

Tobacco News

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A better greenhouse float tray?

For years, tobacco growers have used expanded polystyrene greenhouse float trays and struggled with cleaning them effectively, replacing them when damaged or contaminated, and disposing of them properly. A new tray coming on the market in a few months may change all that.

Plastic float tray

BeltWide Inc. will introduce its Trilogy Plastic Float Tray that should last longer than standard expanded polystyrene (EPS) greenhouse trays, according to developer Chuck Miglianti with

Some of those early designs included a paper tray, which sank. He looked at blow molding as well as fusion molding technology for tray prototypes. His REKA tray, a vacuum-formed tray system made in Korea with his Malaysian partners, also was impractical for the U.S. industry.

The REKA tray works well with small growers who don't utilize mechanization when seeding and transplanting.

Each of these designs and his determination to develop a better tray led to his new polypropylene tray, which was well over due.

"This was in response to the problems in the industry, especially

apparent around the world, in cleaning the EPS tray to avoid increasing disease carryover pressure and also in the inability to recycle the discarded tray," he says. In addition, he wanted to develop a tray that reduced or eliminated EPS caused nontobacco-related material (NTRM), which is a major concern of tobacco manufacturers.

"The float system works so very well; the EPS tray was the flaw, especially in



BeltWide. For more than 15 years, Miglianti has wanted to replace EPS trays. "I have tried and failed with most other designs, either because the material was not suited to float, because of cost, or because it was impractical," he says.

view of environmental sustainability, tray sanitation, and NTRMs," Miglianti says. "A change in tray is needed." He says the tray is easier to clean, recyclable and will last a longer time, making it more environmentally friendly and saving growers money.

See Trilogy tray on page 9

BELTWIDE'S NEW PLASTIC FLOAT TRAY WILL MAKE STYROFOAM A MEMORY

It didn't take Rodney Riggs long to change! Here's why. BeltWide's New Trilogy Plastic Float Tray is environmentally sustainable and made from recycled plastic and is **totally recyclable** – is more resistant to heat damage – is made of sturdier construction with a longer-life span – is easier and less costly to sanitize with traditional cleaners. Just remove the organic material completely and dry – provides consistent results over the life of the tray – eliminates EPS seedling trays as a source for **NRTMs** that is often found in cured leaf – removes non-recyclable EPS trays from entering the industry – starts clean, reduces disease carryover pressure – results either in a superior-grown transplant or at minimum the same quality as an EPS tray-grown plant, according to university research.

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Put the Brakes on Bacterial Wilt

Mechanical topping and harvesting certainly have been labor-saving and time-saving boons for tobacco growers. But the advancements have been a bit of a double-edged sword. While growers lessened their reliance on costly hand-topping and harvesting, additional equipment moving through fields enabled lethal bacterial wilt to spread more rapidly in tobacco crops.

This is a big deal because [bacterial wilt](#), or Granville wilt, is a major disease problem in Southeast flue-cured and burley tobacco production—and the world. It's caused by a soil-borne bacterium that's extremely difficult to control and impacts a number of other crops, too, including tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, eggplants and peanuts. It's also harbored in some weed species, like ragweed.

"Prior to 1985 or so, bacterial wilt losses in tobacco were less than 0.5%," explains Bruce Fortnum, Clemson University professor of plant pathology. "By the early 2000s, it wasn't uncommon to see losses of 90% within some tobacco fields."



"The problem is," he adds, "once the soil is infested, the bacterium (*Ralstonia solanacearum*) never goes away."

The disease has escalated to become a significant disease in most tobacco-growing areas. In South Carolina alone bacterial wilt annually accounts for 1.5% to 3.5% in losses to the state's crop.¹

Cause and Effect

On-farm trials and field trials at Clemson University's Pee Dee Research and Education Center in Florence, South Carolina, repeatedly demonstrated over the years that the bacterium that causes bacterial wilt can be spread very easily during mechanical topping and harvesting.

