

# Michigan Farm Bureau 2026 Policy Book

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## **AGRICULTURE**

### **#1 Agricultural Commodity Commissions**

We support and will protect the Michigan Agricultural Commodities Marketing Act (PA 232 of 1965), and other authorized agricultural commodity commissions.

We support legislation setting time frames for gubernatorial action on filling vacancies when applicants have been submitted.

Michigan Farm Bureau will consider supporting commodity group proposals that align with existing policy and are beneficial to producers, including the extension of referendums up to ten years. We encourage member involvement and support of their commodity organizations.

### **#2 Agricultural Fairs and Exhibitions**

Michigan Farm Bureau and Farm Bureau members have a long history of supporting agricultural exhibitions and livestock shows that promote agriculture. Agriculture has long realized the importance of these events as a forum for competition among individuals involved in our industry and an opportunity to improve agricultural products. These activities also provide opportunities for enhancing leadership skills and boosting the agricultural knowledge of participating youth, while also promoting agriculture to the general public.

The success of state and county fairs and exhibitions relies on volunteer leaders from the agricultural community. We urge Farm Bureau members to take active roles in providing oversight and taking ownership of these activities to ensure the original intent of fairs and

exhibitions continues. Agricultural education exhibits, livestock competitions, agricultural showcases and youth agricultural activities should be the cornerstone of state and county fairs and exhibitions.

Financial resources are a critical component to the viability of state and county fairs and exhibitions. We urge the State of Michigan and individual fair boards to implement long-range plans that address the financial needs of these events, including but not limited to premiums and infrastructure.

As our industry adapts to change, we must look for alternative venues for these events that provide opportunities for expanded involvement with the non-farm community.

We urge MFB to evaluate and make recommendations aimed at ensuring the long-term viability of our agricultural heritage through participation in exhibitions, shows and other public events in addition to state and county fairs.

### **#3 Agricultural Innovation and Value-Added Initiatives**

Structural changes in agricultural processing have affected many traditional supply/demand relationships between producers and their buyers. Value-added initiatives offer opportunities to deal with such changes and keep agriculture profitable.

We support:

- Producers' individual and cooperative efforts to improve income with processing and marketing that add value to farm products while maintaining food safety.
- The Michigan State University Product Center's objectives and ongoing efforts, including educational programs that support and promote agricultural processing opportunities.
- The coordination and formation of producer alliances and cooperatives.
- Efforts to strengthen agricultural processing in Michigan. Incentives for existing and/or prospective processors should include (but not be limited to) industrial facility exemption options, tax breaks, regulatory reform/relief, and ample access to necessary inputs such as investment capital, labor, energy, and farm products.
- A closer working relationship and collaboration between Michigan Farm Bureau and the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC), including quarterly meetings between their staffs and leadership.
- Agricultural representation on the MEDC to better serve agriculture and the food industry. We support Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development authority and/or oversight over granting MEDC funds for agricultural development activity.
- The use of Michigan MarketMaker (<https://mi.foodmarketmaker.com>) for featuring Michigan commodities and value-added products.
- A coordinated effort between agriculture and controllers of publicly owned lands (e.g., county parks, rest areas, park-n-ride lots, etc.) to facilitate farmers' on-site marketing of Michigan-grown products to consumers.
- Tax incentives and infrastructure to increase Michigan's food-processing capabilities.
- State government establishing a low-interest loan program for funding qualified value-added ventures.

- The Right to Process Act, including protections for agricultural processors and cooperatives.
- Continued monitoring of the Michigan Cottage Food Law to ensure it maintains its original intent.
- The use of one-time start-up grants (not recurring funding) for food hubs.
- Encouraging institutions to purchase more food from local sources.
- Additional research and development for value-added opportunities.
- Grant programs for industry segments that struggle to secure loans because they are seen as high risk.
- Government agencies cooperating to expedite innovative agricultural initiatives.
- Annual funding of an ag innovation value-added initiative fund directed by a board of industry representatives.
- Funds for developing automation and robotics useful to Michigan agriculture.
- Funds for studying the impact of automation, robotics, software, and communication technology on Michigan agriculture.

#### **#4 Animal Care**

Livestock production has changed significantly over time. No one has greater concern for the care and welfare of farm animals than the farmers who raise them.

We urge members to respond knowledgeably to misleading information on animal care. We urge members to understand the difference between organizations supporting peer-reviewed science and animal care versus those promoting animal rights and attempting to eliminate or greatly restrict livestock production. Members should continue to tell the success story of modern animal agriculture wherever the opportunity is available. Numerous laws exist to safeguard the proper care of livestock and, if properly enforced, provide the protection livestock requires.

Michigan's livestock and dairy industry is integral to our agricultural economy and needs access to private property rights and privacy laws. Laws appearing to limit free speech or give the perception that agriculture has something to hide may not be the appropriate way to address certain issues impacting the industry. We strongly support transparency by all involved.

People who witness animal care practices not in compliance with the Care of Farm Animals Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs), should report those findings in a timely manner to the appropriate authorities so proper action may be taken. People who hold and release videos in a manner for personal benefit or to promote a group and their cause should be swiftly prosecuted and appropriately fined and sentenced.

We support:

- An animal health and care board to be convened to coordinate activities to enhance and protect the state's livestock industry. The board should be comprised of farmers and industry representatives as voting members; who are nominated by officially recognized livestock and agriculture industry commodity groups; and then appointed by the Governor. Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) and Michigan State University (MSU) officials should serve in an advisory

capacity. The establishment of this board should include a state budget appropriation. This new board process should be concluded by December 31, 2025.

