

The

LOOP

April 2008

Ag Day at the Capitol proves ag is spark plug in 'Michigan's motor' Farmers draw attention to ag's nearly \$64 billion annual economic impact

Contact: Tonia Ritter, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2048, or Rebecca Park, ext. 2049

LANSING, March 20, 2008 - On the same day that Gov. Jennifer Granholm held a televised town hall meeting in Grand Rapids to address how to "rebuild Michigan's motor," more than 150 farmers and leaders from agricultural organizations and agri-businesses gathered at the state Capitol to let legislators know that agriculture is key to revving Michigan's economic engine.

Scenes from the March 19 Ag Day at the Capitol

Scenes from the March 19 Ag Day at the Capitol 'Michigan Agriculture: Bringing it home ... Michigan grown' **Pictured top**, "agbassadors" Wayne H. Wood (left), president of the Michigan Farm Bureau, and Donald Koivisto (right), director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture, deliver an orchid to Gov. Jennifer Granholm, courtesy of the Michigan Floriculture Growers' Council.



At center, Sen. Gerald VanWoerkom (R-Norton Shores) and Rep. Goeff Hansen (R-Hart), pictured left to right, whet their appetite with samples of Michigan food products. VanWoerkom is spotted carrying an Ag Day at the Capitol tote bag stock full of other Michigan agricultural products. Got an "I heart Milk" sticker? Rep. Judy Emmons (R-Sheridan) does, **as pictured bottom**, thanks to Paw Paw dairy farmer and Michigan Milk Producers' Association member Tim Hood. Pictured alongside Hood is dairyman Mark Halbert of Battle Creek.



Assembled for the fourth-annual Ag Day at the Capitol, the group served up food and facts to emphasize how agriculture - more than any other industry - is reinvigorating Michigan's struggling economy. Among the key points they shared were the following. A recently revised economic study by Michigan State University reveals that agriculture and its supporting industries contribute about \$63.7 billion to Michigan's economy annually.

- Michigan's agri-food and agri-energy industry grew at a robust rate of 5.9 percent from 2004 to 2006, whereas the state's economy overall grew only 4.8 percent for that same period.



Membership Standings

2007/08 3/25/2008

Goal	199,120	120,103	60.32%
Target	47,860	33,780	70.58%



Go Ahead...Reward Yourself and enter the Member Survey Contest. Check your mailbox for contest details and how you can be the grand prize winner and drive away with a 2 year lease on a 2008 Chevy Impala.

The contest, which runs from now through July 31, 2008, not only provides you with the chance to win a lease on a new Chevy Impala, but three other Michigan Farm Bureau members will walk away winners as well. Additional prizes to be awarded include: a \$2,500 Visa gift card, \$1,000 Travel voucher, and \$500 Grainger gift certificate.



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

April

- * Deadline to qualify for Membership Chairman's Trip Canandaigua, New York

May

- 6-7 AFBF Policy Development Conf Washington D.C.
- 14-16 County Staff Conf, Crystal Mtn
- 26 Memorial Day Holiday
- 27-30 AFBF Environmental Issues Conf Traverse City

June

- 23-27 Young People's Citizenship Seminar, Northwood Univ
- 27-29 Membership Chairman's Trip Canandaigua, New York

- With its support industries, Michigan's agricultural sector collectively employs about 1 million people, or about 1 in 4 Michigan residents.
- The direct economic impact of Michigan's agri-food system is \$38 billion. The direct economic impact of the agri-energy system, primarily the production of ethanol, is \$378 million.
- If each week every Michigan household spent just \$10 of their current grocery budget on local food products, more than \$37 million would circulate within Michigan weekly.
- Michigan produces more than 200 agricultural commodities, making Michigan rank second, just behind California, for the state with the most diverse agriculture industry in the nation.

"Unlike other industries, it's rare for agriculture to hold ribbon-cutting ceremonies to announce new investment or growth in the work force, yet successes are happening on individual farms and within the businesses that support agriculture nearly every day," said Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) President Wayne H. Wood.

"So when our Ag Day at the Capitol planning committee agreed to this year's theme, which is 'Michigan Agriculture: Bringing it home ... Michigan grown,' the 'bringing it home' reflects not only locally produced and processed food products for families, but also revenue for the state and local economies, all-important jobs, renewable energy, land devoted to green space and much more," said Wood.

Tonia Ritter, manager of the MFB State Governmental Affairs Department, said Ag Day at the Capitol appeared to make an impression on legislators. And while Ag Day at the Capitol was not pre-planned to coincide with the Governor's address on Michigan's economy, the fact that the two activities occurred on the same day further drove home the point of why the Legislature and state government must not overlook agriculture's impact on the state when making policy decisions that have the potential to affect agriculture's current business or future growth.

