

AG ISSUES UPDATE
Edited by Brad Hollabaugh
May, 2011

Senate Confirms Greig Agriculture Secretary

The state Senate voted on May 3, 2011 to confirm George Greig of Crawford County as Pennsylvania's Secretary of Agriculture. Secretary Grieg is a lifelong dairy farmer and has an understanding of many of the challenges that face Agriculture today. He has already shown an interest in learning about the fruit industry by taking a short tour of Adams County growers last month. His position is responsible for encouraging, protecting and promoting agriculture and related industries while providing consumer protection through inspection services.

President Signs 1099 Repeal

President Obama recently signed into law legislation to repeal an oppressive tax filing requirement. H.R. 4 repeals a provision of the health care law that would have required businesses to submit a Form 1099 to the IRS starting next year for every vendor from which they purchased \$600 or more worth of goods or services. Repeal of Form 1099 was one of the top issues members discussed with Pennsylvania's Congressional delegation during PFB's National Legislative Conference in March.

Sen. Schwank Appointed to Ag Committee Post

State Senator Judy Schwank (D-11th Dist.) has been appointed to serve as Minority Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. She won a special election in March to complete the term of the late Sen. Michael O'Pake.

Her background includes serving as Berks County Cooperative Extension director, Berks County Commissioner and most recently Dean of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at Delaware Valley College. Sen. Elder Vogel (R-47th Dist.) serves as Majority Chair of the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

Governor Signs Bill Repealing Mandatory Sprinkler Systems

Governor Corbett has signed legislation recently approved by the General Assembly to repeal mandatory installation of automatic sprinkler systems in newly constructed homes. The mandate had taken effect Jan. 1 and had added costs to the construction of single- and double-family homes.

Laboratory Bioassays to Assess Potential Control Strategies for Brown Marmorated Stink Bug

Laboratory bioassays were conducted this winter at the Penn State Fruit Research and Extension Center to assess the toxicity of various insecticides against adults of brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB). The results provided valuable information relative to insect management during the upcoming growing season.

The biology and behavior of brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB, aka Asian stink bug) present many challenges. BMSB has a plethora of available host plants and has the ability

for unrestricted movement. Insect biology and monitoring issues are undefined and there is no biological control. Each instar (except eggs) can cause damage, and initial injury on fruit is inconspicuous. Alternate management options to be investigated during the growing season include border applications, treatment of surrounding vegetation, and trap crop plantings. Research on spatial and temporal distribution will also be conducted.

College of Ag Sciences Names Associate Dean for Research

Gary Thompson, head of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at Oklahoma State University, has been named associate dean for research and graduate education and director of the Pennsylvania Agricultural Experiment Station in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences. The appointment was effective April 1.

Reporting to the dean of the college, Thompson will administer an annual research budget of nearly \$100 million and oversee 16 graduate education programs as well as the college's participation in seven intercollege graduate degree programs.

New PA IMP Blog

The Pennsylvania IPM Program has a new blog at <http://extension.psu.edu/ipm/news>. Posts will include the latest information about pests and their control in both urban and agricultural settings. You may subscribe to receive updates to the blog by clicking on the "Subscribe" link in the left column. You will only receive e-mails when new content is added to the blog. In addition, archived news items and upcoming events can be found in the right column.

PA IPM is also on Facebook under "Pennsylvania IPM Program" and Twitter under "PAIPM". Both pages are updated frequently with the latest happenings of the program.

New Fruit Pest May Threaten PA Growers

Grapes, berries, and tree fruit may be threatened if a new pest makes its way into Pennsylvania this year, Penn State researchers say.

The Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD) is a small vinegar fly with the potential to damage many tree fruit crops such as cherries, plums, peaches, some apple varieties and Asian pears, says Dr. David Biddinger, entomologist at the Pennsylvania State University Fruit Research and Extension Center. The greatest potential for damage, however, is probably to the many types of berry crops, especially strawberries and to grapes.

Native to Southeast Asia, the fly was first detected in the western United States in 2008 and was discovered in Florida on strawberries in spring of 2010, and then later in the Carolinas and Michigan.

Biddinger says that because the flies are only a few millimeters long and cannot fly very far, human-assisted transport is the most likely cause of the recent rapid spread.

For more information on spotted wing Drosophila, please visit

<http://extension.psu.edu/ipm/agriculture/fruits/spotted-wing-drosophila> or <http://sites.google.com/site/spottedwingdrosophila/>.

Penn State researchers will provide updates on the SWD situation in Pennsylvania once its presence is confirmed in Pennsylvania.

Fire Blight and Apple Scab Models Available at PA-PIPE

Fire blight and apple scab models for locations throughout Pennsylvania are available at PA-PIPE. It is important to collect site-specific weather data in your orchards, but these models serve as a guide.

The Pennsylvania Pest Information Platform for Extension and Education (PA PIPE; <http://pa-pipe.zedxinc.com/>) was developed as a collaborative effort between Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences faculty, the Pennsylvania State Department of Agriculture, and ZedX, Inc. to provide an early warning system for key pests affecting agriculture and forestry in Pennsylvania.