- Strong penalties for those persons criminally convicted of animal cruelty or abuse.
- The rights of individual commodity groups to develop their own production standards.
- The involvement of livestock industry in the development of animal care guidelines if required by food industry officials to market products.
- Participation by livestock and dairy producers in industry-developed, species-specific animal welfare programs.
- Coordination with animal industry and related groups on animal care and housing related issues.
- Farmers educating and having guidelines for employees on proper animal care and monitoring their employees.
- Legislation or rules protecting the rights of farmers/owners to allow the continued utilization of modern livestock production practices, including current euthanization methods.
- 4-H and youth livestock exhibitor education.
- Michigan Farm Bureau working with MSU and MDARD to provide proper education to law enforcement, county officials and animal control officers about laws to regulate animal care and livestock production practices in Michigan.
- MFB and county Farm Bureaus being proactive in educating and training the state and local animal control authorities, local humane societies, local law enforcement, and news media about current animal care and production practices, to build a partnership between Farm Bureau and local animal care organizations.
- Emergency Response to Accidents Involving Livestock (ERAIL) programs and livestock handling training for a select number of emergency response professionals in Michigan counties, based on the county's potential exposure to livestock emergencies.
- County Farm Bureaus consider canceling the membership of an individual criminally convicted of animal cruelty or abuse.
- Land grant colleges and USDA continuing to research and develop programs which will realistically and economically enable farmers to continue to enhance the care and management of livestock.
- Legislation making it a felony to destroy or release animals lawfully confined for science, research and production, and strong punishment and required restitution for losses or damages.
- MDARD taking the lead role in the development of Michigan animal health emergency management guidelines in collaboration with the Animal Industry Division (AID) of MDARD, the State Veterinarian, MFB and agricultural groups.
- Amendments to the Dog Law to more clearly define a "farm dog." The utilization of dogs on farm operations is a normal part of an agricultural enterprise.
- A sensible approach to the substantiation of animal cruelty or abuse accusations including:



- Requiring animal control officers receive training on appropriate animal care and normal agricultural practices as it relates to livestock and farm animals.
- The AID of MDARD (specifically the State Veterinarian) as the authority relating to farm animals, livestock, and relative care, not local animal control.
- Governing municipalities be held financially and civilly liable for inaccurate and unjustified actions of those officers and departments.
- Requiring reported abuse cases to follow uniform administrative procedures to confirm cruelty or abuse before any legal action is taken.
- Contacting the local law enforcement agency or animal control authority.
- Local law enforcement agencies obtaining the opinion of two unbiased local livestock professionals and a large animal veterinarian.
- Costs associated with the resulting investigation be paid for by the accuser if no abuse is found.
- Cruelty or abuse cases of farm livestock be handled through MDARD.

We oppose:

- The concept of animal rights and the expenditure of public funds to promote the concept of animal rights.
- Any attempt to grant legal standing to any animals.
- Regulatory and legislative actions restricting the farmer's/owner's ability to produce at an economically feasible level.
- The utilization of ballot initiatives to control modern livestock production and management practices.

We support Michigan Care of Farm Animals GAAMPs through the following:

- Utilization of the Michigan Care of Farm Animals GAAMPs as the standard for animal welfare.
- Producer representation on the Michigan Care of Farm Animals GAAMPs Committee.
- Proper animal care and encourage livestock farmers to be in compliance with the Right to Farm Act and GAAMPs.
- Mandatory education for convicted cruelty offenders to help them understand proper animal care including the Care of Farm Animals GAAMPs.

## **#5 Animal Health**

As the world expands to international trade, the potential for transmitting communicable diseases among the agriculture community grows. The uncontrolled spread of disease, intentional or otherwise, could devastate the entire agricultural system.

We must protect livestock health in Michigan and across the United States. A healthy animal population is critical to the overall wellbeing of the agricultural economy.

We support:

- Appointing a board of animal health to coordinate activities, programs, and regulations to expedite the control and eradication of animal diseases. The board should consist of livestock producers and industry representatives, Michigan

Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Michigan State University (MSU) College of Veterinary Medicine and USDA.

- MDARD basing new regulations or restrictions for livestock exhibition on veterinary and animal science.
- Changing the Animals Running At Large Act to define livestock the same as the Animal Industry Act does.
- State funding for the MSU Veterinary Diagnostic Lab (VDL) to meet the needs of Michigan's animal population.
- Indemnification for livestock depopulated due to disease or when marketing channels are limited or eliminated by the government.
- Changes to Michigan's Veterinary Law that expand the services/procedures that veterinary technicians or designated staff with advanced training can perform that help address the rural vet/animal care shortage in Michigan.
- Requiring continuing education to maintain a Michigan veterinary license.
- Amending Michigan's Veterinary Law to clarify that artificial insemination of livestock and embryo transplant procedures do not have to be performed by a licensed veterinarian.
- MSU researching health-related issues impacting Michigan's livestock industry, including potentially toxic weeds and feedstuffs.
- Requiring livestock operation visitors to have permission and conduct proper contamination protections, including clothing and disinfectants, to protect and enhance biosecurity on-site.
- Legislative, regulatory and/or management changes that empower the State Veterinarian to collaborate with appropriate authorities to develop a mass carcass disposal plan.
- A statewide ban on the sale and use of sky ("Chinese") lanterns and similar unmanned devices involving open flame that may leave their premises of origin because of the danger of damaging livestock, feed and feed harvesting equipment.
- Research on the potential for chronic wasting disease prions to infect livestock feed and other plant materials.
- Encouraging Michigan Farm Bureau, MSU, MDARD and USDA to:
  - Provide sufficient funding and programs for animal health education, disease monitoring, border inspections and disease eradication that protect the livestock industry and ensure market access.
  - Increase efforts to develop a genetic or live animal diagnostic test for Scrapie and Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE).
  - Continue working cooperatively to support the VDL, and minimize its diagnostic fees.
- Annual review of the Reportable Disease List in collaboration with industry, MDARD and DNR to remove inappropriately listed diseases.
- Livestock producers considering rabies vaccination for all pets, and to learn about the disease.

