Hello, Ashtabula and Trumbull Counties!

It was great to see the rains of this past weekend. The rains (while sporadic) are coming at the perfect time to help increase yield the crop. The Ashtabula County Fair starts next week. Please note that our office will be re-locating to the fairgrounds for the week. Farmers are reminded to keep up on your scouting. Early August is when we usually see the outbreak of crop pests. Thanks to Lee Beers for the newsletter design—we hope you like it. Have a great week!

David Marrison
Ashtabula County Ag Educator

Lee Beers
Trumbull County Ag Educator
Ashtabula Local Food Council: Summer Farm Tours
By Julia Barton

Looking for something fun and educational to do this summer? Join the Ashtabula Local Food Council and The Ohio Sustainable Farm Tour Series for three sustainable farm tours taking place right here in Ashtabula County!

The Ashtabula Local Food Council (ALFC) is a group working to develop a sustainable, local food culture in Ashtabula County. The ALFC works to achieve strong family farms and farming communities, ensure adequate nutrition for our most vulnerable populations, promote the stewardship of agricultural land, and preserve our environmental treasures. Ashtabula County has a proud heritage of food, and we hope to celebrate and grow that great tradition!

Save the date for these fun and interesting family farm activities:

Permaculture and Green Building Farm Tour
Saturday, August 6 • 1-3:30 p.m.
Red Beet Row
Stephanie Blessing and John Wright
2873 E. Maple Rd., Jefferson, OH 44047 (440) 316-2338, redbeetrow@yahoo.com www.redbeetrow.com ASHTABULA CO.

At Red Beet Row, a new 14 acre education farm, Stephanie Blessing and John Wright experiment with permaculture and holistic growing and building methods. They teach the best of what they’ve learned during on-farm classes. Join this tour to see their passive solar underground greenhouse, mobile animal shelters, hugelkultur (mound) beds, polyculture gardens, and more! On-farm products will be available for sale (cash only please). Registration: To register, call (440) 316-2338 or email redbeetrow@yahoo.com.

Directions: From I-90, take Exit 235 for Rte. 84/Rte. 193 N for Kingsville. Travel south on Rte. 193 for 7.2 miles (about 12 minutes). Turn right onto E. Maple Rd. Travel 0.8 miles. The farm is on the right. From Youngstown or Pittsburg, take Rte. 193 N, and turn left onto E. Maple Rd. Travel 0.8 miles. The farm is on the right.

Experimental Building and Herb Sanctuary Tour
Saturday, August 27 • 1-3:30 p.m.
The Trillium Center and BLD farm
Charles Schiavone and Leah Wolfe
715 Furnace Rd., Conneaut, OH 44030 (440) 812-9921, leah@trilliumcenter.org www.trilliumcenter.org ASHTABULA CO.

BLD farm is a place for experiments, creativity, and healing. Charles Schiavone is a builder-carpenter-potter who is building with mud, grass, and sticks. BLD farm is the home of the Trillium Center, an educational project led by herbalist Leah Wolfe, which focuses on community health through whole foods and herbs. They sell eggs, culinary herbs, and leafy greens on-site and offer on-farm classes. See examples of natural building, rocket stoves, a greenhouse, herb gardens, and more. Registration: To register, email leah@trilliumcenter.org by August 20.

Directions: From I-90 W, take PA Exit 3 for Highway 6 N. Turn right toward Highway 20, then turn left on
Lessons Learned, Understanding Gained Farm Tour
Friday, September 9 • 2-4 p.m.
Farm 153
Tim and Barb Loya
1440 Overly Rd., Jefferson, OH 44047
(216) 299-4970, (216) 780-3526, farm153@yahoo.com ASHTABULA CO.

Tim and Barb Loya of Farm 153 grow nutritious and delicious produce with the goal of enhancing the health and the culinary experience of their customers. They see their soil, air, water, and plants as parts of a complex living system that they build up according to organic methods, applying naturally-occurring inputs and avoiding all synthetic pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers.

Since they started the farm in 2008, Tim and Barb have learned many expensive and painful lessons. Join this tour to learn how they’ve improved efficiency and quality and increased scale as they explain some fundamental mistakes that they made that can save beginning growers time, grief, and money. They’ll explore how important it is to consistently and effectively execute the basics in every task. They will also discuss their first steps toward discovering and using permaculture techniques to increase their efficiency and production. Visitors will walk away with a list of resources, materials, practices to avoid, and practices to embrace. Produce may be available for purchase on-site.

Registration: Pre-registration is encouraged, but not required. To register, email farm153@yahoo.com with the number of people coming and any questions or farm topics you’d like to hear discussed.