In other words, if the mechanical topper was driven through infected tobacco, the equipment may easily transmit the pathogen to healthy tobacco. This leads to increased losses and even the collapse of entire tobacco fields. Symptoms first appear as a wilt of leaves on one side of the plant. Eventually, the entire plant wilts and infected plants usually die.

Researchers developed best management practices to help combat the spread of bacterial wilt including:

- Soil fumigation
- Crop rotation
- Development of resistant tobacco varieties

These efforts helped, but they haven't been enough to stymie this stubborn disease.

Tweaks to the System

Additional research that explores additional control options appears promising.

"We're looking for ways to tweak the system, not replace mechanical topping and harvesting," notes Paul Peterson, Clemson University associate professor of plant pathology.

"And we're not adding additional equipment to the system," says Fortnum. "We're looking for ways to become more effective with what growers are already doing."

Since topping and leaf harvesting also coincide with the general time period when maleic hydrazide (MH) is applied to tobacco to inhibit sucker growth, Fortnum, Peterson and their colleagues are delving into what this might mean for bacterial wilt control. (MH is the active ingredient in Royal MH-30® [Growth Regulator](#).)

See **Bacterial wilt** on page 8

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International News

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Leaf price lower: Tobacco sold at the end of the market season in Zimbabwe totaled 205.5 million kilograms (kg) or 453 million pounds and brought a lower average price of \$3.17 per kg compared with \$3.70 per kg last year, Bloomberg reported.

WHO director-general says halt monopoly: Margaret Chan, the director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO) says the government must diversify powers granted the state monopoly to oversee and promote the tobacco industry while also exerting influence over the campaign to control smoking, Reuters reports. Chan, speaking at the conclusion of a visit to China in July says she told officials government agency functions should be stripped from the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration, the news agency reports.

Kretek excise-tax cut proposed: Recent kretek factory closings in Indonesia prompted the Industry Ministry to ask for a reduction in excise taxes imposed on the hand-rolled clove cigarettes, the Jakarta Post reports. "The hand-rolled cigarette industry is labor-intensive and distinctive to Indonesia so we need to ensure its sustainability. If the factories shut down and the producers shift production to machine-rolled cigarettes, that will add to unemployment," Industry Minister MS Hidayat reportedly said. His ministry is preparing to ask the Finance Ministry to cut the levy, the newspaper said on its Web site. Philip Morris International (PMI) recently shut two hand-rolled kretek factories operated by its PT HM Sampoerna subsidiary, costing about 4,900 employees their jobs. The shut downs were due to a decline in kretek volume, according to PMI.

EU black market shrinks: Black market cigarette consumption in the 28 European Union countries fell by roughly 7 billion sticks in 2013 on lower volumes in the United Kingdom and Italy, according to a study by KPMG. However, consumption of illicit whites rose 2.5 billion sticks to 19.6 billion, which represents about one-third of the 58.6-billion-unit black market total, states the study commissioned by the four major international tobacco companies.

Snus volume gains: Swedish Match snus shipments in Scandinavia rose an adjusted 2 percent in the second quarter, but U.S. moist-snuff volume fell on less demand for traditional loose varieties, the company reported in July. Snus volume growth in Sweden at an estimated 2 percent was less than the 5-percent overall increase in a market where Swedish Match dominates the premium segment. However, the company is not as well-positioned in the value segment, 43 percent of the market, where growth in lower priced products has been stronger than in the premium segment Swedish Match reported.

Adjusted for the timing of Easter holidays, snus shipments to the Norwegian and retail-travel segments also gained, Swedish Match reports. U.S. moist-snuff volume measured in can equivalents fell 7 percent.

MRTP status for snus in the U.S.: In June, Swedish Match applied to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for permission to market its General grand snus in the United States as a modified-risk tobacco product (MRTP), the company reported. An FDA risk modification order would allow Swedish Match to use different warning labels than those mandated for other smokeless tobacco products.

Launch for PMI's iQOS: Philip Morris International (PMI) will introduce its reduced-risk iQOS cigarette system in Japan and Italy toward the end of this year, the company told investors in July. PMI's heat-not-burn system uses a rechargeable battery-powered holder into which a filter-tipped, "HeatStick" containing tobacco is inserted. Heat sticks initially will come in three Marlboro versions; rich, light and menthol.

