

Organic pest management solutions through the New Agriculture Network

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The New Agriculture Network

Farmers, researchers and educators teaming up for sustainable and organic ag solutions in the Great Lakes Region

The New Agriculture Network (NAN), www.new-ag.msu.edu, was established in 2004. This three-state network (Michigan, Indiana and Illinois) enables farmers, land grant universities (Michigan State University, Purdue and University of Illinois) and Extension educators to address organic vegetable and field crop issues. A community of practice was formed, supporting organic and transitioning farmers through cooperative inquiry for systematic learning about organic nutrition and pest control in Midwest field crop and vegetable systems.

Similar to growers, Extension educators and university researchers interested in organic options find limited resources for scientifically-based advice that is scattered among universities and grower groups. NAN provides timely information for Midwest conditions through its stakeholder forum.

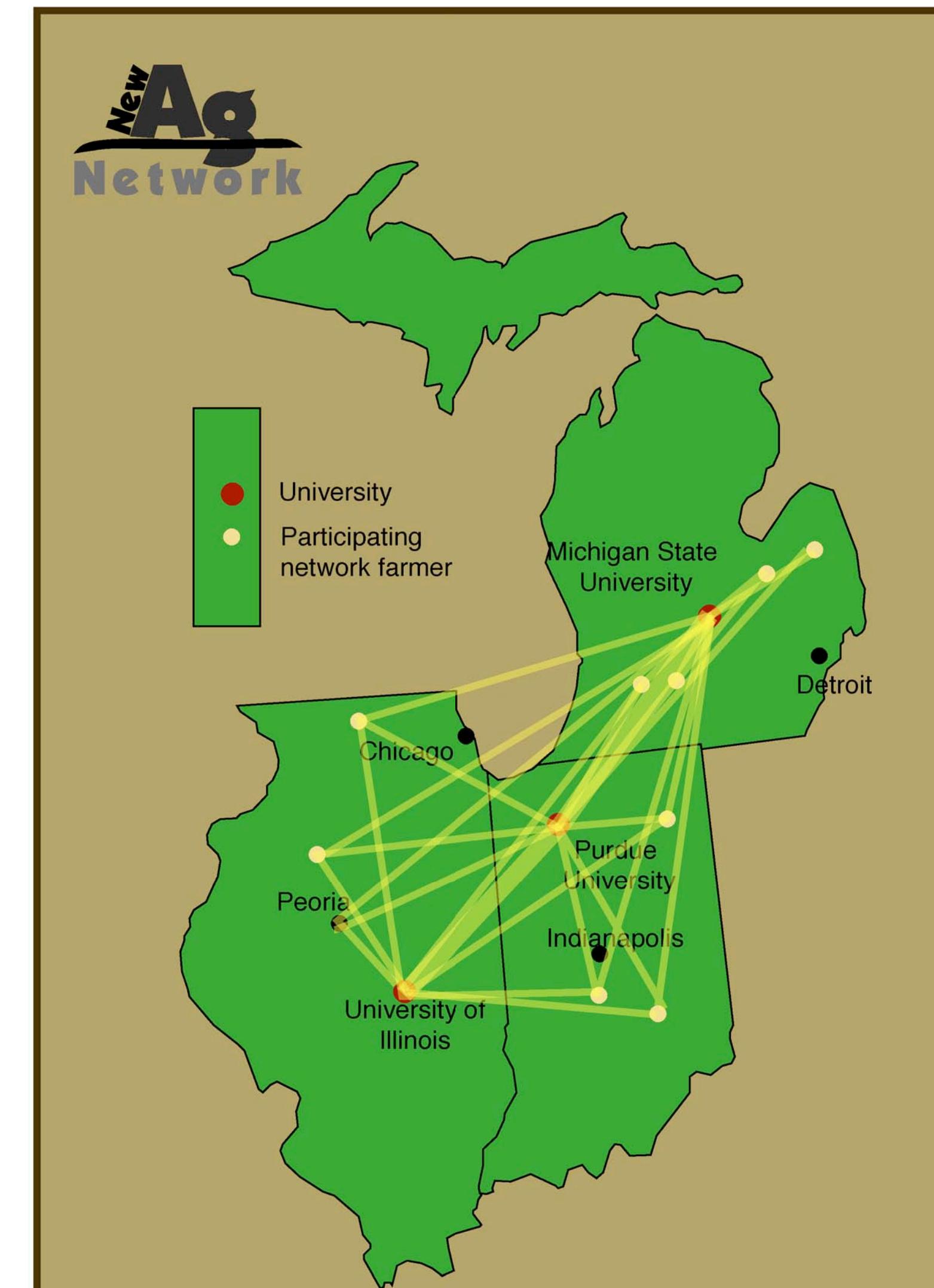
Bimonthly conference calls are conducted for field crop and vegetable organic farmers connecting farmers as advisors with researchers and educators. Each conference call is followed with production of an on-line newsletter. It includes timely articles written by researchers along with farmer reports from each state.

