Inside this issue:

- 2008 Southeastern U.S. Vegetable Crop Handbook
- Farmers’ Market Forum
- Farm to School Legislation in Tennessee
- Renewable Energy Resources for TN Growers
- Commercial Bicolor Sweet Corn Varieties for Tennessee

What’s new?

2008 Southeastern U.S. Vegetable Crop Handbook

The 2008 Southeast Vegetable Crop Handbook is available on-line for your reference. The purpose of this book is to provide the most up-to-date information available for commercial vegetable growers in the Southeast. This handbook covers general production recommendations, specific commodity recommendations, as well as pest control options, including pesticides, biological control organisms and alternative control procedures. This book is a collaboration of Auburn University, Clemson University, Louisiana State University, Mississippi State University, North Carolina State University, the University of Georgia, the University of Tennessee, the University of Kentucky, and Virginia Tech. While specific variety recommendations were not included for Tennessee this year, there are plans for Tennessee to be included in the coming year. We also hope to obtain more hardcopies of the book to distribute to growers in 2009, as the supply was very limited this year. For 2008, the handbook can be downloaded at http://www.aces.edu/dept/com_veg/2008_SEVG5.pdf.

A word of caution: This is a 272 page document and is 8 MB in size, so not easily downloaded for the dial-up internet user!

Farmers’ Market Forum and Appalachian Farmers’ Market Association Meeting

The Appalachian Farmers’ Market Association will be hosting their half-day, spring meeting in Bristol, VA on Saturday, March 29, at 8:30 AM. Workshops for producers will include: 1) Making a Good Impression at Market (by keeping your produce looking fresh and creating eye catching displays) and 2) Growing for Higher Sales and Profits (identifying new crops to grow, considering organic, and value-added and processed items– what are the rules?). There will be workshops for market managers, as well.

On Monday, March 31, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture is sponsoring the Farmers’ Market Forum in Carthage, TN. The event’s focus is opportunities and requirements for producers who plan to sell their farm products directly to the consumer. The event is free of charge. Registration for the day’s program, which includes lunch, opens at 8:30 AM. The program begins at 9 AM and concludes at 4:30 PM. Anyone interested in participating in the forum and luncheon is encouraged to pre-register.

For more information on either event, see the ‘Upcoming Events’ section on page 4.

Local agricultural products given preference in schools (SB 3341 Williams - HB 3158* Harrison)

The Farm to School Legislation, HB3158, yesterday passed the Tennessee House Education Committee and a calendar date will be set soon for its consideration by the entire Tennessee House. The legislation passed the Senate Education Committee and full Senate without opposition. This bill requires each local school board to include preferences for the use of local agricultural products in the compliance plan submitted to the Commissioner of Education for school nutrition standards. The local school board is to allow a flexible bidding process to assist farmers to bid competitively on portions of a given nutrition plan, rather than an entire nutrition plan. All food provided for public schools must meet or exceed the food safety standards for commercial food operations. The Farm Bureau has been a Nashville presence lobbying on the bill, and farmers and others around the state have been contacting their legislators.

You can follow the progress on the bill, including video streaming of proceedings, at the website http://www.legislature.state.tn.us/. This information was taken from personal communication with Steve Hodges of the Jubilee Project (http://jubileeproject.holston.org/) and a TFBF Legislative Alert.
Renewable Energy Systems and Resources for TN Growers

There is more and more talk these days about clean energy, from changing a light bulb to biofuels to solar panels. The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program has just released a new publication, Clean Energy Farming: Cutting Costs, Improving Efficiencies, Harnessing Renewables. This free publication is available online or in print at: http://www.sare.org/publications/energy.htm. This bulletin highlights innovative research and examples of farmers who are improving energy efficiency while saving money. These growers and ranchers are implementing farming practices that save energy, protect natural resources, and produce and use renewable fuels.

Incentives to Implement Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Systems
The USDA will accept $220.9 million in loan and grant applications within USDA’s Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements Program. Loan guarantees and grants are available to agricultural producers and rural small businesses to purchase and install renewable energy systems or to make energy efficiency improvements. Eligible applicants may seek loan guarantees to cover up to 50% of a project’s cost, not to exceed $10 million. Grants are available for up to 25% of a project’s cost, not to exceed $250,000 for energy efficiency improvements and $500,000 for renewable energy systems. The USDA will issue one grant solicitation for two separate competitions in FY 2008. For the first competitive window, grant-only applications must be submitted no later than April 15, 2008. For the second competitive window, grant-only applications must be submitted between April 16, 2008, and June 16, 2008. Applications for loan guarantees, as well as those for loan/grant combinations must be completed and submitted to the appropriate USDA Rural Development State Office no later than June 16, 2008. This information was excerpted from a USDA News Release. To view the full announcement, visit: http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/pa/08energy.pdf. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA’s web site at http://www.rurdev.usda.gov.

