

VIDALIA VEGETABLE NEWS

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AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY COMMISSION FOR VEGETABLES

I happened to be on a Farm Bureau program with Charles Hall (Executive Director for the Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Grower Association) recently and he was talking about developing an agricultural commodity commission for vegetables. There are several such ACCs in Georgia for other crops including cotton, corn, tobacco, dairy, and peaches to name a few. These commissions collect funds from growers that are then used for promotion and research. Vidalia onions have a similar setup, but it is done as a federal market order administered by the Vidalia Onion Committee.

Currently the process is in the planning stage with several questions that will have to be answered before it can be implemented. To start with, which vegetables would be included? Currently they are considering 12, which would include bell pepper, cabbage, cantaloupe, eggplant, greens, snap beans, southernpeas, specialty peppers, squash, sweet corn, and tomatoes. In addition, would there be a minimum number of acres before assessments would be made? For example, growers below 50 acres would be exempt. Unlike other commodities, it is not an easy process to determine who, and how many acres are being grown of any of these vegetables. Another consideration is how much should the assessment be? Currently, there are several proposals on the table and an example is 0.5 cent per unit. A unit would be whatever the standard wholesale unit for a particular commodity is. For example, if you produce 1,200 boxes of peppers per acre with a 0.5 cent per unit charge the total assessment per acre would be \$6.00. Depending on how the assessment is handled there is the possibility of raising between \$300,000 and \$700,000 for promotion, education, and research.

Ultimately, the growers will have to make the decision to set up an ACC for vegetables. Two-thirds of the growers will have to vote in the affirmative to set up such a commission.

CORN GLUTEN MEAL AS AN ORGANIC WEED CONTROL MEASURE IN ONIONS

Organic Vidalia onion production has taken off in a big way this year with a number of growers. Weed control continues to be a major problem for organic onion production particularly for plantbed production. Onion seedlings are poor competitors with weeds because of their upright and slow growth.

Hand or mechanical weeding as well as using a layer of weed free compost, and plastic mulch have been the only viable alternatives to good weed control. Hand weeding can become very expensive, very quickly. Mechanical weed control can be difficult with our current relatively close spacing. Weed free compost has had limited success. To get

reasonably good control at least an inch of compost must be spread on the beds. This can be a costly measure particularly if the effectiveness is limited.

Corn gluten meal (CGM), which can be used in certified organic production has been suggested as a weed control measure in onions. Webber and Shrefler (2006) have reported on using rates of 1000-4000 kg/ha (892-3568 lbs/acre) to control weeds in transplanted onions. Earlier work had shown some toxicity with CGM on direct seeded onions.

Control, however, was only fair with this material. At the lower rates of 1000, 2000, or 3,000 kg/ha weed control was considered poor during the first 46 days after transplanting with less than 50% weed control. The highest rate (4,000 kg/acre) had fair control with 72.1% overall weed control and 82.7% broadleaf weed control.

Earlier work with direct seeded onions indicated a 67% reduction in onion seedling survival at 1,000 kg/ha CGM. This might be ameliorated with primed seed, which germinates more quickly and uniformly. Clearly, however, more work is needed on controlling weeds effectively in plantbed onions.

The second half of the season from 46 days after planting to harvest (95 & 83 days after planting for, 2002 and 2003, respectively) indicated CGM did no better than the unweeded check. The conclusion is that relatively high rates of CGM would be required and additional applications or other weed control measures would be necessary for season long control.

A cursory look on the Internet indicated costs for CGM from \$20.00-\$50.00 per 50 lbs., which translate into about \$1,400.00 per acre at 3,500 lbs/acre rate. These prices were generally for homeowner use and I image it would be considerably less if purchased in bulk.

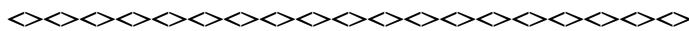
FROM MY DESK

Well, I'm back to sending a simple email newsletter. I've not found a good program to use to send an HTML email, which is what I eventually hope to do. This is my last newsletter for the year, so Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and I'll talk to you in the new year.

The corn gluten meal article is based on:

Webber, C.L. and J.W. Shrefler. 2006. Corn gluten meal and spring-transplanted onions (*Allium cepa* L.): crop safety, weed control, and yields. 2006 National Allium Research Conference Program and Proceedings. December 7-9, 2006. p. 87-97.

Regards,



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