

Sweet Cherry Summit Review



**NW Michigan Horticultural
Research Station**

November 11, 2008

Summit Objectives

- To facilitate discussion
- To develop a roadmap for the industry
 - Marketing strategies, horticultural techniques, and consumer demands have changed
- To develop short, mid-range, and long-term goals
 - To ensure proper adaptations to change
 - To remain competitive in the global marketplace

Summit Topics in Brief

- Brine market future
- Finishing market
- Frozen sweet cherry market
- Current and potential status for fresh market sweets
- National and international look at varieties and rootstocks
- National and international markets
- Overview of current MSU sweet cherry research
- Grower panel
 - Representatives from all market segments

Summit Participants

- Industry leaders from all market segments
- Growers
- Processors
- Marketers
- Ag-chemical representatives
- MSU researchers and Extension staff
- 65 participants

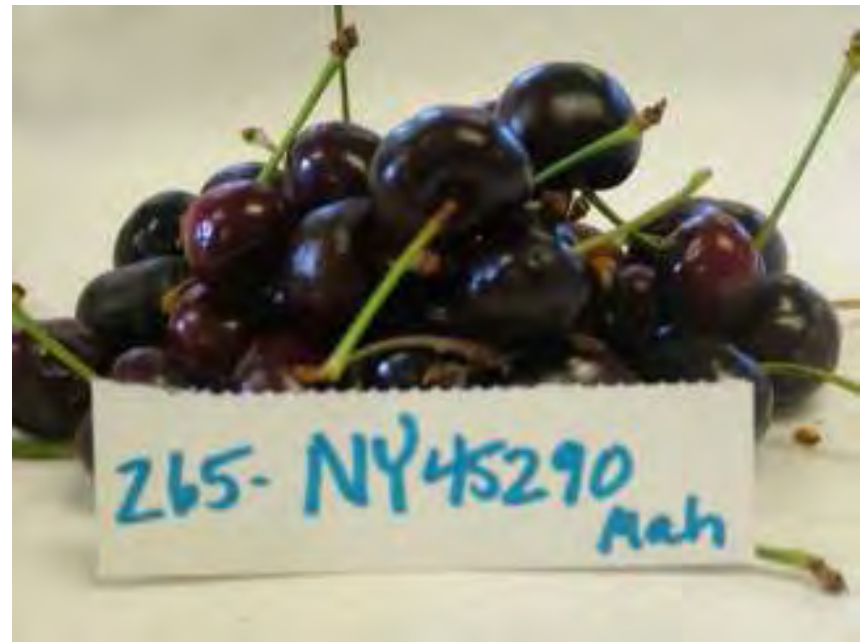


Industry Needs based on Summit Discussion



Quality Improvements

- Consumers demand is for high quality
 - Sweet cherry quality needs to be improved for all market segments
- Tree training/pruning to improve quality
- Pest management strategies that maximize quality



Varieties for the Future

- New varieties needed for all market segments
- Testing current varieties
 - Continue with on-going evaluation process
- Finding potential varieties
 - Breeding programs only on west coast
 - Vastly different climate and availability
 - 'Club' varieties
 - Potential to test European varieties
- Rootstock/variety interactions

Stem-on Brine Cherries

- Improved varieties lend themselves to stem-on harvest
- Cultural practices/tree structure to maximize stems
- Rootstocks
- Harvesting options
- Growth regulator aids

Improving Production Efficiency

- Dwarf rootstocks
 - New rootstocks
 - Cultural practices
 - Irrigation
 - Nutrition
- Planting/training systems
- Harvesting technology
 - Over-the-row (OTR), beside-the-row (BTR), continuously-moving
 - Mechanically harvested fresh market sweets

Opportunities to Expand and Improve Fresh Market

- Infrastructure in MI
 - Presently, little foundation for this industry
- Production practices
 - Larger, firmer fruit
 - Smaller trees for hand harvest
- Labor issues
 - Migrant housing
 - Availability of workers in future
- Marketing strategies