In addition to the USDA program, Tennessee offers grants to supplant the use of fossil fuels and assist businesses in the identification, purchase and installation of approved solar and other clean energy technology systems through the Tennessee Clean Energy Technology Grant Program (TN-CET). The maximum grant under this program is 40% of installed system cost up to $75,000. Approved grant applicants with less than 300 employees may be eligible to receive a 0% or 3% interest loan under The Small Business Energy Loan Program to finance the remaining 60% portion of a project that is not covered by a grant. The minimum grant under this program is $5,000. Grants will not be paid for projects that were either started or completed prior to the date of an application for Grant Assistance. All grants will be paid on a “reimbursement basis” after a project has been completed. No “up-front” payments will be made. For more information on this program, contact Clinton A. Berry, III at 615-253-1943 or Gil Melear-Hough at the Southern Alliance for Clean Energy (SACE) in Knoxville at 865.637.6055 ext. 15.

There is also a 30% federal tax credit (not a deduction, but a credit). Most companies count the grant money as income so that the 30% tax credit can apply to the entire cost and not just the amount beyond the grant.

Additionally, federal tax law provides for 5 year accelerated depreciation.

Does solar make sense for your farm? There are many ways to incorporate renewable energy sources or energy efficiency on the farm, including water catchment systems, updating equipment or tapping into energy from the wind or sun, to name a few. If you have a sun exposed roof on one of your farm buildings, that roof could be doing more for your farm than just protecting what’s inside the barn. Solar energy can be used to power walk-in coolers, lights, greenhouse fans, office computers… the list goes on.

Do I qualify for these incentives? In order to qualify:
- 51% of your IRS return must reflect farming business.
- You need a Southern (SE to SW) facing, existing structure used for an agricultural purpose such as a barn, shed, chicken house or other structure with 300 to 2000 sq. ft. of roof space.

Other advantages
- Most solar panels come with 25-year warranties and are expected to produce electricity for 35 years.
- TVA Generation Partners program will pay you 15-20 cents per kwh. You can expect production of approximately 1200 kwh a year per kw of installed capacity.

Additional Resources
ATTRA also has a comprehensive list of publications, success stories, and links on how to make farm buildings more energy efficient, use the sun’s energy to heat greenhouses and pump water, choose and put up wind turbines, make and use biofuels, and much more at: http://attra.ncat.org/energy.php.

LightWave Solar Electric is a local business that installs TN made solar panels. LightWave has installed solar on many businesses and homes. If you are interested in using solar energy in your operation and would like to take advantage of the available incentives that are scheduled to end December 2008 contact Steve Johnson to discuss it further. All paperwork must be submitted by the middle of May 2008. Steve Johnson is the owner of LightWave Solar Electric. He is a certified electrical contractor and solar electric installer. Contact him at 615-294-9630 or visit www.lightwavesolarelectric.com.
Question of the Month

Q: Do you have a variety recommendation to replace Peaches & Cream?

A: When you are choosing a sweet corn variety to grow, your choices are nearly endless. You can choose a variety by the color of the kernels—white, yellow or bicolor, by the maturity date—early, mid-season or late, or by the how easy they are to grow, their kernel sweetness and their storage life, which are all affected by their genetics.

Since you asked about Peaches & Cream, we’ll stick with the bicolor varieties, but let’s talk about the genetics for a minute. Normal sugary varieties have the su gene. These varieties were the standard for sweet corn for many years. ‘Butter and Sugar’ is an example of a normal sugary variety. Su varieties have the lowest sugar content and need to be eaten soon after harvest. As time passes, the sugar in these varieties is quickly converted to starch, making them chewy and less tender, instead of creamy.

Sugary enhanced varieties have the se gene in them. These varieties are sweeter than the su types and their sugar turns to starch more slowly, which means they will maintain their creamy texture and store for 2-4 days, if refrigerated.

Peaches & Cream is one of the most famous se varieties. While many still ask for it, there are sweeter varieties out there!

The supersweet varieties have the sh2 gene. These varieties are 2-3 times sweeter than the su and se’s, and have a slow sugar to starch conversion rate, so corn will remain sweet for up to 10 days after harvest, if stored properly. However, sh2 types can be less tender, more crispy to eat and harder to grow than the other types and must be isolated by at least 500 ft from all of the other types. Otherwise, cross pollination with su’s, se’s or synergistics will cause sh2’s to become starchy and tough.

