Managing (?) Pepper Weevil in New Jersey

Joe Ingerson-Mahar
Rutgers University
New Jersey history with PW

- Serious infestations have occurred in New Jersey in the past
- 2004 infestation begins ‘modern era’ with nearly annual infestations
Not endemic to New Jersey

• An invasive pest each year
• PW cannot overwinter in New Jersey
  – There are annual hot spots but otherwise PW can show up anywhere
• Vegetable processing plants are our main source of PW
  – Other sources: terminal markets and migrant workers(?)
Our situation

• Early pepper plantings from end of April thru May
  – Later plantings mid to late June
  – Both early and late plantings expected to go season long
  – About 3300 acres @ $33 million

• Our farmers expect 5 or more pickings

• As the ‘Garden State’, we have many vegetable processing facilities
How to manage

• Insecticides only suppress populations
• Must avoid infestations
  – Distance of fields from processor – 1 ½ mile
  – Be aware of field geography
  – First detection
PW still a problem

• 2014 – 2016 no significant infestations
• 2017 – one farm estimated loss of $100,000
  – Another small pepper farmer – no harvested peppers
• 2018 – only one farm known to have an infestation with yield loss
• Still a concern – open dumpsters and residue piles in the field
Processor issues

• What about pepper waste and pick-out?
  – Covered dumpsters?
  – Heated waste?
New strategies

• Traps in high traffic areas
• Traps in farm markets
• Flooding the zone in the field
  – Sticky cards around area of detection
• Removal of aborted fruit
  – Demands good weed control
At the farm market

Farm markets and areas around the packing shed are high traffic areas where PW will likely first come to the farm.
Flooding the zone
Our most prolific trap site

Questions?