FDA Releases Proposed Food Safety Rules

Edited from information in an FDA news release and other sources.

On January 4, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released for public comment its much-anticipated proposed rule to establish standards for growing, harvesting, packing and holding produce on domestic and foreign farms. Another proposed rule focused on processing facilities. FDA officials have set a 120-day comment period for both proposed rules.

The proposed produce rule covers most fruits and vegetables while they are in their raw or natural (unprocessed) state. It would not apply to raw agricultural commodities that are rarely consumed raw; those produced for personal or on-farm consumption, and (with certain documentation) those destined for commercial processing, such as canning, that will adequately reduce microorganisms of public health concern.

FDA will be announcing a series of public meetings to explain the proposal and additional proposed rules and to provide additional opportunity for input.

Limitations on Coverage of the Proposed Rules

Many strawberry growers in our region will likely qualify for the exemptions in the rule. FDA is proposing that the smallest farms – those with an average annual value of food sold during the previous three-year period of $25,000 or less – would not be covered. As required by Congress, farms also would be partially exempt from the proposed rule if they meet two requirements. First, they must have food sales averaging less than $500,000 per year during the last three years (adjusted for inflation). Second, their sales to qualified end-users must exceed their sales to others during the same period. A qualified end-user is either a consumer (in any location) or a restaurant or retail food establishment located in the same state as the farm or not more than 275 miles away from the farm. However, FDA may withdraw this partial exemption if the farm is directly linked to an outbreak, or if FDA determines it is necessary to protect the public health and prevent or mitigate an outbreak based on conditions or conduct that create the potential for the farm’s produce to cause an outbreak.

If a farm qualifies for this partial exemption, certain labeling requirements would apply. That is, if a label is generally required on the produce that would otherwise be covered (tomatoes packaged in a clam shell are an example) then the label must include the name and business address of the farm where the produce was grown. If a label is not required then the name and business address of the farm where the produce was grown must be displayed at the point of purchase (such as on a poster).

When Would the Rules Take Effect?

FDA is proposing an effective date continued on next page

NC Strawberry Association Seeks Scholarship Applicants for 2013

The NC Strawberry Association’s Scholarship Program is growing! Our award, to two students each year, has grown from $500 in 2011, to $750 in 2012, to $1000 for 2013. Funds for the scholarship come from member dues – $2 per membership – and funds raised at the auction during the Strawberry Expo.

The intent of this scholarship is to promote future leadership in the strawberry industry. Applicants should be high school seniors or current college students accepted to or currently enrolled in a land grant university who are interested in or have declared a major in a program of study directly related to the strawberry industry (for example, small fruit production, marketing, food science, nutrition, entomology, agronomy, etc.). Applications from family members of NCSA members, both in North Carolina and in other states, are encouraged. The application must be emailed or postmarked on or before May 1, 2013.

For scholarship details and application forms, visit www.ncstrawberry.org/docs/2013ScholarshipsNCStrawberry.htm. Please also share information about this scholarship with students and schools in your area.
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continued from page one
– when the rule would be codified in the Code of Federal Regulations – of 60 days after a final rule is published. However, recognizing that the farming community, especially small and very small farms, would need time to comply with the provisions of the rule, FDA is proposing extended compliance dates:

Very Small Businesses, those having an average annual monetary value of food sold during the previous three years of no more than $250,000, would have four years after the effective date to comply; for some of the water requirements, they would have six years.

Small Businesses, those having an average annual monetary value of food sold during the previous three years of no more than $500,000, would have three years after the effective date to comply; for some of the water requirements, they would have five years.

Other Businesses would have to comply two years after the effective date. For some of the water requirements, they would have four years to comply.

Commenting on the Rules

The proposed produce rule is hundreds of pages long, and many, many people across the country are poring over those pages. We’ll be listening what they have to say about areas of particular concern for our industry and our region, so we can zero in on those areas, but you can look for yourself as well. FDA is indeed interested to know how the rules will affect individual farmers, and the comment process is not difficult. You can find fact sheets, summaries, information on how to submit comments, and the full rules at www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/FSMA/default.htm. Please share your concerns about the rules with any member of the NCSA Board of Directors.

