

President's Message

Spring time is always filled with countless hours on the tractor. One side effect is that it allows for lots of time to think. Whether this is a good thing or bad thing, I will allow for you to determine. Some of the most impactful changes we have made on our operation have come from ideas thought of while spraying. However, if you ask my father some of the items which have cost us the most money also have come from my hours on the tractor. But I try not to focus on those quite as much.

One item I have been thinking about quite frequently this year is how unpredictable everything has become. Now, when most growers talk about unpredictability, it usually pertains to the weather; I am taking a more wholistic approach with my thought. When I look back say 10 or 15 years ago, it seems as though our industry was much more stable. Yes, there was this new apple called "Honeycrisp" which had made a splash. But, overall, many growers were confident in the varieties they were growing and their ability to grow them at a high quality. Even when it came to supplies such as cardboard for boxes, irrigation equipment, or tree training items, growers knew that their suppliers would be able to support their needs. Now, we live in a world where there seems to be more questions than answers. Yes, I know that the pandemic has greatly influenced the availability of goods; and more specifically increased the cost of them. But when you start to add all of these items together, it creates a very unpredictable business model. This is even before you factor in the typical unknowns of weather and labor. And while this unpredictability can lead to a very successful and profitable year, the likelihood of a terrible year also increases. Why do I bring this up? As you spend those countless hours on the tractors, try to think of ways to eliminate those huge peaks (great years) and valleys (terrible years), and make things more stable.

Speaking of unpredictability, who would have thought one of the worst years for pollination/fertilization would be followed by almost perfect weather for cell division and chemical thinning? Once this issue reaches your hands, the window for chemical thinning will be over and hopefully we all can see how our crop is beginning to look. We are relatively dry on our farm and have been irrigating constantly since Mother's Day weekend. In talking with many growers throughout the region, it seems as though we all are in similar situations. Here's hoping that we can soon receive some much-needed rain!

Ben Keim
SHAP President