

Crop Production

NASS report offers highlights of '07 Michigan fruit production

THE Michigan Field Office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service has released its report of the state's fruit production in 2007. Highlights include:

- Michigan apple production was 760 million pounds, down from 870 million pounds in 2006. Michigan ranked third in U.S. apple production behind Washington and New York, which produced 5.4 billion pounds and 1.27 billion pounds, respectively. The preliminary farm-level value of Michigan's utilized apple crop was \$129.5 million.

- Tart cherry production was 193 million pounds, up fractionally from the 190 million pounds produced in 2006. The average yield was 7,510 pounds per acre. The preliminary farm-level value was \$49.5 million.

- Sweet cherry production was 27,300 tons, up from 20,000 tons produced in 2006. The average yield was 3.79 tons per acre. The preliminary farm-level value was \$17.7 million.

- Cultivated blueberry production in Michigan was 93 million pounds, about 33% of the U.S. total. Growers harvested 18,500 acres in 2007. The farm-level value was \$165.5 million.

- Strawberry production was 4 million pounds on 800 harvested acres. The farm-level value was \$4.7 million. Michigan peach production was 41 million pounds, up from 37.8 million pounds in 2006. Total bearing acres were 4,200, and the farm-level value was \$16.3 million.

- Pear production was 4,000 tons on 750 acres. The farm-level value was \$1.62 million.

- Michigan plum production was 3,100 tons on 650 acres. The farm-level value was \$879,000.

- Grape production was 100,000 tons. The farm-level value was \$26.8 million.

Source: USDA NASS

Product extends apples' shelf life

By JOHN VOGEL

THERE'S nothing like a fresh apple picked off the tree. But now fruit growers and distributors are treating apple bins with SmartFresh 1-methylcyclopropene gas to extend fruits' post-storage quality.

The 1-MCP compound, distributed by AgroFresh, blocks ethylene gas that naturally regulates ripening and aging. "This allows more orderly marketing, without a rush to sell due to loss of firmness," explains James Mattheis, lead plant physiologist at the Tree Fruit Research Laboratory in Wenatchee, Wash., part of USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

"Slower ripening during transport and marketing ultimately results in better quality for consumers," Mattheis explains.

Shelf-life benefits

One key advantage is that 1-MCP has diminished the need for fungal rot preventive fungicides in storage and elimination of diphenylamine to prevent apple scald. It's proven highly successful in Maine, Washington, Michigan and other states, says Mattheis.

Apple varieties tested include Gala, Red Delicious, Golden Delicious, Braeburn, Granny Smith, Fuji and Pink Lady.

Treated apples stayed firm for three to six months longer than untreated apples in controlled-atmosphere storage conditions. Red Delicious apples, for example, stayed crunchier two to three weeks longer.

Not just for apples

Most apples grown in the Pacific Northwest and more than half of the total U.S. crop are treated with 1-MCP. But Mattheis and collaborator Xuetong Fan of the ARS Eastern Regional Research

Key Points

- 1-MCP slows apple ripening and softening in and out of storage.
- Treatment minimizes fungicide and eliminates diphenylamine.
- Similar benefits are seen in vegetables, flowers and plants.



CAPTAIN OF CRUNCH: Plant pathologist Jim Mattheis was honored last year by ARS for his 1-MCP technology-transfer achievements.

Center, Wyndmoor, Pa., also found that 1-MCP decreased degreening of broccoli, browning of lettuce and bitterness in carrots.

1-MCP is similar to ethylene. Today, it's also commercially used to protect vegetables, flowers and plants from ethylene's overripening and wilting effects. The damaging effects of ethylene are delayed to extend freshness and quality.



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State honored for serving Bridge Card clients at farmers markets

IN recognition of its efforts to increase the number of farmers markets serving Michigan Bridge Card clients, the Michigan Farmers Market Association and its partnering organizations were recently awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"We worked very hard over the last year to make local food more accessible to those who need it most through Michigan farmers markets," says Dru Montri, MIFMA project manager.

The coalition, led by MIFMA and the Michigan Food Policy Council, provided special assistance to five farmers

markets in 2007 as part of a community demonstration project.

The goal was to help markets become authorized, approved and equipped to accept Bridge Cards, which has been challenging for farmers markets as the program moved to the electronic benefit transfer system as opposed to the paper coupons.

The markets involved included the Fremont Farmers Market, Marquette Farmers' and Artists' Market, Downtown Saginaw Farmers' Market, Downtown Ypsilanti Farmer's Markets, and the Lansing City Market.

Corn growers honor Elgin Darling, elect board members

THE Michigan Corn Growers Association held its annual meeting in February. Each year MCGA presents the "Friend of Corn" award to a deserving individual as a way to honor them for their support of Michigan's corn growers.

"This year, we decided to not only honor someone who is a great supporter of the corn industry, but also someone who played a prominent role in the creation of our organization," explains Scott Miller, MCGA president and a corn grower from Elsie. "This year's award was given to Elgin Darling, a corn grower from Maybee. Elgin took a leadership

role and showed great vision by helping start the Michigan Corn Growers Association, and he was also very influential in the establishment of the state's corn checkoff — the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan."

During the meeting, board members re-elected for another term were Ed Breitmeyer of Buckley for District 1; Matt Cary of Alma for District 2; Pat Feldpausch of Fowler for District 4; Alvin Ferguson of Allenton for District 5; Mark Kies of Allen for District 7; and Miller for an at-large position.

For more information about MCGA, visit www.micorn.org.

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