- The development and availability of bait vaccines.

### **Bovine**

- An aggressive cost-effective Johnne's detection and control program, and the ready availability of the Johnne's vaccine to dairy farmers.

### **Swine**

- MDARD providing adequate staffing to:
  - Ensure proper monitoring of Michigan's swine herd to maintain our achieved pseudorabies status.
  - Support the development and adoption of the U.S. Swine Health Improvement Plan (SHIP) for Michigan's swine industry.

### **Equine**

- Requiring equine owners to consult with a veterinarian and vaccinate horses, ponies and mules against infectious and contagious diseases.
- All fairs, racing events, sale barns, riding stables and other venues where equine may come together require annual Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA)/Coggins tests for every animal, and mandate those papers be inspected before allowing entry.
- MDARD working with animal health officials in other states to develop standardized EIA/Coggins testing guidelines and uniform testing and movement procedures.
- Eliminating EIA/Coggins test requirements for horses going to slaughter.

### **Animal Identification and Interstate Movement**

- Swift implementation of a mandatory identification system for Michigan's livestock and encourage the continued utilization of producer input into its development, implementation, and cost-share where feasible. Producer information shall remain proprietary, not for public use or subject to Freedom of Information Act or any requests.
- Slaughter facilities upgrading their technology to provide timely and accurate information on individual cattle.
- Rules requiring that all cattle and privately-owned Cervidae be electronically identified before leaving the farm.
- Violation penalties should be strengthened and enforced by law. In the event an animal loses its tag *en route* to an auction facility, they should be retagged upon arrival before being allowed to enter.
- Electronic reading and recording of all cattle exhibited in Michigan. Records should be sent to MDARD.
- DNR, MDARD, USDA, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service working cooperatively to develop regulations to control disease spread including, but not be limited to a system for monitoring live and dead domestic and game animals coming into Michigan.

We oppose importing livestock that does not:

- Meet import testing requirements deemed appropriate by the director of MDARD,
- Have appropriate quarantine protocols in place,
- Have an animal identification system for tracking livestock movement to prevent disease spread.

### **Feed Additives and Medication**

We recognize the need for medication and other additives in livestock feeds. The availability of livestock antibiotics is critical. Limiting or eliminating livestock antibiotic use will negatively impact the industry, both economically and with respect to animal health. Antibiotic use is approved by the Food and Drug Administration only after scientific review and testing. Animal agriculture relies on veterinarians to assist with and oversee animal health. We define veterinarian oversight as a working relationship with a licensed veterinarian.

We support:

- The existing approval process for antibiotic use in farm animals.
- Veterinarian oversight of antibiotic use rather than limiting or eliminating these critical animal health and food safety protection tools.
- Careful use and withdrawal restrictions of feed additives.
- The use of rendered animal protein as additives to swine and poultry rations.
- Strict safeguards to prevent cross-contamination of ruminant feeds with ruminant by-products formulating feed additives.

We oppose:

- Banning feed additives without scientific evidence that they threaten animal and human health.
- Restrictions limiting or eliminating marketing opportunities for the livestock, dairy, equine, poultry and aquaculture industries and their products without peer-reviewed scientific justification.
- State agency farm inspections without notification to and awareness of the farm owner/operation.
- Mandatory rabies vaccination for farm cats.

### **#6 Aquaculture and Commercial Fishing**

Aquaculture and commercial fishing are major to our Michigan food basket and should be recognized as a part of agriculture.

We support:

- Updating the Aquaculture Development Act to reflect the status and potential of the industry.
- Better collaboration between the state agencies and the aquaculture industry that leads to greater investment and enhancement of state hatcheries/fisheries, the commercial fishing industry, and the commercial aquaculture industry. Additional enhancements should also include changes to the permitting process that advance the growth of Michigan's aquaculture industry.
- Urging regulatory agencies, along with Michigan Economic Development Corporation, state universities, and the aquaculture industry to continue cooperating to address regulatory needs, while at the same time facilitating the continued growth of aquaculture through streamlining regulation and facilitating access to capital for development.
- The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services simplifying the Eat Safe Fish Guide through engagement with industry and consumer stakeholders to enhance

consumer understanding of the guide and ensure Michigan farm-raised fish are highlighted as a safe and nutritional choice for consumers.

