



Survey of Needs and Priorities for Saffron Research and Development

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Saffron shows promise as a high-value specialty crop. A survey among subscribers on the University of Vermont Saffron Center email listserv (Saffronnet) was conducted to identify what type of grower is interested in growing saffron. This survey was done over a 1-month period (February 2017) to identify interests and priorities among the subscribers. As of March 6, 2017, there are currently 135 subscribers and we received 55 responses to our survey, a return rate of over 40%. Responses were received from 15 states (from as far away as California to the west and Virginia to the south) and the province of Quebec, and 23% were from Vermont. Most of the respondents (38%) were growers, including organic and conventional producers; 33% described themselves as future commercial saffron growers; and 18% were home growers who are interested in growing saffron to supplement their income. Of the respondents who were commercial growers, 19% produce field-grown vegetables; 12% grow herbs in the field and 12% grow vegetables in high tunnels. Over 90% of the respondents do not grow saffron in the field; 96% don't grow it in high tunnels or greenhouses. Around 95% of the respondents intend to grow saffron within the next 5 years; 29% intend to grow less than 1/8 of an acre; 30% intend to grow between 1/2 acre to over 1 acre. When asked how they would grow saffron; 57% said they would grow it in a greenhouse or high tunnel, either in the ground or in crates. When growers were asked what would help them with production or marketing, the three topic that were identified as the most helpful were drying and processing saffron; pest, disease and rodent management; and fertility (Table 1). When asked what services would help them the most with production and marketing of saffron, 94% said they would like guidelines for saffron production and 92% wanted information about where to purchase corms (Table 2).

Table 1. What questions do you have about saffron that would help you with production or marketing?

	Not needed	Somewhat Helpful	Very Helpful
Production methods in high tunnels	4.00%	22.00%	74.00%
Production methods in low tunnels	15.38%	33.33%	51.28%
Production in the field	11.90%	23.81%	64.29%
Field preparation before planting	9.30%	25.58%	65.12%
Soil type	4.55%	13.64%	81.82%
Fertility	2.17%	8.70%	89.13%
Irrigation/watering	2.13%	10.64%	87.23%
Pest, disease and rodent management	0.00%	10.87%	89.13%
Weed management	5.00%	30.00%	65.00%
Harvesting of saffron	4.35%	8.70%	86.96%
Drying and processing of saffron	4.35%	0.00%	95.65%
Saffron quality analysis	4.55%	9.09%	86.36%
Saffron corm production	0.00%	16.28%	83.72%
Saffron corm processing	2.27%	15.91%	81.82%
Local market opportunities	4.35%	10.87%	84.78%
National market opportunities	7.32%	9.76%	82.93%
Culinary uses	14.63%	34.15%	51.22%
Medicinal uses	9.52%	30.95%	59.52%

