

PLANT & PEST ADVISORY

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Peach Marketing Dilemma

Jerome L. Frecon, Agricultural Agent

In our November newsletter we discussed how 2003 was a most difficult season for peach growers and shippers. We mentioned some of the positive and negative things about the growing season, and the hope that with some changes in the weather and timing of harvest that it may help growers get a better price for peaches in 2004. However, there are some disturbing trends in peach buying and marketing that wouldn't be corrected with weather changes and improved production technology in New Jersey.

We will address some of these at a peach marketing summit on December 18 in the Gloucester County Office of Government Services. We also hope to discuss this with a small group of California growers on January 26, 2004.

In recent years, the U. S. food retailing industry has undergone unprecedented consolidation and structural change through mergers, acquisitions, and divestitures and the growth of new competitors like Wal-Mart, B. J. Wholesale, Costco and Target. With this, over 4400 supermarkets have been purchased. Basically the biggest have gotten bigger with little loyalty to any particular state or region. With bigger stores come fewer but larger buyers who request or demand certain prices and services from suppliers.

What can we do to help the seller deal with this problem? We might ask for federal legislation to introduce antitrust legislation that keeps the big from getting any bigger.

We can also give up trying to sell to the big stores and focus on the smaller stores where we can better compete. Because there are not enough of these stores, we will have to do the things that give us more strength in dealing with the "big boys". As suppliers we may have to build alliances and cooperate more in forward selling and supplying peaches. Of course, we are stickering fruit now but we may have to provide other services related to distribution and inventory management. We may have to consider cooperating with peach suppliers from other regions to increase our supply and marketing season if we can't do those ourselves. These growers may be in other countries. We may even have to cooperate and work with shippers who grow other commodities. To get shelf space we may have to pay slotting fees. Each of you that sell directly to food retailers already know that many of these things are a condition of doing business with selected suppliers, thus many of these suggestions are in place.

SEE MARKETING ON PAGE 2

MARKETING FROM PAGE 1

It is obvious that peaches are underconsumed, or for those of you who think we can't get people to eat more peaches they are overproduced. We know that 20 years ago we sold 110 million pounds of peaches from New Jersey that were not as large, as pretty or as good in quality as the 50 to 70 million pounds that we sell at below cost today. We know people prepare less food at home simply because they have less time, and a spouse who may have stayed at home to prepare food is now in the workplace. We know consumers buy smaller quantities of fresh peaches. We know consumers spend more money on convenience foods and more time eating out in restaurants and other institutions. It seems like peaches are not part of many restaurant and institutional menus. It seems there are not many value added or convenience products for peaches. Are we doing enough to provide fresh peaches for restaurants and institutional markets? The New Jersey legislature has recently introduced bills to make New Jersey government institutions buy fresh products including peaches. Are we trying hard enough to develop value added products to use fresh peaches? One shipper is working on a peach juice and another on a peach wine. Are there other products we can introduce? The National Peach Council has worked with the Agricultural Marketing Service to buy California fresh individually quick frozen peaches for nutritional programs. Is New Jersey getting enough of this market? Should we request more of this, particularly for New Jersey peaches? Can New Jersey peaches be used in other local purchases? Can we work up some deal with our large restaurant industry to use more peaches? Is there any type of resource available from the Casino commission to encourage the use of fresh produce including peaches?

How do we get consumers to eat more fresh peaches? Well, we know that if we get more shelf space in the store we can increase consumption. If we can have a premium flavored product that's aromatic and attractive, consumption will increase. We know that if we can advertise and get people to know our product we will get more shelf space because consumers will demand our product. The New Jersey Peach Promotion Council has done an excellent job using the limited resources they have getting product recognition. How can we get more growers and shippers to support the NJPPC activities? Would we have more success if we had a different organization doing this? Maybe all shippers don't trust the NJPPC's directors and the activities they promote. Maybe we should have a regional or national promotional program? It is always hard to ask for more money to promote a product when growers/shippers don't have money to meet production expenses. However, we know in New Jersey that the Jersey Fresh matching pool program has given strong financial support to the NJPPC and the New Jersey Peach Festival because

the directors work hard to make money. We know the California shippers through the California Tree Fruit Agreement have a large pool of financial resources to distribute and promote their product. Should we work to get a federal marketing order and a state marketing order for promotional purposes? Should the support of this be mandatory to make all growers/shippers support promotion?

