



THE Loop

JANUARY 2010

NEWSLETTER

First month of 'Free Groceries for a Year!' solicits huge response

Consumers can still register online, learn more about Michigan farmers

Contact: Mark Crouser, Center for Food Integrity program coordinator, (816) 556-3134

LANSING, Dec. 17, 2009 - Thousands of Michigan consumers have learned that a chance to win free groceries for a year is just a mouse click away. In fact, since the Michigan "Farmers Feed US" promotion at FarmersFeedUS.org launched on Nov. 15, Michigan consumers have registered more than 56,000 times for a chance to win.

Through Feb. 12, Michigan residents can register at www.FarmersFeedUS.org for a chance to win one of three grand prizes of free groceries for a year courtesy of Michigan's farmers. Each prize has a \$5,000 value based on research conducted by the Food Marketing Institute.

Upon visiting the website, consumers can choose to register with each of the 10 Michigan farmers daily, and take a video tour of their farms. Each video explains how they produce safe, nutritious and affordable food for Michigan consumers.

"We're ecstatic with the first month's overwhelming response," said Jennifer Lewis, a Jonesville dairy farmer featured on the website. "By registering, Michigan consumers are showing that they understand the importance of farmers in the state, and the site is a great opportunity for us to share how we raise the food that Michigan consumers eat, while also introducing them to our families and giving tours of our farms."

Continued on page 2

Please note that the Community Action Fun Page has been discontinued, effective with the January 2010 issue. The archive of past months (back to 2006) will still be available on the MFB Website, under the CAG section.

Membership Standings

	2010	DECEMBER 29, 2009	
GOAL	189,958	50,669	26.67%
TARGET	47,736	9,546	20.00%

A look ahead....

January 2010

- 10 - 13 AFBF Annual Meeting
- 27 - 28 MFB Council of Presidents Conference

February 2010

Statewide Membership Day Feb 2, 2010

- 11 Winter Commodity Conf - Mt. Pleasant
- 17 Lansing Legislative Seminar
- 20 - 22 AFBF YF&R Leadership Conf, Tulsa, OK
- 26 - 28 MFB YF Leaders Conf, Grand Rapids

March 2010

- 10 - 11 Washington Legislative Seminar
- 17 Ag Day at the Capitol

REMINDERS

- "FB Update" DVDs are mailed out quarterly. Your next version will be in February, 2010.
- All CAG Set-up Sheets were due to County Administrative Managers by Dec 1, 2009.
- CAG's have online resources available. The Loop, Discussion Topics, Discussion Response Form, Report Form, and Questions are all available to view and print by visiting www.michfb.com/cag
- Any suggestions or ideas for future articles or discussion topics can be E-mailed to apline@michfb.com or sent to Michigan Farm Bureau, 7373 West Saginaw Hwy, PO Box 30960, Lansing, MI 48909-8460 Attention: Amy Pline



7373 West Saginaw Hwy. • Lansing, MI 48917
Phone (517) 323-7000 • Fax (517) 323-6604

www.michfb.com

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

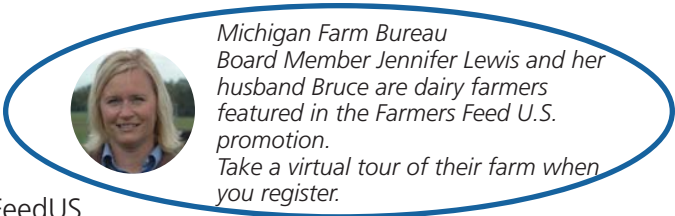


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The site features farmers from across the state, each sharing information about their farm and family. "I'm proud to produce food in our great state," Lewis said, "and I want to show people how today's farms operate." The agricultural commodity organizations sponsoring Michigan Farmers Feed US selected the farmers featured on the website, with the goal of showcasing farmers who are representative of the different food groups and different farming regions in Michigan. The 10 featured farmers are:

- Jennifer Bixby, apple farmer, Berrien Springs, Berrien County
- Dave Cheney, hog farmer, Mason, Ingham County
- Harry Herbruck, egg farmer, Saranac, Ionia County
- Ed Cagney, soybean farmer, Scotts, Kalamazoo County
- Scott Oswalt, sheep farmer, Vicksburg, Kalamazoo County
- Annie Link, dairy farmer, Alto, Kent County
- Bret Schapman, cattle farmer, Romeo, Macomb County
- Clark Gerstacker, corn farmer, Midland, Midland County
- Jason Ruhlig, vegetable farmer, Carleton, Monroe County

Over the course of the 90-day campaign, consumers statewide will also have the opportunity to interact with these and other Michigan farmers on their blogs and Facebook pages, including: www.facebook.com/MiFarmersFeedUS and www.twitter.com/MiFarmersFeedUS.



