

Grants will fund four NYSAES projects

Research focuses
on preventing pests

By JULIE ANDERSON

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GENEVA — The New York State Agricultural Experiment Station conducts year-round research to support local growers in their efforts to create sustainable crops and prevent pathogens from intervening in their production.

Of almost \$1 million in U.S. Department of Agriculture money recently earmarked to support New York state's agricultural sector, more than \$300,000 will benefit four NYSAES projects.

The entomology department has two research projects that will be funded for a total of \$150,608.

The first is for the allium crop industry, which includes onions, leeks, garlic and chives. The \$94,533 will help fund research for controlling leek moths.

Professor of Entomology Tony Shelton has been working on this project for three years. The leek moth, an invasive pest, traveled from Europe to Canada and made its appearance in northern New York in 2008. It lays its eggs on the leaves; the larvae feeds on the foliage and bulbs.

Onions bring in about \$50 million annually to the northern New York counties that grow them.

"It has been a major problem in Europe, and developing proactive management tactics can lessen the potential movement," Shelton said. "By monitoring the distribution of when and where infestations occur,

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\$74K will help wine, grape industries

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we can develop management options to help local growers.”

Researching invasive pests coincides with the “buy local” movement that is gaining steam throughout the region.

“The global invasive pests are spreading through transport of produce,” Shelton explained. “We knew that once the leek moth arrived in Ontario [Canada], it would eventually make its way into New York. We are constantly battling new invasive pests, and with the increase in global trade it is occurring more frequently.

“We applaud New York for providing support for projects like this.”

Shelton said controlling the leek moth is one of 20 projects that the Entomology Department is working on right now.

The grant will provide funding for personnel for the next two years, he noted.

The other project to receive grant funding in the Entomology Department will help to develop insect, disease and weed management for organic apples.

NYSAES Director Thomas Burr said he was thrilled the Department of Plant Pathology and Plant Microbe Biology will receive \$79,785 to fund further researching methods to eliminate the crown-

gall pathogen from grapevine propagation material.

Crown gall is a viticulture disease that causes tumors on the trunks and canes of the vine, weakening it and eventually killing it. The bacterium that causes the pathogen can survive internally, and therefore spread easily, during propagation.

Burr said while the pathogen originated in Greece, it’s now a worldwide problem. Researchers have been studying crown gall for more than 40 years, he added.

Detection is key to eliminating the pathogen, Burr continued. A year ago, Burr’s laboratory developed a highly sensitive method for detecting the presence of crown gall in grape cuttings — as minute as sensing 10 cells per gram of tissue. That is 1,000 times more sensitive than methods used in the past.

Burr said the grant money will be used to fund personnel and materials to conduct research on where the pathogen specifically survives in vines and elimination techniques.

“... This level of funding is impressive,” Burr said. “It means very much to us to be able to carry out our ability on applied projects that benefit the agricultural industries.”

The Horticulture Department will get \$74,331 to help support

Greenhouse work progressing

GENEVA — Six months into the demolition and construction of the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station’s four new greenhouses, director Thomas Burr says everything seems to be on schedule for a March 2014 finish.

“It couldn’t be going better,” Burr said. “We completed the remediation process and a portion of demolition, and right now we are in the upward construction phase.”

State Sen. Michael Nozzolio, R-54 of Fayette, visited the station last week to see the progress. Nozzolio and Assemblyman Brian Kolb, R-131 of Canandaigua, were instrumental in soliciting state funding for the \$4.7 million, 21,000-square-foot project.

“We are utilizing the state money as efficiently as possible,” Burr said. “Some materials are being recycled for the new greenhouses, and the staff has done an excellent job.”

Departments that work on plant breeding and growth, pests and diseases rely heavily on the greenhouses in their research, Burr said. Nonetheless, faculty have made do without the use of the greenhouses during construction.

“It is not an ideal situation for them,” Burr said. “They all had to pitch in, but they have been so effective with their planning.”

When construction is complete, the state-of-the-art facilities will feature climate control and cost-efficient lighting.

A groundbreaking for the greenhouses is planned for 1 p.m. Oct. 24.

“I just want to thank Sen. Nozzolio for his hard work,” Burr said. “Without what he has done, this project would not be happening. It is a big project, and we are thrilled to have received funding.”

— Julie Anderson

the grape and wine industry.

“Investing in research and development is crucial to growing our state’s agricultural sector and economy,” Cuomo said in a recent press release.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced the \$900,000 in Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 grants Sept. 25. Of that, \$304,724 will go to

NYSAES initiatives.

The Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 provides state assistance for programs such as cooperatives, “buy local” programs, education, research, environmental concerns and conservation, distribution, marketing and promotion, trade, food safety and security, plant health programs, innovation and development.