

The

LOOP

March 2009



Michigan agriculture counts: New Census data tracks state trends

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

LANSING, Feb. 5, 2009 - Newly released data from the 2007 Census of Agriculture validates trends that Michigan farmers have observed in recent years; and while the results aren't a huge surprise, they are vital to moving Michigan's agriculture industry forward.

"Whether we're dealing with public policy on local, state or national issues, economic returns to agriculture, or land use and development trends, it's vitally important to have good, accurate statistics because absent that data other people can advocate for a position that might not be in the best interest of agriculture," said Bob Boehm, manager of the Michigan Farm Bureau Commodity and Marketing Department.

"So Michigan farmers deserve thanks for taking the time to participate, because the more accurate data we have the better able we are to sustain and advance Michigan's agriculture industry," said Boehm, adding that the 2007 results "confirm that Michigan agriculture is strong and growing with new and expanding opportunities for growth and diversity within the industry."

Michigan Department of Agriculture Director Don Koivisto agrees, saying the Census, conducted every five years, is "the only source of comprehensive agricultural data highlighting the impact agriculture has on every county in Michigan."

"(The 2007 Census of Agriculture) demonstrated a pattern of growth and diversity over the last five years, a pattern I know will continue to be a building block in rebuilding Michigan's economy," said Koivisto.

The findings

Michigan mirrored the nation in documenting an overall increase in the number of farms, growing 5 percent from 53,315 farms in the state in 2002 (the year of the last Agriculture Census) to 56,014 in 2007.

The majority of these new farms, however, tend to be small operations with more diversified production, fewer acres, lower sales and younger operators who also work off the farm. The stats show that nearly 80 percent of Michigan farms have less than 180 acres, and 61 percent of Michigan farms generate \$10,000 or less in sales.

Large farms represented the other growth sector, while the number of mid-size farms continued to decline. In 2002, 13 percent of Michigan farms accounted for 86 percent of the state's agricultural production. That trend has continued and now 14 percent of the farms are responsible for 90 percent of the market value of products sold.

"We see a continuation of the trend toward large, efficient farms utilizing the latest technology, benefiting from economies of scale, and specializing in production to

Membership Standings

2009 2/20/2009

Goal	192,719	99,511	51.63%
Target	47,543	28,259	59.44%

Attention:

If you are interested in receiving the LOOP newsletter via E-mail, instead of paper, please let your county administrative manager know so they can verify your E-mail address. They in turn can notify Amy Pline to put you on the list.

Set-up Sheets must be returned to CAMs to insure mailing. Only Discussion Leaders receive the newsletter packet each month.



7373 West Saginaw Hwy.

Lansing, MI 48917

Ph (517) 323-7000

Fax (517) 323-6604

www.michfb.com

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

A LOOK AHEAD ...

Feb 27 - Mar 1 MFB YF Leadership Conference

March

11-13 Washington Legislative Seminar

18 Ag Day at the Capitol

April

12 Easter Sunday

May

13-15 County Staff Conf. Doubletree, Bay City

25 Labor Day Holiday

June

1-3 AFBF Midwest Commodities Conf., IN

7-10 AFBF Council of Presidents Conf., MA

16 State P&E Committee Mtg., Lansing

22-26 YPCS, Northwood University, Midland

26-28 Mbrshp Chairman's Trip - Grand Hotel, Mackinac Island

(Cont'd from front page)

meet market demands for high-quality, consistent and affordable products for integration in our modern food supply, said Boehm.

The 2007 Census reflected the changing agricultural landscape from the get-go with the addition of new survey questions exploring practices such as community supported agriculture and direct marketing. The Census found that in Michigan:

- Organic production totaled nearly \$32 million, up \$25 million from 2002.

- Direct marketing totaled more than \$37 million on over 6,000 farms. The number of farmers using the Internet to direct market their products increased by 19.3 percent in five years.

- 500 farms did business using community supported agriculture arrangements.

- Agritourism approached \$23 million on 645 farms. That compares to 2002 when only \$3.3 million was recorded for the same number of farms.

"Michigan farmers are utilizing new marketing ideas to enhance their income opportunities, and we're seeing them respond to the growing popularity of agritourism and heightened consumer demand for locally produced food," said Boehm.

Census data reaffirms that nearly all Michigan farms, 87 percent, are single family-operated. Eight percent are partnerships, and 1 percent estates. Of the 4.5 percent of Michigan farms structured as corporations, 99 percent of those farms are family-held. In all, 70 percent of farm operators are full owners.

Tallies also reveal significant increases in agricultural sales over the past five years, offset by dramatic upswings in the price of farm inputs. The value of agricultural sales in Michigan totaled \$5.75 billion in 2007, up nearly \$2 billion from 2002. During this same period, however, production expenses also grew by \$1.5 billion. Farmers reported price increases of 107 percent for fuel and oil, 90 percent for feed, and 88 percent for fertilizer.

