What’s new?

Potential Increase in Tennessee H-2A Wage

Farmers utilizing H-2A labor are required to pay workers the highest of either the minimum wage, prevailing agricultural wage rate, or the adverse effect wage rate (AEWR). The highest rate is almost always the AEWR.

The AEWR is calculated by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) annually from wage surveys the USDA National Agricultural Statistical Service (NASS) conducts. USDA, NASS, Tennessee Field Office conducts a quarterly survey in Tennessee using a random sample of farmers and collects data on the number of workers hired, hours of hired labor and wages paid. The annual results are published in the October Farm Labor report reflecting average wages rates for All Hired, Field, and Field & Livestock workers. The rates for Field and Livestock workers are used to calculate the AEWR.

Traditionally DOL utilizes the NASS labor survey data and publishes the new AEWR sometime in mid-to late-February. The NASS survey data for 2007 reflected an increase in agricultural wages for the Appalachian II Region (KY/TN/VV) which would move the 2007 AEWR from $8.65/hour to a new AEWR of $9.13/hour for 2008. The KY/TN/VV AEWR increase was one of the largest potential increases across the country. The North Carolina/Virginia region’s AEWR rate will actually decrease in 2008 under current guidelines from $9.02 in 2007 to $8.85 in 2008.

To learn more about factors involved in the calculation of the AEWR wage or about taking action against the increase, visit: www.tnfarmbureau.org. Then click on “issues”, then select ‘Capitol Connections’. The username is tnfarm and the password is agriculture.

Eliot Coleman to Speak at 4th Annual TOGA Conference

The Tennessee Organic Growers’ Association (TOGA) invites you to participate in their 4th Annual Conference, to be held March 15, 2008 on the campus of Tennessee State University.

Eliot Coleman will be the keynote speaker. Coleman is an expert organic grower and advocate for organic and sustainable farming practices, with over 40 years of experience. He is the owner of Four Season Farm in Harborside, Maine. He is also the author of several books, including The New Organic Grower, Four Season Harvest and The Winter Harvest Manual. Coleman is known throughout the world for his cold weather growing techniques and direct marketing expertise. He is sure to bring plenty of practical advice to share with attendees through his presentation “Making a Success of Organic Farming.” However, Coleman will also address this year’s theme, “Sustainable Organic Tennessee,” by offering motivation for growing the sustainable agriculture movement in Tennessee.

In addition to Mr. Coleman’s keynote address, participants can choose from a diverse lineup of workshops, including presentations on organic certification, marketing, food security, and more. A local, organic lunch and exhibition hall will provide opportunities for networking and enjoying the bounty of Tennessee farms.

Conference registration is $50 before March 1st and $60 after. The student rate for conference registration is $20. Doors open at 8am and the conference will run through 5pm.

For more information or to print out a registration form, visit our website at www.tnorganics.org/events/conference.

For sponsorship or exhibitor information, email info@tnorganics.org or call 615.395.4566.
Question of the Month

Q: Do you have a recommended variety list for peppers - all types - especially bell?

A: This is a great and timely question. Variety selection is one of the first steps in ensuring a successful production season. Proper variety selection helps to determine harvest timing; size, quality and appearance of the fruit; disease resistance; and shelf-life or storage potential, as well as overall consumer acceptance. There are many more varieties out there than space to list them here, but the varieties listed have performed well in trials in Tennessee, or in neighboring states with similar growing conditions. Here you will find varieties to suit any taste and any market, from wholesale to a CSA basket.

Bell Peppers

Aladdin - Characteristics: A hybrid cultivar that turns from green to yellow at maturity. Fruit size 4 1/2" x 4". Resistance: Tobacco Mosaic Virus, Bacterial Leaf Spot Races 1, 2 and 3, Potato Virus Y. 73 days.

Alliance - Characteristics: Sweet pepper, extra large fruit are block with green to red color. Resistance: Cucumber Mosaic Virus, Pepper Mottle Virus, Tobacco Mosaic Virus, Bacterial Leaf Spot Races 1, 2, 3 and 5, Pepper Yellow Mosaic Potyvirus, Phytophthora capsici. 72 days.

Aristotle - Characteristics: Excellent green color and smooth blocky fruit, large to extra large, thick walls.

