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 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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GAP for Tobacco Growers

Well I started out in my OSU Extension career in August of 1998 and one of the things I was asked about in my interview for the job was my working knowledge of tobacco. Over the years I have been on several farms in Brown County, and later Adams County, doing research and demonstration plots with cooperating farmers. Tobacco was king back then. Adams and Brown Counties were big producers of burley tobacco, ranking first and second in the state in pounds produced, with Ripley having four warehouses, and the only market in Ohio. Gallia County was the county that did not fit in this little pocket, as Gallia, along with Clermont and Highland made up the top five counties in the state. Adams and Brown made up close to 2/3 of the entire Ohio production in the 1990s.

WOW have things changed. I recently talked to University of Kentucky Extension Interim Director and former Tobacco Specialist, Dr. Gary Palmer. We talked about those “good old days” of doing on farm research. Dr. Palmer stated that you can drive through the Commonwealth during the growing season and might not see one tobacco patch these days, that is a change.

UK Tobacco Specialist were great to help with the local projects here in Southern Ohio. There are several specialists that I have heard about, but did not know. I am sure if you remember Jim Wells working with Extension and/or at the Ripley Experimental Farm as it was called locally, you remember the name Ira Massey. I never met Mr. Massey, but have heard the name frequently. However, the names like Dr. Gary Palmer, Dr. Bill Nesmith, Dr. Paul Denton, Dr. Will Snell, Dr. Kenny Seebold and Dr. Bob Pearce might ring a bell in more recent years. Dr. Snell is still involved in Ag Economics and tobacco, Dr. Paul Denton is still involved a little with GAP Connections, but the only one still heavily involved and still making frequent trips to Ohio is Dr. Bob Pearce. Dr. Pearce teaches and puts together the production part of many of the GAP meetings for producers throughout Kentucky and helps me here in Southern Ohio.

To say things have changed in those twenty years with tobacco production would be a major understatement. The health concerns are clearly a part of that change, but not all of it. Tobacco is now grown in other parts of the world. It is grown cheaper. The rules and regulations are more and more of an issue for producers each and every year. While the rules and regulations are steadily increasing yearly, the price is not. The cost of production is increasing, but the need for burley is not. The need for labor to harvest the crop is increasing, but the ability to market the crop is not.

I was on a farm on Monday morning. The farmer has raised tobacco since he was in high school. He has bought and paid for equipment and land with the money he has made from producing tobacco. I talk to this farmer on a fairly frequent basis. His frustration with the crop and the industry has been building for years. Every time we have talked about tobacco over the years I have heard the end of him being a tobacco producer in his tone and words more and more every year. On Monday morning I did not have to read between the lines. It was very clear. As we talked about prices that were less than



the prices I remember getting when I was in high school for my crop (\$1.66 in early 1980s). A crop that has been very difficult to get down out of the barns to strip added to his frustration (can't fix the weather). The words, "this is it, my last crop" came out. I heard it, but sometimes frustration will push words out that we later re-think. The next thing made me think, not this time. As one of the guys in his stripping crew came out of the stripping room and went toward the bundles of unstripped tobacco, he disappeared behind some equipment. The next thing I heard was a chainsaw start up. I said, what is he doing? The producer said we are cutting up the sticks by the bundle to use for firewood, I told you I am done raising tobacco. I will not need the sticks. For that matter, when we finish stripping this crop, on the last day I am sawing up the presses and burning them, too. I think he has made up his mind, he is done.

Well this grower will not need a GAP training for 2018. I am not sure how many growers are left at this point because this is not a rare situation. I have heard many growers state that they, like Lou Pinella when managing the Reds use to say, "I have seen enough".

For those still needing GAP there are two opportunities on February 22 in the area. The first one is in West Union at Frisch's at 1:00 p.m. You must call Barbie to register by February 21 at 544-2339. Space is limited to 50 at this session.

The second session is at Maysville Community and Technical College at 6:00 p.m. on February 22. No pre-registration on this one.

I have a later one scheduled in Georgetown at the Southern Hills Career and Technical Center on Hamer Road. This one will be at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 20. You will need to call Cindy at the Brown Co. OSU Extension Office to register for this one by Monday, March 19, at 378-6716.

Other GAP opportunities can be found online at www.gapconnections.com

Registration for Pesticide and Fertilizer Re-certs

Please check your status for your private applicator pesticide license. There appears to be some issues with the system and some people may not have been notified to renew the past couple of months. No one is sure what has happened, but to be safe, everyone should check their status. Remember the renewal is due on March 31 if 2018 is the year you need to renew. You can go online at <http://pested.osu.edu> and go to the Private Applicator tab, then click on Recertification. You will need your license number and last name. If you do not have the number, we have them at the OSU Extension Office, so call, e-mail me or stop by. My email is dugan.46@osu.edu

Registration is open for Pesticide and Fertilizer re-certifications that I have listed below. Please call the office for the location you wish to attend. The Adams County office is Barbie at 544-2339; Brown County office is Cindy at 378-6716; and Highland County is Tammy at 393-1918.

Brown Co. Master Gardener Monthly Program

The next Brown Co. Master Gardener program is coming up Thursday, February 15, 2018. The Garden seminar hosted by OSUE Brown County Master Gardener Volunteers will feature

Bill Pettit who will be talking about **Growing Giant Pumpkins**. The program begins at 7:00 p.m. in Room 107 at the Mt. Orab campus of Southern State Community College. As always all seminars are free and open to the public.

Dates to Remember

- Feb. 12 Pesticide Testing at the Old Y Restaurant at noon. Pre-register by calling ODA at 800-282-1955 or online at <http://pested.osu.edu>
- Feb. 20 Adams Co. Pesticide Re-certification at Frisch's starting at 5:00 p.m. 3 hours of Pesticide and 1 hour of Fertilizer Re-certification. Must Pre-register.
- Feb. 22 GAP for Tobacco producers at Frisch's in West Union starting at 1:00 p.m. Registration is required by February 21. Space is limited so register early with Barbie at 544-2339.
- Feb. 22 GAP for Tobacco producers at Maysville Community and Technical College in the evening. No pre-registration and it begins at 6:00 p.m.
- Feb. 24 Brown Co. Cattlemen Annual Banquet.
- Feb. 28 Brown Co. Pesticide and Fertilizer Re-cert at Southern Hills Board Office at 11:00 a.m. Must Pre-register.
- Mar. 2 Highland Co. Pesticide and Fertilizer Re-cert at Southern State Community College in Hillsboro at 11:00 a.m. Must Pre-register.
- Mar. 5 Farm and Family Night at Maysville Community and Technical College.
- Mar. 20 GAP for Tobacco at Southern Hills CTC in Georgetown at 7:00 p.m. Call Cindy at 378-6716 to register by March 19.