

## A Multi-pronged Approach to Information Transfer – Is it Effective?

### Project Leader(s):

Timothy Weigle, NYS IPM Program, Cornell Cooperative Extension  
Andy Muza, Lake Erie Regional Grape Program, Penn State Coop Extension – Erie County  
Kevin Martin, Lake Erie Regional Grape Program, Penn State Cooperative Extension

### Cooperator(s):

Bryan Hed, Plant Pathology Research Associate, Penn State University, North East Lab

### Executive Summary:

Providing up-to-date production information to the diverse demographics of the Lake Erie Grape Growing region is a challenge that has been met through the use of a number of electronic information transfer techniques ranging from web sites and electronic newsletters to digital videos. However, the use of electronic information transfer tools has brought about concern over a 'faceless' extension program. To ensure that a connection is maintained between the NYS Grape IPM Program, Lake Erie Regional Grape Program Extension team and members of the Lake Erie grape industry, weekly Coffee Pot meeting were held from May through the end of August at a different grower venue each week.

### 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/podcasts of production practices on YouTube that are also posted to our Facebook page. This was in addition to the traditional information methods such as small group meeting (Coffee Pots), grower conferences, newsletter and consultations. As with all extension educators, these days, the question for the LERGP extension team is which source of information is most valued and used by the members of the grape industry.

### Extension Response

A survey was conducted at the end of the 2018 growing season to not only determine what information transfer practices were most valued by growers but to also determine if there was perceived value in being a member of the Lake Erie Regional Grape Program. The survey consisted of nine questions which allowed participants to rate the usefulness of extension resources, how they use the information, what information they feel they need but do not receive, if they saw a saving from implementing information from these resources and finally, how they used the program to obtain pesticide recertification credits.

### Accomplishments

The survey results were a bit surprising as one-on-one interactions such as field visits, office visits, phone conversations and email consultations did not find their way into the top five methods growers indicated they like to get their information. The most useful resources identified were 1) the LERGP Vineyard Notes newsletter, 2) LERGP Crop Update (weekly electronic newsletter), 3) NY/PA Pest Management Guidelines for Grapes (Weigle and Muza co-editors), 4) LERGP Coffee Pot Meetings, 5) LERGP.com website and 6) NEWA <http://newa.cornell.edu>. When asked the question of how useful, the resources fell into this sequence of importance 1) NY/PA Pest Management Guidelines LERGP, 2)

Vineyard Notes Newsletter, 3) LERGP Crop Update, 4) LERGP Coffee Pot Meetings and 5) NEWA. On average, it costs a grower \$80 to be a member of the Lake Erie Regional Grape Program. One of the survey questions asked if they felt they saved more than \$80 per year in their vineyard operation using resources provided by the LERGP Extension Program. Eighty-three percent of respondent indicated that they did while seventeen percent felt that they did not. A question was asked to how much a survey participate felt they saved per acre by belonging to the program. Forty-eight percent felt they saved between \$1 - \$10 per acre, fifteen percent felt they saved \$11 - \$20 per acre, fifteen percent indicated \$21 - \$30 per acre, nineteen percent was \$31 - \$50 per acre and four percent felt they saved over \$50 per acre by taking advantage of the resources provided by the LERGP extension team (does not add up to 100% due to rounding).

The last question dealt with the educational resources growers used to collect the recertification credits needed to renew their pesticide applicators licenses. The providing of pesticide recertification credits as long been known as a great incentive to bring participants into meetings. Survey results indicated that seventy-eight percent of participants got between half and all of their recertification credits from LERGP meetings with 28% of respondents saying they relied on LERGP meeting for all of their recertification credits.