We know the Jersey Fresh program has increased recognition of New Jersey products including peaches. This has been documented through market research. Yet we continue to see cuts in the program along with other New Jersey Department of Agriculture programs. At a time when we badly need the program, should we not ask the executive and legislative branches of government to bring funding back to original levels or even increase it? Should this money not only be targeted for advertising but also for enforcement? Should not some of the funds be used to hire regular merchandising representatives to visit buyers? Should money from the program be made available to pay slotting fees for shelf space in all supermarkets in New Jersey? Should money be available for advertising rebates, in-store contests, and more point of sale material? Most of all, either the merchandising representatives or regulatory people in the department should be available to monitor and enforce use of resources from the program. We all know the old adage that "good advertising will sell a product one time but the quality of the product will only bring repeat sales. Because of this all peaches sold in New Jersey should have a Jersey Fresh label and must adhere to quality and condition standards. Of course, there should continue to be a matching pool of funds for commodity councils to reward those industries that work hard to raise money.

As part of this program the NJDA should maintain a web site of all food retailers and institutional buyers that are in New Jersey with their addresses, phone number, and e-mail addresses so consumers know who they are and where their buying and retailing facilities are located. A hotline might also be available so consumers could contact the stores not selling Jersey Fresh, and the NJDA if they see stores not selling Jersey Fresh or using the Jersey Fresh program to promote products from other states.

If we want consumers to buy more peaches should there be more to the promotional program than the quality attributes of the product? Should we continue to promote the idea that buying Jersey Fresh saves New Jersey farmers and open space? Should there be a "what's in it for me" aspect of the program?

Where will we get the money for this program? If we are going to preserve farmers and open space should some of the money come from the open space funding? Is there some form of property tax or roll back tax that could be used to save existing farms by promoting their

PROMOTIONAL PROGRAM ON PAGE 3

Precision Agriculture Tools for Diverse NJ Farms

Jack Rabin, Associate Director for Farm Services, NJAES

We are a few months into our NJ Department of Agriculture grant developing mobile GIS/GPS tools for seven pilot growers. Each grower has unique approaches to managing their operations, and each grower wants different information recorded.

In consultation with growers and their concerns, we have selected the Trimble Recon as the handheld device. It is like a typical handheld Personal Digital Assistant, only ruggedized. The Recon can fall from a pickup truck seat into a puddle, and not be affected.

At this time, what is possible? What things can we measure, map, and place in growers' hands? Though not all features are complete, and no grower needs nor wants too much information, below is a general list of the possibilities:

Fields Management (overhead view on screen)

- Base Map. Has exact field dimensions and area. This can save fertilizer and pesticide applications. Makes accurate automatic calculation of summary information easier.
- USDA map. This includes soil types, and may include elevation and slope maps for fruit production.
- Aerial image of farm and fields. May include land use/land cover or zoning of Twp. Map (if available).
- Soil sample test results. Fertility, pH, lime, soil electrical conductivity map, or even soil compaction maps can be produced if the information is collected. Manure management is currently being worked on.
- Irrigation system. Location of mains, risers, pumps can be mapped.
- Notes can be made by grower, and linked to fields.
- Weed and/or pest map.

Crops Management

- Current Crop. Track management of beds, groups of beds, and fields.
- Crop histories and yield histories.
- Pesticide records verified and printed on demand.
- Fertility applications recorded, totaled, and printed.
- Irrigation water management. We are still working on building a recording feature for this state regulation.
- Organic Transition Management. Provide NOP (National Organic Program) audit trail compliance. Accurately record and report rotations, buffers, and practices.

- Crop insurance. Accurately delineate size and scope of crops, fields, or parts of fields damaged by disasters like drought, excess precipitation, or hail etc.
- Greenhouse inventories of landscape perennials.