Directions: Farm 153 is located near Rte. 11 and Rte. 307. From the west, take I-90 E. Use Exit 228 and take Rte. 11 S. Take Exit 84 for Rte. 307. Turn right and drive west on Rte. 307. Go 100 feet and turn right on Overly Rd. Proceed 0.6 miles. Farm 153 is the fourth house on the right, a brown ranch house with a red barn visible. Park in the U-driveway in front of the house.

For more information about the good work of the Ashtabula Local Food Council, please visit the website at: www.ashtabulafood.org For a listing of these and many more sustainable farm tours taking place as part of the Ohio Sustainable Farm Tour Series, please visit: http://policy.oeffa.org/farmtours

Grape Disease Focus of NE Ohio Field Day
By Kurt Knebusch

A new disease could put the squeeze on some of Ohio’s grapevines. Called red blotch, it’s a featured topic - one of a bunch - at the Aug. 11 educational field day at the Ashtabula Agricultural Research Station in northeast Ohio. The station, which is run by The Ohio State University, does research on growing grapes, especially grapes used to make wine. It’s at 2625 South Ridge East in Kingsville, about 65 miles east of Cleveland.

Andy Kirk, the station’s manager, said the free event, which runs from 2 to 4:30 p.m., is for anyone interested in Ohio’s $786 million grape and wine industry, including grape growers, wine industry workers, horticulture students, and food and wine journalists.

Red blotch new but an ‘issue’ some places
Red blotch, which is caused by an insect-transmitted virus, is “new to Ohio and the U.S. in general,” Kirk said. It’s so new experts aren’t clear how big of a problem it will be, but it’s already become an “issue of significance” in California, New York’s Finger Lakes region and Ontario, Canada, he said.
Grapes from red blotch-infected vines have less sugar in them, among other problems, which reduces their selling price and the quality of wines they can make. Ohio State scientist Feng Qu, who’s found red blotch in some of northeast Ohio’s vineyards, is one of the event’s speakers. He’s an associate plant pathology professor in the university’s College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences.

What's beneath the region’s good grapes
Also scheduled, among others, are talks by experts on:
* Renewing grapevine trunks injured by bad winter weather, such as 2014’s polar vortex
* The grape-friendly soil profile at the 25-acre station, which lies within the Lake Erie American Viticultural Area just a few miles south of the lake
* The glacial history of surrounding Ashtabula County, and why that history makes the region good for growing grapes

The speakers will come from the college and the Ashtabula Soil and Water Conservation District. The station is part of the same college, and specifically is part of its research arm, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. For details on the event, call the station at 440-224-0273.

It's Half Time. How are the Disease Issues in Your Vineyard?
By: Dave Scurlock, OSU/OARDC Viticulture Outreach Specialist
Source: http://ohiograpeweb.cfaes.ohio-state.edu/sites/grapeweb/files/imce/pdf_newsletters/OGEN20162907%2817%29.pdf

It should be a disease free year or should it? We all know about the critical period to spray for disease to prevent them right? Immediately pre-bloom and it wet years we like to keep a 7 day spray interval. In a dry spring, when does that ever occur, we can push the spray interval out to 7 to 10 days with a max of 14 days, but you are probably pushing the envelope?

Now the backbone to our spray program in Ohio has always been and still is Mancozeb. Mancozeb can be purchased under several different names such as Penncozeb, Manzate or even Dithane. All of these are pretty much the same chemical, but be sure to read the label thoroughly on every product that you use. Our spray guides are good reference materials, but the label is the law.

If there are any discrepancies between the Spray Guide and the Label, trust the label. Mancozeb or one of its relatives provides protection from 4 of the 5 main diseases that we are trying to prevent like black rot, phomopsis, anthracnose and downy. The other disease that we are trying to prevent early in the season is powdery mildew. Powdery mildew does not need water to germinate. It actually enjoys it hot and dry. If you are growing non-sulfur sensitive varieties such as vinifera, then sulfur plus Mancozeb sprayed at the right time intervals, right rates and with good coverage should prevent all of these diseases from rearing their heads in July. If you are growing most French hybrids or American varieties, then you will have to substitute something for the sulfur like JMS Stylet Oil, Quintec or Endura and the list goes on.

We have very few fungicides that have kick back action, the ability to kill and infection, so we try to keep the foliage and fruit covered to prevent germination of the spores into the leaves, shoots or fruits. This is not a one spray and done operation. The recommendations are if you are getting close to a spray interval and it is going to rain, then you probably want to put on a spray ahead of the rain. If you get 2 inches or more of rain during your spray interval, your protection is gone and you are open for an infection. I know that probably most individuals do not know or check the pH of their water supply, but this also is an area that can have a drastic effect on the efficacy (effectiveness) of the spray material.

Chemicals need to be rotated to avoid resistance. No more than 2 sprays of any material should be used without rotating to a chemical with a different mode of action or FRAC code. These codes ensure that you are using a chemical that kills that same fungus, but just doing it differently, because we all know those spores are smart. Also we always want to apply chemicals at the recommended rates to make sure we are killing the spores. A lower than recommended rate only allows the spores to adapt to the chemical and develop resistance quicker.

