

Chile Conference Focuses on Improved Marketing Methods

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LAS CRUCES – Improved chile industry marketing is the central focus of this year's 25th edition of the New Mexico Chile Conference on Feb. 6-7 at the Hilton Las Cruces.



(Click for large version.)

"As always, our focus will be on the latest technology for our growers," said Paul Bosland, conference co-chairman and chile breeder with New Mexico State University's Agricultural Experiment Station. "I'm also excited that this is the 25th year of the conference. It shows how vital this annual meeting is to the industry and the state."

Sponsored by NMSU's Chile Pepper Institute, the program brings together some of the top names in the chile world, he said. More than 250 chile industry growers, processors and researchers are expected to attend.

Registration begins at 7:30 a.m. and the program starts at 8:30 a.m. Registration for the conference costs \$75 before Feb. 3 and \$85 after.

The theme of the two-day session is "Tradition and Transition; 25 years of Chile Pepper Industry Innovation." Along with a history of the conference, the program will spotlight Top Grower Awards for the region's highest yielding producers. Categories include red dried chile, fresh green chile and cayenne peppers.

Other attractions include more than 15 supplier and manufacturer booths featuring harvesting machinery, fertilizer and irrigation equipment, said John White, Doña Ana County horticulture agent with NMSU's Cooperative Extension Service.

Technical sessions for chile professionals will feature the latest chile research findings and presentations from Extension specialists and industry leaders. Experts will discuss the changing economics of the Southwest chile industry, while a New Mexico Chile Task Force representative will provide an update on legislative issues facing the industry.

Discussions will include advances in mechanical harvesting technology, including recent developments in chile thinning and sorting devices. Scientists will talk about disease and pest management, particularly a deadly virus known as curly top, which can cut chile stands by more than a third.

Presentations will highlight production practices to optimize stand establishment, including water, salinity and chemical application management. A new element this year will be a tour of the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum on Feb. 7.

If you are an individual with a disability who is in need of an auxiliary aid or service to participate in the meeting, please contact Danise Coon at (505) 646-3028 or send an e-mail to hotchile@nmsu.edu before the event.

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