As a result of farmer/researcher interactions, on the New Ag Network, several spinoff grants have been written to answer pertinent questions raised by organic producers.

Illinois: NCR-SARE Research/ Education grant (submitted)

Indiana: NCR-SARE Producer grant (submitted)

Michigan: USDA/CSREES Integrated Organic Program grant (awarded)



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Reports from organic growers

Michigan
Southwest Michigan – John Timmons
We have had sporadic weeds to be great heights (crops too), but not allowed weed control activities. Currently now cultivating corn, soybeans and sunflowers, as well as flaming corn and sunflowers. In the next two weeks I'll be row cultivating corn, sunflowers and soybeans; prepare for small grain harvest and go to the 4th of July parade.

Question: Soy aphid control update and rust report?

Indiana
South Central Indiana – Dale R. Mutch
Every rain this spring but one has been hard and heavy. This has caused a series of ups and downs in moisture. The past week has been very dry. We are doing consistent, but not yet heavy, watering with everything but sweet corn. All new plantings are watered on a consistent basis to ensure germination and growth of juvenile plants. Temperatures started out very hot, high in the 90's, then moderate—a cool phase of 60-80 degrees, and now temperatures are back up to 90's. We are still in the cool phase. I am not sure what the weather will be like this week. Chad is starting to get leaf spots and go down in quality. I'm trying weekly applications of copper hydroxide.

Currently harvesting green beans, cilantro, kale, chard and baby squash. Finishing up with head lettuce this week. Spanish is gone now. We have been trying up tomato plants, weeding parley plantings, watering, mulching, tilling and preparing for baby lettuce succession. Killing weeds in sweet corn and weeding salad greens. Some insects are showing up to shore up the curly top virus from beneficial wasps. Potatoes have been treated with pyrethrum/rotenone for potato bugs successfully.

I'll be doing much of the same in the next two weeks. Still in the wrapping-up-spring and getting-into-summer phase. Doing a little moving around.

Illinois
North Central – Dale Campbell
We have had only one-quarter inch of rain (that includes a few sprinkler episodes) since May 19. Every month this year since January we've received below normal precipitation. Crops are showing some stress, but not as much as my conventional neighbors, whose row crops were planted earlier. My last fall of soybeans has been planted due to extremely dry conditions. The first cutting of corn has been harvested. The second cutting of corn has just been completed. Most of this was harvested off my waterways. First cutting hay across northern Illinois has yielded well and is also of good quality. It has been ideal hay-making weather. No need to listen to the forecast. Cultivating corn and soybeans has been a challenge. I am not sure what the weather will be like this week. I will be harvesting corn and will hopefully plant the last cutting of soybeans soon (if we receive a decent rain). Otherwise, I will plant this field to buckwheat. Mowing and hand-cutting thistles around farmsteads. Will cultivate corn for the third and final time and will cultivate beans for the second time. Plan to field-cultivate my Canada thistle experimental field to destroy another flush of thistles.