Northeast Ohio Agriculture
This time of the year the fruit should be resistant to black rot, downy and powdery mildew, but the leaves and shoots are not so that is why we keep spraying up to harvest. Overall vineyards look good this year, but with the record high temperatures we have been getting and the spotty rain, we have been seeing conditions in the field not usually observed. Mid-summer vine collapse may have occurred in your vineyard if you had trunk damage from the 2014-15 winters and you have a good crop load. Now, or even earlier in July with the high temperatures, drought conditions and good crop loads, the pumping system in the vine cannot keep up with the demand and the vine shuts down and collapses.

Another symptom that is being seen this year is rupestris speckle. It imitates similar symptoms of anthracnose, black rot and even chemical burning. It is just a physiological disorder that occurs in grapes that have rupestris in their genetic makeup. It is being seen on some of the Minnesota varieties and actually not a disease but an abiotic symptom. If you do not feel like you are getting good coverage, then it may be time to check you nozzles. These may be worn out, or plugged and costing you money by applying too much or too little. A complete set of new nozzles is less than $50.

“Tassel Ears” Sightings in Corn
By: Peter Thomison

“Tassel Ears” (Figure 1) are showing up in corn fields around Ohio. Corn is the only major field crop characterized by separate male and female flowering structures, the tassel and ear, respectively. In most corn fields it is not unusual to find a few scattered plants with a combination tassel and ear in the same structure - a “tassel ear”. The ear portion of this tassel ear structure usually contains only a limited number of kernels.

Tassel ears often appear on tillers (suckers) arising from plants with normal ears and tassels. These tassel ears are produced at a terminal position on the tiller where a tassel would normally appear. However, tassel ears may also be produced by individual plants and often occur in shorter spindly plants associated with delayed emergence and uneven crop development. Tassel ears are often produced by tillers that result when the plant’s growing point is destroyed or injured by hail, wind (green snap), animal feeding, frost, flooding, herbicides, and mechanical injury. Some hybrids may also be more prone to tiller under certain environmental conditions and these tillers may give rise to tassel ears. Low plant density may also promote tillering.

Tassel ears are a reminder that the male and female parts of the corn plant are structurally very closely related. Wild progenitors of corn-teosinte spp. have complete flowers tassels and silks together. These can be crossed with Zea mays (normal corn).

There has been some speculation that a fungal disease called "crazy top" may be responsible for this abnormal ear condition. Crazy top does affect the appearance of tassels and ears but the symptoms are distinctly different from those of the tassel ear phenomenon. Crazy top causes the tassel and/or the ear to become leaf-like. In severe cases, the whole top of a plant and ears are replaced with a mass of leaf-like structures. Visual symptoms and more details concerning crazy top are available on the online at http://u.osu.edu/mastercorn/crazy-top-of-corn/

For more on diagnosing tassel ears and other ear anomalies that start to appear in corn fields during kernel development and crop maturation, check out “Troubleshooting Abnormal Corn Ears” available online at http://u.osu.edu/mastercorn/
2016 Ohio Wheat Performance Test Available Online
By: Laura Lindsey & Matthew Hankinson

A pdf of the 2016 Ohio Wheat Performance Test can be found at the Soybean and Small Grain website at: [http://stepupsoy.osu.edu/node/35](http://stepupsoy.osu.edu/node/35). A sortable version of the Ohio Wheat Performance Test can be found at: [http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/wheattrials/](http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/wheattrials/) Test results are for 72 soft red winter wheat varieties grown at five Ohio locations (Wood, Crawford, Wayne, Darke, and Pickaway County). Variety selection should be based on disease resistance, average yield across test sites and years, winter hardiness, test weight, and standability. Overall, grain test weight averaged 58.4 lb/bu (compared to an average test weight of 56.3 lb/bu in 2015). Grain yield averaged between 97 and 119 bu/acre at the five locations.

Late-Summer Alfalfa Seeding Tips
By: Jeff Stachler – OSU Extension Educator Auglaize County

Late-summer alfalfa seeding is an excellent time to establish alfalfa. Fertility is extremely important to successfully establishing alfalfa, especially in eastern Ohio. Obtaining a recent soil test analysis is critical to establishing alfalfa.

Soil pH should be 6.8 for soils having a subsoil pH of less than 6.0 and 6.5 for soils having a subsoil pH of greater than 6.0. If the soil pH is not at these levels, do not seed alfalfa as soil pH needs to be adjusted at least six months in advance to seeding. Consult the [Tri-State Fertility Guide](http://www.farmanddairy.com/) for phosphate and potash recommendations.

