

## Farm Bureau honors Hillsdale member for service, dedication

Marvin Sober of Hillsdale has been recognized by Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) as the organization's Volunteer of the Month for April 2006. In addition to serving as Hillsdale County Farm Bureau's vice president, Sober is active in the organization's promotion and education (P&E) and policy development committees.



Sober's extensive connection with the agriculture industry across south-central Michigan — and northern Ohio and Indiana — puts him in an advantageous position for advocating Farm Bureau programs. He helped spur sufficient advertiser interest to enable the Hillsdale Daily News to run a regular agriculture page, and pushed for improving communication across county lines to streamline policy recommendations to the state-level Farm Bureau organization.

Assisting his wife on the P&E committee, Sober has taken an aggressive role in reinforcing the public's positive image of the agriculture industry by promoting the proactive steps Michigan farmers take to safeguard the environment. Also helping maintain good relations between the farming and non-farming communities, he helped coordinate an awareness campaign educating motorists about slow-moving vehicle (SMV) emblems, and how to properly share the road with farm equipment. Hillsdale County Farm Bureau's SMV awareness campaign went on to enjoy wider recognition at the Michigan Farm Bureau's 2005 Annual Meeting and the American Farm Bureau Federation's 2006 Annual Meeting in Nashville, Tenn.

"Marv is an ideal volunteer because of the dedication he gives to the industry," wrote Sober's nominator for the Volunteer of the Month award. "His positive attitude has shown others he is serious about addressing problems effectively and professionally."

With his wife Jan, Sober operates a dairy supply business in Hillsdale that has served the region's farmers for more than 30 years. At their home farm they raise Texas Longhorn and Scottish Highland cattle.

## District Policy Development Meetings

Michigan Farm Bureau will be hosting a series of District Policy Development issue surfacing meetings this summer. As a leader in agriculture, you can have an important role in helping to produce good agricultural policy that can result in increasing your farm income. Farm Bureau's nationally recognized grassroots policy-making process has a proven track record for identifying issues and innovative ideas that, when implemented, have influenced

key policy makers to enact policies to grow your business, reduce your economic and regulatory burdens, and improve your ability to make a profit.

Meetings dates, times and locations are being coordinated by your MFB Regional Representative. The following lists the schedule of the 2006 meetings:

• District 4	June 1	7 p.m.	Grand Rapids
• District 3	June 6	7:30 p.m.	Ann Arbor
• District 9	June 7	7 p.m.	Mesick
• District 8	June 13	7 p.m.	Midland
• District 2	June 15	7:30 p.m.	Hillsdale
• District 6	June 21	7 p.m.	TBA
• District 5	June 28	6:30 p.m.	Lansing
• District 1	June 29	7 p.m.	Cassopolis
• District 10	July 13	6:30 p.m.	Gaylord
• District 7	July 27	tent.TBA	TBA
• District 11	August 29	6:30 p.m. EST	Marquette

## CAG'S Speak on Electronic Animal I.D.

We asked "How can your county Farm Bureau help the cattle industry implement the electronic I.D. program to the benefit of everyone, farmers and consumers alike?" You said, by giving positive information and being supportive, farmers will be equipped with information to make the switch. You would also like county Farm Bureaus to hold educational seminars on the equipment and new regulations. You also thought if Farm Bureau made the equipment available to farmers at a discount, it would be a great advantage.

Then we asked "What other method could be used to identify cattle and trace them back to the farm of origin as efficiently?" Most of you answered, that you were unaware of any other method that would be as fast and efficient as electronic animal I.D. The exception would be the learning curve involved in learning to use the new equipment. Still others are content with branding and ear tags, the current animal I.D. method.

Lastly we asked, "What is the value of safer, quicker, more efficient tag reading compared to reading metal tags now?" You told us, we would have better relationships with foreign countries importing beef because the electronic I.D. would show more efficient disease control. All information on a particular animal would be accessible at your fingertips. The electronic I.D. would hold more information than traditional metal ear tags and remain in the animal's ear better. Also, by eliminating the need for physical contact with the animal safety will be heightened.

The



## State's first major bio-diesel plant under construction

Michigan Bio-diesel isn't exactly in the heart of Michigan's traditional soybean belt, but there are a few things that make it just fine where it is, in a Van Buren County industrial park.

The Bangor facility is still at least two months from producing its first gallon, but it's already reaching out to other businesses in other counties.

Ottawa County's Zeeland Farm Services (ZFS), due north, is the most likely source of top-quality soybean oil, since it's the nearest bean crusher.

"I hope we supply Bangor," said Rob Meeuwssen, specialty oils manager with the family-run ZFS. "They'll have to buy at the best price, but I expect us to be competitive."

Michigan Bio-diesel should have an edge over other bio-diesel plants, even if soybean oil becomes pricey, said John Oakley, chairman of Michigan Bio-diesel's Board of Managers.

"Soybean oil is part of our insurance policy," he said. "We can use any type of oil or grease, tallow, poultry fat, soybean oil, corn oil, olive oil. And we are capable of changing our feedstock in eight hours. That's what's unique about our system."