"At a time when other industrial sectors are slowing in Michigan, agriculture is actually growing with opportunities to serve an expanding bio-economy and to meet growing demand across the globe for food and other agricultural products," said Ritter. "But to sustain that growth, we need the state to continue to invest in programs that are vital to agriculture, and we need the state to provide incentives to keep farmers and agribusinesses doing business in Michigan. Likewise, we need the state to remove barriers that would prohibit the continued growth of Michigan's agriculture industry."

Food for thought

To spread their message, farmers visited legislators' offices and invited lawmakers to sample Michigan food products at commodity displays set up in the Capitol. The smorgasbord of diverse offerings included corn dogs, asparagus roll-ups, ice cream, pickles and grape juice.

Legislators were also given an eco-friendly "ag bag" to stock up on additional items, such as packages of dried cherries and flower seed packets. The legislators were encouraged to take the reusable tote bag with them on their next trip to the grocery store or farmers' market, and fill up with Michigan food products when they shop.

Local farmers lobby on agricultural priorities in Washington, D.C.

Contact: Ryan Findlay, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2025

LANSING, March 20, 2008 - Nearly 200 farmers from across Michigan lobbied on national issues important to their industry and community as part of the Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) Washington Legislative Seminar, held March 12-14 in Washington, D.C.

The annual seminar is an opportunity for farmers to discuss priority issues with Michigan's Congressional delegation and hear from national leaders on issues affecting the agriculture industry. This year's lobbying efforts focused on urging Congress to:

- Pass a farm bill that meets the needs of agriculture while maintaining a safe and stable domestic food supply.
- Pass immigration reform legislation that would provide, among other things, a dependable and "workable" guest worker program, as well as a reliable system to help farmers verify the legal status of job candidates.
- Oppose legislation that would expand the jurisdiction of the federal Clean Water Act to all intrastate waters, including non-navigable areas such as ditches and farm and stock ponds.
- Consider science and best management standards in legislation for animal care.
- Approve long-term extensions of tax credits for renewable energy production and distribution, and repeal the alternative minimum tax.

At the seminar, county Farm Bureau members hosted their district Representative and the Representative's legislative staff at a breakfast meeting to discuss the priority issues. The dialogue continued later that same day

when county Farm Bureau members visited their Representative's office on Capitol Hill to discuss the issues in more detail. At a separate meeting, Sen. Carl Levin addressed the crowd.

Also in Washington, D.C., members visited the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) headquarters, where they heard from newly appointed Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer on the administration's stance toward a new farm bill. Gerald Bange, chairman of USDA's World Agricultural Outlook Board, also addressed the group, providing insight on global crop supplies and commodity prices.

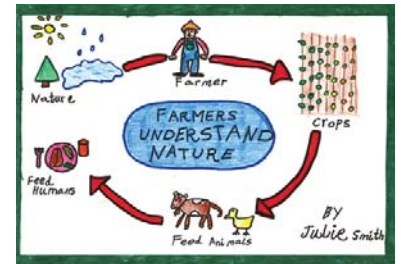
MFB is the state's largest general farm organization, representing more than 47,000 farm families statewide.

Winners selected in fourth annual Ag Week poster contest

Contact: Deb Schmucker, (800) 292-2680, ext. 3213

The fun continues for three Michigan third-graders who did an exceptional job conveying the idea of "F.U.N.- Farmers Understand Nature" on paper.

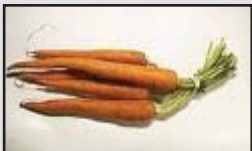
The Michigan Farm Bureau Promotion and Education Committee recently announced the winners of its fourth-annual poster contest for third-graders. Held in conjunction with National Agriculture Week (March 18-24), students were challenged to draw posters based on the "Farmers Understand Nature" theme.



Julie Smith, a student at Pinckney Elementary in Livingston County, submitted this year's first-place entry, pictured above. Her prize is a \$100 savings bond. Fifty dollar savings bonds go to second-place winner Destiny Tate, a student at Bellaire Elementary School in Antrim County, and third-place winner Summer Bartrand, of Northern Michigan Christian School in Missaukee County.

Students from more than 30 counties participated in the contest.

Farm Bureau Quick Facts..... CARROTS



Carrots are grown in Michigan for processing and fresh market use. Fresh market carrots in Michigan are harvested from late July through September or October, while processing carrots are harvested from early October through late November.

Carrots are a cool season crop. Thus, planting usually begins in mid-April to mid-June and is often scheduled to allow for continuous harvesting. The plants then take approximately 120 to 180 days to mature.

The root vegetables we know today as carrots originated 3,000 years ago in Middle Asia in the area of Afghanistan, and slowly spread into the Mediterranean area.

The first carrots were white, purple and yellow - not orange. The Dutch developed orange carrots in the 1600s. All modern-day carrots are directly descended from Dutch-bred carrots.