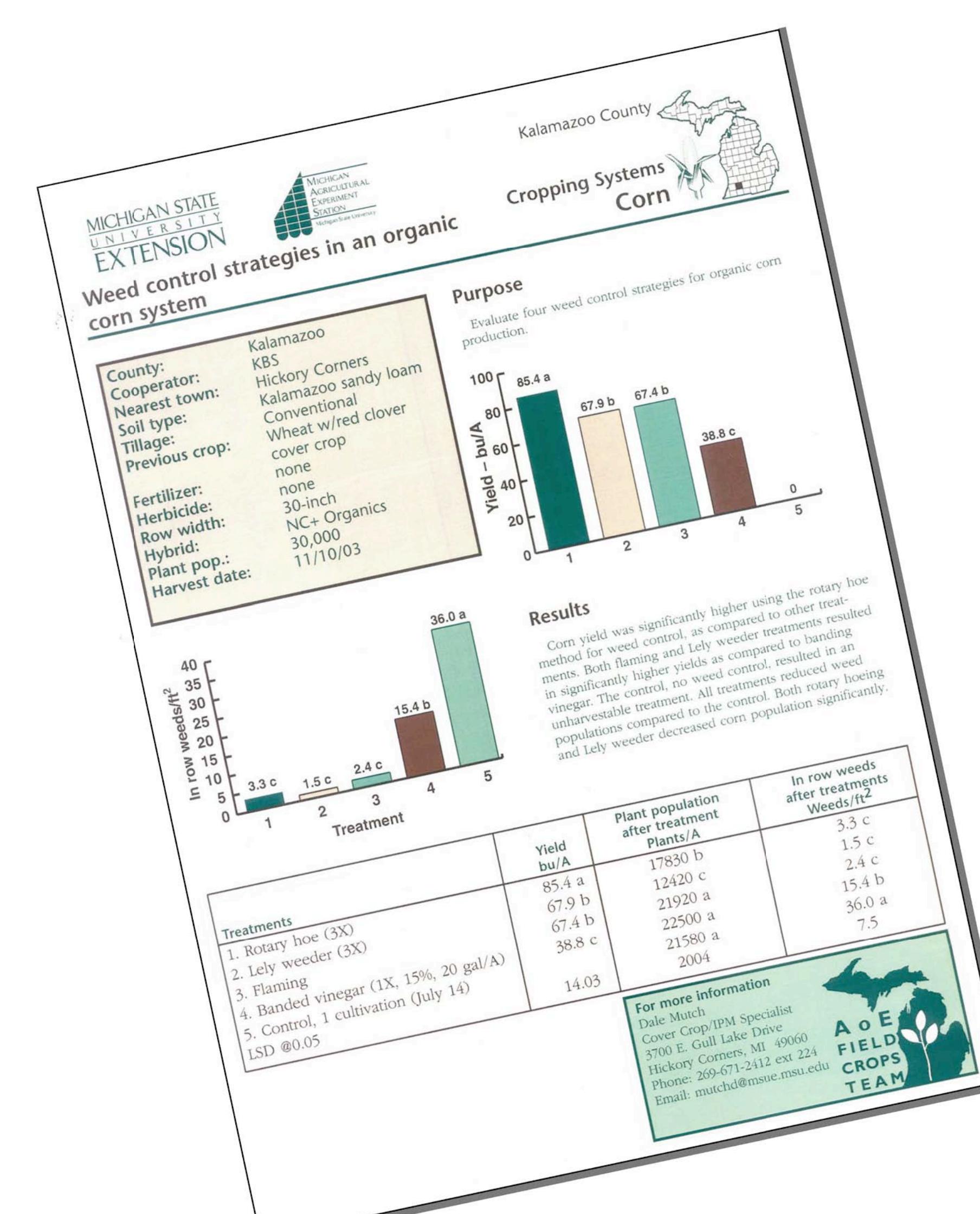
Question: Was wondering if others were going to take any preventative measures in regards to addressing potential Asian rust concerns in soybeans?

Ohio
West Central – Paul Meegan
We finally got a week with no rain and not temperatures. It allowed me to cultivate the corn for the first time and we got some rain. The beans are about 1/2 in to 3/4 in. I will be in the field cultivating the beans later. I have weeded my corn and a little. I had to re-cultivate the corn before it gets too big. In the next two weeks I will need to re-cultivate the beans. The weeds were so big that I didn't get all of them the first time. I have to bale waterways and grass headlands. I have pigs to move and a hoop hoghouse to clean out.

Question: Is there any cover crop that I can seed after my fall tillage (harvested in mid-July) to get significant nitrogen production from it in a couple months and that will start reliably in mid-summer? Does anyone know about sunn hemp (crotalaria juncea), cowpeas, black eye peas, or sesbania?

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Funding to initiate this network was provided by the American Farmland Trust and EPA Region 5. Web site is hosted by the MSU IPM Program.