Small Fruit Consortium Funds Strawberry Projects

The Southern Region Small Fruit Consortium recently funded five strawberry projects and two for multiple fruits including strawberries for 2013; this is considerably more than in 2012, when only two strawberry projects were put forth and funded. Other grants were for grapes, blueberries, and caneberries. The strawberry grants, with investigators and lead state, are listed below:

• Determining Optimum Nitrogen Nutrition Management for Off-season High Tunnel Plasticulture Strawberry Production for Arkansas and the Southeast (Garcia, Johnson, Kirkpatrick, AR)
• Epidemiological Applications to Manage Anthracnose Crown Rot of Strawberry in the Southeast (Louws, Adhikari, NC)
• Southern Region Strawberry Variety Testing Program (Pattison, Poling, Johnson, Smith, Rollins, NC)
• Helping southern strawberry growers control gray mold in light of widespread fungicide resistance (Schanbel, Fernandez-Ortuno, SC)
• Regional Coordination of Strawberry Plasticulture Extension Activities (Poling, Pattison, Chester-Davis, NC)
• Herbicide Weed Control in Annual Plasticulture Strawberries (Straw, VA)
• Influence of fruit coating on Drosophila suzukii oviposition and development and implications for field use (Burrack, Swoboda, NC) $5,000
• Postharvest Evaluation of Small Fruit after Application of Fruit Coatings (Perkins-Veazie, Fernandez, Burrack, NC)

Each project receives approximately $5,000. The Consortium serves six states (NC, SC, VA, GA, TN, AR).

Healthful Berries, Healthy & Safe Farms

If you’ve been cutting firewood, clipping brush, grubbing up rocks, or hauling buckets of feed, you’re probably wondering how much longer your hands can take it. The NC Agribility Project has some great ideas and resources for you that can protect your joints and enable arthritic hands to do the work they need to do. These range from ergonomic hand tools with large, soft-hold, easy-to-grasp handles to the greatest idea of all: putting pipe insulation around the wire handles of your buckets. Many of these were on display at the Agribility table at the NC Agromedicine Health & Safety Fair at the Expo (see photo).

Most of the ergonomic tools they displayed there are available from Lee Valley Tools (www.leevalley.com). Northern Tool and Tractor Supply carries several of them as well, at lower prices. Pipe insulation can be used use on bucket handles, handled tools, buckets and anything else with a handle to increase radius of the tool to relieve stress and strain on joints and muscles. It comes in a variety of sizes. It’s inexpensive and available at any hardware or building supply store.
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February Grower Checklist

General management:
• Check all equipment, including sprayer (replace hoses, etc.), and consider ordering special Frost Nozzles for your sprinkler irrigation system that do not freeze up under high winds
• Check for vetch in holes and weed out. The winter temperatures will not kill it.
• Check for strawberry spider mites
• Keep deer out of the strawberry patch. They can do serious damage to plants and plastic.
• Remove dead leaves, flowers, and small fruit from plants that may have experienced freeze injury in January 2013 – this will help to control botrytis
• In eastern NC: Get ready for leaf tissue analysis in late February.
• Examine plants carefully for spider mite damage. It can be mistaken for winter damage.
• Spray ryegrass in late February-March.
• Order chemicals and fertilizer for spring.

Frost protection:
• Purchase your digital thermometer before you need it! See the video “Using a Digital Thermometer to Guide Your Decisions in Frost and Freeze Events” at http://ncsu.edu/enterprises/strawberries/2009/12/26/mauris-sed-leo-aliquam-aliquam/.
• Order row covers in advance – they can be hard to get on short notice.
• Calibrate all thermometers to read a true 32°F in an ice bath. Better still, ordering a hand-held digital thermometer with thermocouple wire that can be inserted in the blossoms for more precise measurement of bloom temperatures during cold and heat events
• Monitor weather forecasts closely – consider a three-month subscription to a custom weather report/service (e.g. SkyBit E-Weather Strawberry Forecast, or AWIS), during the pre-bloom, bloom and early harvest period.
• Check the NC State Strawberry Growers Information Portal for ADSIORIES http://ncsu.edu/enterprises/strawberries/category/public-advisories/

Marketing:
• Order picking containers.
• Start planning for harvest labor.

