



# Discussion Topic

MARCH 2010

A monthly resource for the Community Action Groups of Michigan Farm Bureau

## MSU AG RESTRUCTURING: WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

**By July 1, 2010, Michigan State University's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) will have completed an effort to streamline its entire structure, including ag research and the Extension service.**

Despite assurances from university officials that services to county farmers through local Extension offices will not be curtailed, there's a common assumption that service will wane. But without serious restructuring, MSU cannot continue to effectively and economically provide services. The new structure will retain, at least for now, an Extension office in every county in which one stands. But the director of each office will be gone, replaced by a single regional director. Programs will be divided into four institutes. See the Jan. 30 issue of Michigan Farm News for details.

As the university begins to change Extension's structure, county Farm Bureaus and their members will need to adapt, said Tom Nugent, director of the field operations division at Michigan Farm Bureau. "First, members must ask themselves which MSUE programs they use now. What services are important right now?" he said. "County Farm Bureaus must learn how to access the information that will still be available. But the ways they get it will change. Knowing how they get information will look quite a bit different in the near future. Farmers need to adapt," Nugent said.

"Don't be afraid of the technology," said Nugent. "You may have to provide more effort into getting it, but if things go the way they should, your effort will be rewarded with quicker, better information that you can use. For example, if you have a problem on your dairy you haven't seen before, you should be able to contact the MSUE expert, no matter where he or she is, ask the question and have an answer, all without leaving the milking parlor or waiting for a person to arrive."

Despite technology, Nugent said farmers should still develop a relationship with the new MSUE district director. "He or she is the person to go to if you come to the point where you think you're not getting what you want and need out of Extension," he said. "This new system will probably be a work in progress for some time, with adjustments and bolt-tightening to make it run as efficiently as possible."

The bottom line?

Don't rush to judgment too soon. "As always, what you put into Extension will determine what you get out of it," said Nugent.



### QUESTIONS

1. What can your county Farm Bureau do to be sure farmers continue to have MSU Extension services available to them?
2. How important is it to you that MSU continue to conduct research at Experiment Stations and distribute findings to the ag community?
3. Which services does MSUE provide that the farming community cannot do without? Which programs are expendable?