Jayson (Jay) Harper

Jay Harper is a Professor of Agricultural Economics in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology. His research and extension program focuses on the area of risk management and crop production economics. Jay’s work on agronomic crops has included evaluation of crop insurance options, crop rotations, herbicide selection criteria, conservation tillage systems, machinery sizing and replacement, and crop harvest and storage systems. In our organic feed and forage cropping systems project, Jay handles the economic analysis.

In addition to dealing with the economic aspects of our project, Jay is also responsible for maintaining cost of production estimates for various crop and livestock enterprises, which are published in three production guides and numerous publications in the Agricultural Alternatives series.

Brian Snyder

Brian Snyder is Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), a position he has held since 2001. Brian is originally from Indiana, where both of his grandfathers had been dairy farmers, and his family operated a purebred hog operation on a small farm.

In addition to writing and speaking in a number of venues on the subject of sustainable agriculture, Brian has also served on several boards of directors, including the PA State Council of Farm Organizations, Keystone Development Center and Food Routes Network. He has also served in an advisory capacity for the state Dairy Task Force in PA, the Northeast Sustainable Ag Working Group and the School of Hospitality at the Penn College of Technology.

Did you know?

- Pennsylvania ranks first in rabbit production nationwide.
- Nearly 100,000 rabbits are raised on 530 farms across the state.
- Lancaster, Mifflin, and Somerset are the top rabbit producing counties in PA.

(source: PA Department of Ag.)

(Biographical info from RestaurantGuysRadio.com)
New publication about organic certification

A major goal of our project is to communicate the results of our research in certified organic cropping systems to other researchers and the general public. But how do cropping systems become certified organic in the first place? A new publication developed by sustainable agriculture extension associate Charlie White and project leader Mary Barbercheck explains the nuts and bolts of organic certification.

The publication is titled “Introduction to Organic Farming: A Growing Opportunity for Pennsylvania Farmers”. In it, the authors explain that “deciding whether to be USDA certified organic is a personal decision that should be based on your own situation”. If you do decide that you want to become certified, the publication provides helpful information regarding things to consider prior to making the transition, such as becoming familiar with National Organic Program (NOP) regulations and determining what your products, and the markets for those products, will be.

The bulk of the information in the publication covers the “Steps to Certification”. In this section, the authors explain the importance of choosing and establishing a relationship with an organic certifier, and becoming familiar with the certifier’s list of allowed and prohibited materials. The section also covers some of the important aspects of the three-year transition period, required prior to organic certification, and the importance of keeping detailed records of your farming practices. These records include the types and sources of any inputs and receipts for materials and non-GMO certificates for any seeds that are purchased. The authors also point out that “it is important to record dates and application rates of any fertilizers and other inputs, as well as dates of practices such as planting, tillage, and harvest”.

The remainder of the publication describes what you should expect during the application submission process and the steps necessary to maintain organic certification. The authors point out that an important component of the certification process is the development of an Organic System Plan (OSP) and provide a link to OSP templates provided by the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service.

The publication is the third in a series of outreach products to be featured in Penn State’s new Agroecology in Practice series. The publication will soon be available to download free of charge from the PSU College of Agriculture’s publication web site at http://pubs.cas.psu.edu. Contact Charlie White (cmw29@psu.edu) or Mary Barbercheck (meb34@psu.edu) for more information.