Frost-Freeze Resource List
NCSA’s Frost Freeze Resource list, normally published in this issue, may be found in the Growers section of www.ncstrawberry.com. It includes sources of row covers, sprinkler irrigation, thermometers, and information.
Strawberry Association Board Meeting Report

The NC Strawberry Association Board of Directors met on December 12, 2012 Raleigh, NC. This was a long and very substantive meeting. In brief, here is what your Board did:

• Elected the following officers for 2013: Co-Presidents: Tom Baker, Kenneth Rudd. Vice-President: Mitchell Wrenn. Treasurer: Karma Lee (Although her term on the board ended in 2012, she agreed to stay on in this position.)

• Reviewed the 2012 Expo, discussed plans for the 2013 Expo, and started planning for the 2014 Expo, by deciding to look into hotel options in the Wilmington, Myrtle Beach, and Pinehurst area, as well as Sea Trail (where the Expo was held in 2004). Members interested in helping plan these meetings should contact the NCSA office.

• Set research priorities for the Request for Proposals for 2013 funding. These are, in order of importance:
  1. Development of new varieties suited to the NC plasticulture system that would improve on current varieties.
  2. Development and protection of a clean plant supply
  3. Disease control and management
  4. Insect/mite IPM
  5. Weed control

Other proposals on other topics will also be accepted. Inclusion of plans for outreach and reporting to growers in the proposal is encouraged.

• Set board committees for 2013. (Others will be invited for some committees)
  • Expo: Tom Baker, James Brake, Lee Berry, Mitchell Wrenn, Scott Dail, Zvezdana Pesic-vanEsbroeck
  • Research: Mitchell Wrenn (chair), Kenneth Rudd, Scott Dail, James Kenan, David Dycus
  • Marketing: Scott Dail (chair), Caroline Lineberry, Sue Leggett, Dexter Hill
  • Finance: Karma Lee, Sue Leggett, Lee Berry, Tom Baker
  • Scholarship: James Brake (chair), James Kenan, Caroline Lineberry, Karma Lee, Kenneth Rudd (also Jim Wrenda)
  • Nominating: Tom Baker (chair), Scott Dail, Caroline Lineberry
  • Awards: full board
  • Fundraising: John Vollmer (chair), Mitchell Wrenn, Tom Baker, Dexter Hill, Debby Wechsler, others from other states.

Bylaws: Sue Leggett, Tom Baker (chair), James Kenan, Debby Wechsler
• Approved Sponsorship Requests for three events: The Berry Health Benefits Symposium in Concord, NC, in June, $500; an Extension Family/Health Agents conference in May in Concord; $100 for purchase of strawberries for their meals; and an Agent Training (see page 8), $1400 for agent travel and lodging.

• Discussed a Proposal for a NC Fruit & Vegetable Industry Council. This is an initiative to develop an umbrella group (similar to the very successful Green Industry Council, which represents, nurseries, landscapers, etc.), as a way to become more active in political and policy areas such as lobbying, raising money for candidates, and influencing on policy, including labor and budgets for research and extension. This is still in the planning stages: if interested in being involved, contact Sue Leggett.

• Met with Dr Joe Zublena, head of the NC Extension system, and Dr. John Dole, head of the NCSU Dept. of Horticultural Science, to discuss ways to get a new strawberry horticulture extension position, to replace that lost in budget cuts when Dr. Poling retired. No funds now available; one-time funding covered re-hiring Barclay part-time for a year, and possibly a second year, but the goal is a longterm solution. Various options were discussed, both for how a potential position would be structured and how it would be funded, with the expectation that the strawberry industry would need to invest significantly in order to make this happen. A Fundraising Committee was formed, with John Vollmer as its head. This committee will consider various possibilities, including increasing the assessment, increasing dues, helping create state-level assessments in other states, a federal marketing order, and other special fundraising campaigns and events, and make a recommendation to the board in February.