The critical soil test value for phosphorus is 25 parts per million and 88-150 parts per million for potassium. Incorporation of phosphate and potash is preferred to make it more available to seedlings and reduce losses into the environment. Apply boron at 2 pounds per acre if the soil test is less than one part per million. Sulfur may also be needed to maximize alfalfa production.

Choosing the right alfalfa variety for the field is very important for the longevity of the stand. Disease resistance characteristics and winter hardiness of varieties can be found at the [University of Wisconsin website](http://www.extension.wisc.edu/alfalfa/). Other traits to consider when selecting varieties include potato leafhopper resistance, low lignin, pea aphid resistance, and Roundup Ready. Consult the [Ohio Alfalfa Performance Variety trials](http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu/alalfa) for yield potential in Ohio by location.

Plant alfalfa from Aug. 1-15 in northern Ohio and until Aug. 30 in southern Ohio. The earlier the planting the less likely sclerotinia stem rot will cause problems and the more successful establishment will be. Plant the highest quality seed available. Alfalfa seed must be inoculated with nitrogen fixing bacteria for optimal yields.
Treat alfalfa seed with a fungicide to combat soil pathogens.

Seedbed preparation is extremely critical to successful establishment. Be sure field is devoid of weeds either with tillage or herbicides. Soil should be smooth and firm if tilled. Manage plant residues in advance to allow for the greatest seed to soil contact at the time of seeding.

Alfalfa seed should be planted 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep in clay and loam soils, but 1/2 to 3/4 inch deep in sandy soils. Recommended seeding rate is 80 seeds per square foot or 15 pounds per acre. The seeding rate can be drastically reduced if using a Brillion Sure Stand Alfalfa seeder.

The only other aspect to consider seeding alfalfa this summer is soil moisture. At this time much of Ohio is deficient in soil moisture to successfully seed alfalfa. Unfortunately, the forecast for rain in the month of August is to remain below average. Good luck with seeding alfalfa this summer.

Trebets to Lead Kent State Ashtabula’s Wine Degrees

The state’s only wine degree programs, offered by Kent State University at Ashtabula, has hired Edward Trebets to lead the future development of the degrees and serve as a full-time faculty member in the two associate degree programs. Trebets is an award-winning winemaker most recently of Debonné Vineyards and Grand River Cellars in Madison, Ohio. In his tenure as winemaker, he was awarded over 950 medals: 200 gold and double gold, numerous silver and bronze medals, and 14 Best of Show for his wines in competitions ranging from the Great Lakes Wine Competition and the Finger Lakes International to the Florida State Fair and the Los Angeles County Fair. Trebets was also the winemaker for Debonné’s 2013 Vidal Blanc Ice Wine that won the 2015 San Francisco Chronicle wine competition for best dessert wine.

Established in 2011 to serve the wineries and vineyards of Ohio, Kent State Ashtabula’s program has continued to grow. Graduates have gone on to work as winemakers in Northeast Ohio wineries or to open their own winery or vineyard. Over the next few years, Trebets says he hopes to expand the program with the addition of a true working winery to serve as a classroom for students.

“With a state-wide program, it’s very important to us to recruit some of the nation’s best winemakers to teach students in the program. We want Ohio wineries to be competitive on a national level, and offering the area’s future winemakers the best possible education helps ensure that,” said Dr. Susan Stocker, Dean and Chief Administrative Officer for Kent State Ashtabula.

Holding a Bachelor’s degree in chemistry, a Master’s degree in education, and having over 12 years in the wine industry puts Trebets in a great place to start passing on his specialized knowledge to future wine industry professionals. “Ed’s background and experience is so valuable for our students’ educations. We want them to learn from the best in the industry and instructors who have been successful in the field and cellar. Ed really embodies that, and we’re very happy to have him join the program,” said program academic advisor Danielle Weiser-Cline.

With past teaching experience, Trebets believes that offering students the opportunity for personal experience has great value in teaching winemaking. “Winemaking is a very hands-on educational experience. You can only become good at it if you are completely involved in the process. My goal is to give students a good classroom experience but also to allow them to experience the craft at a hands-on level,” said Trebets. With the Ashtabula program’s hybrid format, students will attend classes online and come to campus for in-person experiences twice a semester. The largely online format was introduced just over a year ago and has made the program much more accessible to students across the state.
Ed and his wife Gina have been married since 2007 and reside in Chesterland, Ohio with their son Jaxson. Ed and Gina have their own brand called Muddy Paw Wines where they give a dollar per bottle back to the Geauga County Humane Society’s Rescue Village. In his spare time, Ed enjoys fishing, hunting, and spending time with his family. Established in 2011, the Kent State Ashtabula wine degree programs award associate degrees in enology and viticulture. For more information, visit [www.kent.edu/Ashtabula/wine](http://www.kent.edu/Ashtabula/wine).