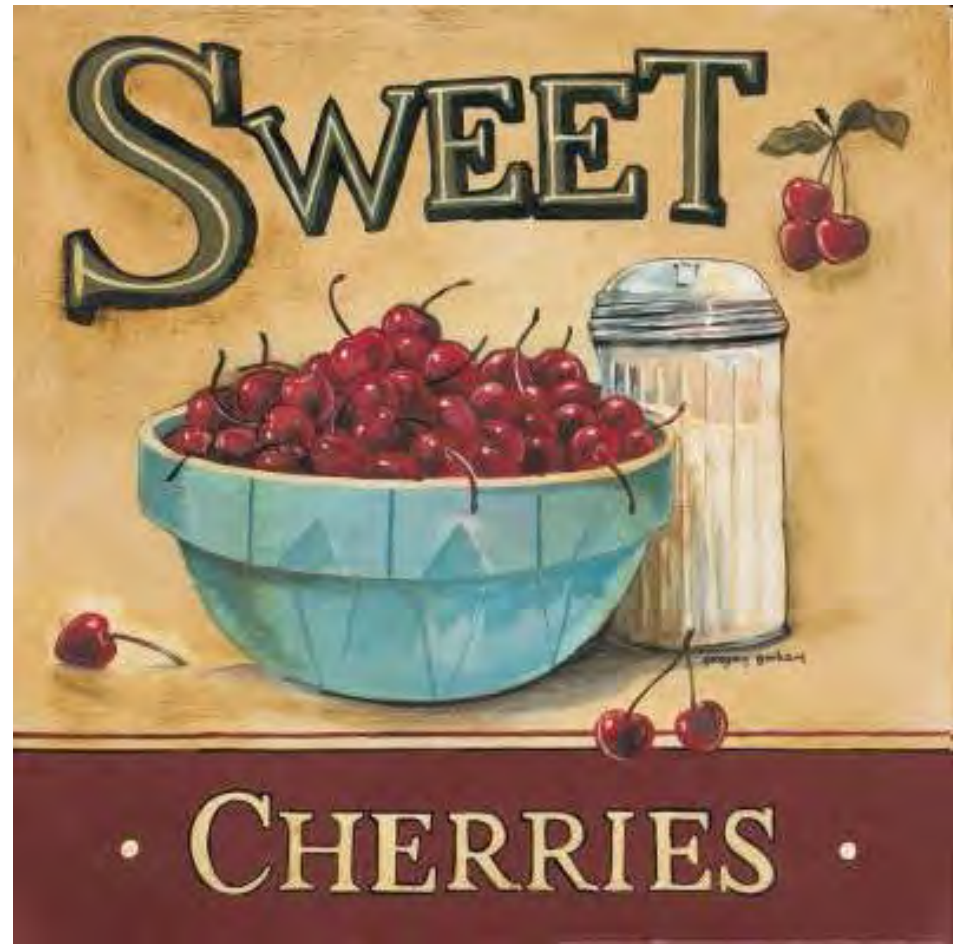
Need to Improve Handling Systems



- Harvesting technology
- Cooling technology

Need to Improve Processing and Packaging

- New packaging
 - For both processing and fresh markets
- Eliminate pits/pit fragments in processing



Need for GAP Certification Standards

- **G**ood **A**griculture **P**ractices
- GAP certification is verification of practices on-farm that minimize microbial contamination in producing fresh fruits, vegetables and tree nuts
- Need to standardize for all market segments/processors/farms

Meeting Needs of Changing Markets and Opportunities

- Local markets
- Regional markets
- National markets
- International markets
- Cooperation between all Michigan industries to better market products



Summit Prioritization Survey

- Sent out to Summit participants mid-December
- Input from other industry members
- Compiled results and input



Survey Results... top five most important priorities for the brine, canned and frozen, and fresh market.

BRINE MARKET	
Fruit cracking	4.6
Eliminating pits/pit fragments	4.5
Plant nutrition	4.3
Stem-on harvest	4.1
Obtaining & testing new varieties	3.9

CANNED & FROZEN MARKET	
Eliminating pits/pit fragments	4.8
Fruit cracking	4.7
Obtaining & testing new varieties	4.2
Plant nutrition	4.1
New planting/training/pruning systems	3.3

FRESH MARKET	
Fruit cracking	4.9
Plant nutrition	4.7
Marketing strategies/infrastructure	4.4
Dwarfing and/or precocious rootstocks	4.3
Obtaining & testing new varieties	4.2

N=11

Sweet Cherry Action Committee



- Met on 12 January
- Discussed survey results
- Prioritized research projects for short and long-term
 - Brine, canner/frozen, and fresh market were addressed individually
 - Cross over between market segments

Priorities for Brine Industry

1. Improve stem retention on mechanically harvested cherries
 - Crop load management
 - Growth regulators
 - Pruning/training

- Rated as the highest priority of outcomes
 - Excellent short-term goal
 - Impacts trees currently in the ground
 - Potential to quickly improve returns to growers

Brine Industry, cont.