The plant will contain 26 tanks, Oakley said, eight of which will hold feedstock, and eight to hold finished product. At first, the feedstock is expected to be soybean oil, from which the plant will produce and sell an estimated 10 million gallons of B100 (100 percent bio-diesel), with potential to double or triple that capacity, Oakley said. Quality will be a top priority, he said.

"We felt from the start that Michigan BioDiesel will be known for its high-quality product," Oakley said. "In our business plan, we wanted to be sure that every gallon that goes out the door will be treated with an additive to maintain a longer shelf life. We will have a quality control tank, and we'll use only top-quality soy oil at the start so that our product is consistent."

Michigan BioDiesel currently has 65 investors, Oakley said, and 56 of them are farmers.



June 2006



## Membership Standings

	2006	5/24/06	
Goal	203,012	154,096	84.16%
Target	47,566	40,031	75.90%

The FB Update video is now available to view online at [www.michiganfarmbureau.com/video](http://www.michiganfarmbureau.com/video)



7373 West Saginaw Hwy.  
Lansing, MI 48917  
(517) 323-7000

[www.michiganfarmbureau.com](http://www.michiganfarmbureau.com)

For questions, comments and suggestions, please contact Mike Wenkel at ext. 3232

A LOOK AHEAD ...

### June

- Spring county newsletter deadline
- YPCS
- Membership Chairman's Trip

### July

- Ag Expo, MSU Campus
- County Policy Development

### August

- AgriPAC
- Primary Election

• **July Discussion Topic: Friends of Agriculture** - Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) prides itself on being a grassroots organization, pooling its membership to develop policy and plan programs to promote agriculture and natural resources. AgriPAC, Farm Bureau's political action committee, was formed in 1978 as another way to involve members who choose which candidates to endorse for state and federal elective offices.

"The purpose of the committee is to gather input from county Farm Bureaus regarding prospective candidates, decide who to endorse, and help elect the candidates who will support Farm Bureau policy win election to public office," Candidates endorsed by MFB's AgriPAC committee earn the designation "Friend of Agriculture."

## 'Tis the season: be aware of anhydrous ammonia theft and meth

Now that anhydrous tanks are in full use, farmers are urged to take all necessary precautions against theft.



The Michigan State Police Methamphetamine Investigation Unit reports that the number of anhydrous ammonia thefts and meth lab seizures in Michigan have increased significantly since 2000. Studies show that meth is also highly addictive. Meth use causes skin sores, severe tooth decay, hair loss, depression, brain damage, psychotic behavior, and even death. Family members and children who are in homes where a meth lab is in operation are also at risk.

It is not difficult to learn to make methamphetamine, however, the process and the ingredients are extremely dangerous. Clean-up crews must wear protective equipment when cleaning up a meth lab that has been closed down. Lab residues that remain on lab equipment, walls, floors, furniture, and discarded materials include acids, caustics, solvents, and other hazardous materials. These toxins can cause burns, rashes and tissue irritation, while vapors can cause dizziness, nausea and other health effects. Because of this, anyone who might come into contact with equipment or supplies previously used by a meth producer should learn to recognize a lab or lab components and then call the appropriate authorities. Never handle materials that you suspect may have been used in the production of meth.

### Recognizing a meth lab

Meth labs are often placed in abandoned buildings such as empty farm houses, trailers, barns and buildings, but may also be found in homes, mobile homes, and even hotel rooms. Mobile labs are also common where meth is made in the back of a van or car trunk. Because of the strong odors emitted from a lab, people who make meth often look for rural areas where the smells will go unnoticed. Signs that a meth lab is present include:

- A strong ammonia or ether smell in the structure or area of the structure, or neighbors complaining of odors
- Numerous discarded portable LP tanks nearby
- Discarded piles of coffee filters, soft drink or fruit bottles, cold medicine packages, starting fluid, drain cleaner, and other materials
- Windows that are barred, covered, or otherwise fortified

- Unusual security, such as cameras
- Windows open even when it is cold outside (to ventilate the room)
- Individuals leaving the building/trailer to smoke
- Suspicious people frequenting the building/trailer, especially at night
- Heavy activity of people visiting the vicinity.

If you suspect a lab may be operating on your property, you should not enter the building nor confront someone you think is involved in the lab. Neither should you handle materials that you think might be leftover components of a lab. Call your local law enforcement agency to investigate. You may also call the Michigan State Police "Meth Tip Hotline" at 1-866-METH-TIP (1-866-638-4847).