• Discussed a possible NC Strawberry Association name change, to reflect the reality that almost half of our grower members are in other states. As this is related to fundraising plans, further discussion will await the report of the Fundraising Committee.

• Discussed expectations of board members, and approved a policy that board members are expected not to miss two in a row of meetings and the Expo over the course of a three-year term. Every board member is also expected to serve on and be active in at least two committees.

• Heard reports about the Association’s Specialty Crop grants and ongoing efforts to work on plant supply issues.

• Discussed revising bylaws to make them more clear and in line with current practices. A new Bylaws Committee was established.

The board meets again on February 11. Key agenda items will include hearing the report of the Fundraising Committee, deciding grants to research, and setting the 2013 budget.
Failing Fungicides for Gray Mold Control and What To Do About It
By Guido Schnabel, Clemson University and Frank Louws, NC State University.

Gray mold (Figure 1) is the most important disease of many small fruits, including strawberry and grapes. It is caused by the fungus Botrytis cinerea, which during wet weather and relatively cool temperatures, attacks the flowers and the fruit. To protect the crop from rotting, fungicides must be used during bloom and during preharvest fruit development. In recent years, the efficacy of fungicides has declined dramatically in experimental fields in North Carolina and Florida, which signaled for the first time the emergence of a problem. Follow-up studies showed that years of exposure to modern fungicides selected for resistance to many fungicides in North Carolina and South Carolina fields rendering many applications ineffective.

During the 2011/2012 growing season Clemson initiated an evaluation program and received and analyzed gray mold samples from about 80 commercial strawberry farms in eight states (Arizona, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Kansas, Maryland, and Virginia) and investigated the sensitivity of the causal fungus to all seven chemical classes (FRAC codes 1, 7, 11, 12, 17, 3, and 9) registered for the suppression or control of gray mold (Figure 2). Sensitivity assays were performed on fungicide-amended media containing specific discriminatory doses of fungicides that allowed the distinction of sensitive from resistant isolates. Discriminatory doses were largely described previously, but we made some adjustments due to assay-specific differences. Briefly, spores from 10 fruit per location were collected with cotton swabs (one swab per fruit), shipped to the Clemson lab, transferred with a toothpick to the center of amended medium in 24-well plates and incubated for four days. Growth was assessed visually and growth data were entered in a web application specifically developed for this purpose. The web application calculates a resistance factor that determines whether a sample is sensitive, or has low, medium, or high resistance to a certain fungicide.

The monitoring indicated that the gray mold fungus from strawberry in many states had developed resistance to different classes of fungicides. The majority of all samples indicated resistance to Topsin M, Abound, and Cabrio fungicides. The latter two products are not specifically gray mold products, but according to the labels they have ‘suppressive action.’ To our surprise, about half of all samples revealed resistance to Elevate, Scala, and Endura. All of those products are commonly used for gray mold control. The newly registered Fontelis is listed in the figure together with Endura because these two products are more or less cross resistant. On the flipside, resistance to Rovral and fludioxonil (Scholar formulated product) was either rare or non-existent. Fludioxonil is a component of Switch.

The monitoring results indicated that resistance to various fungicides is present in the gray mold fungus, which might be surprising to many growers because pre-and postharvest gray mold has not been a tremendous issue in recent years. There may be several reasons for this apparent discrepancy:

- **Inoculum (infectious forms of the pathogen) levels in plasticulture systems are generally low.** The crop starts with new, mostly disease-free plants on fumigated soil with very little plant debris from the previous season. It likely takes a couple of infection periods for the fungus to gain in numbers for an epidemic.
- **We have relatively dry springs in recent years,** making it hard for the fungus to establish.
- **We have far fewer infection periods than previously thought.** Two years of monitoring infection periods in SC has demonstrated that there were only three (during dry springs) to six (during wetter springs) infection periods per season. That means a lot of our sprays are applied in the ‘off season.’

