



Cooperative Extension - Lake Ontario Fruit Program

A partnership between Cornell University and the CCE Associations in these five counties:

Monroe, Niagara, Orleans, Oswego & Wayne

Quarterly Highlights, October - December 2019

Apple IPM Intensive Workshop at Empire State Producers Expo – Janet van Zoeren

Background: The Lake Ontario fruit-growing region has relied in recent years on professional orchard scouts and consultants to inform orchard management decisions. These professional scouts visit orchards to set out monitoring traps and scout for insects & diseases, and provide site-specific recommendations regarding orchard pest management (diseases, insects, weeds, etc) as well as regarding fertility & nutrient management, thinning, & other horticultural practices. Because of the time-intensive nature of scouting & site-specific management recommendations, this is a far more in-depth service that can be provided by Cornell Cooperative Extension, and often requires more time and knowledge than orchard managers have been able to invest.

Need/Opportunity:

Growers and other industry representatives have expressed concern over the decreasing number of professional orchard scouts & consultants, as many have already or will soon reach retirement age. This raises the question among orchard managers of how they will be able to inform integrated pest management decisions in coming years.

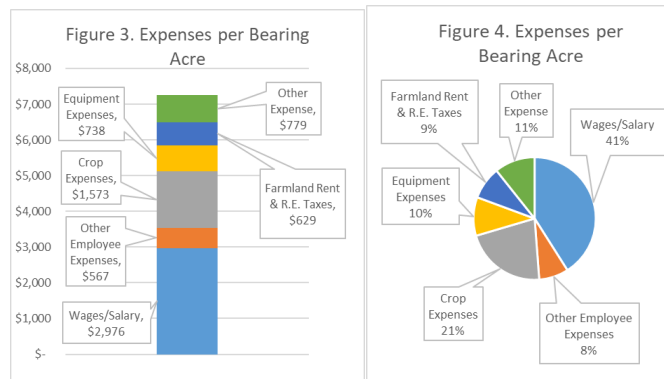
LOF Response:

A group from the Fruit PWT, led by Cornell AgriTech’s Art Agnello and Juliet Carroll of NY State IPM, came up with the idea to put together a pilot program to help train new scouts and consultants. A working team, comprised of myself, Mike Basedow of the Eastern New York fruit team, Dr. Art Agnello, Dr. Juliet Carroll, and Dr. Kerik Cox (Cornell AgriTech) was developed to put together a 4-session in depth “Apple IPM Intensive” program for the Empire State Producers Expo. The intention of this workshop was not only to train potential new professional orchard scouts and consultants, but also as an opportunity to train orchard managers and workforce to take some of the responsibilities of these duties and decisions in-house.

The workshop took place at the Empire Producers Expo on January 15th and 16th in Syracuse, New York. Attendance was far greater than expected, with 46 people (6 over our intended “cap” of 40) attending all four sessions and receiving a certificate of course completion. Of those who had pre-registered for the session, 4 were from Niagara County, 4 were from Orleans County, and 5 were from Wayne County.

Given the degree of interest in the workshop, we hope to develop this into an expanded, even more in-depth workshop for future online or in-person training opportunities.

2018 Fruit Farm Business Summary (FFBS) Captures Production Costs of Fruit Industry – Mark Wiltberger



Figures 3 and 4 from the 2018 Fruit Farm Business Summary illustrate that cash operating expenses were \$7,263 per bearing acre, and labor-related expenses constituted 49% of cash operating expenses.

Need/Opportunity: The fruit industry is changing rapidly. Costs are increasing, especially for labor. High density orchards are cost-intensive. Demand and prices are changing rapidly for different crops and varieties, in some cases increasing, in other cases dramatically decreasing.

The industry as a whole benefits from concrete financial data, especially with respect to costs. Individual farms also benefit from understanding their costs. This understanding helps them to make better decisions about labor, material inputs, orchard systems, and varieties to plant.

LOF Response: I compiled business financial information for seven farms in the Lake Ontario region. The compiled data from on-farm visits served as the basis for the FFBS. The average values from the participating farms are a benchmark for the industry. Each farm receives an Individual Farm report which compares their farm’s performance against the benchmark.

