President’s Message

Finally, a little peace and quiet. A hectic and troublesome Spring and early Summer seems to have settled down into a fairly pleasant string of weather here in Adams County, providing a little time to relax and get things in order before the fall push. The week of the 4th was hot as blazes, but generally this mid-Summer has had a string of pretty darn pleasant days.

July 10th, when the Penn State Fruit Research and Extension Center in Biglerville celebrated its 100th anniversary, was one of those days. The weather was beautiful, the chicken lunch was delicious, and the educational presentations were outstanding, as usual. The opportunity to spend a day learning new ideas and exchanging ideas with other growers is something I find especially valuable.

It may just be my imagination, but it seemed like we have a larger group of graduate students at FREC this year. Whether or not that is true, we can be thankful for their research efforts by both the staff and graduate students. The challenges to the fruit industry they are taking on are both old and new. I’m sure results of this work will benefit both current and future generations of growers.

According to the television weather man, that string of beautiful weather ended this weekend, with 5 inches of rain. He called it ugly weather, I called it beautiful. It started as a slow steady rain, then poured for a few hours over night. It happened on a Saturday, so it was truly a farmer’s rain. I won’t even complain about having to fix the farm roads.

We were starting to see dust devils around here, and I, like many of you, was preparing to set up irrigation pumps, getting a crew ready to walk and repair lines, and generally deal with all the headaches that go along with irrigation. We can hold off on that for now, and with a little luck, maybe all that stuff can stay in the shed this year.

I hope all of you have your harvest crews lined up. In both 2014 and 2015, we left at least 5,000 bushels of apples go on the ground due to a lack of help. I wouldn’t wish that on anyone.

I’m hearing rumors around the county that some folks are short handed, and I’m not seeing many guys in the area looking for work. I certainly hope this isn’t too wide spread or too long lasting. We are in good shape right now, having hired an H2A crew, but 5 or 6 more would sure be welcomed come harvest. Good luck to all of you as this critical time approaches (if it hasn’t already hit you).

If you care about the labor issue and are politically motivated, I suggest you call your congressman. If you care about the labor issue and are not politically motivated, I suggest you call your congressman. There is a bill in Congress being proposed by Rep. Goodlatte called the “Ag Legal Workforce Act”. This bill is supported by The American Farm Bureau and would make significant changes to the H2A program that would benefit Agriculture. Please consider taking the time to make the call. With redistricting, my current district is different from my future district. I called both of them. Hopefully I had twice the impact.

I know, if the opposite of Pro is Con, the opposite of progress is Congress, but if we decide to opt out of the political system we have no chance, given we make up less than 3% of the vote. Please act.

Happy Harvest. May your bins fill quickly and your bruises be few.

Chris Baugher  
SHAP President