

# Editorial

## Grower Funds Are The Key

**M**ost business management magazines you read have an article about how conditions are changing faster and faster all the time, and that those who do not adjust to those changes will have a tough time staying in business. Most of the business people in the NY fruit industry are aware of this hard fact. The question becomes: How will NY apple growers acquire the tools we need to make the changes necessary to stay ahead of our competition in other parts of the US and abroad? The first step in this process is to identify the issues and weaknesses in our operations that need to be resolved in order to ensure that we stay in business. For me, labor, productivity and pest control are my top three issues.

Once you have that list of challenges, share it with someone who can help. Most Cooperative Extension educators have advisory groups that meet a few times of year. One of their main functions is to come up with lists of industry challenges and prioritize them. Get your list to these educators or to a researcher that works in the areas you need to improve.

The next step is to get the research done to help solve the identified challenges. We are very fortunate in NY to have outstanding researchers at Cornell University who can focus their research on important topics. They have the ability and facilities to carry out the needed research. Besides the list of challenges, they need funds to do the research. The NY apple industry is fortunate to have the Apple Research and Development Program that provides some of these funds.

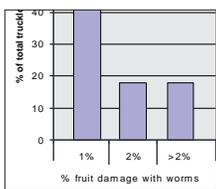
The board, comprised of apple growers, reviews proposals from researchers, selects those that will help our industry the most and determines the funding level. The problem is the funds collected for the program are currently too low to adequately address all the issues we have today. The program is a great vehicle to fund research because it is grower driven, but the car needs more gas. The growers of NYS will never have enough money to fully fund any research project completely. We don't have to. Our dollars are leveraged with the federal, state, Cornell, and other funds to get the needed work done. In fact, it is these grower funds that show those other funding sources that the NY apple industry

is committed and the research deserves to be funded.

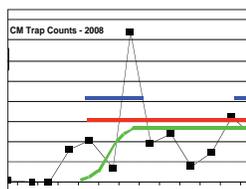
I am a member of the board of directors of the New York Farm Viability Institute that has funded millions of dollars of agricultural research in NYS over the last five years. The number one criteria for funding a project, is that it be grower driven. Grower funding, no matter what the amount, is a dramatic indication of this. When growers have money on the table, we have been more likely to fund the project.

The changes in our industry are occurring at a faster pace. Therefore, research is critical to address our challenges. Grower funds attract the attention of researchers and other funding sources; I believe it is time for the apple growers of NY to increase the amount that the Apple Research and Development Program can assess. The future of our industry depends on it.

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**COVER: Sweet cherries packed in Modified Atmosphere Storage bags (photo by Herb Cooley)**