But it only takes a wet spring and the application of ineffective fungicides for gray mold to thrive. Therefore we must implement resistance management practices.

**Recommendations**

Below are some suggestions on how producers can extend the productive life of a chemical class in their operation and save money by spraying smart.

- **Reduce inoculum levels.** If there is little fungus, there is little problem. Conservative application of nitrogen fertilizer makes plants less susceptible to pathogens in general and allows water to evaporate quicker due to less luscious canopies. Increasing plant spacing could also be considered for improved air circulation. However, growers should optimize plant spacing for yield, and optimum plant spacing depends on soil type among other factors.
- **Moderate use of fungicides.** The fewer sprays applied, the less selection pressure there is for fungicide resistance. In other words, it is much better to spray only when needed than calendar-based. Applications should be done PRIOR (if possible) or soon after (using fungicides

![Figure 1. Gray mold of strawberry](image)

![Figure 2. Average occurrence of resistance in samples from fields of eight states. A sample was considered ‘highly resistant’ if at least 20% of the strains were resistant to a fungicide.](image)
Failing Fungicides for Gray Mold Control

Continued from previous page

with kick-back action) to anticipated rain events of more than one inch of rainfall. Research has shown that fungicide applications should focus on protecting the strawberry flowers.

- **Reduce the use of materials that are prone to resistance development.** If growers want to spray prior to bloom, products like thiram and captan should be used exclusively. These products also provide effective control during bloom unless unusually high rainfall is experienced. Rovral is an effective botryticide and can be used once per season before bloom. In our experience, Rovral is the product of choice if growers encounter Botrytis crown rot due to early wet and warm spring conditions when plants are large. Products like Elevate, Pristine, and Switch, should be used only during bloom and only when weather conditions such as extended rain favor disease development.

- **Perform sanitation measures.** The majority of the Botrytis inoculum that goes to the flowers is believed to come from dead and dying leaves present in the beds after winter. Removing these leaves before bloom can help reduce the amount of Botrytis in the system. In our experience, sanitation increases yield slightly or has no effect. Many growers perform sanitation as part of their practice to remove weeds from holes, to lift plants from under the plastic and remove dead and dying leaves. If multiple tasks are accomplished in one pass, then the practice may prove economical. However, sanitation does not pay for itself if gray mold management is the only purpose and if effective fungicide programs (if resistance is not a major problem) are implemented.

- **Take advantage of the Clemson resistance monitoring service.** At first sign of gray mold during bloom or harvest, contact your county agent or specialist and ask for a sample to be sent for testing. Testing will identify resistance if it is present and thus will provide valuable information to improve your spray program and avoid control failure. A detailed protocol for sample collection and shipment can be obtained from Dr. Schnabel at schnabe@clemson.edu.

Aphid-borne Viruses Detected in Plants Shipped to Florida

By Natalia A. Peres, Alicia Whidden, and Hugh Smith, UF GCREC, and Robert Martin, USDA-ARS Corvallis. Published in the January/February issue of the Berry Vegetable Times newsletter of the University of Florida.

**Note:** This article was written for Florida and shared with us by Dr. Peres. Recommendations and observations may not apply to other states. See also the article by Dr. Poling on facing page.

Some strawberry fields in Florida are facing a devastating problem this season. Plants that initially looked good after establishment stopped growing, started showing some yellowing/reddening on the leaves, became stunted, produced only very small fruit, and in some cases died. (Fig.1) Incidence of these symptoms in affected fields was close to 100% and seemed highly linked to the nursery source.