"The increase in value of gross sales is impressive, but most of the gain is tempered by the fact that farm input expenses also rose dramatically," said Boehm. "Still, agriculture remains a bright and growing sector in Michigan's weak economy and, as long as people need to eat, farmers are committed to supplying people with food."

Additional findings

The 2007 Census also revealed the following information about Michigan agriculture.

- Land in farms, 10 million acres, is down slightly from 2002.

- The average size farm is 179 acres.

- The top commodity sectors in Michigan are: grains, oilseeds, dry beans, accounting for 30 percent of sales; milk and dairy products, 22 percent; and nursery, floriculture, and greenhouse - 11 percent.

- Farm employment totaled 86,000, with a total payroll of \$607 million.

- 56 percent of farm operators have another occupation, a 10 percent increase in five years.

- Roughly one-half of farm operators are at least 55 years old.

- The number of female operators has jumped by nearly 40 percent.

Complete Census results are available online at www.agcensus.usda.gov.

American Farm Bureau launches Web site for consumers

Contact: Jill Corrin, (800) 292-2680, ext. 6585

LANSING, Feb. 12, 2009 - The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) has launched a Web site targeted at consumers. The site, called Your Agriculture at www.fb.org/yourag, is aimed at educating the non-farming public about agriculture issues, farmers and ranchers, and the food, fiber and fuel they grow.

"The average American is three generations removed from the farm and does not have a clear understanding of where their food comes from," said AFBF director of public relations Don Lipton. "We hope this new Web site will help us engage in conversation with consumers about modern agricultural production while shedding light on issues faced by America's farmers and ranchers."

The Your Agriculture site includes:

- A "Meet a Farmer" section, which profiles a farmer or rancher each month with an audio slideshow and questions and answers.
- A series of quizzes to test the public's farm IQ and determine if they are "smarter than a fifth-grade farm kid."
- A consumer guide to farm policy and agriculture issues.
- Farm fact sheets.
- A "foodie" blog for the latest information and opinions on food trends in the United States.
- Video stories from the public television series "America's Heartland."

The Your Agriculture Web site is AFBF's most recent effort to reach out to consumers about farming and ranching. Other AFBF outreach efforts include the FBlog at www.fb.org/blog, which captures the opinions and perspectives of farmers and provides a forum for consumers to engage in conversation with farmers. AFBF also maintains a page on Facebook, www.facebook.com.

The Your Agriculture site can also be accessed via Michigan Farm Bureau's Web site at www.michfb.com.

County Farm Bureau Presidents Primed for Local Leadership

Contact: Tom Nugent, (800) 292-2680, ext. 6587

LANSING, Feb. 5, 2009 - More than 50 county Farm Bureau presidents traveled to Lansing Jan. 28-29 to take part in Michigan Farm Bureau's (MFB) 2009 Council of Presidents' Conference. The annual event brings together local Farm Bureau leaders from across the state for informative workshops, guest speakers and opportunities to learn from and exchange ideas with their peers and MFB staff - all to help them make the most of their role at the helm of their local farming organization.

(TO LOCALIZE, PLEASE SEE THE PDF LIST OF LOCAL PARTICIPANTS IN ATTENDANCE

AT http://www.michfb.com/files/2009/02-05-09_Presidents_Conference.pdf.)

This year's programming began with an open forum over breakfast about the next generation of Michigan farmers, and how MFB's Young Farmer program provides leadership development resources and networking opportunities.

Following a presentation about the future of Michigan agriculture from Rich Harlow, of Michigan Department of Agriculture's Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program, conference participants had their choice of almost a dozen informative breakout sessions. Facilitated by MFB staff and a variety of experts from other organizations, workshops addressed a host of timely subjects, including local taxation, Michigan's Right to Farm Act, transportation issues, grass-roots legislative engagement, media relations, leases and easements, and farm markets and agritourism.

Keynote speaker Tim Skubick, Michigan political pundit and capitol watchdog, offered attendees his behind-the-scenes perspective and insights into the state's current political landscape, and a look toward the future of both the state government and Michigan's representation at the federal level.

The annual County Idea Showcase featured a trio of county Farm Bureau leaders sharing successful local programs with a captive audience of their peers. Eaton County Farm Bureau Vice President Lynn Stanke spoke about his organization's use of technology for targeting specific members with customized communications. Midland County President Nathan Clarke described a successful farm tour his county Farm Bureau hosted for visiting legislators. Berrien County Farm Bureau President Ed Kretchman then outlined the details of a successful cost-share program developed to help members retrofit older tractors with roll-over protection structures.

