



# SPROUTS

## Tennessee Vegetable News

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### Of special interest:

- ▣ First Annual TN Horticultural Expo
- ▣ Salmonella Outbreak Officially Believed To Be Over
- ▣ Soil Fumigant Comment Period
- ▣ Country of Origin Labelling
- ▣ Irregular ripening in tomato

### Inside this issue:

- What's new? 1
- COOL 2
- Question of the Week 3
- Weather Report 3
- Upcoming Events 4

### What's new?

#### First Annual TN Horticultural Expo Slated for January 2009

Don't miss the inaugural joint meeting between the TN Fruit & Vegetable Association, the TN Viticulture and Oenological Society, the American Wine Society, The TN Farm Wine Association, the TN Flower Growers Association and the TN Farmers' Market Association. This horticultural extravaganza will have the largest tradeshow in TFVA history, plus the added camaradery of the other associations. Mark your calendar now for the January 29-31 meeting! The meeting will be held at the Nashville Airport Marriott. The finishing touches are being put on the program. More details to follow as they unfold.

#### Salmonella Outbreak Officially Over

As of yesterday, the CDC declared that they believe the outbreak of *Salmonella* serotype Saintpaul appears to be over. The outbreak started in mid-April and tomatoes were believed to be the culprit. The FDA and CDC later changed their suspect list to include jalapeño and serrano peppers. Contaminated jalapeño peppers were traced back to distributors in the United States that received produce grown and packed in Mexico. Florida tomato growers lost an estimated \$100 million, when their crops was wrongly ac-

cused as being the cause for more than the first two months of the investigation. At the end of July, Florida industry and state officials told a congress committee that the federal government owes disaster relief payments to the nation's tomato growers and packers for the losses incurred because federal regulators wrongly linked their produce to salmonella poisonings nationwide. All in all there have been over 1,400 reported cases of foodborne illness from this outbreak in 43 states and Canada, including 10 cases in Tennessee.

#### Soil Fumigant Comment Period Extended

The EPA is requiring new safety measures for soil fumigant pesticides to increase protections for agricultural workers and people who live, work or otherwise spend time near fields that are fumigated. These measures are included in risk management Reregistration Eligibility Decisions (REDs) for the following soil fumigants: chloropicrin, dazomet, metam sodium/potassium and methyl bromide.

The measures include:

- Users must complete written management plans before fumigations begin.
- Buffer zones around treated fields will reduce the chances of impacting bystanders from fumigant concentrations in air.

- Posting requirements will inform bystanders and field workers about the location and timing of fumigations.
- Registrants must provide first responders with fumigant-specific safety information and training.
- Fumigant registrants must conduct outreach programs to educate community members about fumigants.
- Fumigant registrants must adopt more stringent worker protection measures, and develop training for fumigation handlers and workers.
- All soil fumigant products will be classified as restricted-use pesticides.

This EPA decision will also stop the use of methyl bromide on sites where alternatives are available. Iodomethane will be reexamined later in the year to identify what new mitigation or restrictions are necessary.

Comments will be accepted on implementation of the risk mitigation measures in EPA's soil fumigant risk management decisions until **October 30, 2008**.

More detailed information on the measures and the procedure to provide your comments are available at: [http://www.epa.gov/oppssrd1/reregistration/soil\\_fumigants/](http://www.epa.gov/oppssrd1/reregistration/soil_fumigants/).

## COOL Rules Aren't Expected To Be a Burden on Growers

By all indications, Country Of Origin Labeling (COOL) rules covering produce will go into effect Sept. 30 – but there's no need to panic, especially if you're a grower.

"I don't expect this to be a significant burden on growers," said Robert Guenther, senior vice president of public policy for United Fresh Produce Association (UFPA). "The real debate will be between suppliers and retailers."

Even suppliers and retailers will have time to ease into the new rules, despite the approaching deadline. Guenther expects USDA to implement a "grace period" – perhaps six months, perhaps a year – after Sept. 30, giving the industry time to fully comply with the new rules before they're actually enforced. USDA set a precedent with the seafood industry, which was given a year to comply with the new rules after they were enacted, according to UFPA.

The produce industry has been waiting for COOL to go into effect since 2002, when Congress passed a law requiring retailers of perishable agricultural commodities to inform consumers of the product's country of origin at the final point of sale, according to a UFPA white paper.

