

The

# LOOP

July 2008

## MAEAP verifies first greenhouse as environmentally assured

Contact: Carrie Vollmer-Sanders, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2026



To the left, Mark Elzinga, President of Elzinga & Hoeksema Greenhouses, accepts his certificate of environmental assurance from DA Director Don Kolvisto, during a ceremony in Kalamazoo on Wednesday, recognizing the achievement.

Elzinga & Hoeksema Greenhouses in Kalamazoo County has taken the lead in environmental responsibility by becoming Michigan's first greenhouse operation to become verified by the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP).

More than 500 Michigan farms are MAEAP-verified, but Elzinga & Hoeksema is the first greenhouse to complete the comprehensive Greenhouse\*A\*Syst risk assessment, which pinpoints best practices in water, fertilizer and pesticide use.

Elzinga & Hoeksema Greenhouses is one of southwestern Michigan's largest greenhouse operations, with five locations and more than 30 acres of product. The East O Avenue greenhouse features energy-efficient equipment and renewable energy sources such as wind turbines in addition to the largest solar thermal system in the Midwest. This system provides 80 percent of the greenhouses' heating needs; the other 20 percent is met by high efficiency boilers.

To become MAEAP-verified, farmers must complete three comprehensive steps: educational seminars, a thorough on-farm risk assessment, and development and implementation of an action plan addressing potential environmental risks. The Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) then conducts an on-farm inspection to verify program requirements related to applicable state and federal environmental regulations, Michigan Right-to-Farm Act guidelines and adherence to the farm's action plan.



## Membership Standings

	2008	6/18/08	
Goal	199,120	160,396	80.55%
Target	47,860	41,991	87.74%



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

### A LOOK AHEAD ...

#### July

- : 3-4 Fourth of July Holiday
- : 14-16 AFBF Council of Presidents Meeting - Washington, D.C.
- : 15-17 Ag Expo - MSU
- : 20-23 AFBF Midwest Legislative Conf Rapid City, South Dakota

#### August

- : 13 State Young Farmer Golf Outing Centennial Acres, Sunfield
- : 19-22 AFBF Staff Institute Indianapolis, Indiana
- : 22-Sept 1 Michigan State Fair - Detroit

#### September

- : 1 Labor Day Holiday
- : 3-5 AFBF Administrative & Financial Officers Conf. San Antonio, Texas

## County Farm Bureau program provides universal lesson on farm safety

### All farmers urged to invest in roll-over protection structures for tractors

Contact: Craig Anderson, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2311



LANSING, June 12, 2008 - When farmers viewed a video in 2007 that graphically showed tractor rollover effects, it stirred some discomfort, according to Berrien County Farm Bureau President Ed Kretchman.

"It was really startling," he said. "The interviews with surviving family members of farmers who had rolled their tractors and died was what prompted our board to start to look into it."

Shown at the Southwest Michigan Horticulture Days during a safety seminar put on by Craig Anderson, manager of Michigan Farm Bureau's Agriculture Labor and Safety Service Department, the video hit home in southwestern Michigan even though it was produced in Virginia.

"After that, the Berrien County Farm Bureau board started to look at what we could do for our members to encourage them to put Roll-Over Protection Structures (ROPS) on their tractors, and we decided that some monetary incentive might be a way of getting people going," Kretchman said.

By the end of the summer, he said, a committee was formed, money was found in a county reserve fund, and today, the county is offering its members up to \$300 toward the purchase and installation of ROPS on tractors that were built before 1976, the first year they were standard equipment on most tractors. Purchase and installation of an ROPS is estimated to cost between \$500 and \$1,500.

With \$7,500 in total funding available for the next three years, the fund might be exhausted soon, or might last far longer than three years, Kretchman said.

"This is our first round with it, so we don't really know how many ROPS installations will be needed," he said. "But we are also continually looking for other sources of revenue."

Part of the funding for the effort has come from Berrien, Cass and Van Buren County Farm Bureau Insurance agency manager Loren Korfmacher, who's putting \$30 toward every purchase as well. He said local insurance agents have also pledged their time to the safety effort, because they will travel to take the photos that verify that the ROPS has been installed. Verification is required before he or the county will contribute the money.

Contributing funds for safety is not only good business, Korfmacher said, it may lower insurance costs.

"It won't lower premiums immediately, but it could in the long run because a farmer may have fewer workmen's compensation claims and farm inventory claims. So by installing a ROPS, it could inadvertently lower insurance costs," he said.

Even if the money weren't available, installing a ROPS is worth the cost, Anderson said.

"Where ROPS and seatbelts are used together, there have been no reported fatalities in the United States," he said. "And when you consider that more than half of Michigan's farm fatalities have been tractor-related, that's significant."

"We want to have our farmers come home at night, so this is important. We know farmers love their farms, but they love their families more, and if that means spending money for ROPS, it should be an easy decision."

Adding the ROPS to save a life is obviously the most important thing, but there are other benefits, Kretchman said.

