When Have we Reached our Goal?

There is a popular ad currently where a young boy asks his father as they are leaving his investment counselor’s office exactly who was that man? He asked his father a quick series of very basic logical questions from the eyes of some one less than a decade old. In each case the small boy’s questions only raised more questions in his father’s mind. The point is we never really know all that we need to deal with the future. Often times the more we actually learn only opens our eyes to more questions.

The apple industry is not immune to this basic fact. The public continues, similar to the small boy, to ask what they feel are basic questions. They are looking to us to provide them with security in their food supply and conservation of the planet we all share. Their questions are usually centered around why we continue to use so many different pesticides. While asking these questions they continue to only purchase the most pristine food ever consumed by man. They show zero indication that they wish to compromise on these standards.

Food safety is everyone’s responsibility. I see the safety of our food supply as high a public responsibility as is our national defense. We have to be able to trust the food we purchase and consume. The reality is that we have long since abandoned the individual ability to produce our own food. We have entrusted this to our current food networks. To expect safe food is a given today. But like all of our social safeties they come with a cost. The public has a responsibility along with the producers to make certain our food is safe. Partnership then in research funding has to be shared.

The question then needs to be raised, if they feel a need for a change who is to fund this change? Change does not suddenly appear on Christmas morning as we all had dreams of happening as a small child. If we accept that the public has a desire for change than it is our opinion they have a responsibility to assist in funding the research necessary to drive such change. The New York State Horticulture Society feels it is and should be a collective goal. Therefore a shared responsibility. In the last two years we have approached our legislators to join us in funding such research. We have offered a matching fund goal. As an industry we self assess ourselves and we then ask the public (NYS State) to match our dollars.

Last year we were given for the first time $500,000 to be applied to this end. I feel we have acted responsibly to direct projects that will ensure a safer and continued healthier New York. For example basic research on the issue of honey bee decline has to be of importance to everyone who understand the necessity of pollination in our food supply. We have also directed funds to overcome new invasive species that arrive on our shores for the first time as a result of the increased international commerce. This is a direct result of international trade and we must be ready to respond to such new issues. This reality is here and it will demand our attention moving forward.

Research then is a necessity of doing business. Research is here to answer the mysteries of our food supply. Everyday each of us is looking for a safe supply of nature’s bounty. It is within our power to continue to supply that food. It also is within our power to strive to uncover new ways to do so and conserve the purity of our land and water. With such efforts as we saw this last year I am confident we can and will begin to answer little by little those questions.

(Continued on p.2)
(Editorial, cont.)

most basic of questions. We hope each of you will support our efforts to gather the funds necessary to meet the challenges of providing the food for our tables for years to come.

Paul Baker
Executive Director of the NY State Horticultural Society

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(Continued on page 3.)
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