

August 30, 2005

Dear NW Ohio Greenhouse Grower:



Increasing your market and looking for ways to reduce your energy costs are two of the first projects being tackled by the Northwest Ohio Greenhouse Cluster. I've been appointed to work as Champion of the Greenhouse Cluster and I'm looking forward to talking with you about what problems in your business the Cluster could address.

Clusters are groups of growers that, while still competing in the market, come together to cooperate in solving problems common to all. Each cluster has one person, a "Champion", who coordinates the activities of the group and finds expertise and technology in the Toledo area that can help work on the problems the cluster board has identified. The Toledo Greenhouse Cluster is funded by a US Department of Agriculture grant through Representative Marcy Kaptur's office for at least the next two years and is the first greenhouse cluster in the United States.

When I began as the Greenhouse Cluster Champion, I found that no one has a true picture of the size of the greenhouse industry in Northwest Ohio. USDA and other surveys really don't give a complete picture of the number of growers in the area, the total production area and the number of industry jobs. This information is extremely important when working with federal, state and local governmental agencies to support the greenhouse industry in the region. When I visit your operation, I'll ask your total covered and outdoor production area, the crops you grow (bedding plants, pot, plants etc.) and the number of your full-time and part-time employees (including family members). This information will be totally confidential and combined with data from all the other growers so that no individual firm can be identified. I think the government and even the industry itself doesn't realize the amount greenhouses contribute to the Toledo area economy.

I'll be contacting you early in September to see when I can come and talk to you. I'm looking forward to seeing those of you I've worked with before and meeting those growers whom I don't know. I've been in the greenhouse industry for more than 40 years and, the Northwest Ohio Greenhouse Cluster is the most exciting thing that I've ever worked on, because I truly believe that by participating in the Cluster, Northwest Ohio growers can continue to be competitive in today's rapidly changing production and marketing environment.

Sincerely

Dean M. Krauskopf, Ph.D.