

2019 NEW ENGLAND VEGETABLE AND FRUIT CONFERENCE

Summary of Activities and Impacts

The 2019 New England Vegetable and Fruit Conference and Trade Show took place December 10-12 in Manchester NH. It was organized over two years by a committee of 38 people from 7 states representing extension, farmers, industry and research.

The program featured 34 educational sessions containing 170 half-hour presentations on a range of vegetable and fruit production, marketing, and management topics. In time slots historically reserved for these education presentation sessions, there were also 3 allocated to farmer-to-farmer discussion sessions, in addition to 11 one-hour farmer-to-farmer discussion sessions on a variety of topics. Furthermore, there were two Tuesday evening full education sessions in irrigation technology and climate change adaptation. And finally, for the second year, there was a Wednesday pre-mixer student poster session.

Total attendance over 3 days was 1,265 people, including 136 speakers, 73 steering committee members and Extension personnel, 30 students, and 52 trade show personnel. Participants came from: MA (293), NH (155), ME (116), CT (66), NY (52), VT (57), RI (33), Canada (13), and a variety of other states (18).

Post-conference evaluations were completed by 281 people, representing a 22% response rate. Of the respondents, 73.3% were full-time farmers and 16.7% part-time farmers (>90% engaged in farming). Twenty-seven and thirteen percent of respondents said this was their first or second time, respectively, attending the NEVFC; 13% said they have attended ten or more NEVFC conferences; 68% attended all three days of the conference.

Of the respondents: 95.4% strongly agreed or agreed that the educational sessions were useful, 85.4% answered similarly for the trade show, and 54.8% answered similarly in regards to farmer-to-farmer sessions. [This low rating may be a reflection of the lack of a “not applicable” option in the survey (for those who may not have attended any farmer-to-farmer), which instead may have been answered as “neutral.”] Seventy-seven percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the conference facility is “adequate”.

Questions on general education topics- Numbers are percents of respondents

Information I obtained at this conference will help me (us) to implement: [**New production practices** (varieties, equipment, specific crop management, etc)]

Strongly agree	37.7
Agree	50.9
Neutral	9.6
Disagree	1.8
Strongly disagree	0.0

Information I obtained at this conference will help me (us) to implement: [**New practices to improve soil health and fertility**]

Strongly agree	26.0
Agree	45.9
Neutral	25.3
Disagree	2.5
Strongly disagree	0.0

Information I obtained at this conference will help me (us) to implement: [**Post-harvest handling and storage practices**]

Strongly agree	20.6
Agree	40.6
Neutral	35.2
Disagree	2.5
Strongly disagree	0.7

Information I obtained at this conference will help me (us) to implement: [**Pest management practices (including insect pests, plant diseases, and weeds)**]

Strongly agree	30.6
Agree	50.5
Neutral	15.3
Disagree	2.5
Strongly disagree	0.4

Information I obtained at this conference will help me (us) to implement: [**Improved marketing and business management strategies**]

Strongly agree	8.9
Agree	35.2
Neutral	45.9
Disagree	7.1
Strongly disagree	2.5

As a result of attending this conference, I (we) intend to adopt new practices in each of the following categories: **[New production practices (varieties, equipment, etc)]**

Strongly agree	33.1
Agree	44.8
Neutral	18.9
Disagree	1.1
Strongly disagree	0.0

As a result of attending this conference, I (we) intend to adopt new practices in each of the following categories: **[New practices to improve soil health and fertility]**

Strongly agree	23.1
Agree	41.6
Neutral	31.7
Disagree	1.4
Strongly disagree	0.0

As a result of attending this conference, I (we) intend to adopt new practices in each of the following categories: **[Post-harvest handling and storage practices]**

Strongly agree	18.1
Agree	34.9
Neutral	40.9
Disagree	2.5
Strongly disagree	0.7

As a result of attending this conference, I (we) intend to adopt new practices in each of the following categories: **[Pest management practices (including insect pests, plant diseases, weeds)]**

Strongly agree	26.3
Agree	47.0
Neutral	19.9
Disagree	2.5
Strongly disagree	0.7

As a result of attending this conference, I (we) intend to adopt new practices in each of the following categories: **[Improved marketing and business management strategies]**

Strongly agree	10.3
Agree	25.6
Neutral	52.7
Disagree	5.3
Strongly disagree	2.1

My attendance at this conference in PAST years has had a significant impact on the practices I CURRENTLY implement in any of the following areas: **[New production practices (varieties, equipment)]**

Strongly agree	29.9	
Agree	34.9	
Neutral	33.8	First time attendees likely answered Neutral
Disagree	0.4	
Strongly disagree	0.7	

My attendance at this conference in PAST years has had a significant impact on the practices I CURRENTLY implement in any of the following areas: **[Practices to improve soil health and fertility]**

Strongly agree	24.6	
Agree	32.0	
Neutral	41.3	First time attendees likely answered Neutral
Disagree	1.1	
Strongly disagree	0.7	

My attendance at this conference in PAST years has had a significant impact on the practices I CURRENTLY implement in any of the following areas: **[Post-harvest handling and storage practices]**

Strongly agree	18.1	
Agree	32.4	
Neutral	47.0	First time attendees likely answered Neutral
Disagree	0.7	
Strongly disagree	0.7	

My attendance at this conference in PAST years has had a significant impact on the practices I CURRENTLY implement in any of the following areas: **[Pest management practices]**

Strongly agree	27.8	
Agree	32.0	
Neutral	36.7	First time attendees likely answered Neutral
Disagree	1.1	
Strongly disagree	0.7	

My attendance at this conference in PAST years has had a significant impact on the practices I CURRENTLY implement in any of the following areas: **[Improved marketing and business strategies]**

Strongly agree	13.5	
Agree	23.5	
Neutral	54.8	First time attendees likely answered Neutral
Disagree	4.6	
Strongly disagree	1.1	

Pesticide applicator recertification credits were offered for 30 of the educational sessions. A total of 54 credits were offered during the conference, ranging from one-half credit to 3 credits per session. There were 231 New England growers and professionals that received a total of 1606 credits during the conference.

A 214-page conference proceedings summarizing 82 presentations was published and distributed to attendees. These, and speaker slides, are posted at <http://www.newenglandvfc.org/>.