"Statistics we saw show that in most cases, it is experienced tractor operators who are involved in roll-overs," he said. "A fatality of that nature can also put the farm in peril, because there may be no one else with the experience to run the farm. The fact is that safety is always an issue on farms, but sometimes it gets neglected. Our purpose was to provide a service to our members who pay their dues, because this is a good way to give them something back."

#### AGRITIPS:

##### Michigan maple syrup production is highest since 1964

Michigan maple syrup production was estimated at 100,000 gallons for the 2008 season. That's 40,000 gallons above 2007 and the highest on record since 1964, when 110,000 gallons were produced, according to the Michigan Field Office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service. The tapping season was relatively short with most producers starting later than usual. However, excellent weather conditions salvaged the season with cold nights and slightly warmer days. Producers reported the syrup was better than average quality, with high sugar content throughout most of the season. Producing 6 percent of the total U.S. syrup production this year, Michigan ranks sixth nationally, the same as last year. Total taps were 405,000, and the syrup yield was 0.247 gallons per tap. In 2007, Michigan producers sold 55 percent of their syrup retail, 25 percent wholesale, and 20 percent bulk. The average price per gallon for 2007 was \$41.60 compared with \$37 in 2006. The value of production for 2007 was \$2.5 million, falling from \$2.9 million in 2006. Nationwide, maple syrup production totaled 1.64 million gallons this year, up 30 percent from 2007. The number of taps was estimated at 7.46 million, up approximately 2 percent from the 2007 total of 7.29 million. Yield per tap was estimated to be 0.219 gallons, up 27 percent from the previous season. The 2007 U.S. average price per gallon was \$33.20, up \$1.90 from the 2006 price of \$31.30. The U.S. value of production, at \$41.7 million for 2007, was down 8 percent from 2006.

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## MICHIGAN CROP WEATHER:

The Michigan Field Office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service reports that crop growth improved for the week ending June 8 due to the recent warm weather.

As shown in Table 2, most of the corn crop had emerged and was developing nicely with the recent weather. Soybean planting was all but complete, and numerous fields had emerged; although some fields were replanted due to frost damage and emergence problems. Winter wheat headed rapidly with the warm days. Alfalfa and other hay harvest was slowed by rain and storms. Dry bean planting was in full swing. Oats looked good and were just beginning to head. Barley was mostly in fair to good condition and had emerged for the most part.

In the fruit sector, damage to apples from the May 28-29 frosts in the west central and northwest regions was extensive and severe. Most of the plum crop in the west central has been lost. Strawberry fields in the southwest had thimble-sized fruit, and harvest began in early fields. Raspberries were in bloom in the southwest and southeast. Some frost damage was reported to wine grapes in the northwest.

As for vegetables, asparagus harvest was winding down and growers were expecting lower yields than previous years. Early planted cabbage has developed good heads and harvest started in some fields. Carrot stands appeared to be thin due to earlier dry weather. Sweet corn responded nicely to warmer temperatures, with plants 10 to 12 inches tall. Spinach continued to do well, while the planting of pumpkins and processing zucchini was just under way.

The USDA-NASS-Michigan Field Office can be reached at (517) 324-5300. This information is also available online at <http://www.nass.usda.gov/mi>.

### Table 1 - Soil moisture for week ending 06/08/2008

Stratum: (Very Short, Short, Adequate, Surplus)

Topsoil: (7, 13, 66, 14)

Subsoil: (3, 23, 66, 8)

### Table 2 - Crop Progress for week ending 06/08/2008 (percent)

Crop: (This Week, Last Week, Last Year, 5yr. Avg.)

All hay, first cutting: (35, 27, 44, 38)

Asparagus, harvested: (73, 55, 73, 76)

Barley, emerged: (85, 60, 95, 97)

Corn, emerged: (96, 80, 94, 85)

Dry beans, planted: (35, 10, 26, 24)

Oats, headed: (14, 1, 20, 20)

Potatoes, planted: (97, 88, 94, NA)

Potatoes, emerged: (61, 34, 74, NA)

Soybeans, planted: (95, 90, 93, 85)

Soybeans, emerged: (82, 46, 80, 65)

Winter wheat, headed: (85, 34, 91, 74)

## Farm Bureau Quick Facts

### *June is Michigan Horse Racing Month*

This year represents the 75th anniversary of pari-mutuel horse racing in Michigan.



Horse racing began in Michigan in September of 1933. At the time, there were 31 days of thoroughbred racing at the Michigan State Fairgrounds track in Detroit. The sport attracted more than 100,000 fans who wagered approximately \$3.5 million, generating close to \$125,000 dollars in state wagering tax.

Today, Michigan has six licensed pari-mutuel racetracks across the state. Four are harness racetracks: Hazel Park Harness Raceway, Northville Downs, Jackson Harness Raceway, and Sports Creek Raceway. One is a mixed breed track, Mount Pleasant Meadows, and the other is a thoroughbred track, Pinnacle Race Course.