Good choice for earliness, disease resistance and high yields. Small plant results in mostly concentrated set. Anthocyanin-less. Resistance: Tobacco Mosaic Virus, Bacterial Leaf Spot Races 1, 2 and 3, Potato Virus Y, Tobacco Etch Virus. 71 days.


Camelot - Characteristics: Dark, glossy green to red bell pepper, large fruit, square shape, 4-lobed, and thick-fleshed, upright plants suitable for close spacing. Resistance: Tobacco Mosaic Virus. 74 days.

Heritage - Characteristics: Blocky shape, dark green to red color. Resistance: Bacterial Leaf Spot Races 1, 2, 3 and 5; highly tolerant to TSWV. 74 days.


Jupiter - Characteristics: Sweet bell type, extremely blocky, produces very large, mostly four lobed fruit, thick walls. Peppers turn from green to red when mature. Plant has good foliage to protect peppers from sunburn. PVP 8400065. Resistance: Tobacco Mosaic Virus. 70 days.

Paladin - Characteristics: Green to red bell pepper, mid-early maturity, dark-green extra-large fruit, high quality, high yielding, sweet pepper. Resistance: Tobacco Mosaic Virus, Potato Virus Y, Tobacco Etch Virus, Phytophthora capsici. 72 days.

Patriot - Characteristics: Medium early maturity. Blocky, high quality, extra large fruit, turn from dark green to red when mature. Resistance: Bacterial Leaf Spot Races 1, 2, 3 and 5, Potato Virus Y. 72 days.

Polaris - Characteristics: Smooth, very dark green fruit; firm and heavy. Sets over a long season. Resistance: Bacterial Leaf Spot Races 1, 2, 3, and 5. 72 days.

Revolution - Characteristics: Uniform, sweet pepper; extra large blocky type; early set, cold tolerant. Resistance: Bacterial Leaf Spot Races 1, 2, 3, and 5; tolerant to Cucumber Mosaic Virus and Phytophthora capsici. 72 days.

Tequila - Characteristics: Blocky, lilac colored ripening to medium red bell pepper, elongated pod, strong open growing plant, very early, 3- to 4-lobed fruit. Resistance: Tobacco Mosaic Virus. 69 days.

Hot Peppers

Agriset 4108 – Characteristics: Attractive, dark green fruit, thick walls, jalapeño type. Very hot. Resists checking. Resistance: Bacterial Leaf Spot Races 1, 2 and 3. 70 days.

Anaheim - Characteristics: Open-pollinated, New Mexican type, tall, erect plant, sturdy bush, concentrated set of long, straight, smooth pods, high yield. Green fruits turn deep red when ripe. Resistance: Tobacco Mosaic Virus. 77 days.

Big Red Hybrid - Characteristics: Cayenne type, high yields, good size (10-12”), fruit matures from green to red. 70 days.
Grande - Characteristics: Jalapeño type, vigorous, dark green to red, mid-early maturity, medium pungency, large plant and fruit. Performs well in adverse conditions. Resistance: Tobacco Etch Virus, Potato Virus Y. 85 days.

Mariachi - Characteristics: Creamy yellow to red; very large size fruit with thick walls, good color, 4-5” long; wide shoulders are typical so fruit are heavier than Santa Fe Grande; vigorous plant with good set, early maturity. 85 days.

Diablo Grande - Characteristics: Hungarian yellow wax type, very pungent, tapered, light green ripens to red, 7” long fruit. 65 days.

El Rey – Characteristics: Jalapeño type, smooth, little purpling. Early producer, mild. Thick flesh. Resistance: Bacterial Leaf Spot Races 1, 2 and 3. 64 days.

Fooled You - Characteristics: Sweet jalapeño flavor without the heat, attractive fruit, 1” x 3” long, tapering shape, medium to dark green. Resistance: Potato Virus Y. 85 days.

Mesilla - Characteristics: Cayenne type, 1 ½” x 10” long, tapered and rough, pendant fruit attachment upright plant, mid-season maturity. Resistance: Tobacco Mosaic Virus, Potato Virus Y, Tobacco Etch Virus. 68 days.

Mitla - Characteristics: Early jalapeño type, uniform large fruit, exceptional yielder, dark green fruit turn dark red at maturity, highly pungent. 85 days.

Mucho Nacho Hybrid - Characteristics: Jalapeño type, 4” x 1/2” fruit size, thick walled, green to red, slightly hotter than other jalapeños, exceptionally vigorous plants with very high yields. 72 days.

