

Farm Bureau honors Marion member for service, dedication



Missaukee County farmer Brenda VanHouten has been recognized by Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) as the organization's Volunteer of the Month for January 2007. VanHouten was chosen for her exceptional work educating young people about agriculture through the Missaukee County Farm Bureau's Promotion and Education (P&E) program.

VanHouten has taken the lead on several local P&E initiatives in and around Missaukee County. She routinely presents Ag in the Classroom lessons about DNA and biotechnology for fifth-graders in McBain schools, and last August took advantage of an opportunity to present the same material to 40 inner-city youngsters visiting the area from Washington, D.C.

At her county Farm Bureau's annual Project RED (Rural Education Day), VanHouten added instruction about sheep and horses to the existing farm safety programming, to the benefit of the more than 500 children who attend the event every year. She has also been instrumental in getting local schools to participate in the annual Agriculture Week poster contest for third-graders.

"Brenda stays very active," wrote her nominator for Volunteer of the Month honors. "She's always ready for a new idea and jumps in with both feet."

After proving her mettle at the local level for several years, VanHouten was asked to serve on MFB's state-level P&E committee, where she continues to contribute her infectious talents and energy.

"She is just so upbeat and shares her enthusiasm with everyone," her nominator wrote, adding that she also brings some very practical skills to every activity she touches.

"Brenda is very organized, plans meetings and keeps everyone abreast of the progress each program is achieving."

Also at the state level, VanHouten has for two consecutive years volunteered her time and efforts toward helping staff MFB's Miracle of Life exhibit at the Michigan State Fair in Detroit.

VanHouten and her husband Steve own and operate a tire sales and service business specializing in farm, logging and trucking equipment. At home in Richland Township near Marion, they maintain a 160-acre hay and corn farm, with some 45 head of feeder cattle and 15 horses. The couple has three grown children: Chad, 22, and 24-year-old twins Stephanie and Samantha.



Ag Day at the Capitol

Ag Day at the Capitol has been a huge success since its inauguration thanks to the involvement of Michigan Farm Bureau members who take time out of busy spring

schedules to participate in the event. Because of its success, we have decided to continue the event for a third year in a row.

In order to accommodate member schedules better, this year's Ag Day at the Capitol will be held on National Ag Day on Wednesday, March 21. We will focus on promoting agriculture's contribution to Michigan's economy with the theme of "Michigan Agriculture: Feeding the World...Fueling the Economy."

Like the past two years, we will need approximately 100 county Farm Bureau members to assist in delivering baskets of agricultural products to legislators, the Governor and Lieutenant Governor's offices. Please contact Jean White at extension 3202 to register for the event.

F.U.N. is Theme of Ag Week Poster Contest

Third grade students from across the state of Michigan will try to depict how "Farmers Understand Nature" in the fourth annual National Ag Week Poster Contest, sponsored by the State Promotion & Education Committee. Materials for the contest have been sent to counties.

Each county is asked to promote the contest to third grade classrooms in their area, select one county winner and submit that winning entry to the MFB Promotion & Education Department for inclusion in the state competition.

March 6 is the date winning posters should be submitted for consideration of one of the three top prizes. First place winner in the state will receive a \$100 Savings Bond and second and third place winners will each receive a \$50 Savings Bond. The top three posters will also be included in an upcoming edition of Michigan Farm News.

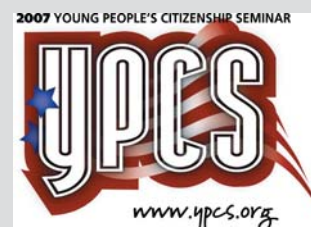
The



March 2007



Young Peoples Citizenship Seminar / Alma College June 11 – 15, 2007



Now is the time to begin seeking students who will be juniors and seniors in the school year 2007-2008 to participate in this year's YPCS seminar.

This week long seminar strives to educate students on the political process by involving them in participating in collecting petition signatures, running for office in a primary and general election, registering to vote and voting with actual machines used by the State of Michigan.

Along with learning about the political process, they will have the opportunity to listen to thought provoking speakers and meet other students, like themselves, from around the state.

Most county Farm Bureaus offer scholarships to pay for this event, which is \$250.00 per student. If the student attendance minimum of 200 is reached, each county will be refunded \$25.00 per student, making the final cost to attend \$225.00 per student.

Information has been mailed to high schools, county coordinators and information has been emailed to county offices and Agri-science educators. Once again, counties will be registering participants through the iMIS data base, registration deadline is April 27, 2007.