Michigan Farm Bureau Board Member Jennifer Lewis and her husband Bruce are dairy farmers featured in the Farmers Feed U.S. promotion. Take a virtual tour of their farm when you register.

The Michigan Farmers Feed US program is supported by local farmers represented by the Michigan Ag Council, Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan Beef Industry Commission, Michigan Pork Producers Association, Corn Marketing Program of Michigan, Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee, Michigan Apple Committee, Dairy Farmers of America, Michigan Milk Producers Association, United Dairy Industry of Michigan, Michigan Allied Poultry Industries, GreenStone Farm Credit Services, West Michigan Ag Alliance, Hamilton Farm Bureau, and 30 county Farm Bureaus from across the state. The Farmers Feed US program originated in Michigan based on interest from the Michigan Ag Council and other agricultural organizations in coordinating a statewide effort to showcase how Michigan's farmers produce safe, nutritious, and affordable food for consumers. Michigan is the second state to implement the nationally-based Farmers Feed US program on a state level.

Editor's Note: Mark Crouser, of the Center for Food Integrity, is the program coordinator and media contact. You can reach him at (816) 556-3134. The Center for Food Integrity is a not-for-profit corporation established to build consumer trust and confidence in the contemporary U.S. food system. Members represent every segment of the food system, and are committed to providing accurate information and addressing important issues among all food system stakeholders. The Center does not lobby or advocate for individual food companies or brands. For more information, visit www.foodintegrity.org.

Farm Bureau Quick Facts: Chestnuts

Chestnuts are one of more than 200 commodities grown on a commercial basis in Michigan. Chestnuts ripen in Michigan in mid- to late-September and are harvested through mid-October. Unlike other nuts, Michigan-grown chestnuts must be refrigerated and should not be allowed to dry out. They can be roasted over an open fire, in an oven, on the grill, and even in the microwave; and can also be boiled or steamed.



Chestnuts have about half the calories of other nuts and have the lowest fat content of all the main edible nuts. They have only 4 to 5 percent fat as compared to 62 percent for the hazelnut and 71 percent for the pecan. In composition and food value, the chestnut, with its high carbohydrate content of about 78 percent, is more akin to cereal grains, such as wheat, than to nuts.

Source: Chestnut Growers, Inc. and Michigan Department of Agriculture

Slight drop in state's dry bean production, increase in potatoes expected

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

The Michigan Field Office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service has released forecasts of the state's dry bean and potato production.

In Michigan, which is among the top states in the nation for dry bean production, 2009 dry bean production is estimated at 3.51 million hundredweight(cwt), down about 3 percent from 3.61 million cwt in 2008. The yield is 18 bags (cwt) per acre, down 0.50 bags (cwt) from last year.

Nationally, dry edible bean production is forecast at 25.2 million cwt for 2009, virtually unchanged from the Oct. 1 forecast but 1 percent below 2008. Planted area is estimated at 1.53 million acres, up slightly from the October forecast and 3 percent above 2008. Harvested area is projected to be 1.45 million acres, 1 percent above the October forecast but virtually unchanged from the previous year's acreage. The average U.S. yield is forecast at 1,737 pounds per acre, a decrease of 17 pounds from October's forecast and 31 pounds below the 2008 yield.

Meanwhile in the potato sector, Michigan's 2009 potato crop is forecast at 15.4 cwt, up 4 percent from 2008. Planted acres, at 45,000, increased 2,000 acres from last year. Harvested acres, at 43,500, were also up 1,000 acres from 2008. The average yield is forecast at 355 cwt per acre, up 5 cwt per acre.

Nationally, production of fall potatoes for 2009 is forecast at 392 million cwt, up 3 percent from 2008. Area harvested, at 919,900 acres, is virtually

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unchanged from the July estimate. The average yield, forecast at 426 cwt per acre, is up 15 cwt per acre from last year's yield and, if realized, will be the highest yield on record.

Go to YouTube for video profiles on elite set of Michigan young farmers

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

Get up-close and personal with some of the Michigan agriculture industry's up-and-coming "movers and shakers" by checking out video profiles of 16 young farmers on Michigan Farm Bureau's (MFB)

YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/MichiganFarmBureau.

MFB filmed each of the 16 finalists who competed earlier this month for young farmer awards, and showed the videos at the MFB annual meeting where winners were announced in four award categories. Through the use of YouTube, these popular videos are now available for everyone to view.

The video profiles tell the stories of the following young farmers: Alpena - David

Tolan; Berrien - Jennifer Wharton; Eaton - Jill Cords;

Steve Tennes; Gratiot - Matt Cary &

Mark Daniels; Ingham - Betty Jo Nash; Kent - Renee McCauley; Montcalm - Heather & Keith Waldron; Oceana - Jason Fleming; Osceola - Mark & Katrina Bontekoe; Ottawa - Luke & Victoria Meerman; Sanilac - Michelle Warczynsky; Tuscola - Benjamin Sattelberg; Van Buren - Coleman Hunt & Tony Stocchiero

Information about the award categories and winners is available at www.michfb.com/annualindex/96/968. MFB's young farmer program targets individuals between the ages of 18 and 35.