The original goal was to give U.S. consumers more information about where their produce comes from. The industry is well on its way toward doing that, since more than 60 percent of produce sold via U.S. retailers already meets COOL standards, Guenther said.

He expected the final COOL rules for produce to be released for public perusal by July. They might have come out sooner, but USDA had to wait for passage of the 2008 Farm Bill – which contained amendments to COOL – before it finalized the rules. So, how exactly do you communicate a product's country of origin? COOL requirements aren't clear about that.



Photo courtesy of TN's Protected Agriculture Program: <http://utprotectedagsolutions.tennessee.edu/>.

"We don't believe there will be specific regulations on font, size, color or anything like that," Guenther said. "It's not black and white."

The 2002 rules stated that retailers are permitted to inform consumers of country of origin at point of sale "by means of a label, stamp, mark, placard or other clear and visible sign on the covered commodity or on the package, display, holding unit or bin containing the commodity," according to the white paper.

Fresh – and probably frozen – fruit and vegetables will require labeling, but canned fruit and vegetables will not. Produce packages that contain two or more different commodities – such as a salad mix containing lettuce and

tomatoes or fruit cup containing cantaloupe, honeydew and watermelon – will probably be exempt as well, since they're considered processed items, Guenther said.

COOL originally was supposed to go into effect Sept. 30, 2004, but was delayed twice because of concerns about the regulatory burden on the produce industry. To reduce that burden, COOL stakeholders debated and finally agreed to make certain revisions to the original law. The revisions are contained in the new Farm Bill, according to the paper.

Guenther said the amended rules are more workable and user-friendly. For example, the old rules stated country of origin labels had to be affixed on a product even if a regional or state label already was in place. So, even if a potato already had a Grown In Idaho sticker on it, a second sticker would have to be applied affirming the potato was grown in the United States. Such a redundancy adds to labor and expense, so the industry pushed to remove it. Now, Grown In Idaho, Pride of New York or similar labels are enough to meet COOL requirements by themselves, according to the white paper.

The paper listed other

amendments to the original rules:

- Liability for retail mistakes or absence of labeling has been significantly reduced. If a retailer is found to be in violation of the act, USDA must give it 30 days to comply. USDA cannot impose a fine at the end of the 30 days unless the retailer has not made a "good faith" effort to comply with the rules. The same rules apply for suppliers who do not provide country of origin information to retailers (who will not be held liable for misinformation provided by suppliers).

- All proposed fines on either retailers or suppliers found to be in violation are subject to a hearing and are limited to \$1,000 for each violation. Also, USDA is barred from new record-keeping requirements, other than records kept in the regular course of doing business.

- The most important thing growers can do to prepare for COOL is to talk to their supply chain partners and make sure there's an accurate, verifiable labeling system in place that's understood and agreed upon along every step of the produce distribution chain. Growers, handlers, shippers, brokers, distributors, retailers – everybody needs to be on the same page, Guenther said.

*This article is reprinted here with the permission of The Fruit Growers News and was written by Matt Milkovich, Assistant Editor.*

## Question of the Week

**Q:** I have two different growers with four different varieties of tomatoes. The tomatoes are red but when they cut into them, they are green. What causes this and how can we correct it?

**A:** Ripening of tomatoes starts from the inside out. But if stressful weather periods (i.e., long dry spells followed by heavy rains, excessive heat over a long time, etc.) occur during the early ripening process, this can impede nutrient movement within the plant causing **uneven ripening**. The result of this nutrient blockage is similar to the symptoms you described- the central core of a tomato becomes tough and remains green or greenish-white or the walls of the fruit can also become pale and seeds and seed cavities remain green in some varieties.

This problem can also occur when there are not enough nutrients available for the plants at that crucial time, so it is always a good idea to have soil tested before planting at the beginning of the season.

Additionally, there are a few things you can do to lessen the stress of the weather on the plants:

- 1) **Mulching.** This helps maintain consistent soil moisture during dry spells. Black plastic mulch, as well as a heavy layer of straw can be used.
- 2) **Drainage.** Be sure the soil drains well, if heavy rains are a problem (generally not the case in TN!).
- 3) **Irrigation.** Using drip irrigation systems help to ensure more even watering.
- 4) **Timing.** Properly time fertilizing and watering to minimize plant stress.
- 5) **Variety selection.** Some research claims that the problem is more common in the older varieties of tomatoes and that some of the newer hybrids have had the problem genetically bred out of them, so they might want to

consider growing different varieties next year.