Many possible causes for the symptoms were hypothesized or investigated, such as fumigation or herbicide damage and root diseases. The uniform and high incidence of the symptoms in the affected fields did not fit a disease-related problem since in that case symptoms would be expected to be more randomly distributed. Similar problems were being observed in plants shipped to North Carolina and other southern states. Pieces of this puzzle started to fall in place after samples from the different states were submitted to Dr. Bob Martin, a fruit virologist from the USDA-ARS in Corvallis. Two strawberry viruses were detected consistently in the samples submitted to Dr. Martin: Strawberry mild yellow edge virus (SMYEV) and Strawberry mottle virus (SMoV). Both of these viruses are transmitted by aphids.

Among the 20 samples received at the UF GCREC Diagnostic Clinic and submitted to Dr. Martin, 15 were confirmed positive for SMYEV and SMoV. One sample was positive only for SMYEV and four samples were negative (clean). All samples that were confirmed positive for the viruses were from strawberry plants produced in the Great Village area in Nova Scotia, Canada. No viruses were detected in samples from strawberry plants produced in other regions. Similar results were obtained for another 40 samples received from five other states along the south and mid-Atlantic coast during the winter.

**What do these findings mean?**

Strawberry mild yellow edge virus and Strawberry mottle virus are among the most economically important viruses affecting strawberries worldwide. Problems with virus diseases are usually less important in annual production areas such as Florida. That is because we do not have strawberries in the field all year long and thus there is less opportunity for multiple infections (on most commercial strawberry cultivars, symptoms are usually observed only when more than one virus is present). SMYEV and SMoV are most efficiently transmitted by the strawberry aphid Chaetosiphon fragaefolii. Fortunately, the strawberry aphid does not occur in Florida. The melon aphid, Aphis gossypii, which is more common in Florida, can only transmit SMoV. However, even if SMoV were transmitted from the symptomatic to healthy plants, symptoms would not be observed with the SMoV infection alone.

This means that, even though the situation is devastating for the growers that received the infected plants, the viruses...
Nova Scotia Plants? Scouting for Smaller Plants Will Be Very Important in February

By E. Barclay Poling, Professor Emeritus/Extension Strawberry Specialist, NCSU

It will be important for growers in the Mid-South with strawberry plugs that originated from tips cut in Nova Scotia to do an extra good job of scouting their crop in early February to see if they have any smaller looking plants, such as the ones shown in Figure 1 below. From a small Chandler plant, such as the one shown, Dr. Bob Martin, Virologist, USDA-Corvallis, has recently identified both the presence of SMYEV (Strawberry Mild Yellow Edge Virus) and SMoV (Strawberry Mottle Virus). In the larger, more normal looking Chandler plug plants in this same commercial strawberry plasticultrure field in Knightdale, NC, Dr. Martin did not find either SMYEV or SMoV. Our situation in North Carolina with virus-infected plugs is in striking contrast to the problem that Florida has occurred this winter with bare-root fresh dug from Nova Scotia, as they are reporting nearly 100% plant losses. What I am seeing as more typical in NC is that the percentage of plants in the small size category (such as the smaller plants you see in Fig. 1) is in the range of 5-20%. I will be keeping a close watch on these smaller plugs in the coming month, as it will be important to see if they are producing normal looking flower buds and blossoms.

In a January 11 email to me, Dr. Martin wrote “If they [your strawberry plugs] have strawberry aphids, it would be a good idea to spray given all the inoculum that is present this year. If they have the black bean aphid (Aphis fabae) spraying probably is not necessary since this aphid only transmits SMoV in strawberry.” So, I think priority must be given in February this year to scouting plantings that had tips from Balamore Farm Ltd (Nova Scotia) for the presence of “smaller plants,” and if strawberry aphids are identified, then you will want to treat with a systemic aphicide, which can be effective in reducing the amount of in-field spread of the virus.