Graphic warnings ordered: Sri Lanka's Supreme Court ordered the country's leading tobacco product manufacturer, Ceylon Tobacco Co. (CTC), to cover 60 percent of the front and back of cigarette packs with graphic health warnings, according to ColomboPage. The ruling will come into effect for any packs released on to the market from Jan. 1, 2015.

Outdoors smoking ban: Selected outdoor venues will be added to the smoking ban in Turkey's public places and smoke-free buffer zones created around shopping malls and the areas to reduce inhalation of secondhand smoke, the Daily Sabah reported. Restaurants and cafes that previously were allowed to seat smoking customers outdoors will be required to create smoking and non-smoking sections, the publication said on its Web site.

EU menthol ban challenge: Poland has submitted a complaint to the European Court of Justice denouncing the European Union's (EU's) tobacco product directive, the Polish Government Information Centre reported. Its focus is the ban on the sale of menthol cigarettes from 2020 in EU member states. The prohibition of menthol cigarettes has long been opposed in Poland due to the country's large menthol market.

Graphic warning bills pass: Separate bills requiring graphic health warnings on cigarette packaging were approved by the Senate and House of Representatives in the Philippines, according to the online site GMA News. The Senate version would require warnings covering half the display area, while the House of Representatives voted to reserve 40 percent, GMA said. A conference committee comprised of both houses is expected to reconcile the two versions.

See *International news* on page 11

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Bacterial wilt

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Interesting Topping Results

Recent trials indicate that disease severity is directly associated with MH applications at various timing intervals.

"We found that MH is extremely effective in suppressing the bacterium that causes bacterial wilt disease in tobacco," Peterson says. "However, timing is critical. If MH is applied four days prior to topping, it was not uncommon to see a 50% to 60% reduction in spread due to mechanical topping, and in some cases even higher reduction rates.



"If we applied MH outside of the four-day window, we did not note suppression effects," he adds. "Our theory is that the effect of the MH application is tied to a plant growth regulator effect within the plant."

As a result, the recommendation is pretty straightforward:

- Apply MH (Royal MH-30) four days prior to topping to minimize the spread of bacterial wilt by topping machinery.

"This falls easily within label recommendations," says Peterson, "and tailors the application to be most effective and obtain the best bacterial wilt control results."

Harvest Remains Tricky

Preventing the spread of bacterial wilt at harvest is proving to be a bigger challenge. "It's more problematic; there are more moving parts with harvest equipment," says Fortnum.

Preliminary results show that adding a product like Royaltac[®] (C-10) to cutter blades appears to be an effective solution to cut down on bacterial spread. Additional tests are pending, as are recommendations. But the research offers hope.

"We're building a management system," conclude Fortnum and Peterson.

"Adding MH to the plant prior to topping followed by C-10 applied to cutter blades and defoliations doesn't require additional equipment, and in addition with best management practices, gives growers ways to prevent serious losses from bacterial wilt," Fortnum says.

"There are still modifications to be made, but we've been able to reduce disease incidence down to premechanization levels with these tools."

1 Peterson P, Fortnum B. Evaluation of Maleic Hydrazide for the Control of Bacterial Wilt on Mechanically Topped and Harvested Tobacco, 2013. Clemson University.

E-market quantified

A search of English-language Web sites revealed 466 brands of e-cigarettes and 7,764 flavored liquids, a University of California study shows. "Older brands tend to highlight their advantages over conventional cigarettes

while newer brands emphasize consumer choice in multiple flavors and product versatility," says the study published in *Tobacco Control*.

