



Cornell Cooperative Extension
Lake Erie Regional Grape Program

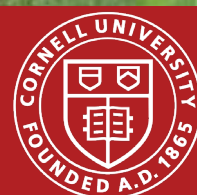


PennState Extension

Concords- September 3, 2020
Photo: Jennifer Phillips Russo

Crop Update - September 3, 2020

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The Lake Erie Regional Grape Program is a Cornell Cooperative Extension partnership between Cornell University and the Cornell Cooperative Extensions in Chautauqua, Erie and Niagara county NY and in Erie County PA.

Contact Information:

Jennifer Phillips Russo - LERGP Viticulture Specialist:

jjr268@cornell.edu

(716) 640-5350

Kevin Martin – LERGP Business Management Specialist:

Kmm52@psu.edu

(716) 397-9674

Andy Muza – LERGP Disease and Pest Management Specialist:

Ajm4@psu.edu

(814) 825-0900

Kim Knappenberger – LERGP NEWA and Vineyard Improvement Program Contact

Ksk76@cornell.edu

Kate Robinson – Administrative Assistant

Kjr45@cornell.edu

How to join a Zoom meeting video (1 minute):

https://www.youtube.com/embed/vFhAEoCF7jg?rel=0&autoplay=1&cc_load_policy=1

Joining and Configuring Audio & Video (1 minute):

https://www.youtube.com/embed/HqncX7RE0wM?rel=0&autoplay=1&cc_load_policy=1



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Business Management

Kevin Martin, Penn State University, LERGP, Business Management Educator

Payroll Update: Executive Order on FICA

This is an updated version of an August 13th article. At that time we had an EO holiday for the employee share of FICA scheduled to begin on September 1st. On August 28th the IRS released additional guidance that addresses and clarifies key concerns and questions held by the industry. Employees may not choose anything. Withholdings are a firm or business decision, not an employee decision. Business may need to manage employee expectations. Businesses that elect to stop withholding FICA at 6.2% should make clear to employees that wages will decrease January 1, 2021. At that time withholding the 6.2% will resume and deferred payments will be collected at approximately an additional 6.2%.

Employers are liable to remit these FICA withholdings by April 30, 2021. The responsibility of collecting from employees is on the employer. If the employer is unable to collect, the employer will still need to remit payment to the IRS by April. It is unclear if an employer would be able to collect from a former employee.

IRS guidance did not officially clarify how businesses can opt out and continue to withhold FICA. However, some have pointed out that so far it appears even if participation is required, there is no penalty for non-compliance. Further, even if these payroll taxes are later forgiven (as the President has promised). Many theorize employers could correct it later on by filing a 941-x. For businesses that want to participate and what that looks like, see the original article included below.

Many employers and accounting professionals anticipate further clarification from the IRS to solidify the legality of opting out as well as the authority (or lack of) to collect from former employees.

Original Article

On August 8th an Executive Order was signed by President Trump. It directed employers to defer the collection of the employee portion of social security FICA taxes. It is well publicized that many people expect this change to be unenforceable. However, enforcement starts soon and all employers should prepare to make changes by September 1st.

The deferral covers: employee Social Security taxes of 6.2%, if that employee makes less than \$4,000 in a biweekly pay period. The deferral does not cover employee Medicare share of 1.45%. It does not cover employer FICA taxes of 7.65%. It does not cover any employee share, whenever compensation exceeds \$4,000 per biweekly pay period. Keep in mind, an employee reaching this level of compensation will need to have full FICA withheld, up to the \$137,700 maximum. This can be confused with social security FICA policy that phases out the 12.4% at \$137,700.

The deferral period is scheduled from September 1st – December 31th. After that withholding on 2021 payments are scheduled to return to the full 7.65%. Treasury guidance will define the repayment procedure of taxes between September and December. As it stands now, employees should expect to repay the full amount that was not withheld. The terms of that repayment are completely unknown at this time. Owners will not yet be able to provide that information until Treasury releases guidance.

We do know that there will be no penalty or interest charges. We also know that there is a push to provide legislation to forgive the taxes altogether.

A simple and straight executive order is a nice read but legislation is hundreds of pages long for a reason. A number of questions remain:

- Owners will need to continue to follow treasury guidance to determine how to calculate whether or not an employee exceeds \$4,000 in a pay period.
- Whether or not employees who leave the organization will leave the employer on the hook for the tax deferral?
- Whether or not an employer can find a way to opt out of the deferral?

Currently, legal challenges are expected. There is also hope that Treasury guidance eases the burden on owners and employers. It is still possible that legislative action could also modify these requirements by September 1st. While it is important for employers to prepare for this change, it is equally important that employers do not do anything beyond prepare. The period does not start until September 1st. Payroll before that date is subject to the 7.65%.