As Dr. Burkack has indicated, growers with suspect plants (i.e. those with plants from already-implicated sources) should systemically treat with imidacloprid (Admire Pro). What is very critical to note is that the treatment through the drip system should be made before plants have flowers. Recent freezes in late January have pretty well destroyed all winter blossoms. According to Dr. Burkack, the aphids we have on strawberries are green peach aphid, potato aphid, and strawberry aphid, and these can be controlled with a systemic neonic application. This will hopefully not be a recurrent problem for us in North Carolina, for reasons similar to what Dr. Peres and the other scientists in Florida have cited in their article in this newsletter. For NC growers who have plugs of Chandler, Camarosa and Sweet Charlie that were propagated from Nova Scotia tips, I recommend that they do a good job of protecting these plants from frost and freeze in March and April, and be sure that they are adequately fertilized and irrigated all through the season.

Agent Training to Focus on Strawberries

More than 27 extension agents, mostly from North Carolina, plus a few from Virginia, are signed up to attend an In-Service Agent Training in Raleigh on Feb. 6-8, 2013, coordinated by Dr. Barclay Poling, as one of his activities in his back-from-retirement, part-time status.

This event is partially sponsored by the North Carolina Strawberry Association, which provided $1,400 towards travel and lodging expenses for the agents. Other sponsors are Cottle Strawberry Nursery, Westech Agriculture Ltd., StrawberryDoc LLC, the Southern Region Small Fruit Consortium, and a USDA-ARS Methyl Bromide Alternatives Grant.

The planned program includes a session for agents new to working with strawberries, pest and disease management, cultural management issues (such as fertility and tissue sampling, drip irrigation, and cold/heat stress), an update on the breeding program, and a methyl bromide alternatives training at the Central Crops Research Station.

It’s great to see a program like this happening!
Taking Note
Send notices of births, deaths, retirements, awards, recognitions, and other notable events of our members to the NCSA office for this newsletter feature.

David Dycus Moves On

David Dycus, Regional Agronomist with NC Department of Agriculture retired on January 1, 2013 with 30 years of service as a state employee. He worked close to 15 years as an Agricultural Extension Agent and 15 years as a Regional Agronomist. He has started his second career as a Sales Manager with Farm Chemical Inc. (FCI), an independent fertilizer, seed, and chemical distributor in southeastern North Carolina. His new contact information is ddycus@fciaig.com and his new phone number is 910-904-3709.

Says David, “I truly enjoyed working with farmers for the last 30 years and helping provide valuable information to aid them in being more profitable. Strawberries were an especially rewarding crop to work with, as I got to watch (and help) production practices change 180 degrees over the last 30 years. I always enjoyed helping someone grow a “new” crop or learn how to grow and manage a crop better, and strawberry growers gave me that opportunity. It’s amazing how drastic some of the changes have been that we made in the production practices over the years; leaving matted row to growing on plastic, taking a perennial crop and converting it to an annual system, using varieties developed from faraway states, changing fertility recommendations, planting dates, fumigation, irrigation practices, marketing, using row covers, new insect and diseases and products to combat them, etc. I can truly say I saw our yields go from one half pound per plant to over three pounds, or a six-fold increase. No other crop I work with comes to mind as coming close to that!”

Introducing the Strawberry Association’s Assistant

Many of you have already met Dorothy Hammett, who has managed the registration table at the last two Strawberry Expos, or have talked to her on the phone about your membership. This year, besides taking on ever more administrative tasks, Dorothy will also play a major role in our new Specialty Crop Project to develop educational materials for schools and farms. Let’s have her introduce herself to all of you:

“I was born in beautiful Niagara Falls, NY, attended a state college in Potsdam, NY, and had various employment in the computer software field in Rochester, NY, for 13 years. I moved to Chatham County, NC, in 1987 and began 20 years of community volunteering and raising three sons. On a fortunate day in 1991, I met Debby Wechsler at a Pittsboro library and I knew right then I wanted to work with her. I continued to do battle with the local wild strawberry planting is in the garden this year (though I continue to do battle with the local wild life). Please let me know your thoughts on how I may contribute to improving NCSA.