The research performed at the University of California at San Diego is the first comprehensive study of e-cigarette brands sold on the Internet, the study states. In the 17 months between a survey done in May-August 2012, and December-January 2014, an average 10.5 e-cigarette brands and 242 flavors per month were introduced, the study shows. **Tobacco Journal**



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Investor sues to block Lorillard sale

A Lorillard investor filed suit to block the proposed takeover of the U.S. cigarette maker by Reynolds American, a deal that also involves international players British American tobacco and Imperial Tobacco, Bloomberg reported. Investor Vincent Valentino is seeking to represent all Lorillard shareholders in a suit filed in Delaware Chancery Court that claims the Lorillard offer favors Reynolds American, according to the news agency. **Tobacco Journal**

Trilogy tray

Continued from page 1

David Reed, an Extension agronomist at the Southern Piedmont Research Station in Blackstone, Va., says growers will find these new trays much easier to sanitize than current EPS trays. In EPS trays, he says roots can grow into the Styrofoam, making it extremely difficult to sanitize. With the loss of methyl bromide fumigation, growers will experience an even more difficult time trying to sanitize the EPS trays. So Reed is encouraged by the breakthrough of BeltWide's Trilogy Plastic Float Tray.

The overall benefits that they see of the plastic tray include:

- Trilogy is easier and less costly to sanitize with traditional cleaners. Just remove the organic material completely and dry.
- The tray is made of sturdier construction with a longer-life span.
- It provides more consistent seedling growth over the life of the tray.
- The tray assists in controlling seedling disease.
- Trilogy trays are made from recycled material and are totally recyclable.
- The tray eliminates EPS seedling trays as a source for NRTMs; it starts clean, reduces disease carryover pressure.

Tray testing

For the 2014 growing season, Reed has tested prototypes of the BeltWide Trilogy Plastic Float Tray extensively in the greenhouse this spring and ongoing into the summer. His testing reveals a well-designed and performing tray that he says represents a viable alternative to today's EPS float trays.

Miglianti says current EPS trays in the tobacco industry account for about 10-million pounds of non-recyclable seedling tray material.

The Trilogy Plastic Float Tray is made of black, sturdy plastic and has a ribbed inside cell to help with root system growth. In the



Chuck Miglianti (holding tray) with BeltWide discusses the benefits of his new Trilogy Plastic Float Tray to people attending the Cross Creek Seed Field Day in late August 2014. Photo courtesy of R.F. Timberlake & Company Inc.

greenhouse, Reed grew seedlings in these new plastic float trays then transplanted the seedlings to the field this spring. "Everything transplanted very well, so we're real excited about the prospects of this as an alternative to our EPS trays," he says. "We're thinking that rib is going to help with the root development and help lock that plant in the cell. I've been really pleased with the root development of these trays."

Miglianti says Reed's tests show that more roots are grown in the tray cell when the ribs are present, so more roots mean a bigger stem which equals a better plant.

The tray weight is different because of the material used. The polypropylene material is solid compared with EPS which is full of air. Miglianti says the polypropylene tray "has solid walls, not permeable and will weigh more because of it. However, because of the material and weight, we expect it to last as long as a grower needs it. Polypropylene-molded vegetable trays are still in use after 30 years."

The plastic tray floats similar to the EPS tray, "although it does sit lower into the water," Miglianti says. "It also helps to place the trays into the water level, not sideways, don't throw them in."

Reed says an EPS tray weighs about a half a pound; whereas, the polypropylene tray weighs about four to five pounds. He says the EPS tray floats because it is lighter than water. However, the plastic tray is heavier than water. To make the polypropylene tray float, the design is built with compartments underneath it. When floating on water, special compartments on the underside of the tray trap air and provide floatation for the tray.

Reed will continue to do more tests on the tray. So far, he and Miglianti are pleased with the results of his rigorous testing, and the black color of the tray shows some benefit to plant growth. "I suspect some of the agronomic success we've had with the polypropylene tray is because of the black color-absorbing heat, accelerating early plant growth," Miglianti says, and he says the black tray takes advantage of recycled material as a lower input cost. White material, on the other hand, is made of virgin material and is considerably more expensive.