- Annually reviewing and updating the memorandum of understanding between Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) and Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR).
- MDARD, EGLE, and DNR understanding that generational transition and industry growth in aquaculture, commercial fishing, and agriculture are critical for future industry success and food security in the state when regulatory decisions are made.
- The State of Michigan prioritizing food production from aquaculture and commercial fishing at the same level as the recreational fishing industry.
- Harmonization of the state and federal definition of aquaculture.
- The concept of group or lot identification for aquaculture species.
- MDARD registration of out-of-state producers who market aquaculture products in Michigan and enforcement of regulations related to importation of aquaculture products.
- Funding, research development, and approval of live fish tests to eliminate the need to sacrifice fish, as is the current requirement.
- If an individual farm has an established herd health plan and a disease status that declares it to be free of regulated aquaculture diseases, that farm should have the ability to ship product interstate.
- MDARD cooperating with other states and establishing agreements allowing shipment of fish from Michigan into other states that follow similar protocol.
- MFB being involved in Michigan Aquaculture Association's strategic plan development.
- Michigan State University establishing an aquaculture program containing dedicated faculty to support and enhance the industry. The program should include research, extension and demonstration and be housed under an agricultural development department.
- Industry-developed herd plans to include the option for slaughter surveillance testing, where feasible, and be implemented on a voluntary basis with MDARD being the lead agency.
- MDARD and DNR reevaluating testing requirements for the fish health certification and required diseases on reportable disease list, with the goal of reducing regulatory and economic burden for aquaculture producers.
- Development of science-based aquaculture disease control policies that also take into account indemnification of losses to producers.
- The right of commercial fishermen to pursue fishing operations in a responsible manner. The DNR should not adopt regulations more restrictive than those applied to tribal fisheries.
- Expansion of opportunities to allow sustainable commercial fishing of additional species of fish in the Great Lakes.
- MDARD having authority over commercial fishing when the fish leave the net.

- Allocation of funds for research to more effectively manage and utilize this natural resource.
- Efforts of the commercial fishing industry to establish a program under PA 232 of 1965.
- The adoption of Best Management Practices (BMPs) as National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit compliance, rather than individual permits with numerical discharge limitations for aquaculture facilities. If individual permits are required, it should only be for facilities that produce over 20,000 pounds annually and only if on a one-page permit application.
- Streamlining the NPDES permit process by developing a general permit based on BMPs to reduce water testing requirements.
- The ability to conduct aquaculture production in current and prior converted wetlands and within the natural rivers districts.
- DNR producing and providing fish, at a fair price, for stocking and growth on Michigan aquaculture farms for food production.
- Enabling legislation and/or the regulatory framework to allow the development of a properly regulated open water net pen aquaculture/cage culture of fish in the Great Lakes and other water bodies.
- Development of a national aquaculture check-off program.
- Appropriate staffing within MDARD to lead and collaborate with other agencies on a planned, designed and streamlined process for approval and permitting of aquaculture and commercial fishing processing facilities.
- Industry oversight on any new state or federal funds for aquaculture or commercial fishing with a majority of the funds going to aquaculture and commercial fishing producers.

We oppose:

- Any ban on the use of biotechnology in aquaculture without specific evidence or demonstration of harm by the technology.
- Individual identification for aquaculture in the event animal identification is mandated.
- Restrictions on the culture or stocking of rainbow trout based on genetic strain.
- Immediate implementation of new Environmental Protection Agency effluent standards if operational viability is jeopardized.
- Increasing NPDES permit restrictions or compliance requirements without peer-reviewed scientific justification.
- The use of the Lacey Act to regulate the interstate movement of aquaculture products and urge immediate action to address current prosecutions, as well as a cessation of this practice by regulatory officials.
- Testing requirements for the stocking of fish in Michigan that are more restrictive than national requirements set by the International Office of Epizootics.

## **#7 Bee Industry**

Bees are a vital resource for pollination of Michigan's diverse crop production and added value of the honey and hive products produced.

Some pesticides can harm honey bees and even destroy whole colonies. We urge beekeepers, farmers and pesticide applicators to cooperate to reduce honey bee losses.

Beekeeping (apiculture) is a specialized form of agriculture and should be recognized under the Right to Farm Act by local, state and national regulatory bodies.

We support:

- Research finding practical, effective means of controlling or reducing the infection from Varroa mites, tracheal mites, small hive beetles — and continued study into all diseases affecting bee colonies.
- The inclusion of apiaries under paragraph 9.4 of the Wildlife Conservation Order, subsection (1). We encourage the Department of Natural Resources to be proactive in the protecting of Michigan's pollinators.
- Michigan Farm Bureau working with state and federal agencies to resolve issues regarding plant species in Michigan and their importance to the Michigan bee industry, such as changes to USDA conservation programs that allow for planting flowering cover crops and pollination plantings that emphasize the health benefits for the bee colonies.
- Increasing the number of veterinarians trained in honey bee health and expanding the animal health tools available for the bee industry.
- The use of improved genetic stocks that naturally reduce pest and pathogen loads in honey bees through inherited traits and breeding that focuses on varroa mite resistance.

## **#8 Biotechnology**

Biotechnology offers tremendous benefits to society, including being able to increase production, while preserving scarce natural resources, to ease world hunger and to tailor-design agricultural products for specific health, nutritional and industrial purposes.

We support:

- Developing research and testing to enhance adoption of biotechnology products and processes, and address consumer safety and environmental concerns.
- Funding from companies that develop this technology to educate the public on the safety and benefits of biotechnology.
- Developing a positive national strategy for the further growth of biotechnology research and the swift dissemination of accurate information to consumers concerning biotechnology products.
- U.S. government agencies, particularly the USDA and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), continue to serve their role in providing unbiased, science-based evaluations concerning human and animal safety and wholesomeness, as well as the environmental impacts of biotechnology-enhanced commodities. These agencies should evaluate if improvements could be made to the regulatory approval process to enhance consumer confidence.