The plant pigment that gives carrots and other vegetables their vivid orange color is beta-carotene. Carrots are one of the vegetables richest in beta-carotene, which our bodies convert to Vitamin A.

Carrot cake gained its popularity by being served at America's county fairs in the 1960s.

The saying "dangling a carrot" as a way to get someone to do something originates from the 1890s, when carrots were dangled in front of donkeys to get them to move.

Source: Michigan Department of Agriculture

MFB's Young People's Citizenship Seminar seeks high-schoolers

Aim is for teens to develop appreciation of U.S. freedoms; register by April 27

Contact: Lisa Pruden (800) 292-2680, ext. 3246

LANSING, March 29, 2007 - Teenagers in high school and living at home under their parents' watch might feel as though they have little freedom, but they enjoy plenty as American citizens and Michigan Farm Bureau's Young People's Citizenship Seminar (YPCS) aims to help them recognize that.

"Americans enjoy many freedoms. We have political freedom. Economic freedom. Religious freedom. Freedom of expression and so much more. As a young person, and even an adult, it can be easy to overlook or undervalue the democratic society we live in. Michigan Farm Bureau's Young People's Citizenship Seminar is a fun, active and educational way for high-schoolers to develop a better appreciation for our rights as citizens of the United States," said Lisa Pruden, one of MFB's YPCS co-coordinators.

In its 43rd year, YPCS will be held June 11-15 on the campus of Alma College in Alma. It is open to all 2007-2008 high school juniors and seniors, but interested students need to act fast! Seminar registration is due April 27.

The four-day seminar explores economics and instills leadership skills in addition to teaching government principles - all while mixing in recreational and social activities as well as motivational presentations by guest speakers.

This year's lineup of guest speakers includes 19-year-old Hillsdale Mayor Michael Sessions, who, at the ripe age of 18, beat a 51-year-old incumbent by two votes in a write-in campaign for the mayor's race. Sessions is currently a freshman at Hillsdale College and is in his second year as mayor of Hillsdale.

"By the week's end, participants have been inspired by individuals who have overcome challenges and learned what it means to be an American citizen. Often times they've also formed long-lasting friendships with peers from across the state," said Pruden. The majority of YPCS participants hail from Farm Bureau families, but Farm Bureau membership is not a requirement. "County Farm Bureaus select participants from local applications received, but YPCS is open to all students regardless of their Farm Bureau involvement," said Pruden.

Cost is \$250 per student. Generally county Farm Bureaus or a local business sponsor the seminar fee; however, a small commitment fee may be required.

More information on YPCS, including a downloadable brochure and promotional video, is available online at www.michiganfarm-bureau.com/ypcs. Information can also be obtained from high school principals, guidance counselors and county Farm Bureau

offices, as well as by calling MFB at (800) 292-2680, ext. 3243.

2007 Washington Legislative Seminar in action

Nearly 140 Michigan farmers traveled to Washington, D.C., this week for Michigan Farm Bureau's (MFB) Washington Legislative Seminar. The annual event



provides an opportunity for farmers to meet with Michigan's Congressional delegation to discuss issues important to Michigan's \$60 billion agriculture industry.

Pictured: Congressman Dave Camp, left, engages in conversation with Farm Bureau members from his

Congressional district at a breakfast MFB hosted for Michigan House members on Thursday.

This year's seminar focused on four primary concerns:

- Making a guest worker program part of legislation for immigration reform
- Developing a farm bill that meets the needs of agriculture while maintaining a safe and stable domestic food supply
- Continued development of the nation's renewable energy industry
- Consideration of science and best management standards in legislation for animal care.

Michigan farmers visited the U.S. Department of Agriculture, where officials briefed the group on the President's farm bill recommendations, food safety and animal identification. Staff from the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) provided legislative updates as well.

Pictured bottom right, AFBF Public Policy Director Mary Kay Thatcher uses a pie chart to illustrate how commodity programs would compete for limited budget dollars under proposed agricultural spending figures released this month.

The Congressional Budget Office projects \$420 billion would be available for agricultural spending from 2008 to 2013, potentially the six-year life of the next farm bill. Of that, 76 percent would support federal nutrition programs - the biggest share ever allocated to nutrition. Meanwhile, commodity spending would be slashed by more than a half, dropping from \$99 billion, as allocated for the 2002 farm bill, to an estimated \$42 billion.



Reminders

- CAG's have a new online resource available. In addition to The Loop, Discussion Topics & Questions, and the Fun Page, the Report Form is also now available to view and submit by visiting www.michfb.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 or sent to Michigan Farm Bureau, 7373 West Saginaw Hwy., P.O. Box 30960, Lansing, MI 48909-8460 Attention: Amy Pline