In 2007, Michigan's racetracks held a total of 1,935 days of live and simulcast racing, and attracted 1 million fans who wagered more than \$260 million. Last year, Michigan's horse racing industry generated \$8.4 million for Michigan's economy through the simulcast wagering tax. The state Office of the Racing Commissioner licensed approximately 4,500 individuals to participate at some level in pari-mutuel horse racing; 3,500 of these licensees permanently reside in Michigan.

Source: Michigan Department of Agriculture

## Against the grain: Michigan corn crop is in better shape than Corn Belt

### Majority of farmers welcomed recent showers to replenish dry soil

Contact: Bob Boehm, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2023



LANSING, June 12, 2008 - Rain over the past week provided a much needed shot in the arm to Michigan's thirsty farm fields,

helping the state's corn crop to continue to fare far better than fields in the nation's Corn Belt.

Massive flooding in Iowa and severe weather in neighboring states to the east has forced the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to lower its estimate for national corn production. Earlier this week USDA said corn planting has lagged due to adverse weather, and farmers had planted about 2 million fewer corn acres than they previously indicated they would. As well, the agency's World Agricultural Outlook Board forecasts a 5-bushel-per-acre reduction in yield for this year's corn crop, putting total estimated U.S. corn production at 11.7 billion bushels - 390 million bushels fewer than last month's prediction.

"While the U.S. corn crop is under a lot of stress because of major flooding in the Corn Belt, Michigan's corn crop got in the ground on time, for the most part, and appears to be in good shape so far," said Bob Boehm, manager of the Michigan Farm Bureau Commodity and Marketing Department.

"While we certainly didn't need the damaging winds and, in some cases, the excess rain over the weekend, the precipitation was definitely welcomed. Soils were getting pretty dry and we needed the moisture."

As of June 1, 53 percent of the state's agricultural topsoil was considered in the "short" to "very short" range for moisture, according to the Michigan Field Office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Moisture levels have since improved, and on June 8 the percentage had dropped to 20 percent. The same is true for subsoil moisture. On June 8, only 26 percent of the state's agricultural topsoil was rated "short" to "very short," down from 34 percent a week ago.

The NASS Michigan Field Office rated 73 percent of the corn crop in "good" to "excellent" condition as of June 8, up from 63 percent the week prior.

Reports by the NASS Michigan Field Office also indicate that farmers finished planting corn last week, with 96 percent of the crop emerged as of June 8.

Boehm said it's doubtful that Michigan farmers will scurry to plant more corn in response to the troubles being experienced out of state because the planting deadline to be eligible for federal crop insurance was June 10. Plus, a later planting window would put the crop at higher risk for developmental problems during the growing season and the threat of frost damage during a late harvest. There are also strong markets encouraging additional acreage of soybeans and dry beans, which

typically are planted following corn.

The bad weather in the Corn Belt has already caused the price of corn to rise to \$7 per bushel. As a result, it's expected that livestock farmers will seek out cheaper alternatives to using corn for animal feed and, in some cases, may reduce their herd size or stop raising livestock. As a result, the World Agricultural Outlook Board predicts that 2008-2009 demand for corn feed will shrink by another 150 million bushels down to 1 billion bushels total, a 16 percent drop from the previous year.

**Wheat** ----- On the flip side, much higher wheat production is anticipated. USDA pegs the U.S. winter wheat crop at 1.8 billion bushels, up 2 percent from last month's forecast and 20 percent above 2007. In Michigan, wheat production is expected to total a record 49 million bushels, up 3 percent from the previous record of 47 million bushels set in 2006.

Terry Francl, senior economist with the American Farm Bureau Federation, notes that once projected increases in wheat exports and demands for wheat for animal feed are factored in, ending U.S. wheat stocks will likely total 487 million bushels, up just 4 million bushels from the May estimate.

Michigan wheat is expected to yield 69 bushels, unchanged from last month's forecast and 4 bushels over 2007. U.S. wheat yield is forecast at 45.3 bushels, up 1 bushel from a month ago and 3.1 bushels more than last year.

First, though, Michigan wheat must be able to withstand the warmer temperatures that will likely ensue following the recent rain.

"The rain was definitely welcomed. The wheat crop needed the moisture," said Boehm. "So it was helpful and beneficial in that way, but wet weather can also make wheat more susceptible to disease. So the concern now is what impact the rain will have on the crop as we head into what is usually a warmer time of the growing season."

#### Reminders



- CAG's have online resources available. The Loop, Discussion Topics, Discussion Response Form, Report Form, Questions and the Fun Page are all available to view and print by visiting [www.michfb.com/cag](http://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](mailto:apline@michfb.com) or sent to Michigan Farm Bureau, 7373 West Saginaw Hwy, Lansing, MI 48917 Attention: Amy Pline
- "FB Update" (DVD) are mailed quarterly
- Please send your completed committee set-up sheets into the home office.