The FFBS provides a benchmark for the industry so that we have an idea of what the financials are for growing fruit. This is especially useful for assessing costs. The 2018 FFBS determined that for the farms who participated, cash operating expenses were \$7,263/bearing acre, and 49% of these expenses were labor-related. The Individual Farm report provides participating farms with valuable data that compares the farm’s performance against the benchmark. With this information they can evaluate their practices & make strategic farm planning decisions. In addition, the farm receives a complete financial statement, which paints the whole financial picture of their farm. Lenders value this report and growers can use it to justify capital investment in their farm.

CCE LOF Continue Building the Hispanic Workforce that Apple Growers Need: 2019 Western New York Master Class – Mario Miranda Sazo

Fall 2019 brought the second successful cohort of WNY Master Class graduates. The Master Class approach is a research-based curriculum delivered by personable experts in English language instruction within a professional development atmosphere. Students embark on a professional development journey learning relevant and thoughtful approaches to modern Agricultural human resource management, all while being completely immersed in an English language classroom.

The Cornell Small Farms Program and the Lake Ontario Fruit Program have successfully collaborated for the training and



Wayne County grower Mark Lagoner from Lagoner Farms, and José Fonseca the day of graduation for the 2019 Master Class Cohort at the Wegmans Conference Center in Rochester on December 13, 2019. Mark envisions a bright future for José in the apple industry in the following years.



Orleans County Next generation fruit grower Brett Kast, pictured here next to 2019 Master Class graduates 'Vilo' Rosario and Rosa Rosario, returned to the family farm almost 11 years ago. He previously worked in the Texas oil business and since then has worked closely with CCE LOF. Brett was instrumental and secured 'Vilo's and Rosa's participation during the nomination process for 2019 Master Class.



2019 Master Class graduates and Cornell instruction team after graduation ceremony on December 13th, 2019.

Lake Ontario Fruit Program Advisory Committee Meetings – A True Partnership!

Background: A foundation of the CCE Regional Agriculture Teams is regular guidance from stakeholders. The success of LOF depends on regular industry interaction, in many forms such as grower interactions (farm visits, phone calls, emails, etc.), and applied research (primarily on-farm).

LOF Response: The above industry regular interactions are very important; however, past precedent has dictated that an industry advisory committee be set up, with regular meeting(s) to guide team programming. The LOF Advisory Committee is directed by operating guidelines, which are regularly reviewed and revised as needed. The Industry Advisory Committee:

1. Assists the area specialists in identifying, analyzing and prioritizing educational program needs;
2. Supports the area specialists in planning, implementing, and evaluating education activities to address specific needs;
3. Markets the education program within the participating Cornell Cooperative Extension association counties;
4. Maintains two-way communication between the respective Cornell Cooperative Extension association Program/Issue Committees and/or Boards of Directors;
5. Provides input in the recruitment, selection and performance review of the area specialists;
6. Aids in local recruitment efforts;
7. Provides input on program needs for budget development purposes. With the Administrative Management Group representative, they secure funding for the respective association shares of program costs. They help develop alternative funding sources and strategies, as needed.

The voting portion of the committee consists of 2-4 growers from each partner county, based on size of the tree fruit & small fruit industry in each county. There are also several industry members (chemical, nursery, etc.) that are nominated and seconded by the other grower/industry members. The at-large grower members can be nominated and seconded by any other grower. For the county representatives, the committee can suggest one or more growers, but the ED of the CCE Association must invite the member. Terms are 3yrs, automatically renewed, to two terms maximum. After 6 yrs on the committee, they cannot rejoin for another 3 yrs. There are Cornell Faculty, the CCE-LOF Specialists, CCE ED's, CCE Admin, and others that are committee members without term limits but cannot vote.

Predicted Outcomes: We've been told by specialists on other teams, along with Cornell & CCE administrative personnel, that our industry advisory committee functions most like it was intended. One of the main reasons for this is perhaps the fairly homogenous nature of our industry- medium to larger commercial tree fruit growers.