Synergistic sweet corn varieties combine the best of both worlds— the sweetness of the supersweets and the tenderness of the sugary enhanced varieties, like Peaches & Cream. Their genetics can include a variety of crosses between types, generally 1/4 sh2 and 3/4 se. They are easy to grow, like the se and su’s and they have the storability of the sh2’s.

We did variety trials of bicolor, synergistic sweet corn at the Plateau (PREC) and Highland Rim (HRREC) Research and Education Centers this past summer. In our trial, at the PREC our three top yielding varieties were Montauk, Sweet Rhythm and Charisma. Our trial at the HRREC was under more stressful conditions, with less water and fewer insecticide sprays, and the three top yielding varieties were Cameo, BC0805 and Providence.

**Montauk:**
- Main-season maturity
- Plant height: 6’
- Height to collar: 17”
- Ear length: 7¼”
- Very good tip fill and cover
- Vigorous plant
- Long shank, nice flags
- Good, sweet, beautiful ear
- Seed treated with neonicotinoid for flea beetle, Stewart’s Wilt, and seed corn maggot
- Available from Seedway, Rupp

**Sweet Rhythm:**
- Early maturity
- Plant height: 6½’
- Height to collar: 19”
- Ear length: 7¼”
- Very good tip fill, excellent cover

**Charisma:**
- Early-mid-season maturity
- Plant height: 6½’
- Height to collar: 20”
- Ear length: 7¼”
- Excellent tip fill and cover
- Medium sized, sturdy plant
- Long shank, nice flags
- Sweet kernels
- Intermediate resistance to Stewart’s Wilt, rust and NCLB
- Available from Seedway, Rupp

**Cameo:**
- Main-season maturity
- Plant height: 7’
- Height to collar: 21”
- Ear length: 8”
- Excellent tip fill & good cover
- Nice sized, semi-sturdy plants
- Good, sweet, beautiful ear, nice package
- Intermediate resistance to SCLB, NCLB, rust, SW
- Available from Seedway, Crookham, Rupp

**BC0805:**
- Main-season maturity
- Plant height: 6½’
- Height to collar: 17”
- Ear length: 8½”
- Excellent tip fill & good cover
- Nice sized plants
- Good, sweet, slender ear
- Intermediate resistance to SCLB; high resistance to rust
- Seed treated with neonicotinoid for flea beetle and SW, and seed corn maggot
- Attribute technology (Bt gene): Built in protection against European corn borer & corn earworm; Part of IPM program— Still need to scout and spray
- Available from Siegers, Seedway, Rogers, Rupp, Rispens

**Providence:** All of the same characteristics as BC0805 without Attribute technology.

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

Appalachian Farmers’ Market Association Spring Meeting, March 29, 2008, 8:30AM-12:00PM, Bristol Public Library, Bristol, VA
Workshops for producers will include: 1) Making a Good Impression at Market (by keeping your produce looking fresh and creating eye catching displays) and 2) Growing for Higher Sales and Profits (identifying new crops to grow, considering organic, and value-added and processed items – what are the rules?). There will also be workshops for market managers. For more information contact Terrie Talbert (423.764.4171).

The event’s focus is opportunities and requirements for producers who plan to sell their farm products directly to the consumer. The event is free of charge, sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. Registration for the day’s program, which includes lunch, opens at 8:30 a.m. The program begins at 9 a.m. and concludes at 4:30 p.m. Anyone interested in participating in the forum and luncheon is encouraged to pre-register by contacting Laura Fortune at (615) 837-5349 or Laura.Fortune@state.tn.us.

Developing & Implementing HACCP for the Fresh-cut Industry, May 20-22, 2008, Extension Food Science Teaching Facility, University of Georgia Campus, Athens, GA
This program has been specifically designed for the fresh-cut industry. The goal of this program is to provide you with the skills and knowledge to design, implement, document and maintain HACCP in your fresh-cut business. For more information and to pre-register, visit: http://www2.unitedfresh.org/forms/MeetingCalendar/

United Fresh Produce Associations’ Produce Inspection Training Program, June 2-6, 2008, Fredericksburg, VA.
This program is designed to provide hands-on instruction from USDA experts to anyone involved in the produce supply chain - grower to retailer. Become more knowledgeable about quality control standards, inspection grading, USDA produce procedures and requirements, and much more! For details, contact Beth Berman at 202.303.3405 or visit www.unitedfresh.org.

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.