

#### **10. What I Tell Others of the Project:**

I tell other growers that participating in this project has been of great benefit to me professionally and personally. This project gave me the opportunity to develop a planting system that I had believed was beyond my technical capabilities and will enable me to increase production. I also learned many new valuable management practices. The exercise of establishing the planting in sequences taught me not to hurry my work, but to take it in stages, thus the pace at which we work is always a pace that myself and crew are sure of handling. We also learned to keep our rows shorter. Prior to this project all rows had been 400' long. For this project we made rows 250' since one box of plants contain 1,000 and at 2 plants per foot the two row planter would make one pass per box. We found the shortened rows much less discouraging to care for compared to our former 400'. Each row now took 15 min. to hoe and workers had the feeling of accomplishing something rather than defeated as we often felt after half an hour of hoeing a long row. Hoeing two rows in the same time gives us better morale and is more efficient since we are hoeing 500' in the time that we used to hoe 400'. Accounting for the costs of the project and analyzing the work of the farm was an education in itself.

Publicity of the project in local papers has given my and the collaborating farm good press that generated new customers. An additional benefit was that the Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance recruited me to go to the Republic of Armenia to teach Armenian farmers how to grow strawberries. I conducted a project in April of 1996 and have been asked to return April of 1997 to work with more Armenian farmers.

#### **11. Outreach**

Outreach in 1995 included: Farm tours to other farmers by CISA, Community Involved Sustaining Agriculture; Public education through a farm display/bulletin board during the picking season; September Twilight Meeting sponsored by UMass Cooperative Extension.

Outreach in 1996 included: May Twilight Meeting sponsored by UMass Cooperative Extension; farm educational display and guided tours during picking season; Slide presentation in August at the NOFA Mass Summer Conference at Hampshire College.

Outreach in 1997 included: Slide presentation in January at the NOFA Mass Winter Conference, Barre, MA.

Twilight meetings were meetings of other strawberry growers and UMass Extension specialists. Farmers were able to inspect the machinery used in the project and examine the plantings and discuss the project with one another. Conference presentations were slide and lecture series to farmers/growers who were growing strawberries or prospective strawberry growers.