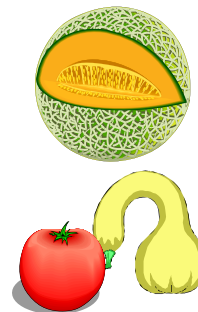




VEGETABLE CROP FACTS

Merced and Madera County



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION 2145 WARDROBE AVE., MERCED, CA 95340 (209-385-7403)

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October, 2000

Annual Fresh Market Field Day A Huge Success....

The regional fresh market tomato field day was held this year on August 8 at Live Oak Farms in LeGrand, California, with about 125 people in attendance. As in the past, this popular summer field meeting was co-hosted by Farm Advisors Bill Weir (Merced and Madera), Bob Mullen (San Joaquin Co.), and Michelle LeStrange (Tulare and Kings). In addition to the variety trial, UCCE regional vegetable specialists Jeff Mitchell and Jim Stapleton had field trials looking at conservation tillage and reflective mulches. This year we added something new, and that was to invite other Farm Advisors and regional specialists to set up information tables in the park to talk with growers and PCA's about research and timely issues affecting tomato production in the Central Valley.

Before and during lunch, people had the opportunity to visit table displays on a variety of diverse subjects including disease (Bob Mullen, Michelle LeStrange), nematodes (Becky Westerdahl), varieties resistant to Dodder (Kurt Humbree), fertilizer management (Tim Hartz), post harvest handling (Marita Cantwell), worm identification (Benny Fouche), Late Blight resistance breeding (Dina St. Clair), and updates on FQPA (John LeBoeuf).

Many thanks to all who participated, and special thanks to Bob Giampaoli of Live Oak Farms for help with the trial, and CA Tomato Commission for the BBQ lunch.



Tomato Variety Trial Results

Yield results for both the fresh market and processing tomato 2000 variety trials for Merced County are shown in tables on the following pages.

For fresh market growers, Peto Seed 150440, QualiT 21 and 23 had the best marketable yield in the replicated trial. In the observational trial, several lines show good potential. Of particular notice was RFT 7041, from Novartis, which had both excellent quality and yield in our trial this year.

With processing tomatoes, Heinz took five of the top seven slots. Other top yielders were CXD 199 and PS 34716. Best tonnage and Brix yield went to H9663, which averaged 46 tons/A and 5.18% Brix.

Many thanks to Bob Giampauli, Live Oak Farms, and Dan Burns, San Juan Ranch, for their excellent cooperation in these trials.

A full report on these and other vegetable crop research results will be completed soon. Contact Bill Weir at the Merced County office (209-385-7403) if you would like to receive a copy of the veg crops progress report.

Tomato Cost of Production Reports

The new, 2000 UCCE Tomato Sample Cost of Production reports for the San Joaquin Valley for both processing and fresh market tomatoes are completed and will be available very soon. These reports are updated every few years, and are very useful to help analyze the breakdown costs of your operation. Bottom line? It costs about \$1,500 per acre to raise a crop of processing tomatoes, and about \$5,100 for fresh market tomatoes. Largest single production cost for either operation is harvest.

Breakeven analysis in these reports shows that at \$5.50 per box, a shed needs to pack about 930 boxes per acre to cover total costs. For processing tomatoes at the current contract price of \$51.50, breakeven yield is 28.3 tons per acre. These figures

assume a “typical” operation of certain size and average input costs, so your breakeven tonnage may differ. Copies of these reports are available at the Merced County office.

Worm Trapping



Starting in June this year, huge numbers of Western Yellowstripe Armyworms started marching across Merced County and seemed to be eating everything in their path. Caterpillars seemed to be the big

pest problem this year for the majority of vegetable producers. The “Yellerstripers” got so bad growers were even spraying alfalfa, cotton, and sweetpotatoes to keep them under control. While we expected a second wave to hit, populations remained controllable for the remainder of the season.

Predicting when such pest problems will or will not occur is the main reason for trapping the adult moths of these caterpillars. Using pheromones specific to certain species, we try to selectively predict what pests may be building up their populations. This year, our traps did a reasonable job of making such a prediction. For the two week period prior to the start of the Yellowstripe Armyworm problem, our bucket traps for this moth suddenly had 10 times the previous counts (over 1,000 moths per week). For the rest of the summer, the bucket traps did not catch high numbers of moths, which corresponds to the lower worm problems we experienced.

Bucket traps can be used to help manage potential pest problems, at least in years when moth numbers become very high in a large area. They help give a “heads up” for scouting and spray scheduling. Research will continue to try and determine more accurately the number at which the moths start

going from nuisance, back ground levels to a full blown pest problem.

2000 PROCESSING TOMATO PRODUCTION

Note: This is an excerpt from the California Processing Tomato Report, released Sept 1, 2000.

As of August 15, 2000, California's contracted processing tomato production is forecast at 9,700,000 tons. This production would be 19 percent less than the record contracted production of last year and slightly less than the production reported earlier in June.

The production for 2000 is expected to come from 273,000 acres producing an average 35.5 tons per acre. The estimated contracted harvested acreage is 16 percent less compared to last year's. However, the yield is only 4 percent less than the record yield for 1999 and similar to the second highest yield established in 1997.

In early March, wet weather delayed some tomato planting and slowed the development of those already in the ground. During April, a duration of warm weather improved the crop such that the progression of tomatoes was considered normal. However, May, June and July had both below and above average temperatures. The higher temperatures caused some Blossom End Rot. Overall, the tomato harvest, which began the last week in June for some areas, is reported in good condition.

As of August 19, the total statewide inspected tonnage of tomatoes delivered (5,131,105 tons) was 9 percent higher compared to the same time frame one year ago. However, it is similar to 1997.

This report is based on the results of a survey conducted in August. This particular survey asked processors for the amount of tomatoes they expect to process and the total harvested acreage required to achieve that amount. The estimate for planted acreage is based on a survey earlier in June.

Free Motor Oil and Filter Recycling

Small growers in Merced and Stanislaus Counties can take their used oil (up to 55 gallons per trip) to service centers for recycling free of charge. This program is a collaborative effort involving local growers, the Farm Bureaus, Ag Commissioners, and the County Health Departments from both counties. The project is funded by the California Integrated Waste Management Board. Call 1-800-CLEANUP for participating county locations, or see the service stations below.

Merced	Bartlett Petroleum	723-5402
Los Banos	C.L. Bryant	826-2236
Turlock	Dickey Petroleum	667-0236
Modesto	George Lowry, Inc.	545-8130
Modesto	W.H. Breshears	522-7291
Patterson	Paul Oil	892-8902

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