

The

# LOOP

December 2007



## MFB award honors Oxford Christmas tree farm for being 'ever green'

Frank and Cathy Genovese run an "evergreen" business through and through. Not only do they grow and sell Christmas trees, but they apply environmentally friendly, or "green," practices to

nearly every facet of their Candy Cane CHRISTmas Tree Farm in Oakland County, and that includes marketing cutting-edge "living Christmas trees."

For their progressiveness and dedication to protecting the environment, the Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) is honoring the couple with the organization's 2007 Award for Proactive Leadership in Ecology Management.

Now in its fourth year, the award goes to an individual, farm or partnership whose natural resources stewardship practices contribute to the protection of the environment, while maintaining or enhancing productivity and profitability.

The Genoveses were nominated for the award by the Oakland County Farm Bureau, and selected from a field of 25 nominees submitted by county Farm Bureaus from across the state.

The pair will be formally recognized Nov. 27 at the MFB 88th Annual Meeting in Grand Rapids, where they will be awarded with a prize John Deere Gator compliments of Fillmore Equipment, Harvey's Ag Solutions, Syngenta Crop Protection, CJD Farm Consulting, Dennings & Associates, and NTH Consultants.

In nominating the Genoveses for the award, Jackie Scramlin, a director on the Oakland County Farm Bureau Board of Directors, described the Candy Cane farm as a "model of efficient management," adding the family offers "friendly service to the public ... and education about how to promote and protect the resources of our area."

Operating from 30 acres nestled amid a residential area of Oxford, the "green" practice gaining the most notoriety has been the farm's addition of "living Christmas trees." These trees are planted in a lightweight soil mix using a "pot-in-pot" system that allows the tree to retain its root structure when dug. With the roots intact, a tree adorned for the holidays can survive longer indoors and be planted outdoors once the holidays are over.

## Membership Standings

2007/08 11/29/07

Goal	199,120	36,126	18.14%
Target	47,860	5,435	11.36%



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For questions, comments and suggestions, please contact Amy Pline at ext. 3211

### A LOOK AHEAD ...

#### : December

: New County Leadership Conference

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#### : January

: AFBF Annual Meeting -

: New Orleans, LA

: Council of Presidents' Conference

#### : February

: AFBF YF&R Leadership Conf

: Lansing Legislative Seminar

: Young Farmer Leaders' Conf

The Genoveses have been pioneers in introducing the popular "living" trees to Michigan. They began growing the variety in 2003 and today remain the first and only Michigan nursery to successfully grow 6-foot-tall trees of this nature for sale on a large-scale basis.

Some of the Genoveses' other environmental stewardship practices are less obvious to their neighbors but are just as significant. For instance, the nursery is the first choose-and-cut Christmas tree farm in the state to install a drip irrigation system. Unlike standard irrigation systems which spray streams of water over crops, the drip system distributes water directly to a tree's root system, minimizing the amount of water lost to evaporation and providing better water conservation overall.

The farm is small enough that the Genoveses can plant trees individually by hand using a small gas-powered auger. The practice eliminates the need to till the entire field, thus reducing soil erosion. They also follow integrated pest management practices to minimize pesticide use and are proud to report that they have not used any insect sprays over the last four years.

In addition, the family provides habitat for wildlife and promotes the benefits of trees to the environment through several local outreach efforts that include providing free tree transplants in the spring to returning Christmas tree customers.

The operation also stands out as the first farm in Oakland County verified in the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP), which is a voluntary program that helps farmers identify and eliminate or minimize environmental risks on their farm.

To earn verification in the MAEAP Cropping and Farmstead Systems, the Genoveses had to demonstrate that the farm operates in compliance with all applicable state and federal environmental regulations and generally accepted farming practices, and that meant making some improvements to the farm. For example, a new pesticide/fertilizer storage facility was built far enough away from an irrigation well and pond to meet the state's setback requirements for minimizing the risk of potential groundwater contamination.

"Frank and Cathy Genovese and their Candy Cane CHRISTmas Tree Farm bring out the best in agriculture and embody the spirit of Michigan Farm Bureau's Proactive Leadership in Ecology Management Award in every way," said MFB President Wayne H. Wood.

"They're innovative in their agricultural production and marketing. They're committed to protecting the environment. They're superb ambassadors for agriculture in their local community. And they're role models for the entire farming industry," said Wood. "They're proof that the American farmer's legacy as a natural-born conservationist continues today."

## Meetings to explain TB risk mitigation plans for northeast cattle producers

A series of meetings is planned in early December to help beef and dairy producers in northeast Michigan learn what's required of them in developing a wildlife risk mitigation plan as part of Michigan's bovine tuberculosis (TB) eradication efforts.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has said each cattle farm in Michigan's TB Modified Accredited Zone must develop a wildlife risk mitigation plan before USDA will consider upgrading the region's TB status. The plan is intended to help farmers identify and eliminate or minimize risks for the transmission of TB between wildlife and domestic livestock.

The upcoming meetings will feature state and/or federal presenters who will outline what's required of a wildlife risk mitigation plan, provide direction on how to develop a plan, and answer producers' most commonly asked questions.

The meetings are scheduled as follows:

- Dec. 10, 7-9 p.m. at Miller Feeds in Spruce.
- Dec. 11, 1-3 p.m. at the MDA office in Atlanta.
- Dec. 11, 7-9 p.m. at the Emmet County Fairground Community Building in Petoskey.
- Dec. 12, 1-3 p.m. at the Alpine Center in Gaylord.

The Modified Accredited Zone is the area known to have TB in cattle and deer. The zone includes the entirety of Alcona, Alpena, Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Crawford, Emmet, Montmorency, Oscoda, Otsego, and Presque Isle counties, and those portions of Iosco and Ogemaw counties that are north of the southernmost boundaries of the Huron National Forest and the Au Sable State Forest.