Member Services "Member in Action" Photo Contest

Michigan Farm Bureau is kicking off the 3rd Annual Member Services Photo Contest. "Members in Action" is this year's theme and we will be seeking 13 photographs for our 2008 Member Service Calendar.

Photos should capture our members at home, at work and participating in a variety of Farm Bureau activities and programs. All winners will be notified and will be given credit in the calendar. One grand prize winner will receive a \$100 cash prize and have his/her photograph grace the cover of the calendar. Contest rules and entry forms will be available on the Michigan Farm Bureau website or by contacting the Member Services Department at (800) 292-2680, ext. 3240. Contest Deadline is Friday, June 15, 2007.

Membership Standings

2006/07 02/27/07

	2006/07	02/27/07
Goal	201,244	106,669
Target	47,655	29,719



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

Reminders

- CAG's have a new online resource available. The Loop, Discussion Topics and Questions and the Fun Page are all available to view and print by visiting www.michiganfarmbureau.com/cag.
- Any changes to your group can be made directly through your county administrative manager, including changes to discussion leaders.
- Any suggestions or ideas for future articles, discussion topics or fun pages can be e-mailed to smorris@michfb.com or sent to Michigan Farm Bureau, 7373 West Saginaw Hwy, Lansing, MI 48917 Attention: Sarah Morrison

March

- Washington Legislative Seminar
- Ag Day at the Capitol

April

- Deadline to qualify for Membership Chairman's Trip

May

- County Staff Conference
- District PD Meetings

New EQIP Funding for 2007

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has just announced another incentive payment through its Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). This added payment is for livestock facilities that would like to have a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) written.

Contracts filled opting for an operation's CNMP to be written by the NRCS or their contracted CNMP providers, now include a \$250 incentive payment. For a personally hired CNMP provider, the incentive payment is based on animal units; one animal unit equals 1,000 pounds live weight. Animal unit-based payments through EQIP are not to exceed 300 animal units. (See the table.)

All sizes of operations are eligible for EQIP cost share to develop a CNMP. Complete your application by March 15 at your local NRCS office. Each application is ranked according to its environmental benefit with the highest ranking applicants funded first.

See www.mi.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip.html or talk with your NRCS field staff to apply and/or review the ranking tool. This incentive opportunity is a great way to get one step closer to MAEAP verification in the livestock system and ensure proper utilization of nutrients on your farm.

Species	Payment amount	Not to exceed
Dairy	\$55/animal unit	\$16,500
Swine	\$45/animal unit	\$13,500
Beef	\$40/animal unit	\$12,000
Equine	\$40/animal unit	\$12,000
Sheep	\$40/animal unit	\$12,000
Poultry/other	\$40/animal unit	\$12,000

NRCS also has a special allotment of EQIP funds available for water conservation practices (i.e., plate cooler water reuse, irrigation system sprinkler and irrigation water management). Dairy operators can receive payments based on the amount of water they save by reusing 100 percent of their cooler plate water for livestock watering or other related uses. Interested producers should apply for these EQIP payments by March 15.

Local farmers lobby state lawmakers

Farmers from every corner of the state converged on Lansing Feb. 20 to meet with lawmakers about the state's agriculture industry. Michigan Farm Bureau's (MFB) annual Lansing Legislative Seminar offered producers the opportunity to meet face-to-face with state senators, representatives and staffers, putting the grass roots of the state's second-largest industry in direct contact with lawmakers.

A list of individuals representing Farm Bureau this year is available at http://www.michiganfarmbureau.com/files/2007/2007_lls_attendees.pdf.

Alongside their peers representing every facet of Michigan's diverse agricultural economy, these local farmers discussed current agriculture-related issues, from renewable energy to appropriations for agricultural programs. Taking center stage this year were taxes, the state budget, and the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP).

"They're all current issues, all in Farm Bureau policy, and all important to our broad membership," said Ron Nelson, manager of MFB's State Governmental Affairs Department.

Four instructional sessions in the afternoon brought participants up to speed on those key issues before they met with elected officials at the late afternoon reception, when scores of lawmakers and their staffers met with constituent Farm Bureau members from their districts.

The event also gave the state's largest general farm organization a venue for honoring three state lawmakers with MFB's Silver Plow Award, in recognition of their outstanding service on agricultural issues in 2006. Silver Plows went to Sen. Cameron Brown (R-Sturgis), Sen. Gerald Van Woerkom (R-Norton Shores), and Rep. Neal Nitz (R-Baroda).

