

The

# LOOP

April 2009

## MFB honors legislators for supporting agriculture in Congress

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

LANSING, March 12, 2009 - The Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB), the state's largest general farm organization, is honoring eight members of the Michigan Congressional Delegation with Friend of Farm Bureau awards in recognition of their support of agriculture in the 110th Congress.

Awarded each Congressional session, the Friend of Farm Bureau Award recognizes legislators whose voting records support priority issues of the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF).

Recipients are nominated by state Farm Bureaus and are approved by the AFBF Board of Directors. Receiving Friend of Farm Bureau awards for the 110th Congress are: Sen. Carl Levin • Rep. Mike Rogers • Rep. Dave Camp • Rep. John Dingell • Rep. Dale Kildee • Rep. Thaddeus McCotter • Rep. Candice Miller • Rep. Fred Upton

*Congressman Fred Upton's support of agriculture in the 110th Congress has garnered him a Friend of Farm Bureau Award. Pictured, St. Joseph County Farm Bureau member Larry Walton, right, presents Upton, left, with a plaque in honor of the distinction during a visit to Upton's office in Washington, D.C. Walton and other Farm Bureau members from the Congressman's district were in town for the Michigan Farm Bureau Washington Legislative Seminar. Additional Photographs are available online at [www.michfb.com/newsroom/photos/32](http://www.michfb.com/newsroom/photos/32)*



"The Friend of Farm Bureau designation is one of the highest honors the Farm Bureau bestows on Congresspersons," said MFB President Wayne H. Wood. "Michigan Farm Bureau is proud to formally thank these deserving members of Congress for their service to agriculture.

"We look forward to maintaining this vital working relationship as Michigan agriculture faces additional opportunities and challenges in coming years."

Some of the priority issues considered for this round of awards included support for the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, Energy Independence and Security Act, Water Resources Development Act, and agricultural disaster assistance.

Farm Bureau also looked for shared opposition to legislation that would negatively impact agriculture, including legislation that would criminalize horse processing and extend Clean Water Act regulations to all waters in the United States.

MFB members presented plaques to the award winners this week during the MFB Washington Legislative Seminar in Washington, D.C.



## Membership Standings

2008 3/13/2009

Goal	192,719	111,940	58.08%
Target	47,543	31,722	66.72%

### ATTENTION

#### DISCUSSION LEADERS

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7373 West Saginaw Hwy.

Lansing, MI 48917

Ph (517) 323-7000

Fax (517) 323-6604

[www.michfb.com](http://www.michfb.com)

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

### A LOOK AHEAD ...

#### April

12 Easter Sunday

30 Deadline to qualify for the 2009 Membership Chairman's Trip

#### May

13-15 County Staff Conference

25 Memorial Day Holiday

#### June

22-26 Young People's Citizenship Seminar (YPCS)

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

## Dairymen feeling pinch as weak economy sours milk demand

Contact: Ernie Birchmeier, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2024

LANSING, Feb. 12, 2009 - America's dairy farmers are facing incredibly difficult circumstances as the global economic recession drives down demand for milk and other dairy products both here and abroad.

This is a concern for Michigan, where dairy production is one of the state's biggest agricultural sectors, said Ernie Birchmeier, Michigan Farm Bureau livestock and dairy specialist. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, Michigan's dairy industry accounts for nearly a quarter of all agricultural sales in the state.

"Strong dairy prices had helped shield dairy farmers from some of the pains of rising costs for animal feed and energy over the past couple years. Without that shield, though, producers are defenseless," said Birchmeier.

Experts predict the steep drop in dairy prices will be felt by dairy farmers for several months to come, a situation that will only add to America's economic woes, said Birchmeier.

"People forget that farmers are consumers, too. When their budgets get tight, they cut back on spending and the ripple effect of a bad economy is only exacerbated."

The decline in dairy product prices is no surprise to many in the dairy industry. What is surprising is the dramatic correction that took place from the end of December through January, said Allison Specht, a dairy and regulatory economist with the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Dairy prices on the futures market traded at \$14.13 per hundredweight on Dec. 1, 2008, \$10.28 per hundredweight on Dec. 31, 2008, and \$9.30 per hundredweight on Feb. 9, 2009. Milk prices are down more than 50 percent from last summer after hitting all-time highs in 2007 and climbing to the second highest level on record in early 2008.

The main culprit for low prices paid to dairy farmers is the general economic situation.

"The financial condition of consumers has changed domestic food consumption patterns, and dairy is feeling the negative effects of this trend," said Specht. "Exports had insulated the dairy industry from feeling losses in away-from-home demand, but this is no longer the case. While grocery dairy-buying may be expanding slightly, losing any food service demand, which accounts for 40 percent of dairy consumption, is bad news."