- Developing standardized testing procedures to ensure accurate, timely and cost-effective analysis of biotechnology products throughout the production and marketing chain.
- The U.S. government to use all available means to improve international understanding of the science-based process used by agencies when approving biotechnology-enhanced commodities.
- Initiatives that assist in the research, development and regulatory clearance of specialty crop biotechnology products.
- Michigan Farm Bureau proactively educating members and consumers about the advantages and potential of biotechnology, including the use of the FARM Science Lab.
- Strong patent protection to encourage these new technologies.
- An expedited process for the approval of edible and non-edible genetically engineered plant material beneficial to the agricultural/horticultural/floricultural industry through the FDA and USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.
- Allowing farmers to use their own crop as seed as long as they pay the technology fee for the seed they use.
- Communication with end users to identify specific needs to promote value-added trait development.
- The voluntary approach taken by the biotechnology industry allowing further development of agriceuticals and research while protecting our commercial production. Seed purity (identity preservation) is critical in maintaining consumer and processor confidence in agricultural products.
- The common practice followed by the seed industry (as well as outlined under the USDA organic practices) that the burden of maintaining genetic purity falls solely upon the producer of the identity-preserved crop as far as needed buffer strips and other cultural practices. Users of biotech seeds should follow planting restrictions and requirements.
- The U.S. developing a uniform, science-based international approval process for biotechnology.
- The free choice of farmers to grow what they want, whether it be biotech or non-biotech products.
- Public and private efforts to continue research on non-biotech seed.

The U.S. producer should not have to pay for this technology, development, and marketing alone; all purchasers should share the research cost.

Food products utilizing biotechnology that have been scientifically proven safe should not be discriminated against by unfair labeling requirements that are not required of other industries using biotechnology. No products should be released for commercial production until approved for both human and animal utilization.

We oppose attempts to limit the production or use of genetically modified crops or animals, based on unproven statements and unsubstantiated fears.

We are concerned about the potential loss of current technology, production and



management tools that have fostered advancements in agriculture and will oppose attempts to limit the utilization of approved use of biotechnology in production agriculture.

## **#9 Cannabis Production**

In alignment with the voter passed initiatives, the Michigan Medical Marihuana Act of 2008 and the Michigan Regulation and Taxation of Marihuana Act of 2018 (MRTMA), related to cannabis production and use, we support:

- Funding for continued and expanded research on the effects of cannabis use.
- Local municipalities having the ability to allow or not allow cannabis production and sale in their communities as prescribed in section 6 of MRTMA.
- The development of site selection and setback guidelines by local municipalities, with input from the Cannabis Regulatory Agency, for new cannabis production operations from non-owned residences to minimize negative interactions between the growing/processing industries and the local residents.
- The Cannabis Regulatory Agency developing model local ordinances for the cannabis industry.
- Best practices being developed to provide guidance to the cannabis industry for both production and processing/packaging for retail sale.
- Continued tracking of the production and distribution of cannabis to ensure the integrity of the industry.
- The development of accurate testing to determine impairment levels from cannabis use.

## **Industrial Hemp**

We support:

- Changes to the 2018 Farm Bill that allow for industrial hemp with up to 1% Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) to be legal.
- Changes to federal laws that allow for the housing, transportation and marketing of legally derived industrial hemp products for further processing, regardless of the THC level, if the product for final sale meets legal THC limits.
- Establishing a Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) Industrial Hemp Advisory Committee to assist in the regulatory development and oversight process, including developing hemp Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices.
- Collaboration with the industry to develop a professional hemp industry organization.
- Federal and state funding for required regulatory oversight. We are willing to consider producer and processor funding to help offset or assist with regulatory oversight.
- Research on processing, production techniques, prospective volumes, and market outlook.
- Collaboration amongst MDARD, Michigan State University Extension and other stakeholders to develop and disseminate educational materials on growing, processing, transportation and marketing of industrial hemp.

- Development and approval of alternative uses and/or disposal methods for the destruction of a “hot crop” other than Drug Enforcement Agency disposal rules.
- The regulation of hemp/cannabis-derived intoxicating cannabinoids/terpenes that are artificially added to hemp products.

We urge the Food and Drug Administration to issue guidance and clarity on the rules surrounding the marketing of industrial hemp-derived products.

## **#10 Commission System of Government**

Prior to 2009, bipartisan commissions controlled the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources with the power to hire directors of the respective departments.

We strongly support this historical commission system of government. Commissions should provide oversight and set policy for the department, conduct appeals, and employ a director. The historical commission system creates continuity, transparency and program accountability. We support restoring all duties of the agriculture and natural resources commissions, including the ability to employ a director.

Future Natural Resources Commission (NRC) appointees should be balanced, not only in their passion for outdoor recreation but also with ecological and business environments. A farmer representing production agriculture should be on the NRC.

We insist the Michigan Legislature or Governor create a commission for the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy. We urge appointments to include agricultural representation in proportion to other interests and to follow guidelines like those listed above.

## **#11 Compliance and Resources for Farm Business Management**

Michigan farmers are business owners and employers operating in an increasingly complex and technical environment. We encourage Michigan Farm Bureau to monitor and identify regulatory changes to the business environment.

We support the creation of educational documents, credible referrals, and technical services covering, but not limited to:

- Steps to becoming an employer.
- Steps to determine business structure and formation.
- Employer obligations, laws and regulations.
- Estate planning.
- Liability issues.
- Taxation.

## **#12 Craft Beverage Industry**

Michigan’s craft beverage industry is a strong economic contributor to the state of Michigan and impacts many subsectors of our economy including tourism, manufacturing, food, and agriculture. The craft beverage industry also allows for more diversification in agriculture through the growing of specialty crops and grains that help to expand value added niche

markets. This industry supports many Michigan produced commodities such as wine grapes, hops, small grains, sugar, forestry products, vegetables, stone fruits, etc., which also has the potential to serve as a large consumer for Michigan grown commodities. The Michigan craft beverage industry is an important partner in the future of Michigan farming.

