) and I conducted the training in English or Spanish. The 2 sessions helped 20 farm operators and 80 workers comply with DEC requirements for on-site supervision of workers handling and making applications of restricted use pesticides. DEC Regions 3 & 4 staff monitored the training and issued the permits.

Highlighted Efforts Currently Underway:

Farm Energy Conservation and Use of Alternative Fuel Project – in collaboration with T. Rusinek, R. Churchill and A. Reith, efforts continued to help farmers learn how to reduce greenhouse gases by improving on-farm energy conservation practices and through the use of sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels. An energy web page was developed and a farmer energy survey was completed. A report on the survey findings is being prepared.

I represent CCE UC on Ulster Strategy 12B Committee which is charged with developing ways to strengthen and maintain agricultural viability in Ulster County.

Outreach Efforts:

In collaboration with S. Hoying, film clips of a "How To Topwork (graft) Apple Trees" were recorded during May-December 2007. These clips will be edited and a video production of the process placed on the Regional Fruit web site this spring.

A project to develop videos detailing apple production using the NY Tall Spindle Training System is being started In collaboration with T. Robinson and S. Hoying and with funding from NY Farm Viability Institute. The end result will be a CD distributed to apple growers throughout NY and video clips placed on the Cornell Fruit web page.

Collaborative efforts will continue with HVL staff to provide growers with timely pest management information including electronic grower alerts, web resources and video clips.