

Vegetable Production & Marketing



VOLUME 7, NUMBER 8

AUGUST 1997

MAYBE IT'S TIME THAT 'WE' WORK TOGETHER!

*By Dr. Frank J. Dainello, Extension Horticulturist,
Department of Horticultural Sciences, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas*

I believe that most people closely associated with Texas vegetable production will agree that the industry is 'sliding south'. Although the Lower Rio Grande Valley has been the most severely affected by this occurrence, its impact is being felt across the state. As a result, the Texas vegetable industry, as we know it, will be facing some difficult challenges in the next few years. If the state is to remain a major player in the produce arena, the way we do business will have to change rapidly. No longer do individual growers, grower-shippers, and shippers have the luxury of standing alone in the marketplace. Competition for our limited market shares is increasing at an alarming rate. The competition for these market shares is now coming from other nations, rather than from other parts of the state or from other states, as it did not so long ago. With this level of competition, individual company labels do not mean as much to our ultimate customer -- the average consumer -- as do regional or state recognition. Consequently, the need to band together to promote and market the attributes of 'Texas Grown' is greater now than ever before.

A good example of what can be done when growers and shippers work together to sell an area rather than an individual label can be found in an effort undertaken by the New Jersey Tomato Council. The Council was organized to unite the tomato producers of New Jersey in such a way as to benefit the individual producer as well as the entire market. According to an article by Robert J. Matarazzo appearing in the June/July issue of *The Tomato Magazine*, "while only in its second year, the New Jersey Tomato Council has outperformed all other suppliers of state-grown, vine-ripened tomatoes in every region of its marketing area." 'The Jersey Tomato™' was selected as the Council's brand. The performance of 'The Jersey Tomato™' has demonstrated the results of utilizing a dis-

tinguished brand name, with a superior quality product, and effective marketing strategies. 'The Jersey Tomato™' is now being asked for by name. As a result, the total volume for the New Jersey Tomato Council is up over 40 percent!

If Texas is to prevent the further closing of its produce marketing windows, programs such as the above, as well as other innovative and cooperative ventures, must be adopted in the very near future. The Texas Vegetable Association and The Texas Produce Association will jointly sponsor a panel discussion to address these issues at their Annual Convention, September 10-13, 1997, in Corpus Christi. The panel will be charged with discussing the current status of the industry, factors which have brought the industry to its current status, and the actions needed to prevent further deterioration of the industry's markets. The intent of these associations is that the panel will stimulate discussion regarding this topic with members of the audience. The group can then use the comments, ideas, suggestions, etc., coming out of the discussion to formulate an industry-wide survival plan. Therefore, if you are concerned about the future of your industry, please make every attempt possible to attend this discussion. All points of view are needed if we are to devise a road map that will chart the path for our industry to follow into a prosperous future.



DON'T FORGET!

Texas Produce Convention, September 10-13, 1997,
Corpus Christi, Texas Convention Center

For more information, contact Ray Prewitt,
Texas Vegetable Association, at (210) 584-1681

WHY BOTHER TO ROTATE VEGETABLE CROPS?

Crop rotation refers to a long-range plan for growing different crops on the same land. The length of time to complete the cycle may vary from 2 to 8 or more years, depending on the crops grown. Double-cropping, or growing 2 crops on the same land in a single year, can be an important part of the rotation. Some of the advantages of a good crop rotation include several which can directly affect profits. These include:

1. Reduce losses to disease. Several disease organisms, such as *Fusarium* in watermelon and tomatoes, watermelon anthracnose, *Phytophthora* in peppers, clubroot, and blackrot in cabbage, can survive in the soil as persistent structures or in plant debris from year to year. As crop residue decomposes over time, the life cycle of the pathogen is interrupted.
2. Many of the nematodes which infest vegetables cannot reproduce in grasses. A grass crop, such as sweet corn, in the rotation can minimize nematode problems.
3. Manage insect pressure. Small-grain stubble or sod can serve as a reservoir for insect populations. If crops such as fall cabbage are planted in wheat stubble, seedlings must be watched carefully for insect damage.
4. Residual nitrogen management. Crops which can take advantage of high residual soil fertility can follow those which tend to leave nutrients in the soil.
5. Minimize soil erosion. A good crop rotation will protect the soil during the winter with either crop stubble or a cover crop.