Michigan farmers urged to complete January livestock surveys

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

Michigan Farm Bureau members are encouraged to respond to livestock surveys they will soon receive from the Michigan Field Office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service. During the first two weeks of January, the office will conduct the following three surveys: the Cattle Report, the Sheep and Goats Report, and the Milk Production Report.

More than 2,000 Michigan farmers will be asked to provide information about their livestock operations. The data will be used to estimate Michigan's milk production, cattle inventory, and sheep and goats inventory by class. Individual reports from farmers are kept confidential and only summarized to set county, state, and national estimates of livestock inventories and production.

Most selected farmers will receive a questionnaire in the mail. Some will be contacted by telephone or interviewed in person. Completing the surveys on the Web is also an option.

All reports will be available on the Internet at www.nass.usda.gov. The Milk Production Report will be available after 3 p.m. on Jan. 19, 2010. The Cattle Report and the Sheep and Goats Report will be available after 3 p.m. on Jan. 29, 2010. Farms participating in the surveys will receive a free copy of the results as published in "Agriculture Across Michigan." Estimates by county will be available for cattle on April 13, 2010



Right to Farm extends to farm markets with newly approved standards

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

LANSING, Dec. 17, 2009 - Michigan's Right to Farm Act and the nuisance protection it affords now clearly extends to farm markets operated by farmers on their property. The Michigan Commission of Agriculture approved a new set of Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs) for farm markets. GAAMPs are widely accepted industry practices, and farmers who voluntarily follow them are protected from nuisance lawsuits under Michigan's Right to Farm Act.

"The Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) appreciates the Commission of Agriculture's work in not only approving but also initiating the development of the farm market GAAMPs. We are especially grateful of Commissioner Don Coe's leadership in championing and supporting the cause," said Ken Nye, MFB's horticulture and forestry specialist.

The need to develop GAAMPs for farm markets stemmed from a lack of uniform information on regulating farm markets in Michigan - a situation that has created challenges for farm market operators and local and state regulators alike as more Michigan farms have transitioned into direct marketing and on-site retail activity.

While the definition of a "farm operation" in the Michigan Right to Farm Act includes marketing produce at roadside stands or farm markets, specific marketing activities are not defined or described. The new farm market GAAMPs were developed to provide guidance on what exactly constitutes an on-farm market and farm market activities. "This doesn't mean certain local and state regulations are going to be pre-empted, nor does it mean farm market operators are exempt from following certain local ordinances. A GAAMP only sets a voluntary standard for compliance with accepted practices," said Nye. "What we gain from the farm market GAAMPs is education and a set of statewide standards for both farm market operators and local officials."

Under the newly approved GAAMPs, a farm market is defined as a "farm retail facility and is considered part of a farm operation." The definition spells out that at least 50 percent of the products

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marketed and offered for sale at the market "must be produced on and by the affiliated farm." It also states that the farm market can operate seasonally or year-round, may involve processing activities that convert raw commodities to finished products, and may include marketing activities to attract customers. In addition to providing clearer definitions, the farm market GAAMPs outline standards for practices such as providing signage, customer parking and external lighting. Nye added that this week's final approval of the GAAMPs marks an important step in drawing more attention to Michigan's burgeoning farm market industry.

"The development of industry standards and the extension of Michigan's Right to Farm Act to farm markets is validation of the sector's positive role in Michigan's agriculture industry," he said. The farm market standards join Michigan's existing GAAMPs covering manure management, nutrient utilization, farm site selection, irrigation/water use, pesticide utilization, care of farm animals, and cranberry production. GAAMPs are reviewed annually by technical committees and revised and updated by the Michigan Commission of Agriculture as necessary. "There are more protections we'd certainly like to see in the future and we look forward to making those refinements," said Nye, "but for now this set of approved GAAMPs is an important first step for Michigan's farm markets."

DIGITAL DIALOGUE REMINDER!

You can follow Michigan Farm Bureau news and interact with the organization using the following social media tools.

Facebook: The Michigan Farm Bureau operates a page on Facebook called Michigan Farm Bureau. Search for it at www.facebook.com and become a fan.

Twitter: The Michigan Farm Bureau operates a Twitter account named MichFarmBureau (no spaces). You can find us at <http://twitter.com/MichFarmBureau> and become a follower.

YouTube: The Michigan Farm Bureau has its own YouTube channel, appropriately titled MichiganFarmBureau (no spaces). Find it at <http://www.youtube.com/MichiganFarmBureau> and become a subscriber.