



June 2020

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Virtual CSA fair gave Kentucky farms a boost

By Matt Ernst, independent writer

A virtual CSA fair, held as a [Facebook event](#) in April, helped Kentucky farms find new customers as interest in locally produced food increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

About three-fourths (58 farms) of Kentucky's CSAs participated in the event from April 16th to 30th. "It went fantastically well," said Cindy Finneseth, executive director of the Kentucky Horticulture Council. "Almost every single farm participating that wasn't already sold out of CSA shares sold out," she said.

Jessica Hodges, of Modern Heritage Farm in Glendale, said the virtual fair helped connect her farm with lots of locals. "We've never been able to meet our CSA member goal until this year, and now we have a waiting list," she said. "The virtual CSA fair did such a great job not only explaining what a CSA is and making people aware of the benefits, but also connecting people with CSA farms like ours in their community."

The Kentucky Department of Agriculture co-hosted the event with Edible Kentucky & Southern Indiana, Bluegrass Farm To Table, the Organic Association of Kentucky (OAK), and the Horticulture Council.

Growers participating in the fair sold an estimated \$116,000 worth of shares, according to co-hosts. But it is hard to quantify the total value of the event, said Brooke Gentile, OAK executive director. "There is a lot of value from the event that is intangible, like consumers building relationships with farmers and learning about the diversity of produce and animal products available from nearby farms," she said.

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Coming up

July 7 - Linking Agriculture for Networking and Development (LAND) Grayson area Virtual Forum. The KY Department of Agriculture and the KY Association of Manufacturers have aligned to leverage agricultural resources with the state's manufacturing industry. For details about this and future events, [click here](#).

July 23 - Berea College Farm virtual tour, 2 to 3 p.m. EDT. For details and registration information, visit the Organic Association of Kentucky website at <https://www.oak-ky.org/field-days>.

Sept. 11, 18, 25 - Virtual Mechanical Weed Control Field Day, 12:30-1:15 p.m. CDT. Free. For details and to register, visit <https://thelandconnection.org/event/mwc-2020/>.



Flyer series underway for nursery managers

By Joshua Knight, Senior Extension Associate, Horticulture


The Nursery Crops team is collaborating with extension professors in Plant Pathology and Entomology to develop a series of flyers on a range of topics to help nursery managers disseminate research-backed information to their employees.

Each flyer is made available in standard print format of 11 x 8.5 inches, designed to be printed in landscape format on almost all printers. Full color and B&W versions are also available, to reduce costs. Full color versions will be made available upon individual request through extension personnel (agents and associates) and at industry trade shows.

We recommend flyers be posted in workspaces relevant to the topic and/or other conspicuous locations where employees congregate like break

ONLY YOU can prevent the spread of

Boxwood Blight

Crew Section-off boxwoods, and sanitize between sections Start work from healthier blocks to before moving to higher risk blocks Bag infected material, and move off-site for disposal Where areas of infection have been identified: wear disposable Tyvek suits or washable cover-alls and shoe covers	Tools Create cleaning stations with sanitizers for crew, tools and equipment to sanitize between blocks. This can be as simple as providing a dedicated pump-up sprayer with sanitizer . Tools that should be sanitized include anything that was used to work in a block of boxwoods . Shovels, rakes, pitch-forks, hand pruners, hedge trimmers, string-trimmers and wheel-barrow.	Trucks & Tractors Remove all boxwoods and trimmings from vehicle beds and spray surfaces with sanitation solution. If truck or tractor was driven in boxwood blocks, spray tires down with sanitizer solution Do not compost any diseased boxwoods.
Online Extension Resources https://tinyurl.com/VTBoxwoodBlight https://tinyurl.com/UKBoxwoodBlight	Developed in collaboration between  Department of Horticulture Nursery Crops Extension Department of Plant Pathology Ornamental Horticulture Extension	

areas, similar to the Federal Department of Labor posters.

At the time of this article, flyers for two topics in English have been posted: Boxwood Blight and Sanitization, though more are coming and we expect Spanish versions to be finished soon. Bookmark the link (<https://ncer.ca.uky.edu/flyers>).

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Gentile said that Kentucky's organic produce farms are finding ways to create opportunities for more CSA add-ons, like additional produce from an online store, eggs, meat or bread. Add-on items provide shoppers with more product variety in one shopping experience and can help increase farm sales.

The online format helped growers connect with consumers. "The farms looked very professional, so appealing," said Finneseth. "It was a very comfortable way for people to engage with CSAs."

An online format was ideal as concerns swirled around COVID, and CSA growers have continued using online tools more this year. "The consistent thing we're hearing from farms is that they are relying on virtual platforms and online sales because there's not the regular opportunity for in-person conversations," said Gentile.

Many CSAs have adapted as members requested the ability to have greater choice over what is included in the share. Hardin County's Mod-

ern Heritage Farms manages a private Facebook group and uses Google Forms to set up pre-orders. Hodges also said the farm added three new share pickup sites, in addition to its normal two, to adjust for social distancing guidelines.