Proptek, an English company owned by John Cooley, is a partner with Miglianti on this new tray project. Miglianti says Cooley has developed polypropylene trays for the vegetable industry throughout the world as

See Miglianti on page 12

Mantews on tobacco

device may not be as important as the existence and use would be. Every crop should be managed for the best cure possible; however, this year this may be more important than usual. Since the cost to take a crop to the curing phase does not vary appreciably relative to weather and production practices, and you have done the best you can to this point to produce a high-quality crop, it becomes very important to manage the cure and stripping activities to provide the highest quality grade possible to maximize the return. What happens during the cure and in the stripping room may determine the profitability of the crop. Contact your company grower representative and/or county agent for the latest information on curing and curing management for the type of curing structure(s) you are using. The conditions necessary for a good curing environment are known. The management of these conditions can vary depending on the type of curing structure and its location relative to weather factors.

Contracts generally specify price relative to quality grade. The difference between the contract price of a quality grade 1 and a quality grade 3 can have a significant impact on the gross return for a crop. Attention to detail while preparing the crop for market will result in obtaining the highest quality grade possible. Check with your grower representative for guidelines in preparing the crop to obtain the highest grade possible. Some reports indicate potential for a production level in excess of the contracted level of production. Will this be a factor in determining the quality grade of a crop?

Pay close attention to the moisture content of cured tobacco. Some companies require lower moisture content than others. Know the moisture levels your customer wants and will allow and try to provide what is wanted by knowing what your leaf moisture content is. The following table gives a relative moisture rating related to relative humidity. Keep in mind that the tobacco needs to have been exposed to the given conditions for an appropriate length of time.

Table 1: Feel of Cured Tobacco Flyings in Relation to Relative Humidity^a

Feel of Cured Leaf	Relative Humidity (Percent)
High case	90 to 100
Medium to high case	85 to 90
Medium case	80 to 85
Low to medium case	75 to 80
Low case	70 to 75
Dry to low case	65 to 70
Dry	60 to 65
Dry to brittle	55 to 60
Brittle	50 to 55
Fragile	0 to 50

^aFrom Kentucky Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 501 "Principles of Burley Tobacco Barn Operation"

A grower recently told me about a friend who said, "If you put a big juicy steak in front of me, and I am full of chicken. I don't want the steak." Let's try for steak and hope everyone is hungry.

Until next time,
Mantews

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Greetings all,
This article's target audience is active burley producers.

As we complete the burley harvest and move into the curing phase of another crop, there are some things which should be addressed. Weather conditions have given us just about every combination of growing conditions imaginable. Not only has this been true for growers across the burley production belt, but in

some cases is true for individual growers. Generally, a crop is handled relative to the growing season prevalent for that year, and decisions made relative to harvest, housing, curing and market preparation can be applied across the board for that year. This year may be a little different because of the wide range of growing conditions. Growers who have crops grown several

miles apart have experienced significantly varied growing conditions and may need to handle them differently. If these varying conditions continue, curing conditions may also vary significantly. We have all experienced the situation where the conditions reported by the local TV station do not accurately describe the conditions around us. Investment in an inexpensive device to monitor temperature and relative humidity might be a good investment. Stepping out on a limb a bit, the accuracy of such a



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International news*Continued from page 6*

Cigarette tax hiked: President Abdel Fattah alSisi raised tax on cigarettes by 50 percent and alcoholic beverages by up to 200 percent, a measure his predecessor Mohammed Morsi was forced to roll back, the Daily News of Egypt said. Although the percentage increase on a cigarette tax is steep, the English-language newspaper said the impact will be to raise the price of a pack of cigarettes.

Plain-pack warning: European trademark protection groups in a joint statement criticized Ireland's government plans to introduce uniform packaging for tobacco products, saying the proposal amounts to indirect expropriation of commercial rights, according to the Irish Independent.

Plain-pack draft regs: A set of draft regulations on uniform packaging for tobacco products is included in a second and final public consultation announced by the Health Department. The draft covers cigarette and roll-your-own (RYO) packaging, and requirements for the appearance of individual cigarettes. Products such as cigars would not be subject to plain packaging. The consultation will run until Aug. 7, the Health Department said.

A prior consultation was held in 2012 and was followed by the Chantler Review published this April that concluded plain packs would have a positive impact on public health. Draft regulations applying to cigarettes and roll-your-own tobaccos stipulate a uniform drab brown, matt finish for pack surfaces with standard typeface for brand and variant names. Inside pack surfaces would be white or drab brown, the consultation document states.

