

A REPORT FROM THE  
EXECUTIVE DEAN  
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Report to the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture  
July 2018



*Organic grains field tour, Snyder Farm.*

More than 60 farmers from New Jersey and Pennsylvania attended a field tour on value-added organic small grains held at Snyder Research and Extension Farm in Pittstown on June 26. The event was hosted by NOFA-NJ and the Organic Growers' Research and Information-Sharing Network (OGRIN), and Rutgers NJAES. On display were over 30 different varieties/landraces of spring- and fall-planted grains, including modern, heritage, and ancient wheats; ryes; malting and edible barleys; hullless oats; buckwheat; and flax. Elizabeth Dyck (OGRIN) and extension specialist in soil fertility **Joseph Heckman** (Department of Plant Biology) discussed management strategies that produce high-quality grain

products. In addition to a demonstration of small-scale grain processing equipment operation, a tasting was conducted of many of the grains seen in the field—wheat, barley, rye, einkorn, emmer, and spelt. The research and event were funded in part through the NE SARE Research and Education grant "Farmer-generated training and equipment solutions for producing and processing value-added grains."

County agricultural agents **Wesley Kline** (Cumberland) and **Meredith Melendez** (Mercer) in collaboration with program associate **Jennifer Matthews** (Cape May) are leading the Rutgers On-Farm Food Safety team in conducting On Farm Readiness Reviews (OFRR) to help growers comply with the Produce Safety Rule in the Food Safety Modernization Act. This is part of a five-year project funded by the Food and Drug Administration through the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. The reviews are voluntary, confidential, and free to growers—with more reviews conducted in New Jersey than any other state. During the winter, growers receive a six-hour training on the Produce Safety Rule and food safety, followed by reviews conducted during the production season. The objective is to help growers determine if they are ready for a regulatory inspection which will start in 2019 for operations over \$500,000 in sales. For operations of \$250,000–500,000 inspections start in 2020, and \$25,000–250,000 in 2021.

An NJDA Specialty Crop Block Grant of \$39,813 was awarded for (FY 2019) project, "Evaluation of the Production, Marketing and Storage of Yacon: A Potential Specialty Crop for New Jersey Farmers." There are health benefits associated with this sweet root vegetable, which is native to South America and growing in popularity in the U.S. County agent **Peter Nitzsche** (Morris) is principal investigator, with co-principal investigators: county agents **Meredith Melendez**, (Mercer), and **Rick VanVranken**, (Atlantic), and professor **Thomas Gianfagna** (Department of Plant Biology), chef **Ian Keith** (Harvest at New Jersey Institute for Food Nutrition and Health), and technician **Jeanne Peters** (Department of Plant Biology).

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*Nakorn Pradi, isolating plants.*

Blunt-nosed leafhoppers are vectors of a phytoplasma that causes false blossom disease in cranberries, which imposed a severe threat to the U.S. cranberry industry in the first half of the last century. However, by the second half, management of leafhoppers through the development of resistant varieties and effective chemical controls reduced its incidence. Recently, the disease has re-appeared on many New Jersey cranberry farms due to changes in management practices and the use of new, possibly more susceptible, varieties. To address this issue, the entomology program at the Philip E. Marucci Center for Blueberry and Cranberry Research and Extension in Chatsworth is conducting studies to understand the effects of phytoplasma-infected cranberry plants on resistance to leafhoppers and other insect herbivores. This research is being led by **Nakorn Pradi**, doctoral student in the Department of Entomology, working with extension specialist in entomology **Cesar Rodriguez-Saona**. The team is investigating whether phytoplasma-infected cranberry plants are resistant or susceptible to leafhoppers, and determining the mechanisms of this resistance/susceptibility to develop tools for improving control methods.

The USDA-funded regional project, "Resource Management in Commercial Greenhouse Production" has received the 2018 Award for Excellence in Multistate Research from the Northeastern Regional Association of State Agricultural Experiment Station Directors. Rutgers contributors to this multistate project include extension specialist in farm management **Robin Brumfield** (Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics), project engineer **Thomas Manning** (Department of Plant Biology), and extension specialist in controlled environment engineering **A.J. Both** (Department of Environmental Sciences). The objectives of the project were to develop up-to-date water, nutrient, and energy management guidelines for greenhouse crop production, and to provide stakeholders with educational opportunities that teach proper implementation of sensors and control strategies at their own facilities.

The United States Cattlemen's Association (USCA) hosted its inaugural East Coast Producer's Forum on July 7 at the Gloucester County 4-H Fairgrounds in Mullica Hill, NJ. USCA partnered with Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension including a local Gloucester County 4-H club, Boots 'N Spurs, to organize the event. Producers from New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York were in attendance.

#### Of Interest:

The following fact sheet is now available on NJAES Publications: FS1294 Ultra-Niche Crop Series: Crop SWOT Analysis Template. **Carleo, J.**, [njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1294](http://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1294)

#### Events:

Vegetable Twilight Meeting, August 22, at 5 p.m. Tomato tasting and wagon tours. Rutgers Agricultural Research and Extension Center, 121 Northville Rd., Upper Deerfield.

The Great Tomato Tasting Event and Snyder Farm Open House, August 29, 3-7 p.m., 140 Locust Grove Rd., Pittstown. RSVP: [snyderfarm.rutgers.edu/tomato-tasting](http://snyderfarm.rutgers.edu/tomato-tasting)