**Organic Farmer Seeks $210,000 After Cows Defecate on Crops**

Source: Ag Web


An organic farm is seeking $210,000 from a neighboring dairy after cows escaped and defecated on the farm's crops. The Oregonian/OregonLive reports that a lawsuit filed by Simington Gardens claims they had to throw out contaminated winter squash and leafy greens and to shut down the field for four months because of the cows from Rock Ridge Farms. Both farms are located in Aurora, Ore., located south of Portland. According to court documents, cows from Rock Ridge escaped their gated enclosure in April 2014. After several hours they were wrangled back to the dairy, but Simington Gardens says the damage was already done. Oregon Tilth organic policies prohibit the use of raw manure on plants intended for eating. Officials with Rock Ridge Farm declined to comment but said they work to be good neighbors.

**2016 Robert Spellman Memorial Steer Assistance Program**

The Ashtabula County Cattlemen’s Association is pleased to be offering the Robert Spellman Memorial Steer Assistance program. The purpose of this program is to help a 4-H youth or FFA Member who needs assistance with their Steer Project which will be exhibited at the 2017 Ashtabula County Fair. The Ashtabula County Cattlemen’s Association is sponsoring this program in the memory of Robert Spellman. Mr. Robert Spellman was an avid supporter of the Ashtabula County beef industry and was a 28 year director member of the Ashtabula County Fair Board. Mr. Spellman passed away on October 5, 2015. He served as the chairman of the Beef Cattle Department for 25 years and he worked diligently to attract open class beef exhibitors to participate in the fair. He will be long remembered and greatly missed.

The $500 award can be used by the youth to help purchase their calf or for equipment needed for their steer project. It is requested the award winner donate $100 back to the fund from the proceeds they receive from the sale of the steer at the Market Animal Sale. Anyone enrolled in an approved Ashtabula County 4-H Club or is a member of a FFA Chapter in Ashtabula County is eligible to apply. The calf must be exhibited at the fair (not Carcass show). If the youth does not exhibit a steer at the 2017 Ashtabula County Junior Fair show, they agree to pay the $500 back to the assistance program fund. Interested youth should have their completed application returned the Ashtabula County Junior Fair Office by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 10, 2016. More information can be obtained by calling the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008. The application can also be obtained at: [http://go.osu.edu/ne-events](http://go.osu.edu/ne-events)

**Northeast Ohio Grape Twilight Tour to be held on August 11, 2016**

OSU Extension is pleased to announce to the Northeast Ohio Summer Twilight Tour will be held on Thursday, August 11, 2016 at The Winery at Spring Hill located at 6062 South Ridge Road in Geneva, Ohio from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. The Winery at Spring Hill opened its doors in March, 2009. Prior to converting to a winery, the Swank family operated a farmer's market & gift shop from 1953-2007. This multi-family winery was started in March 2009 and features a restaurant and live entertainment. The winery produces over 22 different wines ranging from dry and semi-dry Vinifera to semi-dry and semi-sweet Labrusca and fruit wines. In May of 2016, the operation began producing and selling an award winning line of Hard Ciders.

During the tour, Tom Swank will share with participants the rich history of The Winery at Spring Hill. Learn how this former multi-generational fruit farm transitioned to a multi-family winery in 2009. Tom Swank, winemaker, will share how the winery is paying homage to the farm’s rich apple tradition.
with the introduction of hard cider line. Learn more about the production, bottling, and marketing of hard cider. Currently the winery is selling four types of cider: Orchard Original, Spiced Apple, Blueberry Hills and Hopped Up. The next cider to be released is a Maple Bourbon Hard Cider which is sure to grab the attention of many in northeast Ohio.

In addition to learning about the new events at The Winery at Spring Hill, participants will get the chance to learn how to control nuisance wildlife in the grape vineyards. We are pleased that Jason Warren, ODNR Wildlife Officer for Ashtabula County, will be on hand to share strategies for controlling nuisance wildlife which inflect vineyards. Learn how to control deer, wild turkey, raccoon and birds which love to eat wine and juice grapes.

To close the evening program, Patrick Pierquet, Enology Research Associate/Lab Manager at OSU – OARDC, will share a talk titled “Rose’ Wines and Alternative Processes. Attendees will participate in a sensory evaluation of two rose’ wines and two experimental dessert wines. Participants will be asked to provide their feedback on these wines.