A good crop rotation requires some thought, but is not too complex. Crops with similar pest problems should not follow each other. Generally, it is a good idea to alternate shallow-rooted crops with deep-rooted crops. Rotation with a grass crop (field corn, sweet corn, winter wheat, oats) should be planned, to allow use of herbicides for broadleaf weed control. Many herbicides registered for use in vegetables are weak on broadleaf weeds. Although the grass crops in rotation may not generate the greatest profits per acre, the benefit is in reduced weed pressure in the vegetable crops planted following, and in minimizing the soil erosion during the winter.

There is no 'standard' crop rotation schedule. Each grower must devise his own, based on his own particular crop specialization and markets. By reviewing the production requirements and pests common in each crop, patterns will become evident, and a rotation scheme can then be planned to minimize adverse impacts, and increase sustainability of the land for desired long-range profit.

This article by James E. Motes appeared in Horticulture Tips, Oklahoma State University, June 1997.

Sweets for the Sweet in Texas

Leonard Pike and his colleagues at Texas A&M University's Vegetable Improvement Center are working on a replacement for the Texas 1015 sweet onion that should have more natural sugars and lower pungency levels.

In other words, less of that infamous onion 'bite' per bite.

Every year, Pike, VIC Director and creator of the 1015, analyzes thousands of onion bulbs, and selects the most favorable examples. After 6 years of tests on the new project, he is into the third generation of plants.

"I had one variety in the trial last year that everybody went crazy over," he said. "It would be a newer version of the 1015 but with even lower pungency. It's a little higher on sugar, but the pungency is what makes the onion taste a lot sweeter."

Sweet onions are rated on the pyruvate scale. The lower the score, the better. Anything scoring less than a 5 is considered a sweet onion. This variety scored a 3.4, which compares with the 1015's rating of 4.5. By comparison, Vidalia's sweet onions often range from 2.8 to 4.5. Pike's new onion should have a sugar count of 7 percent. The 1015 has a 6 percent sugar makeup. A commercial crop of the variety likely won't be available until 1999.

Besides making onions taste better, Pike is trying to make them more healthful, which could help increase consumption. This effort means he's on a quest for quercetin, a chemical compound that occurs in alliums such as onions and peppers. The compound has antioxidant properties similar to other compounds that have been proven to protect against cancer. Red and yellow onions contain quercetin, but white onions only have trace amounts.

Also in Pike's plans is a pink 1015. But why? "Because it can be identified and promoted," he said. "Isn't that what the game is about?"

This article by Lance Jungmeyer, Assistant News Editor, The Packer, appeared in The Grower, July 1997

Mini Vegetables as 'Nitch' Marketing Items

Sweet corn is just one of many vegetables whose miniature form is considered a delicacy. This 'baby corn' can come from either the ears of normal sized varieties harvested at a very immature stage, or from the ears of a genetically dwarfed variety. The latter is more often the case with commercial growers who supply this specialty gourmet market. Miniature sweet corn is used in a variety of ways; the most popular are as hors d'oeuvres, stir fries, and pickles, or cooked whole in soups and stews. For this reason, miniature vegetables, including baby sweet corn, are grown to some extent by home gardeners.

The following are some of the varieties that are sold and advertised by seed companies for growing and harvesting as baby corn.

1. 'Baby' - tender, fingerlike ears, delicately flavored, entirely edible - excellent for freezing - best harvested within 5 days of appearance of silk. Sold by Nichols Garden Nursery, 1190 North Pacific Highway, Albany, OR 97321.
2. 'Golden Midget' (also called 'Golden Miniature') - ears 3 to 5 inches long, 8 to 12 rows of butter-yellow kernels per ear - plant is 20 to 40 inches tall, producing 3 to 5 small ears per plant, standard maturity. Sold by several companies, including R. H. Shumway, P.O. Box 1, Graniteville, SC 29829, and Park Seed Company, Cokesbury Road, Greenwood, SC 29646.
3. 'Glacier' - short-season, dwarf white variety. Sold by Fisher's Garden Store, P.O. Box 236, Belgrade, MT 59714.
4. Miniature hybrid, sold by Park Seed Company, Cokesbury Road, Greenwood, SC 29646.
5. 'Baby Asian' - harvest at silking. Sold by LeMarche Seeds Inc., Box 190, Dixon, CO 95620.
6. 'Baby Blue' - (popcorn) blue ears, only 3 to 4 inches long - produces multiple ears on 5-foot-tall plant.
7. 'Bo Peep' - (popcorn) pink ears. Sold by Shepherd's Seeds, 30 Irene Street, Farrington CN 06790.
8. 'Strawberry Popcorn' sold by Shepherd's Seeds, 30 Irene Street, Farrington, CN 06790.

