

What's in Season from the Garden State

Seasonal Highlights from Cooperative Extension, a unit of Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

June, 2011



Rutgers Cooperative Extension's traditional role of helping growers adapt new mechanical technologies: Demonstrating asparagus harvester, South Jersey, circa late 1960s.



Dr. Peter Oudemans trains a Salem County Vo-Tech student in the use of a handheld mobile GIS for on-farm use.



Kris Holmstrom (right) can instantly post vegetable IPM insect scouting data by dictating over a cell phone.

e-Farming on the Rise

Imagine what gibberish this sentence would have been just a decade ago: *With my iPad and a few free apps, I can friend my father, like my mom's status, tweet about last night's storm, and add a new post to my blog, all before getting out of bed.*

Electronic communications tools have changed so many aspects of our lives. It's hard to imagine how we got by before cell phones and the internet. These technologies have infiltrated not only our daily personal communications, but also how we conduct business.

How do e-technologies incorporate into agriculture? Growing crops and harvesting the mature edibles is an undertaking that has fed us since antiquity. Modern farming has indeed undergone revolutionary changes – first mechanical, then chemical – and yes, now even electronic. Herein is a glimpse of how New Jersey growers and county agricultural agents from Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension use electronic technology to communicate, market and conduct applications in the field.

Blogriculture – now farmers can get the information from agricultural agents – when they need it and where they need it:

- After scouting a corn field, Kris Holmstrom, Research Project Coordinator for Rutgers NJAES, Vegetable Integrated Pest Management Program didn't have enough time to type a post on his corn borer counts on the extension [VegBlog](#). While still in the field, Kris was able post it by dictating a message on a cell phone.
- The [Cape May County Agricultural Agent Facebook](#) page allows Jenny Carleo to post vegblog updates, monthly reports and flyers for upcoming events as well as links to news articles mentioning Rutgers Cooperative Extension. She also posts weekly pictures of her field research to keep people up to date on what she's doing, and what her local associations have on their Facebook pages. Her Facebook account is linked to her Twitter account, so anything posted automatically gets Tweeted.
- When Meredith Melendez, Senior Program Coordinator Agriculture for Mercer County Extension visited a soybean grower who was having an issue that she was unable to identify, she was able to take a picture and email it with a message to Mercer County agricultural agent Bill Bamka via her smart phone while she was standing in the field with the farmer. Bill was then able to help her identify the problem and offer a solution.
- [Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Gloucester County's website](#) changes daily and is heavily used by constituents where they can find, among other things, current meeting information and registration forms. The county has also developed a website for [Gloucester County Board of Agriculture](#) as well as a [county agritourism site](#) where county agriculture and direct marketing sites are listed.
- Monmouth County Agricultural Agent Bill Sciarappa and colleagues web-stream [presentations from agricultural meetings](#) so farmers can "attend" agricultural conferences by viewing on-line.

New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Jersey Fresh & Seafood Availability Report

Current:

Arugula
Baby Arugula & Baby Spinach
Basil
Beets
Blueberries
Cabbage
Cherries
Cilantro
Collards
Cucumbers
Dandelions
Dill
Escarole & Endive
Kale
Leeks
Lettuce
Mint
Onions
Parsley
Radishes
Spinach
Squash - yellow and zucchini
Swiss Chard
Turnips



Forecast:

Eggplants & Peppers - starting early July and increasing volume mid-July
Peaches - early July
Nectarines - mid July
Sweet corn - early July
Tomatoes - starting end of June and getting underway around July 4th

Field Application – Among other things, electronic technologies allow for precision agriculture using GPS satellite guidance steering for tractors and sprayers.

- Dave Wuillermin of August C. Wuillermin Farms in Hammonton has been testing a pesticide record keeping system on a handheld personal information manager working with Crop Production Services of Malaga.
- Several farmers are working with Lee Rain, an irrigation company in Vineland to install and use remote computer-based irrigation monitoring and management systems. Lee Rain received the endorsement of the Vegetable Growers Association of New Jersey to partner on a grant application to evaluate/demonstrate and expand the use of this technology.
- Peter Oudemans, Plant Pathologist at the Rutgers Marucci Cranberry and Blueberry Research & Extension Center in Chatsworth and Jack Rabin, Associate Director for Farm Services created a handheld mobile [GIS software/hardware application improving farm management](#) while simultaneously easing environmental regulatory recordkeeping burdens. A handful of farmers adopted the tools and guided in their development. Some Atlantic and Burlington County growers so depend on this application they hired young employees tasked with using them to track their farms' activities.
- Eric Buzby at A.T. Buzby Farm in Woodstown can use his cell phone to turn on and off his irrigation system, leaving him more time to interact with customers at their newly launched CSA (Community Supported Agriculture).

Advocacy - Since Jersey farmers already are using these technologies in the field, there is every reason to use them with guests and customers. Many farm marketers are using Twitter, Facebook and other social media to communicate with their customers and market their products.

- Kurt Alstede, of Alstede Farms in Morris County's active use of social media to engage customers was highlighted in the press coverage he received when he won the [American Vegetable Grower magazine's Grower Achievement Award](#) in 2010.
- Z Food Farm in Lawrenceville regularly posts what is harvested that day on Twitter. The farm also uses [Facebook](#), a blog and Twitvid to communicate to a larger audience with only a few seconds of input.
- Atlantic County Agricultural Agent Rick VanVranken is putting together a session for the 2012 Atlantic Coastal Ag Conference on using social media to get the word out about ag (using the new term: *agvocacy*). Rick's "[Finding Jersey Fresh - Helping NJ's Tech Savvy Consumers Find Roadside & Community Farm Markets Throughout the Garden State](#)" project he's been working on with direct marketers is a Point of Interest (POI) file that can be loaded on personal navigators (Garmin, TomTom, etc) to find directions to and/or alert drivers of nearby farm markets, community farmers markets, wineries, etc. Those same files can be read by smart phones.
- Jerry Frecon, Gloucester County Agricultural Agent developed Facebook pages for the [New Jersey Peach Festival](#) and the [New Jersey Peach Promotion Council](#) in addition to helping develop the [New Jersey Peach Promotion Council](#) website, where consumers and wholesale buyers can get in-depth information on Jersey peaches.

Where to find Jersey Fresh? Ask for it where you shop or dine or go to:
<http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov>

To receive these reports by e-mail:
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