Another problem that has been common this year is blotchy ripening. As you might guess, this disorder was so named because the fruit ripens unevenly, with patches that don't ripen or ripen after the rest of the fruit is overripe. While the exact cause is not known, symptoms often develop in the interior of dense plants with abundant foliage. Once again, weather conditions and nutrient availability can play a role- cloudy, cool, wet conditions, too much nitrogen, too little potassium and compacted soils can increase the severity.

For more on tomato disorders, visit the Cornell University 'Common Tomato Fruit Disorders' webpage at: [http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/NewsArticles/Tom\\_ComDis.htm](http://vegetablemdonline.ppath.cornell.edu/NewsArticles/Tom_ComDis.htm).

**If you have a question, send it to: [annettew@utk.edu](mailto:annettew@utk.edu).**



All photos courtesy of: <http://www.jmokufl.edu/LIV/groups/cultural/physio/vcfs1.htm>

## Weather Report

Parts of Tennessee got a good soaking this week thanks to Fay, but it looks like things will be sunnier again for the next few days. Good for all the Labor Day picnics!

In East TN, high temperatures will stay in the mid- to upper 80's for the next five days with low temperatures in the

mid- to upper 60's.

The Plateau still has some chances for more storms today and then clearing up until Tuesday. High temperatures will be in the low 80's with lows in the low 60's.

In Middle TN, there's also a chance for more storms going

into the weekend and temperatures will just touch 90, with low's in the upper 60's.

In West TN, temps will hover around 90 for most of the next 5 days, lows dropping to the upper 60's.

A safe and happy Labor Day to all!



## Upcoming Events

**Farm Worker Food Safety Training**, September 8, 2008, Grainger Co. Justice Center, Rutledge, TN

*This training will focus on how workers can minimize pathogen contamination during production and harvest of fresh produce, including worker hygiene, harvesting, cleaning harvest aids, and handling produce. This workshop will be given 3 times on the 8th. At 9:30 AM, the workshop will be in English. At 2 PM and 6 PM, the workshop will be in Spanish. This workshop is free, thanks to support from the TDA.*

**Pumpkin/Gourd Field Day**, October 16, 2008, Mountain Research Station, Waynesville, NC  
For more information, contact Department of Horticultural Science Extension Specialist Jonathan Schultheis at [Jonathan\\_Schultheis@ncsu.edu](mailto:Jonathan_Schultheis@ncsu.edu).

**Fall Flower and Garden Fest**, October 18-19, 2008, Crystal Springs, MS  
For more information, visit: [www.msucare.com/fallfest](http://www.msucare.com/fallfest).

**NC Greenhouse Vegetable Growers Conference**, October 28-29, 2008, Raleigh, NC  
Sponsored by the NC Greenhouse Vegetable Growers Association. For more information, write to the NCGVGA at PO Box 58220, Raleigh, NC 27658.

**23rd Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference**, October 31-November 2, 2008, Anderson, SC  
Sponsored by Carolina Farm Stewardship Association. For more information, visit <http://carolinafarmstewards.org>.

**23rd Annual Southeast Vegetable & Fruit Expo**, December 2-3, 2008, Myrtle Beach, SC  
This annual event is sponsored by the North Carolina Vegetable Growers Association with the North Carolina Extension Service in partnership with the South Carolina Vegetable Growers Association. More information will be posted on <http://www.ncvga.com/>.

**Deep South Fruit and Vegetable Conference and Tradeshow**, December 3-4, 2008, Mobile, AL  
For registration information, visit: <http://www.deepsouthfruitveg.com/>.

**2009 Southeast Regional Fruit and Vegetable Conference**, January 8-11, 2009, Savannah, GA  
For program and registration information, visit: <http://www.gfvga.org/>.

**Tennessee Horticultural Expo**, January 29-31, 2009, Nashville Airport Marriott, Nashville, TN  
Come to the inaugural joint meeting between the Tennessee Fruit & Vegetable Association, the Tennessee Viticulture and Oenological Society, the American Wine Society, The TN Farm Wine Association, the TN Flower Growers Association and the TN Farmers' Market Association. This horticultural extravaganza will have the largest tradeshow in TFVA history, plus the added comradery of the other associations. Mark your calendar now! More details to follow.

**North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Convention**, February 1-7, 2009, Savannah, GA  
For more information, visit: [www.nafdma.com](http://www.nafdma.com).

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