Some employers have gone down the rabbit hole of what the worst case scenario could be. I tend to view these actions as political brinkmanship and don't think that it's a meaningful exercise to do so at the moment. While these actions may increase payroll costs in 2021, I expect someone to blink (legislative action) before employers end up paying the cost of this deferral in 2021. While I could be wrong, it's likely enough that there are many other variables that will affect your labor management decisions that are more pressing. In the meantime, just be ready to follow new rules.

Mosier-Maille Ag Consulting
Soil and Crops

Jared Mosier
Consultant
(814) 923-1372

7472 Buffalo Rd.
Harborcreek, PA 16421



Dave Maille
Consultant
(814) 572-5781

mmagconsulting@gmail.com

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Viticulture

Jennifer Russo, Viticulture Extension Specialist, LERGP

Around the Belt

This week in the Lake Erie Grape Region harvest began to ramp up with Aurore, Seyval, Edelweiss, Elvira, and Marquette varieties coming off the vine. Concord growers have started taking samples into their processors and brix accumulation and sugars are tracking earlier than last year. One industry representative reported that Niagara Brix are averaging at 10.8 and Concords at 11.03 across the belt, as of August 31st. Also stating that at this point in the season we are making a full Brix every three days and have been doing so since August 27th. For the month of August, the Cornell Lake Erie Research and Extension Laboratory in Portland, NY Network for Environmental and Weather Applications (NEWA) station reported that our average air temperature in °F was 71°, with the maximum temp of 85.3° and minimum of 55.2°. We recorded 2.83 inches of precipitation and 55 hours of leaf wetness. The average maximum air temperature for month was 77.8° and the average minimum temp 63.0°.

There was some trepidation at this point, with concerns expressed about how quickly sugars are accumulating. There are reports that Concord processors are looking at starting up on September 20th and Niagara starting on September 14th. To keep abreast with what is happening in the Lake Erie region, check out the Lake Erie Regional Grape Program Extension team's weekly podcasts. This week's podcast covers the Executive Order about deferring FICA in your business management.

[Click here to watch LERGP Podcasts](#)

Soil and Petiole Samples During COVID

During this pandemic time, Cornell requires that we not allow visitors to the Cornell Lake Erie Research and Extension Laboratory. We have been encouraging all of you to take soil and petiole samples and in the past you would just stop by, drop them off, and fill out the paperwork. We are still accepting these samples; however, the process looks a little different.

Kate Robinson is still our contact person to deliver your samples to. We ask that you reach out to Kate via email at kjr45@cornell.edu to make an appointment with her to help you with your process using COVID guidelines at a socially acceptable distance. Kate will provide you with a simple form to fill out with the required information needed. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns that you may have and we will find a way to work together safely.

Our pricing structure for soil sample services are quantities from 1-4 samples cost \$19.00/sample and 5 plus samples are \$16.00/sample.

Our pricing structure for petiole sample services are quantities from 1-4 samples cost \$32.00/sample and 5 plus samples are \$30.00/sample.

As always, we are here for you albeit in a different avenue. Please reach out to my cell phone at (716) 640-5350 or via email at jjr268@cornell.edu with any questions or to request a farm visit.

PA Update

Bryan Hed, Research Technologist, Lake Erie Grape Research and Extension Center

Weather: Here by the lake in North East, August finished up with 2.41 inches of precipitation (well below average) and about 665 growing degree days (gdds), well above average. We've recorded 0.08 inches of precipitation in September so far. Our May through August gdd accumulation (growing season) is ahead of average and gdds since April 1 are at 2323 (about 130 gdds ahead of our long-term average).

Phenology: Ripening is proceeding at break-neck speed here at our location by the lake. Among our wine varieties, brix levels are rising fast: Geisenheim is at 19.4, Riesling clones are averaging 17.5, NY81 is at 17.9, Vignoles is at 20.3 (wow), and Chancellor is at 16.6. This places most of our wine grapes at our location, about a week ahead of last year. In fact, our Vignoles has gone from bud-break to 20 brix in 100 days!!!!...crazy. Concord and Niagara are between 11 and 12 brix.

Diseases: According to DMCast, on the network of weather stations on NEWA, downy mildew infection periods occurred in most places along the lake as a result of rain that fell from August 28-30. Lesion development generally takes 5-7 days, so symptoms on leaves from that wetting period (white, downy sporulation on the underside of the leaf) should be visible by the weekend, possibly sooner. Go out and look for signs and symptoms of the disease. Take the time to scout blocks of susceptible varieties, especially if wet weather returns. The small bit of rainfall we recorded in most places yesterday is enough for the disease to build on, and this disease can do a tremendous amount of damage in a very short period of time on highly susceptible wine varieties (I'm not concerned about Concords). So, stay on top of your downy situation and apply a fungicide if the disease starts to 'chew' on your leaves. Materials like captan or copper at this point for wine grape protection against downy mildew, can cause problems with fermentation later if fungicide residues are high enough at harvest (which may depend to some extent on how much rain we receive between now and harvest) even though you're observing proper pre-harvest intervals. Phosphorous acids may be among your 'go to' materials on wine grapes that will be harvested within the next couple of weeks.

