
Agricultural Program
Lake Erie Regional Grape Program

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Program Statement:
Founded in 1992, this collaborative effort involving Cornell and Penn State Universities, County Extension Associations (Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Niagara Counties in New York and Erie County in Pennsylvania) and Grape Processors; National Grape Cooperative, Constellation Wine and Walkers Fruit Basket, conducts extension education programming as well as applied research and demonstration projects throughout the 30,000 acres of grapes located in the Lake Erie Region of New York and Pennsylvania.

Major Activities:
Meetings
A total of 880 grape growers and members of the Lake Erie grape industry participated in 32 LERGP educational events during the 2016 growing season. These events included weekly Coffee Pot meetings (19), Hops Conference, CORE Pesticide Training, Winter Grape Grower Conference, and a Twilight meeting.

Implementing research-based practices
Members of the LERGP Extension Team provided phone, office, and on-site consultations on IPM, business management and viticulture practices during 776 grower contacts. In addition, the team conducted implementation and applied research projects in the commercial vineyards of 68 cooperating growers.

Highlights:
Cover Crops
The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program, through a grant from the New York Farm Viability Institute, has been studying the effect of cover crops in Concord vineyards. Over the last two years the project has worked with area growers and measured how different cover crop mixes affect soil health and vineyard productivity. On September 1st, the program hosted a workshop and field day at the Cornell Lake Erie Research and Extension Laboratory in Portland to educate over 70 participants on improving soil health and introduce ideas for planting cover crops in Concord vineyards. Early results from cover crop use are showing promise for improving soil health and increasing vine health and productivity in area Concord vineyards.
Crop Insurance Education
Lake Erie Regional Grape Program was awarded two one year grants from USDA and NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets to provide educational information to area growers. Growers learned about crop insurance, including major changes in specialty crop coverage, that was finalized in 2015. We have taken the opportunity to expand the project and identify areas of production that do not use crop insurance. Current funding will allow us to target those areas with web-based tools to assist in risk management strategies for those skeptical growers. Our growers have higher rates of crop insurance coverage than other crops, other regions and their peers that are not members of extension.

Efficient Vineyard Project
Members of the Lake Erie Regional Grape Program extension team are providing the leadership in the Outreach and Adoption portion of a $6 million USDA/NIFA Specialty Crop Research Initiative grant obtained by Dr. Terry Bates, Director of the Cornell Lake Erie Research and Extension Laboratory and research viticulturist with the Lake Erie Regional Grape Program. This combined research and extension project looks to develop multiple sensing and automation solutions for measuring vineyard soil, canopy, and crop characteristics, and reconstitute those solutions for high-resolution spatial crop load management. The LERGP extension team has added program aide and videographer/web administrator to their team to assist in the development of delivery tools for the grant. This 4 year project is a collaborative effort between Cornell University, Penn State, Carnegie Mellon, Newcastle University, University of California Davis, National Grape & Wine Initiative and USDA/NIFA.

Grants:
Members of the LERGP extension team are principle investigators (PI’s), co-PI’s, and/or cooperators on 7 grants representing a total of $6,159,162 for extension, research, implementation and demonstration of the latest research-based information for grape and hops producers in the Lake Erie region.

Publications:
- 2016 New York and Pennsylvania Pest Management Guidelines for Grapes. Weigle and Muza co-editors
- Efficient Vineyard Website https://www.efficientvineyard.com/
- Lake Erie Regional Grape Program website http://lergp.cce.cornell.edu/
- The Crop Update – Weekly e-newsletter published by the LERGP extension team
- Lake Erie Vineyard Notes – newsletter published by LERGP extension team
- Veraison to Harvest Newsletter – weekly harvest newsletter involving all statewide and regional grape extension teams. Martinson, Gerling, Haggerty, Bates, et al
- Press Releases – semimonthly articles sent to area newspapers.