We support:

- Expansion of incentives for all Michigan grown commodities used in Michigan craft beverage production.
- The increased funding to agritourism marketing in Michigan through the Pure Michigan or ad campaign and Craft Beverage Council.
- Research and development of a Michigan oak barrel industry and other beverage related forestry products.
- A microbrewery license that operates similar to the small winemaker license.

We oppose:

- The unfair taxation on craft beverage products, especially those that limit the usage of certain fruits and other commodities.

### **#13 Dairy Industry**

The dairy industry is critical to Michigan's agricultural economy. We support a strong and vibrant dairy industry allowing Michigan dairy farmers to be competitive in national and international markets.

We support:

- Industry collaboration in developing additional dairy processing in Michigan, and urging local, state and federal lawmakers and regulators to help streamline the process for dairy processing expansion.
- Funding state and federally required dairy industry sampling and inspection programs.
- Current dairy laws pertaining to milk pasteurization, including prohibiting the sale of unpasteurized fluid milk for human consumption.
- Michigan Farm Bureau and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development working together to provide guidelines for cow-share and herd-share programs that meet Grade A dairy standards.
- Implementing on-farm biosecurity practices that protect animal health and enhance dairy markets.
- Continued availability and proper use of animal health tools (e.g., antibiotics, technology).
- Dairy industry participation in the veterinary feed directive.
- Collaboration between farmers, animal health officials and the veterinary community in an aggressive Johnes detection and eradication program, and continued focus on improving dairy cattle health.
- Industry participation in any changes to the Siting Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practice (GAAMP) to allow for continued growth and dairy expansion.

- Continued farmer participation in any changes to the National Dairy Farmers Assuring Responsible Management (FARM) Program and on-farm implementation of its standards.
- Continued investments in research that allow for industry growth and efficiency.
- Continued farmer participation and control over dairy industry promotion funds, enhancements and creativity in dairy promotion ideas and the development of new products.
- Increased efforts to increase dairy consumption in schools, including higher milk fat options and flavored milks.
- Dairy farmers being able to collect, store, and market colostrum to licensed collectors/sellers.
- Collaboration with the United Dairy Industry of Michigan and Michigan Ag Council in promoting the benefits of dairy consumption — especially for youth — to the medical and educational communities.
- Collaboration across the industry to establish a world-class dairy teaching, research and extension facility at Michigan State University's dairy farm that meets our industry's current and future needs.

#### **#14 Direct Marketing and Agritourism**

Agritourism is the intersection where agriculture and tourism meet; when a farm opens its doors to the public and invites visitors to enjoy their products and services. Direct marketing is the sales of goods or services produced on the farm directly to the consumer. Many direct marketers also utilize agritourism.

We support:

- Legislation defining agritourism as activities on the farm that may or may not be directly related to the farm operation, conducted for the purpose of increasing income for the farm business including education, entertainment, experiences, or farm stays, but does not change the general intent of the farm operation.
- The development of an agritourism act, administered by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), that preempts local ordinances. Areas of coverage should include, but not be limited to, event barns, corn mazes, farm stays, and farm animal related activities. Farms will receive the benefits of this act if more than 50% of the farm income is generated by the sales of commodities grown on the farm and if the facilities can meet the building code's public safety requirements. This does not prohibit local governments from enacting reasonable hour, noise and parking regulations.
- Master plans and local zoning ordinances recognizing the benefits and allowing the operation of farm markets, roadside stands, agritourism destinations and farmers markets that allow for the placement of these activities on agricultural zoned land without a special use permit. We do not believe a city, township or other local agency can restrict or mandate the size of what a farm market/roadside stand is and recognize that selling produce retail is not considered a change of use on land that is currently farmed.

- Michigan zoning authorities adopting the Agricultural Tourism Model Zoning Ordinance Provisions developed by the Michigan Agricultural Tourism Advisory Commission and MDARD.
- Working with the direct market and agritourism industries to improve and strengthen the farm market Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs).
- Creating Generally Accepted Agritourism Practices that align with the GAAMPs outlined in the Right to Farm Act and recognizing agritourism as a sector of the agriculture industry.
- Legislation to enhance and promote agritourism, the development of guidelines and best practices, as well as on-farm direct marketing opportunities.
- Designating certain roads and highways as “Scenic Agricultural Byways” to showcase Michigan’s agricultural diversity, unique agricultural features, farm markets, roadside stands and related businesses.
- The opportunity for farm operations to have their businesses designated as tourism destination points.
- The Michigan Farmers Market Association, along with grower vendors, establishing guidelines for agriculture procedures of farmers markets and to assist them if requested. In the event fees are charged by municipalities to farms that participate in farmers markets, we believe those fees should not exceed the cost to run the market.
- Locally grown should be defined as produced in Michigan, or within 50 miles of the border.
- Community Supported Agriculture programs that build relationships, provide healthy food choices, and encourage consumers to meet the people that grow the products.
- Farmers markets and farm marketers promoting and providing food safety education to consumers.
- Operations welcoming the public to their facilities and portraying a professional image because they are our ambassadors to the public where positive perception is important.
- Operations with livestock participating in their respective national animal care programs.
- Defining farm stays as an agritourism experience.
- Legislation that provides liability protection for farmers engaged in direct marketing or agritourism activities. Such protections should not exempt a farm or farmer from actions that may be gross negligence.

