

LERGP Coffee Pot Meeting Provide Bidirectional Education

Project Investigators

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Impact “Nugget”

Informal Coffee Pot meetings held weekly during the growing season by members of the Lake Erie Regional Grape Program provide extension team members with the chance to learn about local conditions affecting grape production while growers are taking the information and seeing a positive return on investment for practices they implement in their vineyards.

Issues/Needs and Audiences

The area covered by the Lake Erie Regional Grape Program (LERGP) Extension team extends along Lake Erie from the Pennsylvania/Ohio border (Erie County, PA) to the shores of Lake Ontario in Niagara County. Growing conditions, as well as vineyard practices, can vary greatly across the 150 mile long grape belt during a single growing season. In order to reach the varied audience within this geographically large area the LERGP Extension team had devoted time and resources into electronic information transfer methods such as a weekly electronic newsletter "The Crop Update", development of a presence on the web for the team and team members, and videos of production practices on YouTube. While this ensured that growers across the region would be able to access production information at their convenience, LERGP team members were not as up to date on local conditions across the belt as desired.

Extension Responses

Informal weekly Coffee Pot meetings were held across the Lake Erie Grape Belt at grower venues starting in May and ending in August. This face-to-face interaction has become crucial in the learning process by LERGP extension team members of the particular problems facing different areas of the grape belt. This was especially apparent during the 2012 growing season where an extremely early bud break, followed by up to 16 freeze events caused a dramatic difference in production potential across the region. There is no set agenda for the Coffee Pot meetings; the discussion follows questions from growers and industry members who are participating in the meeting. A total of 200 growers and industry representatives attended 11 Coffee Pot meetings held in locations ranging from Lockport, NY to Harborcreek, PA. The location rotates between the 4 counties involved in the program (Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Niagara in New York and Erie in Pennsylvania) each week to provide the team a comprehensive overview of conditions found across the belt.

Accomplishments and Impacts

Topics for the 2012 season varied widely according to location. The center of the grape belt was the most affected by the freezes and crop insurance and crop potential from secondary buds remained the hot topics well into the season. In the northern and southern end of the belt the freeze damage was not as extensive and while crop insurance was discussed, the 'normal'

topics of disease and insect management lead the way. A survey conducted at the LERGP Growers' Conference indicated that educational programming provided during Coffee Pot meetings helped over 70% of respondents increase profits by changing fungicide practices. This change resulted in costs savings per acre ranging from \$50 - \$500. 75% of respondents also indicated they increased profits by changing grape berry moth management practices resulting in cost savings per acre ranging from \$15 to \$500 per acre.

Collaborators

Grape Growers in Chautauqua, Cattaraugus and Niagara Counties in New York and Erie County in Pennsylvania

Special Funding Sources

Lake Erie Regional Grape Research and Extension Program, Inc.