Vidalia Vegetable News

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Vidalia Onion Variety Trial

We have completed compiling the results of this year's variety trial (see attached Excel workbook). The average total yield was only about 80% of last year's yield. Last year of course was the 'perfect storm' with some of the highest yields we've seen. Jumbo yields this year were close to 90% of last year. This year we were more aggressive in the harvest shortening the total time from 24 to 9 days. This may have affected yields slightly in the later maturing varieties, but resulted in avoidance of late season bacterial diseases that have plagued us. In the past late maturing onions often had good total yields, but jumbo yields would be much lower because of the high cull rate due to these diseases.

Seedstems were much worse this year than last with an average of 11 per plot across the whole trial with a range of 0 to 54 seedstems/plot compared to an average of only 2 last year. This isn't the worst I've seen for seedstems, but for susceptible varieties it was relatively severe. Doubles were comparable to last year averaging 8 per plot over all the varieties compared to 11 per plot last year.

The pyruvate values ranged from 3.4 to 6.7 um/ml for the onions tested. Last year's results ranged from 2.8 to 6.3 um/ml. The correlation from last year to this was only 0.496. A correlation calculates a value between 0-1, which indicates how closely two sets of number track one another. This value (0.496) suggests there are yearly differences that account for more than 50% of the differences between these values.

This was the first year we tested red onions in earnest. We've had one or two in the trials in the past, but this year we five red entries. Yields of the reds tended to average lower than the yellows, about 16%. Other characteristics such as pyruvate, seedstem, etc. were not appreciably different from yellow onions. We should have a better idea on these onions will perform in coming years.

Overall the trial went very well this year. Shortening the harvest window helped us avoid disease problems, but even without this it was a low year for late season bacterial diseases based on other onions that were harvested very late.

Upcoming Events

There will be a Twilight Summer Field Day on June 21, 2007 from 6:00 - 8:00 pm. This will be held at the Vidalia Onion and Vegetable Research Center just outside of Lyons. The program will begin with a supper followed by visits to the field plots. We currently have projects underway with watermelon, cantaloupe, pumpkin, tomato, and pepper. We are conducting some interesting experiments so do plan to join us.

After the field day the Organic Vidalia Onion Working Group will have a short meeting. This will be primarily to discuss an organic onion field day for this fall. I hope we get an opportunity to discuss this year's organic onion crop as well. I was reading a recent issue of The Packer (May 28, 2007) and they are quoting prices for organic Vidalia onions! A 40-lb box of jumbos was $32-34, which is 70% greater than the price for conventional onions.

From My Desk

We've hit the big time with The Packer quoting organic onion prices! Not bad. This newsletter is a bit early because I wanted to get it out before the upcoming field day and I will be out of the country for two weeks next month in Honduras. This is a University sponsored trip to visit local growers, students, and Honduran institutions. It should be an interesting and exciting trip. I should have lots of pictures to share next month. I hope you will make an effort to come to the field day on the 21st. Finally, I'm again trying a new software package to send my newsletter. I hope this works better than the last time. Don't forget the attachment. Talk to you next month.

Regards,

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