



Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

Agricultural Diversification and Market Development Bureau

IOWA GROWERS' NEWS

November 13, 2007

Issue 2

WINTER IS A GREAT TIME TO ENHANCE YOUR SKILLS

Make plans to attend one of the many conferences being offered this year. Whether it involves developing a niche business in agritourism or enhancing your farmers market skills, there are many opportunities to pick up new skills to help your business flourish.

The Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Association's annual conference is scheduled for January 24-25 at the Best Western Regency in Marshalltown. Nationally renowned agritourism expert Jane Eckert will be the key note speaker for

this event. The conference will focus on a marketing theme. A highlight will include 4 grower panels discussing apples, strawberries, CSAs and farmers markets. Gary Luebke, USDA Risk Management Agency, will also be on hand to discuss crop insurance for specialty crops.

For more information contact Deb Smith at 515-465-5992 or visit their website:

www.iafruitvegetablegrowers.org.

Mark your Calendar

- Iowa Farmers Market Workshop
Sat. 2/23/08 in Des Moines
Contact
Barbara Lovitt @
515-281-8232

FARM TO SCHOOL—A NEW MARKETING OPPORTUNITY

In 2007 the Iowa Legislature passed a bill containing a new program for Iowa food producers and processors. This program is called Farm to School (F2S). This new program is part of a nationwide Farm to School Program—www.farmtoschool.org/. The goal of this program is to encourage and promote the purchase of locally and regionally produced or processed food in order to improve child nutrition and to strengthen local and regional farm economies.

"Iowa producers of fresh fruits and vegetables should be able to count on some new markets for some of the food they produce," according to Steve Pedersen, F2S Coordinator at IDALS. School districts in Iowa will be in need of fresh Iowa produce, meat products, eggs, poultry products and dairy products as well as locally processed foods. "Iowa public and private school food service directors will be looking to local growers to supplement their normal purchases. Some of the goals of this program

include: to encourage school-age children to develop healthy eating habits; to provide an additional market for farmers; to provide activities that assist students with hands-on learning opportunities including farm visits, cooking demonstrations, gardening and educating students about the source of the foods they eat; to establish additional partnerships; and to accept financial and in-kind contributions to support this program.

The program is still being organized. Additional information on this program will be available on the IDALS web page in the near future. The program is supported by IDALS, the Iowa Department of Education, and the Iowa Department of Health. A Governor-appointed council will oversee the program.

Producers interested in participating in this program may contact Steve Pedersen at 515-281-7608 or steve.pedersen@idals.state.ia.us.

FEATURE CROP

Whether you indulge to satisfy your taste buds, or for medicinal purposes, garlic is probably one of the most popular ingredients in many of your favorite dishes and can be found in health food stores everywhere. Medicinally, garlic is most effective for lowering cholesterol and helping to prevent artery blockage. The oil from garlic can also be used as a topical treatment of skin infections. Now that we have established the demand for garlic, why not consider growing it? Information obtained from Iowa State University may be helpful to you before you begin. Garlic cultivars are classified as either hardneck or softneck. Hardneck cultivars are suitable for Iowa gardens. There are different varieties which include Asian Tempest, German Red, Merri-



field Rocambole and Spanish Roja Rocambole. Garlic grows best in well-drained, fertile soils that are high in organic matter. The optimum soil pH for garlic is between 6 and 7. Be sure to till the soil before planting to provide a loose growing bed for bulb development. Plant garlic cloves 3 to 5 inches apart within the row leaving 18 to 24 inches between rows. Garlic cloves should be planted in the fall or early spring with 4-6 inches of weed-seed free straw as mulch to protect it from the elements of winter. Garlic requires more fertilization than many vegetables and should be watered once a week through late July. It is

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time to harvest garlic when the foliage starts to turn yellow and die, in August or September, allow 2 to 3 weeks for drying.

I'VE GOT A CROP, NOW WHAT?

Don't get stuck asking this question; MAKE A PLAN!! The key to any successful business is in the planning. If you plan to expand your business, chances are good that you may have to consult with your banker. Before you do that, you want to be well organized. If you do not have a business plan, I strongly encourage you to do so. There are many outlets available to assist you with this including technical assistance providers, courses and workshops and a few hundred self-help books. A business plan should consist of your business concept, background information and history, a description of products and services, management structure and organization, marketing plan, a financial plan with an income statement, cash flow analysis and a balance sheet.

For the sake of time and space, this article is going to focus on the marketing plan aspect. Before making drastic changes in a business you should consider the market you are producing for; more importantly, what does the market need and want? Once you have paired market needs to production options viable to your business, you need to consider the best source to market them in. NOW, before the crop is harvested, is the time to do this. Start by weighing the pros and cons of each mar-

keting opportunity. Each community is different - cater to the needs of your customers. There are opportunities within Farm to School programs, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), direct marketing, entertainment and agritourism, farmers markets, selling to restaurants, and listing your business in local directories. By researching the markets near you, you can answer some of the other critical questions such as: Who will buy my product? How do they want to receive it? What makes my product unique? What are the current trends?