The region's zone status is currently only one step above being considered "infected." As such, cattle producers in the zone are subject to more intense state and federal animal testing requirements and animal movement restrictions than other parts of the state.

"Producer attendance at these meetings and overall cooperation with developing wildlife risk mitigation plans is critical to eradicating TB in the Modified Accredited Zone and essential to producers in the region one day regaining the market freedoms they used to enjoy," said Ernie Birchmeier, Michigan Farm Bureau livestock and dairy specialist.

## Farmers encouraged to get familiar with new Ag Census Web site

Farmers can get all their questions answered about the upcoming 2007 Census of Agriculture via a new Web site, [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov).

Conducted every five years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Census is a complete count of the nation's farms and their operators and the only source of uniform, comprehensive agricultural data for every county in the nation.

"Census Web site visitors can find answers to frequently asked questions about the Census and can access data from previous counts, dating all the way back to 1840," said Dave Kleweno, director of the Michigan Field Office of the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

This year also marks the first time that producers have the option of filling out their Census forms online, saving both time and postage costs.

"Those wanting to plan ahead can download a draft of the actual Census form and begin pulling together the information they'll need to respond," said Kleweno of the new Web features.

NASS will mail Census forms on Dec. 28. This mailing will include instructions on how to log in and respond to the Census via a secure Web connection. Census forms must be completed by Feb. 4, 2008.

## Michigan grape production up from 2006; apples down

Michigan's grape crop is forecast to bounce back from last year's weather problems with triple the force. That's according to the newest fruit report from the Michigan Field Office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Grape production this year is forecast at 100,000 tons, up 5 percent from the August forecast and three times larger than the state's frost-devastated crop of 2006. However, compared to the state's last normal crop from two years ago, this year's production is 3 percent below 2005.

According to the fruit report, warm and dry conditions this season were ideal for grape ripening and allowed the crop to progress ahead of normal. While the extremely dry conditions had a negative effect on grape size, quality was reported to be good to excellent.

Also forecasted in the report is Michigan's 2007 apple crop. It's anticipated that Michigan apple production will total 780 million pounds, down 1 percent from August and 8 percent below 2006. According to the report, a hot and dry growing season resulted in below normal apple size for some varieties. Nationally, apple production forecast is 9.25 billion pounds, down 7 percent from 2006.

### Farm Bureau Quick Facts

#### Turkey consumption and production

- Nearly 88 percent of Americans surveyed by the National Turkey Federation eat turkey at Thanksgiving. The average weight of turkeys purchased for Thanksgiving is 15 pounds, meaning that approximately 690 million pounds of turkey were consumed in the United States during Thanksgiving in 2006.
- In 2006, about 262 million turkeys were raised in the United States. It's estimated that 46 million of those turkeys were eaten at Thanksgiving, 22 million at Christmas and 19 million at Easter.
- Fifty percent of all turkey consumed in 1970 was during the holidays, but today that number is only 27 percent as more people enjoy turkey year-round.
- Turkey consumption has more than doubled over the past 25 years. In 2006, per capita turkey consumption was 16.9 pounds compared to 8.3 pounds in 1975.
- Turkey production in the United States has doubled since 1970 in order to meet consumer demand. An estimated 269.8 million turkeys will be raised in 2007.
- Like domestic turkey consumption, turkey exports have continued to grow throughout the last decade. In fact, turkey exports are an increasingly important aspect of U.S. turkey production, especially for turkey parts and dark meat products.



Source: National Turkey Federation

## FSA's crop disaster program sign-up begins

The Michigan Farm Service Agency (FSA) has announced that eligible farmers who suffered quantity losses to their crops in recent years can now enroll in the Crop Disaster Program 2005-2007 (CDP) at local FSA service centers. An ending date has not been announced yet.

"Certain crop producers suffered major financial losses as the result of floods, tornados and other natural disasters during the last couple of years," said FSA State Executive Director Nancy Dietz. "This program will help many Michigan farmers to maintain viable businesses so consumers at home and abroad have the food and fiber they need to survive."

Subject to final rules for the program, CDP provides benefits to farmers who suffered losses to 2005-2007 crops from natural disasters and related conditions, so long as the actual crop lost was planted or prevented from being planted before Feb. 28, 2007. Producers who incurred qualifying losses in 2005, 2006 or 2007 may apply for benefits in more than one year, but will only receive benefits in their most beneficial year. Producers may apply for benefits for losses to

multiple crops as long as the losses occurred in the same crop year.

Only producers who obtained crop insurance coverage or coverage under the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) for the year of loss will be eligible for CDP benefits. Producers must have suffered quantity losses in excess of 35 percent to be eligible for CDP. The payment rate is set at 42 percent of the established price. Assistance, together with any crop insurance or NAP payment received for the same crop and including the value of the crop production not lost, must not exceed 95 percent of the total value of the crop absent the disaster.

FSA offices may accept information from producers about quality losses when producers submit applications for quantity losses. However, FSA won't consider quality loss applications until FSA announces the quality loss sign-up date and all other information necessary to determine eligibility. Similarly, applications for quantity losses won't be considered complete until a final rule has been issued for this program.



### 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](http://www.michiganfarmbureau.com/cag).
- Completed set up sheets can be mailed directly to your county administrative manager. Remember: discussion Leaders are designated to receive all materials, so make sure the person designated as DL is an active member of your group.
- Any suggestions or ideas for future articles, discussion topics or fun pages can be e-mailed to [apline@michfb.com](mailto:apline@michfb.com) or sent to Michigan Farm Bureau, 7373 West Saginaw Hwy, Lansing, MI 48917  
Attention: Amy Pline