We oppose:

- Discriminatory regulation, licensing and inspection by regulatory agencies and local units of government on farm markets, roadside stands and agritourism operations which restrict their competitiveness. Markets should not be subject to duplicate or unnecessary inspection by MDARD, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, and local units of government.

## **#15 Dry Bean Industry**

We appreciate the Michigan Bean Commission's ongoing efforts to increase the consumption of nutritious Michigan dry beans.

We support:

- Ongoing research and funding to continually improve dry bean production in Michigan, including new technology.
- Research ensuring the industry can meet changing consumer preferences, specifically the development of new end-user products.
- Continuation, staffing and adequate funding of Michigan State University's dry bean variety development program.
- A bean breeding program that includes the development of new varieties that better meet the demands of domestic and international markets.
- Researching chemical and mechanical disease control and pest prevention.
- Production contracts as viable and important marketing tools for growers, elevators and canners. All parties must abide by the provisions of these such agreements, with close interaction among all parties to ensure compliance at all levels.
- Contract language that includes "Acts of God" provisions accounting for adverse weather conditions affecting growers' ability to plant, grow or harvest a crop.
- The Pulse Health Initiative.
- Accurate and timely reporting of dry bean prices by elevators when gathering data for computing revenue insurance.
- Uniformity of grading standards among elevators regarding foreign material and pick/grading determinations.
- Production and price reporting in an efficient format that can be updated as needed.
- Electronic shipping documentation.
- Representation from the organic dry bean industry on the Michigan Bean Commission.

We oppose:

- Limited market access for all processors and producers.

## **#16 Equine Industry**

Michigan's equine industry is very broad and involves many people and a variety of horse breeds. We strongly encourage and support collaborative efforts by equine professionals to strengthen the industry and support its growth. The equine industry is stronger and able to thrive when united and working collectively.

We support:

- The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development working with local governments to continue classifying equine operations as agricultural for zoning purposes.
- Additional changes or legislation that provide economic growth and strengthens the horse racing industry.
- Funding for the expansion of the Pavilion for Agriculture and Livestock Education at Michigan State University.

- Marketing opportunities for the equine industry.
- Michigan Farm Bureau working to re-establish additional harvest options for the equine industry.
- Funding for the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service for inspectors in facilities that slaughter horses.
- The Equine Liability Act, which strengthens liability protection measures for the industry.
- Efforts to establish an equine industry marketing and education program.
- The industry's efforts in conducting a study to determine the impact and status of the state's equine industry.
- Removing the online wagering tax cap with the funds being allocated to the Agriculture Equine Industry Development Fund.
- The expansion and promotion of equine recreational opportunities on public land.
- Prohibiting bicycle/pedal powered devices on trails signed for equestrian and hiking only.
- Prohibiting non-equestrian campers in equestrian campgrounds and portions of other campgrounds dedicated to equestrian use.
- The establishment, growth, and funding of urban equestrian education and promotion programs.
- Seven-year retention of signed liability release forms.

We oppose:

- Attempts to classify equine as companion animals.
- Legislation limiting or prohibiting the use of horses as working animals.
- Relocating the horsemen's simulcast purse pool funds to any race meet licensee.

We understand there are instances where owners can no longer care for their animals and under these circumstances there must be viable options for dealing with them. All equine owners need to understand the responsibility of owning and caring for their animals.

In instances where equine is abandoned, we encourage local officials to seek out the owner and levy a fine for animal abandonment.

In an attempt to encourage the equine industry to be more proactive in environmental protection, we encourage MFB to develop an equine specific strategy that focuses on Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program verification, manure management and environmental protection for the industry.

We are concerned about the number of wild mustangs being rounded up on federal land and being moved into Michigan. These horses should have an inter-state health certificate and meet the health standards of the Michigan equine population and the Bureau of Land Management adoption requirements.

## **#17 Food Insecurity**

Data suggests that rural communities in Michigan are at greater risk for childhood food insecurity than our urban counterparts. We believe agriculture is positioned to have the greatest impact.

We support:

- Michigan Farm Bureau providing information that is farmer facing on how farms can connect with existing programs for those who are in need as well as the benefits of donation, which may include tax credits or other financial incentives.
- Farm Bureau participation in the Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger board.
- Food assistance programs such as, but not limited to, Michigan Agricultural Surplus System (MASS) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and encourage these market opportunities.
- The State of Michigan and interested stakeholders working to create a single point of sale system to make it easier for both vendors and customers to participate in state and federal food assistance programs.
- Food assistance programs in the farm bill and partnering with like-minded Michigan organizations that receive nutrition title funding.
- Changes to the farm bill and/or USDA programs that would increase farm gate value through federal food assistance or government purchase programs.
- More focus being placed on the food delivery system to connect farmers with rural families that are food insecure. Consideration should also be given to the time of day and locations for distribution.
- More research on preferred food packaging, size, and quantity to best serve families utilizing food assistance programs.
- Increasing access to venison donation programs that allows for free processing of venison that is donated to food banks including an increase in processing locations. The Department of Natural Resources should promote the program and available processing locations.
- Increasing access to the Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger program that includes increasing available processing locations and removing barriers to distributing venison.
- The donation of protein sources (venison, beef, etc.) that have not been processed through a USDA processing facility but that have been processed responsibly through a state inspected processor.
- County Farm Bureaus coordinating with charitable food networks regarding needs that they have locally, such as cold storage.
- Farm Bureau promoting opportunities to members that sell at farm markets on how they can utilize produce prescriptions and connected Medicaid programs to solve symptoms of food insecurity.