Health warnings would be in line with new European Union rules for cigarettes and RYO that require graphic messages covering 65 percent front/back, and printed warnings on 50 percent of the sides.

Specialist tobacco products would not be subjected to UK plain packaging because they are not popular with youth.

Individual cigarettes would be white with cork tipping and specified type and location for brand names. There are, as yet, no restrictions on size and length of cigarettes.

RYO packs may be cuboid, cylindrical or in pouch form. Pack surfaces must be smooth, with no embossing. Foils must be fully clear and transparent, according to the draft.

Imperial to shutter Bishkek: Imperial Tobacco plans to close its cigarette factory in Bishkek due to overcapacity, according to the Times of Central Asia. Citing a Kyrgyz government announcement, the Web site said. Imperial subsidiary Reemstma Cigarettenfabriken invested \$60 million in the Bishkek factory after entering the local market in the late 1990s.

JT enters e-cigarette market: Japan Tobacco (JT) has entered the electronic cigarette sector by acquiring Zandera, a United Kingdom company known for its E-Lites brand, the company reports. Zandera management would remain, according to JT.

JT also markets Ploom, a product that enables users to draw vapor from tobacco pods.



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polypropylene trays over the years,” Miglianti says.

He and Cooley have worked on the specific design of the tobacco plastic float tray for more than three years. Miglianti says this design is the first to float successfully.

Since few molders are available in the United States for this specialized design, Miglianti says he sought the help of an international company that specializes in difficult injection molding. “Think of room temperature material being heated to 600 Fahrenheit injected into a 650-ton press, formed to a tray, then cooled back to room temperature and ejected in 30 seconds,” he says. “It is incredible technology; detailed and expensive, and much different than EPS tray molding.”

The final design of the top of the tray will look identical to EPS trays today and will feature identical center to center of the cell dimension to the present EPS BeltWide tray. It also has the traditional end and side edge **so present-day seeding equipment will work properly with the new tray.**

Reed tested cell designs of a 10cc capacity and traditional 15cc in the 288-cell trays. “We know that an 8.6cc 288-cell capacity works successfully in U.S. tobacco seedling production, both from a survival at outplanting and going through the setter standpoint,” Miglianti says. “We settled on 12.5cc. This gives the grower more cell room than is required for the plant to develop its roots in the

well as for the tree-seedling industry. “More than 85 percent of the EPS trays in California have been replaced by his

cell for strong plant development, as well as the wet media and root weight needed to fall through the setter at outplanting.”

For the 2014-2015 growing season, Miglianti says the trays will come in 288-size cells. Besides the 288 size in the 2015-2016 growing season, they will come in 338 and then 242-cell size. The tray depth will be about the same as BeltWide’s 288 trays

which are 2- inches deep. “The critical design issue was that this tray must go through the present seeding equipment as it is,” he says. “EPS trays, as growers know, will shrink over time. These will not.”

Availability and price

Growers can expect to purchase the plastic float trays soon. They will start to be made in October 2014. Price is expected to be around \$6.50 per tray, which Miglianti says to be 2 to 2.5 times the cost of a high-density EPS tray. “We are working on the details of the inevitable warehousing and inventory costs versus passing those significant costs as savings onto the grower, who may schedule his tray order early and take his trays in the offseason,” he says. “Anyway, as we look at it on an annual basis, the polypropylene tray will be considerably cheaper than the EPS tray and much more predictable to start the next crop—from a clean standpoint.”

BeltWide’s east coast sales manager, Ray DeBruhl, added, “Chuck and David Reed are on target. Reaction at an eastern North Carolina tobacco field day was phenomenal, and growers were delighted to find out that BeltWide has taken, and is taking, advance Trilogy tray orders now.”

Miglianti says traditional farm supply distribution channels will market the new trays. **TN**



The new BeltWide Trilogy Float Tray will come in a 12.5cc design so the plant will have more cell room to develop healthy roots and heavier root weight necessary to fall through the setter.