This article by J. M. Stephens appeared in the Vegetarian 96-06, a vegetable crops Extension publication of the University of Florida

Plant and Row Spacing for Southern Pea and Snap Bean

Growers often question whether or not increasing plant population with southern pea (*Vigna unguiculata* [L.] Walp.) and snap bean (*Phaseolus vulgaris* L.) through twin drills or decreased seed spacing has the potential for increasing yield. The authors evaluated the effects of within-row spacing and row configuration on the yield of snap beans and southern peas under southern Louisiana conditions.

Three crops of southern pea and snap bean were grown in 1995 at the Burden Research Plantation in Baton Rouge. 'Texas Pinkeye' southern pea and 'Blue Lake Bush' snap bean were planted on May 4, 'Royal Blackeye' and 'Texas Pinkeye' southern pea were planted on June 8, and 'Texas Pinkeye' southern pea and 'Mirada' snap bean were planted on August 30. The bed spacing was 48 inches. One drill per bed, or twin drills 12 inches apart per bed, were planted, using a Stanhay Model 870 Precision Seeder (Hestair Farm Equipment Ltd., Suffolk, England). Nominal seed spacings for southern pea were 2.7, 4.0, and 5.4 inches. Nominal seed spacings for snap bean were 3.6, 4.6, and 5.4 inches. Seeds were placed approximately 1 inch deep on 6-inch raised beds. Plots were fertilized with 350 lb/a of 8N-24P₂O₅-24K₂O. The fertilizer was banded prior to planting. The soil type was Olivier silt loam.

Plots were hand-harvested for yield estimations. The May 4 planting of 'Texas Pinkeye' southern pea was also machine-harvested in a one-row Pixall Pull-Pix Bean Harvester (Pixall Corp., Clear Lake, WI) to allow an evaluation of the efficiency of mechanical harvest of twin-drill peas compared with a standard single-row configuration. All treatments were replicated 4 times.

Results of this study indicated that snap bean showed sensitivity to single- and twin-drill configurations in yield response. Twin-drill plots of snap bean yielded over twice as much as single-drilled beans. Under southern Louisiana conditions, southern peas were not sensitive to changes in stand count resulting from either in-row spacing or twin- versus single-drill configuration, when hand-harvested. The one planting that was machine-harvested showed greater machine efficiency, and, thus, higher machine-harvested yields with the single-row configuration. The harvester was designed for single rows, and had difficulty spanning the twin-drill configuration.

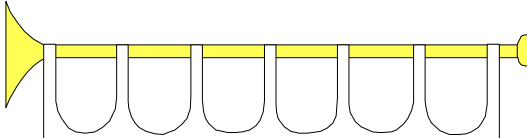
From an article by Richard L. Parish, Christopher M. LaBorde, and Timothy J. Raiford, appearing in the Journal of Vegetable Crop Production, Vol. 2(2):65-74, 1996.



Texas Agricultural Extension Service
United States Department of Agriculture
The Texas A&M University System
College Station, TX 77843

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
Penalty for Private Use \$300

BULK RATE
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
USDA
PERMIT NO. G-268



Appearing Within . . .

- Maybe It Is Time That "WE" Work Together
- Why Bother To Rotate Vegetable Crops?
- Sweets For The Sweet In Texas
- Mini Vegetables as 'Nitch' Marketing Items
- Plant And Row Spacing For Southern Pea And Snap Bean

NEW PUBLICATION AVAILABLE

Texas Guide for Controlling Insects on Commercial Vegetables, B-1305, by Alton N. Sparks, Jr., Extension Entomologist, The Texas A&M University System.

A copy of the this guide can be obtained from your local county Extension office or by contacting Publication and Supply Distribution, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas.

Educational programs of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, Acts of Congress of May 8, 1914, as amended, and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture, Zerle L. Carpenter, Director, Texas Agricultural Extension Service, The Texas A&M University System.

The information given herein is for educational purposes only. Reference to commercial products or trade names is made with the understanding that no discrimination is intended and no endorsement by the Cooperative Extension Service is implied.

Frank J. Dainello
Extension Horticulturist
Commercial Vegetable Crops
The Texas A&M University System
College Station, TX 77843-2134