Dinner will be served at the conclusion of the tour (approximately 7:00 p.m.). Participants will be treated to Grilled Chicken dinner with dessert. Iced Tea and Coffee will be available. A cash bar will be made available for those who wish to sample wine or sample flights of the Hard Cider. The dinner fee will be $20 per person. In order to ensure a meal, we must have reservations by Thursday, August 4, 2016. This should be a marvelous evening topped off by a great dinner and fantastic fellowship! To register for this program, please contact the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008. A complete registration flyer can be found at: http://go.osu.edu/ne-events

Farm Income Set to Fall Yet Again
by Brent Gloy

One of our top questions heading into 2016 was whether 2016 would be the year when farm income stopped falling. At the start of the year we weren’t particularly optimistic for a rebound, in large part because livestock prices had fallen considerably from early 2015 levels. In February, the Economic Research Service released their forecast of farm income which projected yet another decline. In this post we will look at the forecast, some of its components, and examine the implications another year of declining farm incomes.

The Forecast
The Economic Research Service estimates an aggregate income statement for the U.S. farm sector. Their 2016 forecast is for net farm income to fall an additional 3% from 2015. While this drop sounds rather modest, the decline from the net farm income peak is substantial. In figure 1 we show nominal net farm income from 2006 to 2016. One can see that in nominal values, net income is back to levels not seen in the last 10 years. The decline from the 2013 peak to today is 55%.

Figure 1. Nominal U.S. Net Farm Income 2006-2016.

A longer-term perspective using real values is shown in Figure 2 which shows how real net farm income has evolved since 1980. In percentage terms, the decline from 2013 to 2016 is a staggering 57%. Of the data shown, the last comparable decline would be 1981 to 1983 when net income fell by 52%. The absolute level of income also shows the magnitude of the decline. Real net farm income in 2016 is forecast at the sixth lowest of the 37 observations shown. The last time income was this low was in 2002. Before that, you must go back to the 1980’s to observe real
net farm income at these levels.

Figure 2. Real U.S. Net Farm Income (2009 $’s) 1980-2016.

As ERS points out with this graphic, most of the income declines are due to falling output prices. This combined with sticky costs has led to a dramatic contraction in net income. However, reduced government program payments have also contributed to shrinking net farm incomes.

Government Program Payments Expected to Increase This Year

Given the structure of the current farm program and the magnitude to the income decline, farm program payments are expected to increase. Indeed, ERS is forecasting that payments under the ARC and PLC programs will nearly double, increasing from a combined $4.984 billion in 2015 to $9.132 billion in 2016.

Although this is a large percentage increase, in real terms, the magnitude of government payments is much smaller than those made in previous farm economic downturns. Figure 3 shows the real (2009 $’s) value of direct farm program payments made since 1980. The current real level of direct program payments is on par with that made in the late 2000’s, but less than that made even in the late 1990’s and early 2000’s.

Figure 3. Direct Government Program Payments (Real 2009 $’s), 1980-2016.

Declining Payments Likely in Coming Years

Given the structure of the ARC-CO program, one should expect that these payments will start to decline as the guaranteed prices begin to fall. For those interested in the details we described the ARC-CO payment cliff in a 2015 post. The bottom line is that corn and soybeans payments this will likely start to decline when price guarantees start to decline in the 2016 crop year (payments that will be received in 2017). For example, the price guarantee for corn in 2016 will likely be $4.79 versus $5.29 in the past two years.

Implications

At times it looked as if this could be the year when net farm income stopped sliding lower. However, as the ERS points out, it is now becoming quite likely that yet another year of lower incomes are in store for the farm sector. This will make 2016 the third straight year of declining income. From its peak the decline is as dramatic as anything seen in recent times.

Although the current growing season is far from over, soon attention will turn to budgets for 2017. Given the prospect of some very large harvests and the continuing build in grain stockpiles, the income prospects for 2017 are starting to look less than rosy.

In this environment the pressure for farmers to continue to cut costs will remain and could very well intensify. This likely means that all variable expenses will again come under substantial scrutiny in 2017. This
situation will also likely intensify the downward pressure cash rental rates. It also suggests that spending on capital investments such as machinery and farmland will again contract.

To date, credit conditions in the agricultural sector have remained relatively strong. However, as we pointed out in our post about farm sector sentiment, banker attitudes toward repayment rates are as negative as any time in recent history. Additionally as Kansas City Federal Reserve Bank economists have recently pointed out, demands for farm debt are increasing and there are signs that credit conditions are deteriorating. It will be very important to monitor the credit situation going forward as credit conditions can decline rapidly.

Wrapping it Up
All in all, the economic situation in the farm sector appears to be continuing to slow. This slowdown has had, and will likely continue to have, many impacts throughout the agricultural sector. The impacts will be felt by everyone from landowners, to farmers, to input suppliers, and so on. While many of these signs have been apparent, it is likely that they will become more so if incomes continue to decline.

Agriculture has gone through difficult financial times before. Fortunately, it appears that the sector is financially in better shape to handle this slowdown than in previous downturns. How bad things get will depend on a variety of factors including where commodity prices end up. One thing that is certain is that government program payments will be a welcome addition to the cash flow on many farms this year.

