Spring High Tunnel Fertility
Judson Reid, CCE Cornell Vegetable Program

April is transplant time for high tunnel tomatoes in New York. Through ongoing work with Cornell Vegetable Program and NOFA-NY, we have observed that long term high tunnel sustainability requires attention to detail on soil nutrients. The challenge in soil-based production is that the soil acts as a bank for phosphorus (and calcium and magnesium) and the build-up over time interferes with other nutrient uptake. So we generally are not recommending fertilizers with P beyond the first year. For conventional growers, nutrient additions can be restricted to a 10-0-0 or urea; plus the K product of their choice. For organic growers, we suggest a straight N source such as soy, alfalfa, blood or feather meal plus sulfate of potash.

✓ Soil test ASAP. We prefer a Fall test, as warmer, biologically active samples will give more accurate results, particularly for P and N, but a Spring test is better than none.

✓ Adjust soil pH. In nearly every high tunnel that has been in place for more than one year we find pH on the rise. This needs to be checked with annual applications of elemental sulfur.

✓ Add potassium based on test results. The benefit of sulfate of potash is additional sulfur to react with excess calcium already in the soil.

Foliar testing throughout the season is essential for fine tuning these rates and any other nutrients of concern. The other key factor for long-term productivity is to keep irrigation water on the acid side; reducing pH and alkalinity to low 6’s and 0-50 ppm bicarbonate, achieved with the addition of sulfuric (conventional) or citric (organic) acids. To determine rates we need a water test and Spring is the time to get this done. If you have questions on labs that provide these services, or you would like interpretation of your test results, call Judson or Cordelia. This work has been funded by the New York Farm Viability Institute.

U.S. EPA Denies Activist Petition and Retains All Chlorpyrifos Tolerances
Phil Jost, Dow AgroSciences, 3/29/17

[This just in! Active ingredient chlorpyrifos (trade name Lorsban) will continue to be available for vegetable growers. Onion growers use Lorsban for onion maggot control. Cabbage growers use Lorsban for controlling cabbage maggot. Ed. C. Hoepfing, CCE CVP.]

On October 30, 2015, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a proposal to revoke U.S. food tolerances for the insecticide chlorpyrifos. This proposal was an outcome of a Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals decision ordering EPA to respond to allegations about chlorpyrifos in a 2007 petition from the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) and Pesticide Action Network North America (PANNA), even before the Agency had finished its formal health and safety evaluations of the product underway in registration review.

On November 17, 2016, the EPA released a Notice of Data Availability (NODA) with accompanying assessments to notify the public of the data that the Agency may use to support its proposed decision to revoke all chlorpyrifos tolerances. Both of these releases by EPA offered the opportunity for public comment and many comments were submitted in support of retaining chlorpyrifos tolerances from universities, stakeholders, growers, and customers in the ensuing comment periods. Dow AgroSciences also submitted a comprehensive response to both EPA releases.

U.S. EPA on 29 March 2017 announced that it would not proceed forward at this time with any restrictions for chlorpyrifos or changes to U.S. tolerances. In addition, EPA has notified the Courts that it is denying the NGO petition in full. Instead, EPA announced that it will focus its attention on updating and revising its human health assessment for chlorpyrifos under the standard procedures of the Registration Review process scheduled for completion on October 1, 2022 in order to support future decision making.

Dow AgroSciences believes the science and established legal and regulatory standards and processes support the EPA decision to deny the activist petition and retain all chlorpyrifos tolerances. Dow AgroSciences remains confident that authorized uses of chlorpyrifos products offer wide margins of protection for human health and safety. This is the right decision for farmers who, in about 100 countries, rely on the effectiveness of chlorpyrifos to protect more than 50 crops from damaging insect pests, some of which are can only be effectively controlled with chlorpyrifos. Dow AgroSciences will continue to cooperate with EPA under the established Registration Review process in its scientific review of this important crop protection solution.