### Reducing thefts of anhydrous ammonia

By following the suggestions below, you may be able to help reduce the theft of anhydrous ammonia from your farm or farm supply outlet. You may also reduce your liability should a thief be injured or cause an anhydrous ammonia accident:

- Ask your supplier to put a stain marker such as GloTell™ in anhydrous ammonia and apply product stickers to nurse tanks to deter thieves. This product spoils the chemical process resulting in a very poor grade of meth. It also leaves pink stains on the thief's hands, clothing, and lab equipment
- Don't keep anhydrous ammonia nurse tanks on the farm any longer than absolutely necessary
- When not in use, keep tanks in well-lighted and secure areas that are visible from the road
- Ask your supplier to place locking covers over nurse tank valves
- Enclose tanks inside a security fence if possible, especially at farm supply outlets where numerous tanks may be stored
- Secure the tank to a stationary object to prevent the entire tank from being stolen
- Provide surveillance equipment, motion sensor-alarms, or security cameras if feasible, especially at farm supply outlets where numerous tanks may be stored for long periods
- Park tanks downwind of livestock facilities and homes
- Install "No Trespassing" signs at the entrance to the farmstead or farm supply company instructing visitors to stop at the farm or company office before proceeding
- A barking dog may also help to decrease the possibility of theft, although dogs should be kept contained to prevent liability should the dog bite the perpetrator or someone else
- Report a theft of anhydrous in progress, and/or report suspicious persons or behavior by calling 911. Do not confront thieves yourself.

Anhydrous ammonia is considered an Extremely Hazardous Substance under SARA Title III. A release of 19 gallons (100 lbs) or more must be immediately reported to the local emergency preparedness coordinator (listed under county government), the DEQ Pollution Emergency Alert System at 800-292-4706, and the EPA National Response Center 800-424-8802. Refer to MSU Extension Bulletin E-2575 for more information.

Farmers and agribusiness persons should take steps to prevent anhydrous ammonia theft and learn how to recognize the signs of meth production. By securing anhydrous ammonia and reporting meth labs, farmers and agribusinesses can protect their families, farms, and businesses, while providing a service to their communities.

For more information...Visit [www.msue.msu.edu/emergency/meth](http://www.msue.msu.edu/emergency/meth).

## Michigan floriculture sales rank third nationally

Michigan placed third nationally in value of wholesale sales of floriculture products in 2005, according to the Michigan Field Office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Agricultural Statistics Service. Only California and Florida reported larger sales than Michigan.



Reports from Michigan's 696 commercial growers (\$10,000 or more in gross sales) showed an estimated wholesale value of \$384 million for all surveyed floriculture crops, virtually unchanged from last year's revised figure.

Michigan leads the nation in value of sales for 13 floriculture crops:

- Potted Easter Lilies with 1.3 million pots sold, valued at \$4.6 million.
- Potted Spring Flowering Bulbs with 6.9 million pots sold, valued at \$8.7 million.
- Potted Geraniums (seed) with 15.9 million pots sold, valued at

\$12.7 million.

- Potted Petunias with 2.5 million pots sold, valued at \$4.6 million.
  - Potted New Guinea Impatiens with 4.8 million pots sold, valued at \$6.9 million.
  - New Guinea Impatiens Hanging Baskets with 803,000 baskets sold, valued at \$5 million.
  - Geranium Hanging Baskets (cuttings) with 716,000 baskets sold, valued at \$4.8 million.
  - Impatiens Hanging Baskets with 550,000 sold, valued at \$2.8 million.
  - Begonia Hanging Baskets with 434,000 baskets sold, valued at \$2.4 million.
  - Petunia Hanging Baskets with 544,000 baskets sold, valued at \$3 million.
  - Impatiens (flats) with 2.1 million flats sold, valued at \$15.3 million.
  - New Guinea Impatiens (flats) with 78,000 flats sold, valued at \$832,000
  - Potted Geraniums (cuttings) with 4.9 million pots sold, valued at \$11.7 million.
- Other notable Michigan crops that ranked second in value of sales nationally were:
- Potted Hardy/Garden Chrysanthemums 5.7 million pots sold, valued at \$11.2 million.
  - Other Flowering Hanging Baskets with 2.1 million baskets sold, valued at \$ 12.7 million.
  - Petunias (flats) with 1.6 million flats sold, valued at \$11.5 million.
  - Begonias (flats) with 1.3 million flats sold, valued at \$9.7 million.
  - Potted Hosta with 1.1 million pots sold, valued at \$3.4 million.
  - Marigolds (flats) with 772,000 flats sold, valued at \$5.7 million.
  - Pansy/Viola Hanging Baskets with 85,000 baskets sold, valued at \$408,000.

## Did you know...

- **Asparagus spears grow from a crown that is planted about a foot deep in sandy soils. Under ideal conditions, an asparagus spear can grow 10 inches in a 24-hour period. Each crown will send spears up for about 6-7 weeks during the spring and early summer.**
- **The outdoor temperature determines how much time will pass between each picking. Early in the season, there may be 4-5 days between pickings and as the days and nights get warmer, a particular field may have to be picked every 24 hours. The larger the diameter, the better the quality!**

- **Asparagus is a member of the lily family.**
- **After harvesting is done the spears grow into ferns, which produce red berries and the nutrients necessary for a healthy and productive crop the next season.**
- **An asparagus planting is usually not harvested for the first three years after the crowns are planted, allowing the crown to develop a strong, fibrous root system. A well cared for asparagus planting will generally produce for about 15 years without being replanted.**