Web site:
www.new-ag.msu.edu



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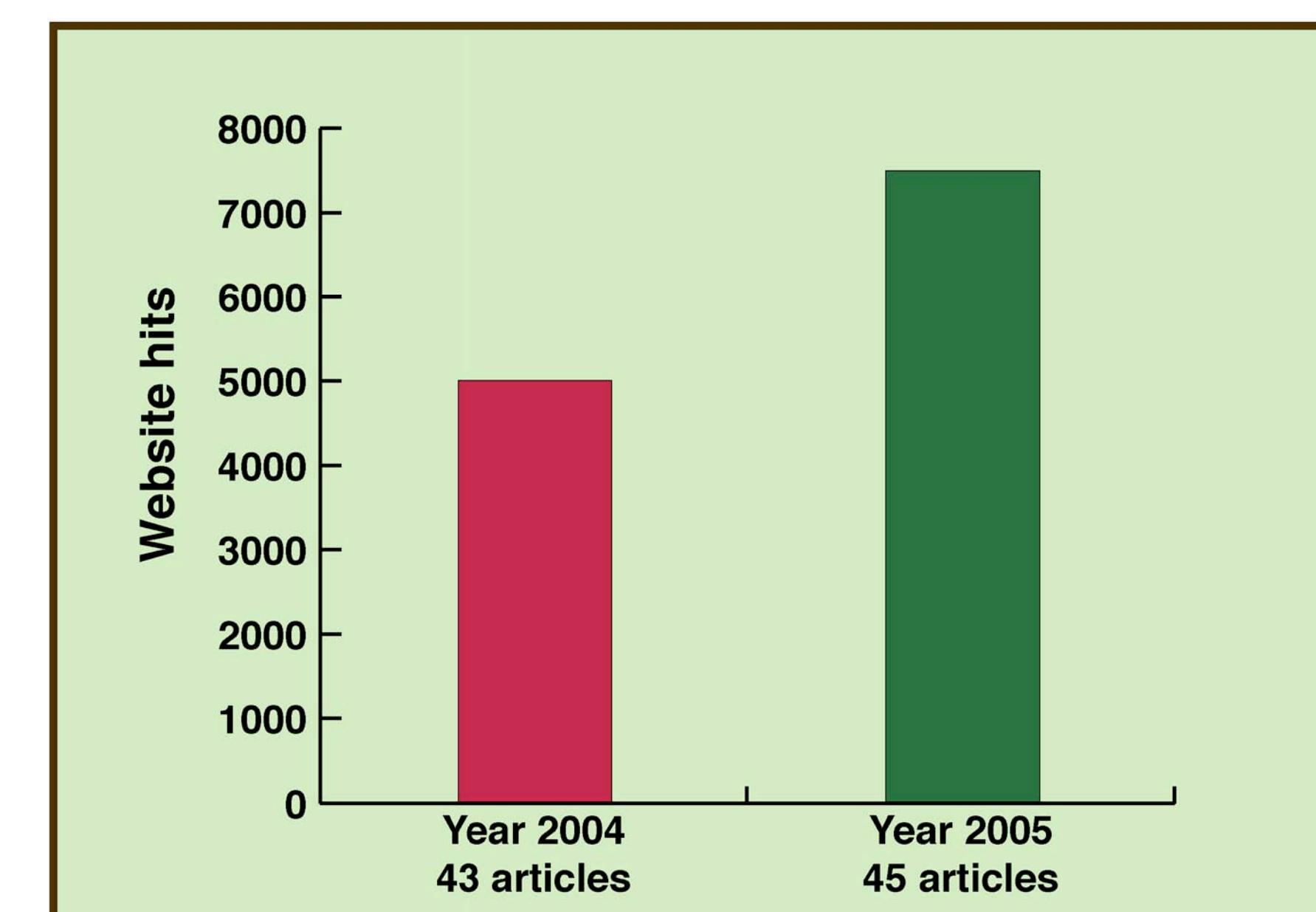
Last issue for 2005

With this issue we conclude our second year of publishing at the New Agriculture Network. We would especially like to thank the farmers who participated in conference calls and submitted farm reports for posting at the Network. We would like to thank the researchers and Extension specialists and to thank our colleagues for these contributions. To quickly access their articles from the past two years, follow the "Search this site" link in our green navigation bar, or see the table of contents in the "Calendar of issues" link.

Looking ahead, we have been successful in locating funding for the New Agriculture Network and will return with more information in 2006. Our goal is to continue to link our on-line-based network with the research and extension efforts of growers and to share the sheer量 of ideas. In particular, if you have comments or suggestions related to the New Agriculture Network, please send an email to msuipm@msu.edu and we will consider your comments and suggestions for improvements for the Network. Ideas for article topics, comments about how you've used the information here, research needs and other feedback from you.

Thanks for reading.

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In 2004, university specialists wrote 41 articles and the site received 5,009 hits. In 2005, specialists produced 43 articles and more than 7,500 hits occurred.

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