A few of the many resources for you to utilize are:

- AgMRC Agricultural Marketing Resource Center <http://www.agmrc.org/agmrc/default.html>
- National Sustainable Agriculture Info. Service/ ATTRA <http://attra.ncat.org/>
- U.S. Small Business Administration <http://www.sba.gov/>
- "Grow your small Market Farm" program http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/marketing_files/workshop/abstracts/gysmf.htm
- Growing New Farmers <http://www.growingnewfarmers.org/>

CONSIDERING ORGANIC? LEARN MORE

Make plans to attend the 7th Annual Iowa Organic Conference to be held on Monday, November 19th. The conference is sponsored by Iowa State University and will be held on their campus at the Scheman Building in Ames.

A trade show of 30 vendors featuring organic products and services will be held in conjunction with the conference. You will have an opportunity to attend seminars on organic grains, vegetables, herbs,

fruits and soil health as well as an array of marketing tips targeting beginning growers to those who want to enhance their current marketing skills. A four-course all-organic lunch from Midwest growers will also be included in the conference fee.

To learn more about the conference, or for registration information go to: <http://extension.agron.iastate.edu/organicag>.



Iowa Growers' View

Comments from Growers

The weather data in this table was obtained from the State Climatologist Harry Hillaker. The totals used were derived from data taken from June, 2007- September, 2007. The numbers do not show an accurate reflection of the variation in weather from month to month over the 2007 summer.

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|---------------|-----------------------|--------------|---|
| North West | Temp Precipitation | +2.1 - .3 | |
| North Central | Temp Precipitation | +1.2 +4.3 | |
| North East | Temp Precipitation | +1.3 +7.3 | Overall a good season. Rains were timely early. Late fall some problems with picking and mold due to too much rain. No irrigation needed this year. |
| West Central | Temp Precipitation | +1.6 +2.0 | |
| Central | Temp Precipitation | +1.9 +2.6 | Mid April Freeze deadly to fruit buds on apple trees. Very timely saturating rains provided for excellent pumpkin/squash production. |
| East Central | Temp Precipitation | +1.0 +5.1 | Rain early did not come regularly enough—late season greens & early season peas did well-lots of bugs this year (squash bugs, bean leaf & cucumber beetles) |
| South West | Temp Precipitation | +2.2 + .0 | |
| South Central | Temp Precipitation | +1.6 +2.2 | |
| South East | Temp Precipitation | +1.4 +4.9 | |

Please help us fill in the blanks. If you reside in a region that has not had a report submitted, please consider being a volunteer reporter. Any information you can provide will be appreciated. Please send an email to Tammy Stotts at tammy.stotts@idals.state.ia.us or phone at 515-281-7657. Thank you for your help.

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Ag Diversification & Market Development Bureau
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Des Moines, Iowa 50319
www.agriculture.state.ia.us

Please direct questions/comments regarding
newsletter to:
Tammy Stotts
Marketing Specialist
tammy.stotts@idals.state.ia.us
Phone: 515-281-7657
Fax: 515-281-6178

Find us on the web at:
www.agriculture.state.ia.us

COULD AGRITOURISM BE THE NICHE YOU'RE LOOKING FOR?

Mark your calendars for Visit Iowa Farms, a conference on developing and marketing Iowa's agritourism operations. The conference will be held March 15 at the Scheman Building on the Iowa State University campus. Marketing 101, business planning, at-

tracting tourism and regional networking are just a few of the exciting topics offered. For more information, watch www.iavaap.org or contact the Iowa State University Extension Value Added Agriculture Program at 515-294-9483.

FLOOD ASSISTANCE MAY BE AVAILABLE FOR NORTHEAST IOWA

Recent flooding in Minnesota and Wisconsin has hit some farmers very hard. The objective for the fall/winter 2007—spring 2008 Sow the Seeds Flood Relief Fund is: to provide financial help to southeast Minnesota, southwest Wisconsin and northeast Iowa organic and sustainable family farmers whose farms have been affected by the August 2007 floods and storms and who have suffered hardship as a result. A volunteer Flood Relief Steering Committee has been formed to create the guidelines and procedures for distributing the donations. Applications

will be accepted until November 21. To learn more about this assistance or to get an application form, you may go to their website at <http://www.sowtheseedsfund.org/index.cfm>. Completed applications can be faxed, mailed or emailed to the Committee at:

Sow the Seeds Flood Relief Fund
c/o Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
105 First Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404
Fax 612-870-4846; Email info@sowtheseedsfund.org

ACT NOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) administered through the USDA, Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides financial assistance to producers of food and fiber crops for which catastrophic level crop insurance is not available when low yields, loss of inventory or prevented planting occurs due to natural disasters. It does not cover home gardens, experimental crops, by-products from processing or harvesting of an eligible crop, volunteer stands, nor most crops not produced for food or fiber. To enroll producers must pay a \$100 service fee per crop per county paid on or before the application deadline, maximum cost will not exceed \$300 per county or \$900 per producer. The application deadline date for coverage of the following 2008 crops: apples, cherries, grapes, stone fruit, peaches, pears, apricots, nectarines, cane berries, blue-

berries, gooseberries, walnuts and chestnuts is **NOVEMBER 20, 2007**.

NAP payments may be issued to eligible producers when crop losses exceed 50 percent of the individual's approved yield. If producers have not established an individual yield by providing FSA with past years' production, the approved yield will be 65% of the average historic yield established by Commodity Credit Corporation.

Be sure to keep good production and sales records each year and report any natural disaster events that effect your crop. To apply for NAP or to learn more about the program, contact your local Farm Service Agency.