The National Restaurant Association tracks the industry's health and performance, and the December 2008 index marked the 14th consecutive month that the index was below 100. An index below 100 signals industry contraction, thus less dairy buyers in the marketplace.

On the export front, several factors have contributed to much stronger competition in trade markets, including New Zealand dairy production beginning to rebound somewhat after past droughts crippled the nation, and decisions by the European Union to once again directly subsidize exports.

Most dairy industry analysts foresee depressed prices through the duration of the recession, however optimists anticipate a mid to late-year turnaround. Butter and milk powder prices are at government support levels, and the federal government purchased nearly 162.3 million pounds of nonfat dry milk and almost 2.67 million pounds of butter between Oct. 1, 2008 and Feb. 6, 2009.

"The U.S. dairy industry is positioned very well in the long-term (post 2009) assuming a growing world economy," said Specht. "But individual producer survival is dependent on management decisions and how long the short-term economic woes will last."

*Editor's Note: For assistance arranging an interview with a local dairy farmer, contact Jill Corrin, media support services manager, at (800) 292-2680, ext. 6585; or Jeremy C. Nagel, county communications manager, ext. 6584.*

## Michigan can bank on 'wholesome, honest, pure' farm families Farmers will carry message to legislators at Ag Day at the Capitol

Contact: Nicole Campbell, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2047 or Rebecca Park, ext. 2049

LANSING, March 12, 2009 - In the midst of an economic recession, Michigan can still bank on agriculture and feel good doing it because Michigan farm families are "wholesome, honest and pure."

That's the message dozens of Michigan farmers and more than 30 agricultural organizations will deliver to state legislators when they gather in Lansing on March 18 for the fifth-annual Ag Day at the Capitol.

Ag Day at the Capitol aims to raise awareness and a deeper sense of appreciation among the Legislature for agriculture, the state's second largest industry. This year's theme is "Wholesome, Honest, Pure ... Michigan Farm Families."

"We'd like legislators to understand that agriculture is a vibrant industry in Michigan that has not lost

(Cont'd from page 2)

sight of basic values. In other words, agriculture is big business in Michigan run by families with big hearts," said Michigan Farm Bureau President Wayne H. Wood.

"At the end of the day, we hope the Legislature better understands what agriculture brings to the table, and draws on this knowledge in making budget decisions and handling other issues affecting Michigan farmers," said Wood.

To kick off the day, participating farmers will visit every legislator's office and share valuable insight concerning the industry and its agri-food and agri-energy sectors. Discussion topics will include the following:

- Agriculture contributes \$71.3 billion to Michigan's economy annually.
- Agriculture employs more than 1 million people. That's a quarter of Michigan's work force.
- The state's agricultural economy has been expanding at a rate five times faster than the growth rate of the general economy.
- Ninety-five percent of Michigan's farms are single-family operated and/or family partnerships.
- Of the few Michigan farms structured as corporations, 99 percent of those are family-owned and involve multiple generations and family members.

To keep matters fresh in the minds of legislators, farmers will leave behind a gift basket chock full of food and agriculture-related products donated by event sponsors. The items include pickled asparagus, sugar canisters and lanolin hand cream.

Legislators will have another opportunity to interact with farmers later in the day at an agricultural "showcase" inside the Capitol. Legislators will be invited to sample Michigan food products, such as barbecue pork and string cheese, and learn more about individual commodities at the trade-show style showcase.

A list of sponsoring organizations can be found at [http://www.michfb.com/files/2009/03-12-09\\_Ag\\_Day\\_sponsors.pdf](http://www.michfb.com/files/2009/03-12-09_Ag_Day_sponsors.pdf). Ag Day at the Capitol is also made possible thanks to the bi-partisan, bi-cameral support from legislative sponsors, Sen. Gerald Van Woerkom (R-Norton Shores), Sen. John Gleason (D-Flushing), Rep. Jeff Mayes (D-Bay City), and Rep. Goeff Hansen (R-Hart).

Ag Day at the Capitol coincides with National Agriculture Week, which runs March 15-21, and also aims to promote agriculture's many benefits.

## Report reveals Michigan's 2008 fruits of labor

Contact: Ken Nye, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2020

Findings from the 2008 Michigan fruit production report are in. Highlights, as compiled by the Michigan Field Office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service, follow.

Michigan apple production was 560 million pounds, down from 770 million pounds in 2007. The preliminary farm level value of the utilized crop was \$121 million. Michigan ranked third in U.S. apple production behind Washington and New York.