From our perspective here by the lake, powdery mildew pressure appears to be light this season. Juice grapes should be 'good to go' at this point. However, protection of leaves from this disease may still be important on susceptible wine grapes, especially vinifera. Surface eradicants like Nutrol (with a surfactant), Armicarb, etc, can be used for powdery mildew to keep leaves clean. Research has also shown that the application of foliar fertilizers, like Harvestmore, will impact the fungus in much the same way. Sulfur applications should be avoided at this point, especially for reds fermented on the skins; excessive sulfur residues in fermentations can generate off-aromas (hydrogen sulfide) during fermentation. As a rule, avoid sulfur applications within 5 weeks of harvest...unless your crystal ball tells you to expect an inch or more of rain a week. Keeping vinifera leaves healthy as long as is practical is not only important for proper ripening of fruit and wood, but also for maximizing winter cold hardiness and avoiding the kind of trunk damage that incites crown gall and expensive trunk renewal the following spring.

In wine varieties, especially those that produce tight clusters, a Botrytis specific fungicide spray about 2-3 weeks after your veraison spray can help manage bunch rots but will only be effective on Botrytis. In warm, wet harvest seasons, we can also see sour rot caused by non-Botrytis microbes that cannot be controlled with Botrytis specific fungicides. Sour rot generally starts to show up at about 15 brix. This year, our 3 and a half weeks of bone-dry weather in August limited sour rot development...until now. Scout your wine vineyard to assess your sour rot situation. To control sour rot, you need to control fruit flies (insecticides). And, applying insecticides with sterilants or antimicrobials like Oxidate or Fracture can improve control above insecticides alone. However most of the sour rot control is going to come from the fruit fly control. Also, be aware of the fact that fruit flies reproduce rapidly and can develop resistance to insecticide chemical classes in short order; always rotate insecticide chemical classes when spraying for fruit fly/sour rot control.

Announcements

Safe Harvest 2020: COVID-19 Office Hours @ 12:30 PM, September 8

Since late August Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development and Cornell Cooperative Extension have hosted a weekly office hour on Tuesdays for farmers and packers to answer any questions about managing and responding to protect the farm workforce during COVID-19. Office hours will be held at a new time on September 8, at 12:30 PM EDT, and will continue to be held each Tuesday through September. Registration is free but required. Questions can be submitted during registration or asked during the office hours.

[REGISTER for COVID-19 office hours at 12:30 PM EDT, September 8](#)

The Safe Harvest 2020: COVID-19 Office Hours now feature updates and also provide an opportunity to ask questions. Participants can log in from a computer or call in from a phone to ask questions or just to listen. A panel of experts will be available to answer questions immediately. Questions that the experts cannot answer right away will be recorded, studied and answered later. Panelists on September 8 include:

Jennifer Trodden, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets
David Bell, Orleans County Health Department
Mary Jo Dudley, Cornell Farmworker Program
Elizabeth Bihn, Cornell University Department of Food Science
Julie Kikkert, Cornell Vegetable Program
Hector Gonzalez, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets
Richard Stup, Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development
The September 8 office hours will kick off with some key updates:

Mobile testing lab progress so far, lessons learned, and upcoming plans. Jennifer Trodden, Deputy Commissioner, NYS Ag and Markets
Local health department perspective about on-farm testing and best practices that employers can take to support testing and communication. David Bell, Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, Orleans County Health Department

Hand Sanitizer and Face Masks Still Available

It's not too late! If you haven't picked up your free NYS Clean hand sanitizer and washable Hanes masks, you still can. All farms in New York are eligible to request supplies. Click on this [link](#) to make the request. We will set up a time for you to come pick up the supplies at CLEREL in Portland.

CORE pesticide training on September 22nd from 9am - 10:50am or September 24th from 6pm - 7:50pm

Josh Putman, Southwest NY Dairy, Livestock and Field Crops Program will provide an overview of the basic information involved in the pesticide application certification process and will present the basics of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) as well as general pesticide safety, regulations and pesticide resistance.

[Register now for this event!](#)

Other links of interest:

[LERGP Web-site:](#)

[Cornell Cooperative Extension website:](#)

[Cornell CALS Veraison to Harvest Newsletter:](#)

[Efficient Vineyard:](#)

[Appellation Cornell Newsletter:](#)

COVID-19 resources:

Need information? View the following Cornell CALS and CCE Resource Pages Updated Regularly

General Questions & Links:

<https://eden.cce.cornell.edu/>

Food Production, Processing & Safety Questions:

<https://instituteforfoodsafety.cornell.edu/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Employment & Agricultural Workforce Questions:

<http://agworkforce.cals.cornell.edu/>

Cornell Small Farms Resiliency Resources:

<https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/resources/farm-resilience/>

Financial & Mental Health Resources for Farmers:

<https://www.nyfarmnet.org/>

Cornell Farmworker Program

www.farmworkers.cornell.edu

www.trabajadores.cornell.edu (en espanol)

