According to a recent University of Wisconsin College of Agricultural and Life Sciences study summarized in 2013, the Wisconsin cranberry industry continues to advance in ways that optimize production, use the latest horticulture research and protect the environment.

The following ongoing improvements in sustainable cranberry production are highlights from the most recent UW survey that looked closely at the growing and management practices on approximately 70 percent of Wisconsin’s cranberry acreage.

• For every one acre in cranberry production, cranberry producers own another 6.3 acres of support land that is conserved as wildlife habitat. A diversity of species, ranging from eagles to wolves, is often seen around the marsh or its support lands.

• Responsible water use is a priority to cranberry growers. 57% of growers surveyed use sophisticated soil moisture monitoring equipment to make informed decisions about when to irrigate the crop. This is up from 36% of growers just four years ago, and it is expected that the number of growers adopting this technology will increase even more as the technology is refined.

• 92% of growers monitor temperature in their cranberry marsh beds to know exactly when frost will occur. This helps growers determine when to use sprinklers to protect the crop and ensures that only the water needed to protect the fruit is used.

• 92% of cranberry growers test their soil and plant tissue to determine the amount of fertilizer inputs needed to fulfill the plant’s needs yet not oversupply in a wasteful manner.

• 69% of cranberry growers hire a professionally trained integrated pest management (IPM) expert or independent crop consultant. These consultants are trained on the latest technology to provide regular advice to growers on how to sustainably and effectively manage crops and pests on the marsh.

• Growers keep up with the latest research and industry trends to optimize their business and reduce risk of environmental impact. More than half of growers attended ecological education events in the past three years and 64% reported attending continuous education events that focused on farm, crop and ecosystem management.

• 52% of growers have conducted on-farm research in collaboration with University of Wisconsin-Madison and UW Extension scientists. These growers are critical players in developing and implementing new, low-risk growing practices.

• Cranberries are an integral part of the rural economy in Wisconsin. 81% of growers buy their farm inputs from local sources when available.