Gentile and Finneseth see demand for locally grown produce persisting over the next six months. Beyond that, they say CSA farms could be poised to maintain the increased consumer interest in CSAs for the long haul. "The question that we have right now is what can we do in this moment of opportunity for local foods to maintain momentum," Gentile said.

Organizers hope the fair, which engaged 128,000 people, sets a precedent. "A lot of growers had been thinking CSA, and at that time we didn't know what was going to happen with farmers markets," Finneseth said. "Now growers are thinking about (extending CSAs into) the fall."

Future virtual fairs will help growers build on this outlier year. "We'll absolutely do the fair again," said Finneseth.

Seasonal vegetable issues

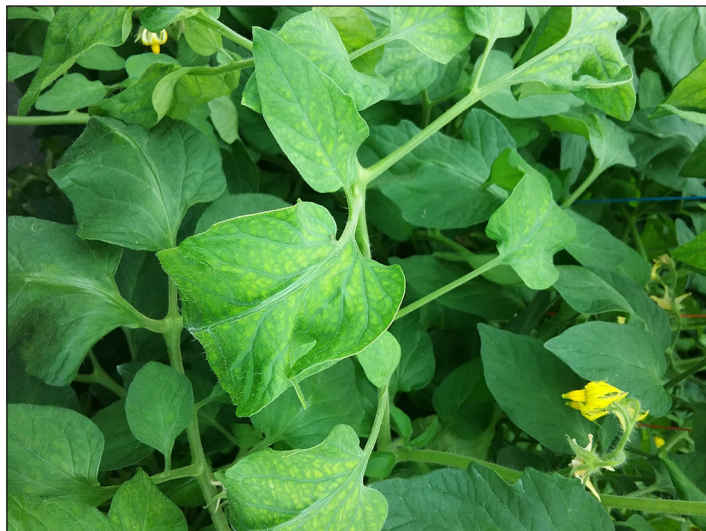
By Rachel Rudolph, Ph.D.

UK Extension Vegetable Specialist

“What is wrong with my tomato plants?”

Here is an example of tomato plants exhibiting zinc deficiency. This is distinguished by the yellowing between the veins (interveinal chlorosis) in the new/younger leaves of plants. These symptoms can look very similar to iron deficiency in tomato plants. A down and inward curl of young leaves can also be a sign of a zinc deficiency. Leaves may also be smaller than normal. Although zinc is a micronutrient, it plays an important part in the formation and activity of chlorophyll, which is vital to photosynthesis. Zinc is also crucial to the functioning of several enzymes as well as auxin, a growth hormone.

A zinc deficiency may develop under a few different conditions. Zinc can be less available to the plant when there is excess soil phosphorus or when the soil pH is above 7.0. For a tomato crop, the target soil phosphorus should be between 30 and 60 pounds per acre and the soil pH should be between 6.5 and 6.8. It is important to get a soil test prior to planting in order to be able to adjust the pH and soil nutrients according to the crop you plan to plant. In order to adjust the pH (raising or lowering), it takes at least six months for lime or sulfur to take full effect after applying to the soil. Remember, many nutrient deficiencies look similar. A foliar test is recommended to ensure proper diagnosis. If you are unfamiliar with foliar sampling, watch this short video to learn more: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRSBAz0cuBM>.



Photos by Rachel Rudolph

[watch?v=dRSBAz0cuBM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRSBAz0cuBM).

For more information on other issues in tomato see ID-172 [An IPM Scouting Guide for Common Pests of Solanaceous Crops in Kentucky](#) and/or ID-235 [An IPM Scouting Guide for Common Problems of High Tunnel and Greenhouse Vegetable Crops in Kentucky](#).

Farmers: Which online direct-to-consumer platforms work for you?

From The Land Connection

As farmers add customization, online stores and home delivery to meet the needs of customers, The [CSA Innovation Network](#) and [FairShare CSA Coalition](#) are gathering farmer-to-farmer input on which platforms you've used (not just for CSA!), which work well, and which do not.

After providing feedback through this form, producers will receive a link to see the responses of other farmers around the country. The gath-

ered information will become a companion piece intended to supplement the excellent [Farmers Guide to Direct Sales Software Platforms](#) from the National Young Farmers Coalition.

NOTE: All responses are collected anonymously and will be shared in aggregate. It should take about three minutes to add input for each platform you use.

[Click here](#) to share your input on the direct sales software platforms you use.

UK leads national study on COVID and local food systems

By Carol Lea Spence, UK Ag Communications

LEXINGTON, Ky. — The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Services (AMS) Division is partnering with the University of Kentucky, Colorado State University and Penn State University on a \$1 million cooperative research agreement to conduct a national study on the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on local food systems.

Co-principal investigators Lilian Brislen and Tim Woods of the UK College of Agriculture, Food and Environment will partner with the USDA to lead the team of researchers. Also included in the study are 16 trade association partner organizations from around the country that represent various sectors of the food industry.

The study seeks to answer how sectors of local and regional food systems are responding to COVID-19, what successful adaptations have been implemented, what obstacles the various arms of local food systems have encountered and the economic and value-chain impacts.