Interested in learning more? Follow the Agricultural Economic Insights’ Blog as we track and monitors these trends throughout the years. Also, follow AEI on Twitter and Facebook.

David’s Weekly News Column- Robert Spellman Memorial Steer Assistance & Grape Tour Reminders
by David Marrison

Hello, Ashtabula County! Zing, the month of July is done! In less than a week the Ashtabula County fair will be underway. OSU Extension has been working diligently with our 4-H clubs and committees to prepare for another great fair. I hope that each of you make plans to attend this year’s fair on August 9-14.

As a reminder, our office will re-locate to the fairgrounds next week but will be back open on August 15. As we make our final preparations fair, I would like to share information on the Robert Spellman Memorial Steer Assistance program and to remind grape producers of the Ohio Grape & Wine Day and the Northeast Ohio Grape Twilight Tour slated for Thursday, August 11, 2016. See you at the fair!

One of my favorite groups to work with is the Ashtabula County Cattlemen’s Association as they are a committee which is driven to do “great” things for our local beef industry. Each year they provide college scholarships, conduct educational workshops and tours and provide free refreshments for the buyers at the market animal auction at the county fair. Today, I am pleased so share another super program which they are offering in conjunction with the Robert Spellman Family in Dorset.

This new program is the Robert Spellman Memorial Steer Assistance program. The purpose of this program is to help a 4-H youth or FFA Member who needs assistance with their Steer Project which will be exhibited at next year’s fair. The Ashtabula County Cattlemen’s Association is coordinating this program in the memory of Robert Spellman who passed away last October. Bob was an avid supporter of the Ashtabula County beef industry and was a 28 year director member of the Ashtabula County Fair Board. He served as the chairman of the Beef Cattle Department for 25 years and he worked diligently to attract open class beef exhibitors to participate in the fair.

The $500 award can be used by the youth to help purchase their calf for next year's fair or for equipment needed for their steer project. Anyone enrolled in an approved Ashtabula County 4-H Club or is a member of a FFA Chapter in Ashtabula County is eligible to apply. Interested youth should have their completed application
returned the Ashtabula County Junior Fair Office by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, August 10, 2016. More information can be obtained by calling the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008. The application can also be obtained at: http://go.osu.edu/ne-events

Grape producers are encouraged to attend the 2016 Ohio Grape & Wine Day at the OARDC Ashtabula Research Station on Thursday, August 11 from 2:00 to 4:30 p.m. in Kingsville, Ohio. Some of the topics that will be discussed at this event include: Trunk Renewal Methods following Winter Injury, Life Cycles of Vineyard Weeds, The Emergence of Red Blotch Virus, Entomology Update, Agricultural Soils through the Lens of Geological History of Ashtabula County, and Soil Profiles of the Ashtabula Research Station Soils. This event is free and pre-registrations are not needed. Just come as you are and learn more about factors affecting grape production in northeast, Ohio.

Immediately following the afternoon session, participants will hop in their car and dash through the construction on Route 90 to attend the evening’s Twilight Grape Tour. This year’s tour will be at the Winery at Spring Hill located at 6062 South Ridge Road in Geneva, Ohio from 5:30 to 8:00 p.m. During this event, participants will learn more about the production, and marketing of hard cider. Grape growers will learn how to control deer, wild turkey, raccoon and birds which love to eat wine and juice grapes. Attendees will also participate in a sensory evaluation of two rose’ wines and two experimental dessert wines. Dinner will be served at the conclusion of the tour. The dinner fee is $20 per person. In order to ensure a meal, we must have pre-reservations. To register for this program, please contact the Ashtabula County Extension office at 440-576-9008. A complete registration flyer can be found at: http://go.osu.edu/ne-events

To close today’s column, I would like to share a quote from Jean de la Bruyere who stated, “The sweetest of all sounds is that of the voice of the woman we love.” Have a good and safe day.
The Winery at Spring Hill – The Winery at Spring Hill opened its doors in March, 2009. Prior to converting to a winery, the Swank family operated a farmers market & gift shop from 1953-2007. This multi-family winery was started in March 2009 and features a restaurant and live entertainment. The winery produces over 22 different wines ranging from dry and semi-dry Vinifera to semi-dry and semi-sweet Labrusca and fruit wines. In May of 2016, the operation began producing and selling an award winning line of Hard Ciders.

Attend the Ohio Grape & Wine Day Before the Twilight Tour (2:00 - 4:30 p.m.)
Producers are encouraged to attend the 2016 Ohio Grape & Wine Day at the OARDC Ashtabula Research Station located at 2625 South Ridge Road East in Kingsville, Ohio from 2:00 to 4:30 p.m. Some of the topics that will be discussed at this event include: Trunk Renewal Methods following Winter Injury, Life Cycles of Vineyard Weeds, The Emergence of Red Blotch Virus, Entomology Update, Agricultural Soils through the Lens of Geological History of Ashtabula County, and Soil Profiles of the Ashtabula Research Station Soils. This is a nice opportunity to dialog "one on one" with OARDC personnel with grape responsibilities. For more information about this event, call the OARDC Ashtabula Research Station at 440-224-0273.