San Martin - Characteristics: Ancho type, dark green to red fruit, better yield, and larger fruit than open pollinated cultivars. 75 days.

Tiburon - Characteristics: Very dark green, firm flesh, poblano type. Early, reliable, high yields. Mild flavor. 81 days.

Tula - Characteristics: Jalapeño type, very pungent, large fruit size, concentrated heavy yields, green to red fruit. Resistance: Potato Virus Y. 85 days.

Sweet Specialty Peppers

Banana Supreme - Characteristics: Long (8” x 2”), yellow sweet pepper, very high yielder, vigorous medium size plant, spreading upright habit. Peppers will turn bright red when mature. 65 days.

Cubanelle - Characteristics: Open pollinated, Cuban frying type, slightly tapered fruit, with rounded ends measuring 6” x 2”. 65 days.

Pimiento Elite - Characteristics: A thick walled pimiento type that matures a week earlier than the open-pollinated, standard pimientos and sets more fruit, fruit measure 3 ½” x 3”, heart-shaped. Heavy yielder. Peppers turn from green to red when mature. Resistance: Tobacco Mosaic Virus. 75 days.

Pimiento L - Characteristics: Open-pollinated, large thick walled. 4 ½” long heart shaped sweet peppers. Peppers turn from green to red when mature. Excellent pickling variety. Vigorous plant.

Resistance: Tobacco Mosaic Virus. 95 days.

Sweet Banana - Characteristics: Thick, sweet flesh wall, bright yellow color, proper shape and size for pickling (6” x 2”). Peppers are sweet and turn from bright yellow to red when mature. Most commonly used when yellow. 65 days.

Truhart Perfection (Truhart) - Characteristics: Pimiento type, thick walled, heart shape, uniform fruit, 3½” x 3”. 80 days.

If you have a question, send it to: annettew@utk.edu.

Coming soon...

UT Extension Publications on the 2007 variety trial results and recommendations for:
1) fresh-market, slicing tomatoes,
2) bi-color sweet corn, and;
3) pumpkins.

These results will be available on the web soon.
In the coming weeks, check the weblink on page 4 for SPROUTS archives and new publications.
Upcoming Events

World Ag Expo, February 12-14, 2008, Tulare, CA
For more information, visit http://www.worldagexpo.com/.

9th Annual Virginia Biological Farming Conference, February 15-16, 2008, Richmond, VA
For more information, visit http://www.vabf.org/.

National Watermelon Association Annual Convention, February 20-24, 2008, Orange Beach, AL
The National Watermelon Association will hold its annual convention at the Perdido Beach Resort. For more information, visit www.nationalwatermelonassociation.com.

Winter Vegetable Conference and NC Tomato Growers Meeting, February 21-22, 2008, Asheville, NC
For more information, contact Jeanine Davis at 828.684.3562 or jeanine_davis@ncsu.edu.

For more information, visit http://www.georgiaorganics.org/conference/.

Greenhouse Tomato Short Course, March 4-7, 2008, Jackson, MS
For more information, visit: http://www.msstate.edu/dept/cmrec/ghsc.htm.

For more information and registration, visit http://tnorganics.org/events/conference.

2008 University of Tennessee Research and Education Center Field Days:
(For more information on any of these events, visit http://taes.tennessee.edu/dynamic/events.asp.)

Beef and Forage Field Day, June 12, 2008, East Tennessee Research and Education Center, Knoxville, TN

Fruits of the Backyard Field Day, June 17, 2008, Middle Tennessee Research and Education Center, Spring Hill, TN

Tobacco, Beef and More Field Day, June 26, 2008, Highland Rim Research and Education Center, Springfield, TN

Blooms Days, June 28-29, 2008, University of Tennessee Gardens, Knoxville, TN

Summer Celebration, July 10, 2008, West Tennessee Research and Education Center, Jackson, TN

Tobacco and Forage Production Field Day, July 17, 2008, Research and Education Center at Greeneville, Greeneville, TN

25th Milan No-Till Field Day, July 24, 2008, Research and Education Center at Milan, Milan, TN

Steak and Potatoes Field Day, August 5, 2008, Plateau Research and Education Center, Crossville, TN

SPROUTS: Supporting Producers through Research and Outreach at UT
Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.