The closure of schools, universities and restaurants to slow the spread of COVID-19 has taken a toll on local and regional food markets. The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition estimates a loss in farmers markets' annual sales of 10% to 25%, a 10% loss in farm-to-school sales, and 20% loss in food hubs and restaurant sales.

The yearlong study will create a national platform to bring resources together for local and regional food systems stakeholders by fostering cross-sector collaboration, conducting marketplace assessments and capturing production and marketing

strategies and innovations. The resulting information will be posted online in the form of webinars, guides, fact sheets, case studies and resources to help producers have a voice in shaping future USDA response programs.

"There are many different players, and local food looks different in different contexts," said Brislen, executive director of [The Food Connection @ UK](#). "We want to understand the differences and similarities in how local food systems are being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic."

Though smaller, local and short supply chain systems are more vulnerable to crises, they are often more nimble than the big players when it comes to being able to redirect their product.

"The smaller-scale producers have been able to make silk purses out of sows' ears, so to speak, in some instances, redirecting their product to other markets where market demand has expanded," said Woods, UK extension professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics. Woods has seen an unexpected surge in the demand for local products since the pandemic began in the United States, which has positively impacted CSAs and farmers markets.

"Many direct markets like farm markets and CSAs are seeing a surge in consumer interest. Other aspects of local food markets are struggling. We have an opportunity in this project to hear from grocers, restaurants, schools, agritourism and farm groups to help forge a path forward together," he said.

The study will result in the AMS having a conduit of communication throughout the U.S. that will help them design support programs for local food.

Spencer joins UK MarketReady, COVID-local food systems study team

Emily Spencer has joined the UK Department of Agricultural Economics as an extension associate. A native of Lexington, she comes to UK Extension most recently from a background in small business marketing and sustainability, where she worked for a local sustainable brewing company. In her new position, she is part of the UK team that was recently awarded a \$1 million grant from the USDA to research the response of local and regional food systems to COVID-19. She also works on the MarketReady Training Program and a Specialty Crop Block Grant. She completed her B.A. in History at Centre College, and earned her M.S. in Community and Leadership Development at UK, where she completed her thesis on the role of place in small food cooperatives.

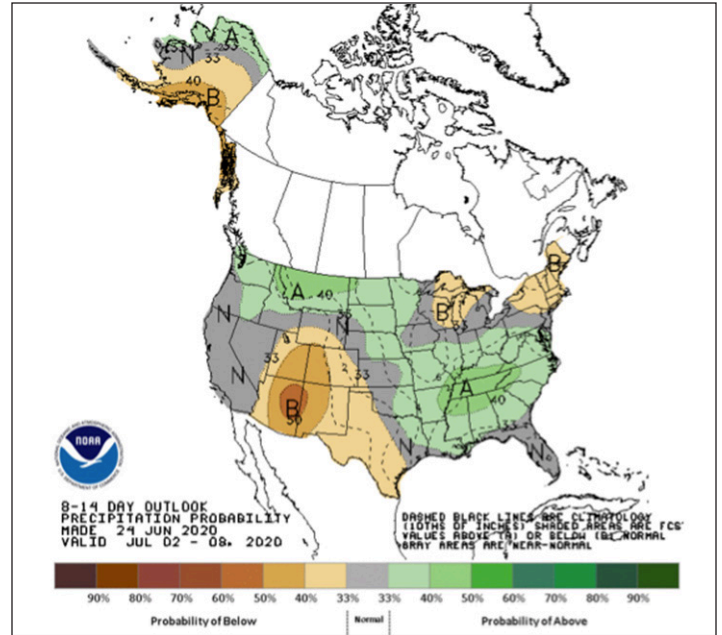


Emily Spencer

Expect to see warmer and wetter than average weather in July

By Joshua Knight, Senior Extension Associate, Horticulture

The forecast from the NOAA's climate prediction center is for an increased probability of warmer and wetter than average weather throughout July. Though other parts of the country, especially out west, are likely to have drier than average weather that will exacerbate existing drought conditions, the commonwealth could expect wetter than average conditions to continue for the summer and possibly even into October. Tropical storm forecasting from Colorado State is predicting the 2020 season to have elevated activity compared to the 1981-2010 averages for the tropical Atlantic due to the elevated ocean temperature in the tropical and subtropical Atlantic this year, which may



create conditions for increased precipitation in our region.

CCD resources update

Organic fruit, vegetable profiles among revised publications

Recently updated crop profiles from the Center for Crop Diversification include [Raspberries \(CCD-CP-18\)](#), [Organic Asparagus \(CCD-CP-108\)](#), and [Organic Blueberries \(CCD-CP-13\)](#). In addition to our crop and marketing profiles, be sure to check out our farmers market and produce auction price reports, and our numerous resources related to COVID-19. Access our crop profiles at www.uky.edu/ccd/production, marketing profiles at www.uky.edu/ccd/marketing, price reports at www.uky.edu/ccd/pricereports, and links to webinar recordings and other resources to help you market your products during the pandemic from our home page at www.uky.edu/ccd/.



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