Editor's Note: Photographs of conference attendees can be downloaded at www.michfb.com/newsroom/photos. For assistance arranging an interview with your local Farm Bureau president, contact Jeremy C. Nagel at (800) 292-2680, ext. 6584, or jnagel1@michfb.com.



Above: Michigan political pundit Tim Skubick both informed and entertained an assembly of Michigan's county-level Farm Bureau presidents Jan. 28 in Lansing.

FARM BUREAU QUICK FACTS:

February is National Cherry Month

- The U.S. cherry crop yields between 200 and 300 million pounds of tart cherries per year.
- Approximately 94 percent of the cherries consumed in the United States are grown here.
- Michigan grows the most cherries, producing 70 to 75 percent of the crop each year.
- There are about 7,000 cherries on an average cherry tree, with each tree capable of producing more than 100 pounds of fruit in a season.
- There are two main types of tart cherries. The most commonly grown tart cherry in the United States is the Montmorency.
- It takes 6 to 8 pounds of cherries to make 1 pound of dried cherries, and there are about 100 cherries in an 8-ounce glass of cherry juice.



Source: Cherry Marketing Institute

Ag Secretary Meets Next Generation of Farm Bureau Leaders

Contact: Sarah Black, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2040 or Deb Schmucker, ext. 3213

Members of Michigan Farm Bureau's Institute for Leadership Education, better known as ProFILE, recently returned from a whirlwind six-day tour that took them to Canada, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., West Virginia and Ohio to learn about agriculture and Farm Bureaus in other areas. In addition to farm visits, the group made a stop at the U.S. Department of Agriculture headquarters in Washington, D.C., where they had the opportunity to meet new Secretary of Agriculture **Tom Vilsack, pictured center.**



Pictured alongside him from left to right are: Burk Kretschmer of Jeddo, Macomb County; Trent Hilding of Edmore, Montcalm County; Matthew McKimmy of Beaverton, Gladwin County; John Streiter of Bay Port, Huron County; Andrea Boughton of Marshall, Calhoun County; Joe Tarkowski of Lowell, Ionia County; Jeffrey Kala of Onaway, Cheboygan County; Abbey Dorr of Lawrence, Van Buren County; Carrie Orr of Charlotte, Eaton County; Joshua Humm of Ithaca, Gratiot County; Caleb Stewart of Bannister, Clinton County; Karah Leitz of Sodus, Berrien County; Abe Pasch of Weidman, Isabella County; Emily Seiferth of Fremont, Newaygo County; Calby Garrison of Adrian, Lenawee County; and Luke Meerman of Coopersville, Ottawa County. ProFILE participants not pictured are: Tina Love of Rudyard, Chippewa County; Tom Oesch of Alto, Kent County; and Robert Rowley of Richmond, St. Clair County.

The tour is a standard component of ProFILE, which is a comprehensive 15-month-long leadership education program for MFB members between the ages of 25 and 35. These participants represent the tenth ProFILE class and will graduate from the program this spring.

MFB 2009 Policy Book is online

Contact: MFB Public Policy and Commodity Division, (517) 323-6560
The 2009 Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) Policy Book is now available on the MFB Web site at www.michfb.com/policy/book.

Categorized and searchable by subject, the book outlines MFB's positions on state issues as adopted by Farm Bureau members at the MFB 89th Annual Meeting. A small portion of the book is devoted to member-adopted policies concerning organizational issues.

For more information or to request a print copy, call the MFB Public Policy and Commodity Division at (517) 323-6560.

Newest 'FB Update' video newsletter is online

Contact: Steve Paradiso, (800) 292-2680, ext. 3208

The Winter 2009 edition of "FB Update" is now online at www.michfb.com/video. This edition chronicles the Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) 89th Annual Meeting, covering all the action from policy sessions to awards programs, young farmer contests, and promotion and education activities.

The program can be viewed online or downloaded as a Windows Media version, a version for use on a video iPod, or an MP3 file for use on any MP3 player.

"FB Update" is MFB's 20-minute quarterly video newsletter. In addition to being posted on the MFB Web site, "FB Update" is distributed to agriscience teachers and members of MFB Community Action Groups across the state.

Individuals with story ideas are encouraged to contact "FB Update" producer Steve Paradiso at (800) 292-2680, ext. 3208, or via e-mail at sparadis@michfb.com.

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.
- Completed set up sheets can be mailed directly to your county administrative manager. Remember: Discussion Leaders are designated to receive all newsletters, 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, Lansing, MI 48917 Attention: Amy Pline
- "FB Update" (DVD) are mailed quarterly
- Please send your completed committee set-up sheets into the home office. If you received an excess, I apologize.