The models developed utilize weather data, combined with local observations from researchers, local growers, and specialists, which are then processed with algorithms intended to predict important events in crop, insect, and disease development cycles. The result is a spatial view of the development and significance of diseases, insects, weeds, and crop conditions for the entire Pennsylvania region.

The system is not intended for use when making important economic management decisions, but to help target the timing and need for monitoring of key insects, diseases, and crops in the area.

Apple Scab Model

The Apple Scab Disease model results depict disease severity based on suitability of environmental conditions for disease development. Suitability is determined or forecast based on wetness events and associated temperature. A wetness event is defined as a rainfall event or dew formation. Disease severity is organized into classes: inactive (no infection), active but no infection, and five severity levels: very low, low, moderate, high and very high.

Fire Blight Model

The Fire Blight model results depict disease severity based on suitability of environmental conditions for disease development. Suitability is determined or forecast based on wetness events and associated temperature. A wetness event is defined as a rainfall event or dew formation. Disease severity is organized into three classes. These classes are inactive (no infection), active, but no infection, and active and infectious.

New Blueberry Herbicide and Valuable Weed Identification References

Sandea (halosulfuron-methyl, Gowan) has been approved for use on blueberries in Pennsylvania. Sandea has both preemergent and postemergent activity on certain weeds that can become problematic in blueberry plantings. Labeled rates are really low (1/2 to 1

oz/acre), so make sure that your application rate is correct. Be sure to follow precautions and directions on the label, and avoid contact with any green tissue.

Voluntary Leafy Green Agreement Proposal Released

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has released its proposal for a voluntary National Leafy Green Marketing Agreement (NLGMA). If adopted, the program would be used to govern the production, handling and packaging of leafy green vegetables, including spinach, lettuce, and cabbage, for handlers who sign on and for all the farmers who supply those participating handlers.

One component of NLGMA is a governing board, which would be tasked with submitting recommendations to USDA Secretary Vilsack and with enforcing the agreement. This proposed board would consist of 26 members, ten of these being producers, including two small farm representatives.

Additionally, the proposed structure includes 12 handlers. The NLGMA proposal is available for review and public comment. Farm Bureau will thoroughly examine the proposed rule and file comments. One area however where there is still some uncertainty is how this voluntary program might be impacted by the Food Safety Modernization Act, passed by Congress in January 2011. The Food and Drug Administration is currently writing regulations for the new law.

Dangers of Ticks and Lyme Disease Most Significant in Spring

As spring turns Pennsylvania's fields and forests lush and green – and outdoors enthusiasts turn out to go trout fishing, grouse hunting, hiking, mountain biking, camping, canoeing and more -- they will be greeted by sun and fun and at least one dangerous pest: Blacklegged ticks (commonly called "deer" ticks). Carriers of the bacteria that cause Lyme disease, they are a lot more common around the state than they used to be, according to an entomologist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

Annual Update for National Farmers' Market Directory Begins

The Agriculture Department's Agricultural Marketing Service is opening the updating process for the USDA National Farmers' Market Directory, the official count of the nation's farmers' markets. For the first time this year, the directory will also track farmers' markets with multiple locations and operating days.

"The USDA National Farmers' Market Directory not only counts, lists and maps the country's more than 6,100 farmers' markets, it is also a fantastic resource for those interested in local food production, small producer success and public policy about regional food systems," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. In addition to helping people find the closest farmers' market, the farmers' markets listed in this directory are included in maps, mobile apps and other stats.

All of the information in the directory relies on input from farmers' market managers in the field. Farmers' market managers can update market listings at

www.usdadirectoryupdate.com. The complete directory will be released prior to National Farmers' Market Week, Aug. 7-13.

Website Provides Resources on '4Rs' of Nutrient Stewardship

A new website that provides information about nutrient stewardship to farmers based on the "4Rs" Right fertilizer source at the Right rate, at the Right time and in the Right place, is now online. The site, www.nutrientstewardship.com, describes the importance of these steps and offers practical advice and information on how to implement a 4R plan.

"Nutrient management is important because nutrients are the second largest input expense in corn production," said Dr. Howard Brown, GROWMARK manager, agronomy services. Brown noted that nutrients impact farmers' profitability as well as plant nutrition and growth. (GROWMARK is one of the sponsors of the new website.)

RFD-TV To Broadcast "Farms To Table"

An edited version of a six-part television series produced by the PA Farm Bureau and PCN-TV will be broadcast nationally on RFD-TV throughout 2011. The original series, "From the Farms to the Table," will be broadcast as part of Farm Bureau's Voices of Agriculture program.

The TV shows include stops at a Northumberland County dairy farm, a York County fruit farm, Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, the New Holland farm equipment manufacturing facility in Lancaster County, Sterman Masser Potato Farms in Schuylkill County, and the Giant grocery store chain. The RFD-TV broadcast schedule will be posted at PFB's website at www.pfb.com and published in RFD-TV's program guide.

The first show takes place May 11 and features Gary Truckenmiller's Dry Run Dairy Farm. Farm Bureau's Voices of Agriculture series is initially broadcast on Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. each week and includes rebroadcasts on Thursday at 4:30 a.m. and Saturday at 3:30 p.m. The RFD-TV channel is carried by the DISH Network (Channel 231), DIRECTV (Channel 345), Verizon FiOS TV (247) and other cable systems.