-Tart cherry production was 165 million pounds, down 16 percent from the 196 million pounds produced in 2007. The average yield was 6,370 pounds per acre. The preliminary farm level value was \$65 million.

-Sweet cherry production was 26,500 tons, down from 27,300 tons produced in 2007. The average yield was 3.68 tons per acre. The preliminary farm level value was \$15 million.

-Cultivated blueberry production in Michigan was 110 million pounds, approximately 32 percent of the U.S. total. Growers harvested 18,600 acres in 2008. The farm level value was \$124 million.

-Strawberry production in Michigan was 4.9 million pounds on 800 harvested acres. The farm level value was \$6 million.

-Michigan peach production was 28 million pounds, down from 41 million pounds in 2007. Total bearing acres were 4,300, and the farm level value was \$9 million.



-Pear production in Michigan was 2,850 tons on 800 acres. The farm level value was \$1 million.

-Michigan plum production was 2,300 tons on 650 acres. The farm level value was \$821,000.

-Michigan grape production was 73,700 tons. The farm level value was \$27 million.

-Michigan remains No. 1 for pickle production

Contact: Ken Nye, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2020

## Local young farmers gather skills, ideas at ag conference

Contact: Lori Chamberlain, (800) 292-2680, ext. 3234

LANSING, March 5, 2009 - Approximately 300 young farmers from across the state attended Michigan Farm Bureau's (MFB) annual Young Farmer Leaders Conference, Feb. 27 to March 1 in Grand Rapids.

(TO LOCALIZE BY ADDING INDIVIDUALS IN ATTENDANCE FROM YOUR AREA, SEE THE FOLLOWING PDF LIST OF LOCAL PARTICIPANTS at [http://www.michfb.com/files/2009/03-05-09\\_YFLC.pdf](http://www.michfb.com/files/2009/03-05-09_YFLC.pdf).)

The annual event offers farmers ages 18 to 35 a combination of leadership development, informative workshops and idea exchanges, all with an eye toward building a strong new generation of agricultural producers to lead Michigan's second-largest industry confidently into the future.

Centering on the theme "Planning for 2030," the seminars and workshops at this year's conference encouraged young farmers to adopt a long-term perspective on developing their farming operations.

Specific topics included biofuels; new technologies in seeds, animal health and farm equipment; the effects of consumer, merchandiser and processor demands on agricultural producers; agriculture's role in watershed management; and the future of farm inputs and grain marketing trends.

"Our goal was to provide our young farmers with a longer-term picture," said Lori Chamberlain, manager of the MFB Young Farmer Department. "And many of them said afterwards they found it refreshing that we emphasized planning for the future rather than focusing on the challenges of the present day."

Keynote speaker Lowell Catlett, dean of the College of Agriculture and Home Economics at New Mexico State University, encouraged young farmers to reflect on agribusiness trends to better anticipate and plan their future success.

Other special guest speakers at this year's conference included David B. Armstrong, president and chief executive officer of GreenStone Farm Credit Services, and MFB President Wayne H. Wood.

*Representing the Northwest Michigan Farm Bureau at MFB's 2009 Young Farmer Leaders' Conference were (front row, from left) Betsy Wagner, Amanda Wagner, Kelsey LaCross, Jackie Bott; (middle) Adam Wagner, Paul Wagner, Ben LaCross, Stephen Bott; (back) Elin Westover, Greg Bancroft and Keri Bancroft.*



## FEATURED DISCUSSION TOPIC RESPONSES

### Febuary: Making Energy While the Wind Blows

#### **Question 1: How can county Farm Bureaus encourage increased investment in alternative energy?**

-Business will take care of itself. Speculators are what throws everything off. The county Farm Bureaus show and make unbiased data available. Things should not always get subsidized.

-Before Michigan gets into this, they should go out west to see how they operate. Do more research.

#### **Question 2: What is an acceptable time for an investment in alternative energy to pay for itself? Five years? 20? What does it need to be to gain acceptance by the public?**

-Most acceptable would be 5-10 at most. People are impatient, they want a return to show for their investment in a shorter length of time.

-It will be a long time for an investment in alternative energy to pay for itself. It needs to be seen as profitable to be accepted by the public.

#### **Question 3: What is the most viable, most efficient and long-lasting alternative energy source? When can you expect it to be in common use?**

-Wind, solar energy, but vary by region. Digesters may come sooner as technology is close.

-Water/Nuclear/Coal...Depends on our government and their restrictions (which are too many).

**Thank you for all of your submissions and they are all reviewed. This is a preview of what other Community Action Groups think.**

## 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)

- 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
- Your May 2009 issue will be mailed and will contain your next quarterly "FB Update" DVD.