2018 FRUIT PROGRAM WORK TEAM ANNUAL REPORT

Tree Fruit and Berry Program Work Team

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Purpose:

The purpose of the Tree Fruit and Berry PWT is to serve as a forum for Cornell faculty and technical staff, CCE Educators and Specialists, and industry representatives and consultants, to confer on matters related to the New York tree fruit and berry industry, including production matters, business management, pest management, and other issues related to the establishment and maintenance of a healthy and profitable fruit industry in NY. Current situation and trends are shared and discussed, problems are identified, program needs are addressed, and group events and activities are planned; these include field days, tours, in-depth schools, and local & regional meetings.

During 2018, the Fruit PWT sponsored a meeting of the Great Lakes Fruit Workers in Ithaca (7-9 November), three business meetings (23 March, 9 August, and 13 December, all held in Geneva), and gave presentations at the 2018 Ag In-Service in Ithaca (13-15 November). The three business meetings included participants who connected to the meeting via Zoom from Ithaca, the Hudson Valley Lab, and/or other locations around the state.

The Great Lakes Fruit Workers Conference was attended by 74 participants including fruit university researchers, extension educators, and private consultants, who presented 45 talks, toured university and private fruit/ cider production and research sites and discussed common fruit research & extension priorities over a 3-day period. The field tour included stops at the McGowan Farm and Cornell Orchards, Ithaca, where we attended presentations on strawberry production in low tunnels (Marvin Pritts), an overview of Cornell Orchards farm and store (Eric Shatt), the Postharvest research program and facilities (Chris Watkins), a Honeycrisp rootstock study (Mario Miranda Sazo, Lailiang Cheng), overview of the Viticulture and Enology Major (Justine Vanden Heuvel), and talks covering hard cider research, an organic rootstock trial, and organic weed control in apples (Greg Peck program). We then visited Black Diamond Farm in Trumansburg for a tour of their orchard and cider making facilities (Ian Merwin), and finished with a tour and tasting at Finger Lakes Cider House in Interlaken.

For the CCE Ag In-Service, the Fruit PWT presented a session on Unusual Fruits and Nuts for the Home Garden, attended by 18 registrants and featuring presentations by Marvin Pritts, Laura McDermott, Greg Peck, and Sam Bosco. We also co-sponsored a session on Economics and Risk Strategies in the Apple Industry (Todd Schmit, Bradley Rickard and Jarzy Jaromczk).

In addition to the formalized PWT group functions, PWT extension educators organized numerous winter fruit schools, summer tours, webinars, and field meetings where Cornell faculty presented the
latest information on IPM practices and crop production strategies to stakeholder audiences. These fruit grower meetings frequently attracted participants from other states and Canadian provinces because of the high quality of the programs. PWT members are also actively involved in regional professional meetings such as the Great Lakes Fruit Workers Conference (above); the New England, New York, and Canadian Fruit Workers Conference (held in Burlington, VT on 23-24 October), and the Cumberland-Shenandoah Fruit Workers Conference (held in Winchester, VA on 29-30 November). These professional meetings allow PWT participants to access the latest information generated by colleagues in other states while also showcasing our in-house expertise and research programs. More importantly, the informal networking that occurs at these professional meetings helps to build cooperative regional ventures among scientists and educators and helps to eliminate wasteful duplication of efforts.

Our PWT business meetings generally followed a common format, with approximately half of the meeting time dedicated to informal sharing of observations/problems noted or anticipated in tree fruit and berry crops during the current season. The other half of each meeting was used for updates on meeting plans, conferences that might be of interest to the group, collaborative projects, and policy issues that might affect either PWT members or the clients that they serve in the tree fruit and berry industries.

Participation of private crop consultants at PWT meetings (2 to 3 consultants at each meeting) allowed the group to benefit from a broader range of observations than would have been feasible otherwise because consultants regularly interact with numerous growers and, taken together, have scouting programs that cover more than 70% of the total tree fruit and berry acreage in the state. At the same time, the consultants benefitted by having first-hand access to the latest information and developments discussed at PWT meetings.