Integrating these production tools and information with farm management can be done, but it requires appropriate software and grower time commitment. Information that can be determined includes:

- Tracking costs and returns by crop, field, variety, etc. (this has never been easy on diversified farms, even when growers have production budgets and know their yields)
- Equipment and labor time by field/crop
- Packed out yields and dollars by field/crop.

Growers will always think up their own ways to use these tools once the portability and technical difficulties are overcome. For example, though not part of our project, a landscape manager is interested in mapping all managed properties for size and features such as plants or areas requiring special management. □

PROMOTIONAL PROGRAM FROM PAGE 2

products? How about a restaurant tax? The people that eat out and don't consume the raw product could pay for it?

How do we get support? How about making sure that any media advertising uses local legislators to promote the product? Everyone would get recognition with New Jersey products.

We need to continue to develop better varieties and handling systems for peaches. We need to have diversity, high sugar, and genetically large size. Maybe we should have some funding for genetic engineering to get these attributes into New Jersey peaches. The gene for sweetness, firmness, size, and disease resistance should be identified and incorporated. We need to be bold in some of our new technology and take chances. If we don't do something bold we are not going to be around producing/marketing quality New Jersey peaches.

These are some thoughts and ideas that have been expressed to me or that I have seen working with other commodities. Hopefully, we will come to some agreement at our marketing summit. □

Income-Producing Tree and Shrub Species for Riparian Areas

Mark C. Vodak, Ph.D., Specialist in Forestry and Anthony Pasquini, Former Program Associate in Forestry

Restoring Riparian Forest Buffers

New Jersey's many streams, rivers, lakes, and bays are an invaluable natural resource. Clean and naturally-functioning water bodies are vital to New Jersey's environment, economy, and quality of life. It is important that measures to enhance and protect water quality become established practices and are incorporated into land-use planning efforts.

Nonpoint source pollution (NPS) is a major threat to New Jersey's water quality. NPS pollution differs from point source pollution or 'end-of-the-pipe' pollution because the pollution originates from many sources which are not easily identifiable, including agricultural operations, commercial development, industrial operations, residential development and the state's transportation system. NPS pollutants can be anything that is placed on or under the land's surface with the potential to wash or leach into our waterways and include such things as:

- fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides from agricultural and residential areas;
- oil, salts, and toxic chemicals from roadways, parking lots and urban development;
- sediments from construction sites, cropland and eroding streambanks;
- bacteria and nutrients from livestock, pet wastes, and defective septic systems.

Storms and snowmelt create stormwater run-off which can carry pollutants over and through the landscape into streams, rivers, and other bodies of water.

Riparian areas are the lands adjacent to streams, rivers, lakes, and bays that form a transition zone between aquatic and terrestrial environments. Riparian forests are woodlands which occur in riparian areas. They are important for ensuring water quality and healthy aquatic environments.

Riparian forest buffers are one of the best management tools for enhancing water quality and protecting water bodies from NPS pollution. A riparian forest buffer is composed of trees, shrubs, and tall grasses planted to help protect the integrity of a waterway, act as a vegetative filter strip, and reduce impacts of the surrounding land-use on water quality. Riparian forest buffers:

- improve water quality by filtering sediments and absorbing chemical and nutrients;

- reduce erosion by stabilizing stream banks;
- provide wildlife habitat by providing cover and food;
- enhance aquatic habitat by stabilizing water temperature, reducing sediment and providing woody debris;
- restore landscapes to a more natural state;
- offer both educational and recreational opportunities.

New Jersey's existing riparian forests should be protected and managed. Where they are degraded or missing, restoring riparian forest buffers should be a planning and management practice to help counteract NPS pollution.

There are also other alternatives for protecting riparian forests, including active forest management, easements, ordinances, public acquisition and incorporation of riparian protection into land-use planning and municipal master plans. Government officials, natural resource managers, land-use planners, private landowners - even the general public - must accept the challenge of clean water and healthy riparian environments.

Income-Producing Tree and Shrub Species for Riparian Areas

A project to restore riparian forest buffer planted on an agricultural site (pasture) was done in Vincentown, NJ. The Vincentown Project demonstrates how a riparian forest buffer can be designed and implemented on a working farm to provide environmental benefits and product/income potential to the farm.