Changes at NCDA Marketing

Heather Barnes, who worked as Marketing specialist for strawberries for the last two years has had changes to her responsibilities and is now concentrating primarily on working with the Farm to School Program. We asked her replacement as strawberry marketing specialist to introduce herself:

My name is Dexter Hill and I would like to introduce myself as the new Marketing Specialist for the NCDA&CS Eastern Marketing Center located in Kinston, NC, and I will be the liaison between the Department and the North Carolina Strawberry Association.

I am relatively new to the Marketing Division but look forward to working with the Strawberry growers of North Carolina to provide marketing assistance to growers, packers/shippers, and buyers in developing new markets, locating buyers and suppliers, market research, and conducting marketing promotions.

I am a 1980 graduate of ECU with a degree in Business. I have worked within the agricultural industry most of my life and have also owned and operated my own business for over 25 years. I feel I have a strong knowledge of what the growers in North Carolina are facing in terms of production problems and will strive to help in whatever way I can to make the strawberry industry here in North Carolina a strong presence throughout this state and beyond.

David Dycus

Dorothy Hammett, with her first planting of Chandler strawberries
Welcome Dr. Samtani!

other small fruit specialist in our region.

A New Strawberry Growers Workshop, on February 25, 6:00 to 8:30 pm, has been added this year. Attendees will receive Strawberry Plasticulture Guides and a wealth of information invaluable to anyone considering strawberry production or growers in their first year. Includes a box dinner for attendees who also attend the Field Walk earlier that day. The location will be Virginia Beach Agriculture Department Conference Room, 2449 Princess Anne Road, Building 14, 2nd floor, Virginia Beach, VA 23456.

February 26 is the Strawberry School and Trade Show, 8:00 am to 3:30 pm. Our regional strawberry experts will discuss the NC strawberry breeding program, the status of botrytis resistance in strawberries, fertility programs, overall strawberry production issues, and forecast for the 2013 crop; representatives will be present to provide an update on phase two label requirements for soil fumigants, as well as marketing announcements and opportunities for Virginia growers. The location is the Advanced Technology Center, 1800 College Crescent, on the Tidewater Community College Campus, Virginia Beach, VA 23456.

For additional information or to register, contact Jenny Wright, jwright@vbgov.com or 757-385-4769.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you might have. My contact information is Dexter Hill, NCDA&CS, 202 Cunningham Rd., Kinston, NC 28501, phone 252-527-7125, cell 252-933-3145, dexter.hill@ncagr.gov.

New Small Fruit Production Specialist in Virginia

The Hampton Roads Agricultural Research and Extension Center is pleased to announce the hiring of Dr. Jayesh Samtani as the Small Fruit Production Specialist, effective February 25, 2013. Jayesh is a native of Pune, a city in the western state of Maharashtra, India. He earned a Ph.D. and M.S. degree in Horticulture from the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His B.S. degree is from the College of Horticulture in Pune. Jayesh was a Post-doctoral Scholar, until recently, in the Department of Plant Sciences at the University of California, Davis, where he worked on evaluating non-fumigant alternative treatments to methyl bromide fumigation in field grown strawberry and cut flower production.

A salute to Virginia for supporting another small fruit specialist in our region. Welcome Dr. Samtani!

Ideas for Coyote Problems?

Member Amy Douglas of The Farmers Daughter in Taylorsville, NC says their farm has been having a terrible problem with coyotes tearing up their layflat and irrigation tapes this winter.

Does anyone have any ideas of a solution or a way to prevent this problem (other than shooting all the coyotes, which is both obvious and difficult)? Respond to her at thefarmersdaughterfarmmarket@gmail.com or 828-312-8137.

Springs Farm Update

If you were on the Expo tour, you’re probably wondering how the plants at Springs Farm have been faring, after their poor start, when boxed plants were stored badly before planting and many had to be replaced. Says Ron Edwards, “We covered them up for a couple of months, fertilized them, and gave them a lot of TLC. They’re small, but they look good. Now we just have to see if they will put on flowers and fruit. The photo above was taken in late January.
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