2. Improve production efficiency

- Disease and insect management (brown rot and plum curculio)
- New planting/training/pruning systems
- Irrigation and water needs
- Dwarfing rootstocks
- New varieties
- Crop load management
- Plant nutrition

Brine Industry, cont.

3. Fruit Cracking
4. New harvest technology
 - Major priority but would like to see project funded by non-industry dollars (USDA Farm Bill potential)



Priorities for Canner/Frozen Industry

1. Improve production efficiency
 - Disease and insect management
 - American brown rot and OBLR
 - Crop load management/pruning for size
 - New planting/training/pruning systems
 - Irrigation and water needs
 - Dwarfing rootstocks
 - New varieties
 - Plant nutrition

Canner/Frozen Industry, cont.

2. Fruit Cracking

3. New harvest technology

- Major priority but would like to see it funded by non-industry dollars (USDA Farm Bill potential)
- Long term goal for industry for all market segments

Priorities for Fresh Market Industry

1. Production efficiency

- New varieties
- Training systems/ rootstocks
- Crop load management for size and quality
- Irrigation (particularly for high density/dwarfing)
- Disease and insect Management / IPM
- Plant Nutrition

2. Fruit Cracking

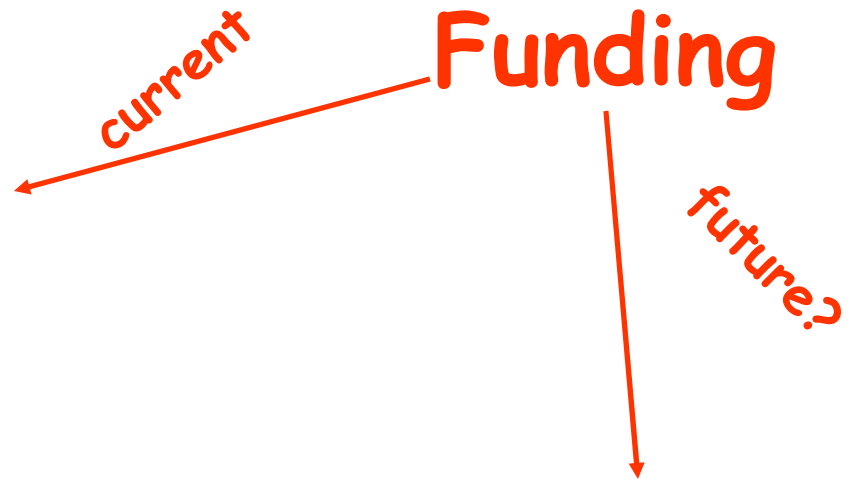
3. New Harvest Technology (seek USDA funding)

Fresh Market Industry, cont.

- No current structure in Michigan
- No current funding mechanism
 - Difficult to research fresh market potential without funding structure



- MCC collects funds
 - \$10/ton of processed sweet cherries
 - \$5.50 goes to NCGIF promotion
 - \$35,000 directly funds sweet cherry research
 - Allocated by Sweet Cherry Action committee
 - Joint funded positions--split 80% tart cherry and 20% sweet cherry
 - ~\$300-500/year funds fresh market projects



- How to fund more in-depth projects?
- How to fund fresh market projects?

Next Steps

- Arrange meeting with MSU researchers to address new priorities
 - 2009 proposals will reflect priorities
- Sweet Cherry Action Committee will meet February 20th to review 2009 proposals
- Arrange a follow-up meeting with MI fresh market growers to discuss options for a funding source

Thank You

- Summit presenters
- Summit participants
- Survey respondents
- Sweet Cherry Action Committee

- Phil Korson, Bill Shane, Greg Lang, Erin Lizotte, Jim Nugent