Government cost-share programs and incentives encourage farmers and landowners to plant riparian forest buffers on their property. Properly designed, these buffers can be managed as a productive part of the farm or woodlot. Planting trees and shrubs with product-and income-producing potential in riparian areas not only protects waterways from sedimentation and other non-point source pollution but also keeps these areas as viable, productive, contributing parts of the farm or woodlot.

While the following lists are not exhaustive, they provide examples of income-producing riparian species.

This project was a cooperative effort of Rutgers Cooperative Extension, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and New Jersey Forest Service.

For more information on Restoring Riparian Forest Buffers, visit Rutgers Cooperative Extension's web site at: <http://www.rce.rutgers.edu/njriparianforestbuffers>.

SEE TREE AND SHRUB SPECIES IN BOX ON PAGE 5

Calendar of Events

Income-Producing Tree and Shrub Species for Riparian Areas

Trees - Overstory

- Sugar maple - *Acer saccharum* - syrup, timber, firewood, charcoal, honey
Sweet birch - *Betula lenta* - essential oils
Hickory - *Carya spp.* - nuts, timber, tool handles, firewood, charcoal
Ash - *Fraxinus spp.* - timber, tool handles, firewood
Black walnut - *Juglans nigra* - nuts, timber, firewood, dyeing
Tuliptree - *Liriodendron tulipifera* - timber
Black cherry - *Prunus serotina* - timber, firewood
Oak - *Quercus spp.* - timber, firewood, charcoal
Linden - *Tilia americana* - honey
Eastern hemlock - *Tsuga canadensis* - floral products, essential oils
Slippery elm - *Ulmus rubra* - herbals/medicinals

Trees - Understory

- Alder - *Alnus spp.* - smoke/flavor wood, honey, dyeing
Shadbush or Serviceberry - *Amelanchier spp.* - fruits, jellies, honey
Pawpaw - *Asimina triloba* - fruit, jellies
Redbud - *Cercis canadensis* - floral products
Persimmon - *Diospyros virginiana* - fruit
Flowering dogwood - *Cornus florida* - floral products, firewood
Witch hazel - *Hamamelis virginiana* - herbals/medicinals
American holly - *Ilex opaca* - floral products
Red cedar - *Juniperus virginiana* - fenceposts, essential oils
Sweet-bay magnolia - *Magnolia virginiana* - floral products
Blackhaw - *Viburnum prunifolium* - herbals/medicinals, jellies

Shrubs

- Black chokeberry - *Aronia melanocarpa* - dyeing
Redosier dogwood - *Cornus stolonifera* - floral products
Hazelnut - *Corylus spp.* - nuts
Winterberry - *Ilex verticillata* - floral products
Northern bayberry - *Myrica pennsylvanica* - essential oils
Common ninebark - *Physocarpus opulifolius* - firewood, herbals/medicinals
Rosebay rhododendron - *Rhododendron maximum* - floral products
Pussy willow - *Salix discolor* - floral products
Common elderberry - *Sambucus canadensis* - fruit, jellies
Steeplebush - *Spirea tomentosa* - floral products
Highbush blueberry - *Vaccinium corymbosum* - fruit, dyeing

December 17, 2003, 7-9 pm - South Jersey AGR - Lite Crop Insurance Workshop, Rutgers Agricultural Research & Extension Farm, Upperdeerfield, NJ. Contact: <http://salem.rutgers.edu/cropinsurance> or by calling the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Office in Salem County at 856-769-0090.

December 18, 2003, 7-9 pm - Central Jersey AGR - Lite Crop Insurance Workshop, EcoComplex, Bordentown, NJ. Contact: <http://salem.rutgers.edu/cropinsurance> or by calling the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Office in Salem County at 856-769-0090.

January 27 - 29, 2004 - Mid Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention, Hershey, PA. Contact William Tietjen, at 908-475-6505 or Jerry Frecon at 856 307-6459.

March 13, 2004 - Grape Expectations – A Viticultural and Enological Symposium, Forsgate Country Club, Jamesburg, NJ. Contact: Dr. Gary Pavlis, Rutgers Fruit Research & Extension Center at 609-758-7311 or creamridge@aesop.rutgers.edu.

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