

Risk Management Survey of Pennsylvania Specialty Crop Producers

The last few years have been challenging for specialty producers as well as for all farmers. Low prices and adverse weather conditions have impacted Pennsylvania growers and stimulated new interest in tools to help cope with the risk that is inherent in agriculture.

Specialty crop growers in Pennsylvania will soon be receiving a special survey of their risk management and cropping practices. The mail survey is a partnership endeavor among the USDA Risk Management Agency, the Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Service, and Penn State Cooperative Extension. The survey will be mailed by the Pennsylvania Agricultural Statistics Service during the first quarter of 2002. Specialty crop producers include growers of fruit, vegetable, floriculture, nursery products, maple syrup, Christmas trees, turf, aquaculture, honey, and mushrooms.

Question: Why should specialty crop producers complete this survey?

Answer: To provide input that will be utilized to evaluate current risk management tools for producers, and to help design new and/or improved products.

The primary objective of the survey is to determine why federal crop insurance and other risk management products are utilized at the current level. Pennsylvania is considered an under served state in terms of farmers' use of crop insurance and other risk management products and tools, and growers of specialty crops in particular make less use of these tools than other farmers. **Pennsylvania producers are among a select group being asked to provide input. Other states involved in this survey are California, Florida, and New York.**

A second objective will be to determine how the design of crop insurance and other risk management tools could be improved to better meet the needs of producers. It is widely believed that many of the current crop insurance products will need to be redesigned as coverage is extended to specialty crops, and **this survey will help to provide guidance to the Risk Management Agency about the particular needs of producers.**

The survey asks for information about crops grown, marketing channels utilized, sources of risk in the commodities grown, use of risk management tools (including growers recent experiences with crop insurance), and suggestions for improvements to the crop insurance program. The survey information will be used to develop reports in mid-2002 that will be used by policy makers in Harrisburg and Washington to assess the need for new risk management products and revisions to the current crop insurance program for specialty crop producers.

If you would like more information on this project, you can contact me via e-mail at jharper@psu.edu or call (814) 863-8638.

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