The Silver Plow is MFB's highest award for lawmakers, and is only given if and when a state senator or representative enacts legislation of significant benefit to the state's \$60 billion agriculture industry.



Three factors driving milk prices

2006 U.S. milk production finished up above 2005 with large gains in California, Idaho and Texas. The number of U.S. milk cows declined in the middle of 2006, but the year finished with 9.126 million cows-up 72,000 from December 2005. Total cheese stocks were up 4.2 percent over a year earlier. Butter stocks at the end of October were 58.1 percent higher than a year earlier. Such statistics usually spell a relatively low milk price outlook, yet at the current time, both the Class III futures and USDA outlook are for 2007 milk prices above historical averages. What is driving these high milk prices? Three factors: corn prices, potential Cooperatives Working Together (CWT) actions, and world dairy markets.

Domestically, the drive to build ethanol plants - spurred by the recent high oil prices and national policy - has led to a potentially very large demand for corn starting this year. If all the planned plants are built, it is even possible that Iowa could become a corn deficit state.

The result is corn that is priced at \$4 per bushel for March. The result of this high corn price - (Hilker predicts \$3.30/bu for 2007) - is an expectation for a dramatic increase in corn acreage this year which can have the trickle-down effect of increasing the prices of crops that compete for land base. For example, if large amounts of land move out of alfalfa into corn, it will take higher yields to supply sufficient hay this year. These moves also make the potential effects of weather events, such as drought, more significant. Land rents will also increase (or have already). With feed being the largest input cost, the net effect is potentially large increase in cost of production.

Figure 1 displays the U.S. milk cows and milk-to-feed price ratio from 2001 through 2006. Poor milk prices in 2002-'03 resulted in a low ratio and a decline in cow numbers. The high milk prices in 2004 produced a more favorable price ration and an expansion in cow numbers that did not let up until the middle of 2006. Even though milk prices have not been poor in recent months, the dramatic increase in feed costs has brought the ratio down to a level

that is encouraging a national decline in milk supplied.

However, there are an inordinately large number of replacement heifers available nationally. And, as was discussed above, there is an ample and building supply of stocks. Both of these factors might indicate a potential to moderate the effects of higher feed prices on the 2007 milk price. The CWT program has been collecting 10 cents per hundredweight since July 2006 and has strongly hinted that another herd buyout is in the works. The most recent round, in late 2005, removed 64,000 cows. Another round of that size would take care of most of the U.S. herd growth from the past year. The CWT program is also subsidizing butter and cheese exports.

Internationally, the U.S. dollar is weak and world supply-demand is tight. This has led to nonfat dry milk and dry whey prices which encourage U.S. exports. Dry whey prices, especially, are propping up the Class III price of milk. The EU has cut milk production by partially decoupling payments from production. Australian milk production is also down.

At the present time, the futures market is bullish on milk prices with a 2007 average Class III milk price of \$14.76/cwt with a range from \$13.50 to \$15.60/cwt (on Jan. 30, 2007). USDA has recently increased its 2007 milk price forecast. It is now predicting a Class III average of \$12.50 to \$13.30/cwt. Michigan producers can usually count on a mailbox price that is \$1 to \$1.50/cwt higher than the Class III price.

Will the market forecasts be correct with a Class III milk price of \$14-15.50/cwt in 2007? The answer depends on concentrate cost and how quickly milk production responds. Weather impacts on forages may also have a large impact.

The forecast here is that the futures market is a little overheated at the moment, but that farm milk prices will be relatively high. Dairy farm profitability in 2007 will depend on controlling feed prices while keeping per-cow production high.

The recent decision to increase make allowances means that farm Class III and IV milk prices will drop when the decision is implemented. The 2007 farm bill looms, and dairy policy will be an important part of the discussion. Once again the Milk Income Loss Contract will be an important topic as legislators from the Northeast and Wisconsin push for its continuance.

Did you know...

- Lettuce is a member of the sunflower family.
- Darker Green lettuce leaves are more nutritious than lighter green leaves.
- Americans eat about 30 pounds of lettuce every year. That's about five times more than what we ate in the early 1900s.
- In the United States, lettuce is the second most popular fresh vegetable.
- Almost all lettuce is packed right in the field.
- About 25% of all iceberg lettuce is made into fresh cut salads
- The plant pigment that gives carrots and other vegetables their vivid orange color is Beta-Carotene. Fruits and Vegetables that are yellow/orange in color contain Beta-Carotene and carrots are one of the richest in this nutrient. Our bodies convert Beta-Carotene into Vitamin A.

