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VIDALIA ONION FIELD DAY A BIG SUCCESS  
George Boyhan and Cliff Riner  

Another successful field day was held at the Vidalia Onion and Vegetable Research Center in Lyons, GA on April 5th of this year. Over 100 individuals came to the field day for a sponsored lunch and visits to the onion research field plots.  

There was a wide variety of research underway with onions. Dr. David Langston had extensive trials on fungicides for disease control in onions. Related to this we had a small trial of nine varieties to evaluate their disease resistance without fungicide applications. This was not a good year to evaluate disease resistance since disease pressure was relatively low across the onion belt. In fact there was no discernable difference in diseases from sprayed to unsprayed plots. Other research at the farm included onion fertility, direct seeding, and herbicide evaluations  

With the low disease pressure, it was a good year for organic Vidalia onion production. This year we had close to 250 acres of organic onion production across the belt. At the farm we had two studies on the certified organic land. One was an evaluation of poultry litter and commercial organic fertilizers for onion production and the other was an evaluation of Kelpak, an algae derived growth regulator for vegetables.  

The variety trial garnered the most interest from participants. The trial had 49 varieties this year, which is the most we’ve ever had. These varieties represent the range of maturity classes with both commercial varieties and advanced breeding lines.  

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The highlight of the luncheon was a presentation by Christopher Schepis who is the legislative liaison for Representative John Barrow. John Barrow is the U.S. Congressman representing the 12th district which encompasses much of the onion growing region. Mr. Schepis gave a short presentation on the farm bill and Congressman Barrow’s efforts on behave of Georgia growers.

This was one of our most well attended field days and portends great changes at the research farm. Contingency funding has been made available for equipment and irrigation upgrades and State Senator Jack Hill has secured funds to build a new office, teaching, and research building at the farm. These changes, with grower support, assure great success for the future.

UPCOMING EVENTS

There are a couple of events coming up in May that may be of interest to you or your clientele. One is the Organic Strawberry, Onion and Blackberry Field Demonstration sponsored by Fort Valley State University and Georgia Organics. It will be held at the Bridges of Hope Center near Louisville, GA on May 15, 2007 from 1-3 pm. (see the attached Word document for details).

Another event is a workshop, Bill Hurst will be having in the Food Science Department in Athens called ‘Hands-ON HACCP for the Fresh-Cut Industry’. This workshop will be May 15-17, 2007 at the Food Science Building.

The fresh cut industry has been in the news lately with the outbreak of E. coli in spinach. This was a devastating event for this industry with losses estimated over $100 million. HACCP stands for hazard analysis critical control point, which is a method to

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reduce the likelihood of contamination by human pathogens. Growers and particularly processors are encouraged to attend this workshop. Attached is a brochure (PDF) with more details about the workshop.

ONION RECOMMENDATIONS GO FORWARD TO DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

The Dean has forwarded onion recommendations to the Georgia Department of Agriculture to be included on the official list of acceptable Vidalia onions. The list includes in no particular order:

- Honeybee (SSC 33076), Shamrock Seed Co.
- SSC 1535 F1, Shamrock Seed Co.
- Ponderosa (XON 303Y), Sakata Seed Co.
- XON-204Y, Sakata Seed Co.
- XON-403Y, Sakata Seed Co.
- WI-129, Wannamaker Seed Co.
- WI-131, Wannamaker Seed Co.
- Yel. Granex 15082, Dessert Seed Co.
- Yel. Granex 15085, Dessert Seed Co.
- Yel. Granex 15094, Dessert Seed Co.
- Yel. Granex 105101, Dessert Seed Co.
- Yel. Granex 108101, Dessert Seed Co.
- Yel. Granex 114101, Dessert Seed Co.
- FS 2005, Solar Seed Co.
- FS 2011, Solar Seed Co.
XP 07542007, Seminis Seed Co.
HSX-61304, Hortag Seed Co.

In addition, the recommendation went forward to remove:

Cyclops, Seminis Seed Co.
Sweet Melody, Nunhems Seed Co.

The recommendations are guidelines for the Georgia Department of Agriculture to use. The final list of included and excluded onion varieties is solely at the discretion of the Georgia Department of Agriculture. The varieties recommended for exclusion were solely on the basis of not being included in the trials two or more of the last three years.

FROM MY DESK
The onion harvest at the Vidalia Onion and Vegetable Research Center should be wrapping up in a week or so. We executed the harvest more aggressively this year harvesting the variety trial in three weeks. This helped us avoid late season bacterial diseases. The dry weather has been terrible for most growers, but it does help the onion harvest by allowing growers to maximize field curing saving money on fuel. Talk to you next month.

Regards,

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