About the Twilight Tour (5:30 - 8:30 p.m.)
Tom Swank will share with participants the rich history of The Winery at Spring Hill. Learn how this former multi-generational fruit farm transitioned to a multi-family winery in 2009. Tom Swank, winemaker, will share how the winery is paying homage to the farm’s rich apple tradition with the introduction of hard cider line. Learn more about the production, bottling, and marketing of hard cider. Currently the winery is selling four types of cider: Orchard Original, Spiced Apple, Blueberry Hills and Hopped Up. The next cider to be released is a Maple Bourbon Hard Cider which is sure to grab the attention of many in northeast Ohio.

In addition to learning about the new events at The Winery at Spring Hill, participants will get the chance to learn how to control nuisance wildlife in the grape vineyards. We are pleased that Jason Warren, ODNR Wildlife Officer for Ashtabula County, will be on hand to share strategies for controlling nuisance wildlife which inflect vineyards. Learn how to control deer, wild turkey, raccoon and birds which love to eat wine and juice grapes.

To close the evening program, Patrick Pierquet, Enology Research Associate/Lab Manager at OSU – OARDC, will share a talk titled "Rose’ Wines and Alternative Processes. Attendees will participate in a sensory evaluation of two rose’ wines and two experimental dessert wines. Participants will be asked to provide their feedback on these wines.

Dinner (7:00 – 8:00 p.m.)
Dinner will be served at the conclusion of the tour (approximately 7:00 p.m.). Participants will be treated to Grilled Chicken dinner with dessert. Iced Tea and Coffee will be available. A cash bar will be made available for those who wish to sample wine or sample flights of the Hard Cider. The dinner fee will be $20 per person. In order to ensure a meal, we must have reservations by Thursday, August 4, 2016. This should be a marvelous evening topped off by a great dinner and fantastic fellowship!
Call the OSU Extension office at 440-576-9008 to make your reservations. Reservations must be made by 4:30 p.m. Thursday, August 4.

Directions to The Winery at Spring Hill
- Follow South Ridge Road east to State Route 193
- Take Route 193 South to Route 90 West
- Take Route 90 West to Route 534 North
- Take Route 534 North to Route 84 (South Ridge Road) and travel West
- Follow South Ridge Road West to The Winery at Spring Hill

2016 Northeast Ohio Twilight Grape Tour

Name___________________________________________________________
Address________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________
Phone_______________________________   Email___________________
No. of Reservations for Twilight Tour Dinner   _______ @ $20.00 per person Total Due $_______

Reservations are due by August 4, 2016. Please mail today to OSU Extension, 39 Wall Street, Jefferson, OH 44047
Call OSU Extension at 440-576-9008 with any questions.
2016 OHIO GRAPE AND WINE DAY*

AUGUST 11 • 2 P.M.

Ashtabula Agricultural Research Station
2625 South Ridge Road East
Kingsville, OH 44048

*Followed immediately by the NE Ohio Grape Twilight Tour, 5-8 P.M., Winery at Spring Hill. For information call 440-466-0626.

Program
• Trunk Rehabilitation Strategies
• Entomology Update
• Life Cycles of Vineyard Weeds
• The Emergence of Red Blotch Virus
• Agricultural Soils Through the Lens of Geological History in Ashtabula County
• Soil Profile at Ashtabula Agricultural Research Station

Speakers
• Thomas Todaro, Horticulture and Crop Science
• Elizabeth Long, Entomology
• Feng Qu, Plant Pathology
• Jaclyn Fiola, Horticulture and Crop Science
• Nathan Paskey, Ashtabula Soil & Water Conservation District
• Andrea Leiva Soto, Horticulture and Crop Science

Directions
Take I-90 East to Exit 235/OH-193, Kingsville; travel north 1 mile to South Ridge Road (St. Rt. 84), then west 1 mile to 2625 South Ridge Road. The station is on the right (across from the water tower).

Directions to The Winery at Spring Hill
From the Ashtabula Agricultural Research Station, start out going southwest on South Ridge Road E (OH-84), merge onto OH-11 S/OH-46 S via the ramp on the left toward I-90, merge onto I-90 W via Exit 94B toward Cleveland. Take the OH-534 exit, Exit 218, toward Geneva. Turn right onto South Broadway/OH-534. Turn left onto South Ridge Road W/OH-84. The Winery at Spring Hill is on the left.

For more information
Andy Kirk
440-224-0273
kirk.197@osu.edu
oardc.ohio-state.edu/branches/branchinfo.asp?id=1

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COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
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