## **#18 Food Safety**

Food safety is a significant concern for agricultural producers and consumers and is one of the highest priorities for the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD). In making decisions regarding regulations for food safety, MDARD must balance risk preventative measures with over-regulation that would hinder entrepreneurial opportunities.

Food safety transportation concerns must be handled at the national level to ensure smooth interstate commerce.



As food safety regulations increase, it is vital for Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) and MDARD to continually review and monitor any changes to pesticide labels. It is imperative for farmers to have up-to-date information when following the pesticide spray recommendations in the MSUE spray guides.

We support:

- Proper biosecurity, identification, and safety protocols being followed by state and federal agency personnel when visiting farms; including compliance with executive orders and regulatory requirements relative to the industry.
- Continued use of food safety audits such as Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and food safety risk assessments to ensure food and consumer safety.
- A private, third-party audit being accepted by USDA if it includes at least the same minimum standards as a government audit.
- Standardizing a single third-party audit that would be broadly accepted by retailers.
- Permanent institutional licensing, including churches and civic facilities.
- Current milk pasteurization laws, including prohibiting the sale of unpasteurized fluid milk for human consumption.
- Michigan Farm Bureau and MDARD working to provide guidelines for cow-share and herd-shares that meet Grade A dairy standards.
- Use of wooden pallets and wooden harvest bins.
- Custom exempt slaughter.
- The ability for families to process and consume their own products on their own farm.
- Monitoring of the Cottage Food Law.
- Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, in consultation with MDARD, reviewing the rules for application of biosolids to growing fruit and vegetable crops with the intent of preventing potential human health hazards.
- The concept of On-Farm Readiness Review kits along with the Food Safety Modernization Act Grower Training programs that help ease the burden of farms becoming compliant.
- MFB and stakeholders conducting educational meetings for microbusinesses related to agriculture.
- Prohibiting reuse of food containers or packaging labeled with “use by” or “purchase by” dates, for the benefit of consumer health and producer liability protection.
- A committee of MFB members researching and reporting on block chain technology use in agriculture and the potential impact on Michigan agriculture.
- MDARD immediately reporting food fraud and cybersecurity impacts.

We oppose:

- Unfunded mandates, including but not limited to USDA GAP audits.
- Abusive and overreaching Cottage Food Law enforcement and application.
- Any agency or department quarantining or seizing raw or finished products, commodities, livestock, land, or equipment without clear violation of law or lawfully set standards.

## #19 Forestry

Forestry is considered an integral part of Michigan agriculture. Producing forest products requires inputs and management practices similar to those necessary for the production of other agricultural commodities. Michigan forests contribute substantially to the state's economy.

We support:

- Efforts to define forest industry activities as agricultural with respect to matters such as truck licenses, equipment taxes, insurance, supply purchases, real estate taxation, zoning, and land-use classification.
- New/expanded industrial uses of forest products in transportation infrastructure, such as bridge construction, guard rails, and other uses, and urge the Michigan Department of Transportation and county road commissions to use Michigan-grown and processed forest products.
- The increased and continued utilization of forest products in Michigan as a renewable resource for products such as pallets, as opposed to non-renewable or petroleum-based products.
- The use of cross-laminated timber in building construction due to its many benefits including carbon sequestration, LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) credits, and reduced construction time.
- Changes to the state building code and other regulations to address the advancements of mass timber.
- State buildings utilizing mass timber as a way to promote this sector of the forestry industry.
- Promoting cross-laminated timber manufacturing in Michigan.
- Clarifying the use of the log plate to include all activities connected with logging operations.
- Classifying logging equipment as implements of husbandry.
- Multiple-use management of public forests, emphasizing sustainable management and harvest of state-owned forests.
- The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) basing public-land timber sales on reasonable aggregate economic, biological and social impacts.
- Requiring a market-value bid on purchase offers of state-owned forests. Sales should be based on a total-value bid rather than on sales of species or product estimates.
- DNR finding markets for oversized red/white pines and tamaracks.
- The DNR timber sale extensions period being increased to one year.
- The DNR timber sale extension fee being waived due to poor market or weather conditions of a period longer than six months.
- Timber management practices suited for public lands along roads and highways.
- Legislation that protects timber operations from liability for individuals using the land for recreation.
- Requiring log book use to ensure hunter safety on public lands being logged.
- The maintenance and improvement of tax-reverted lands acquired by the state through reforestation or other conservation practices.

- Ongoing forest inventory and analysis funded jointly by industry, state, and federal sources.
- Programs that incentivize landowners to improve forest resources, encourage proper management, promote forest sustainability, and/or benefit the forest products industry.
- Farms and landowners managing forests, wetlands, and habitat participating in the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP), completing as many recommendations as possible to help preserve air, water, and soil quality, and to practice sustainable land management.
- State government's efforts to provide education and outreach for private forest landowners.
- Expanding post-high school education programs in applied/skilled forestry to help ensure a sufficient and skilled workforce.
- The Right to Forest Act and urge landowners to utilize Generally Accepted Forest Management Practices.
- State government action to encourage local utilization of ash lumber and biomass, near its point of origin, to minimize the potential for ash borer invasion and spread.
- Better defining foresters' duties and responsibilities in the Occupational Code, and a voluntary forester registration program.
- DNR assisting with prescribed burns on private land. Prescribed fire is an important management tool to control unwanted vegetation and helps prevent accumulated dead wood, needles, etc. from becoming a fire hazard.
- Reviewing recent changes to the Forestry Best Management Practices (BMP) manual. It is imperative BMP guidelines reflect current industry practices and standards, not ideology. Standards should be based on outcomes, not a prescriptive set of rules.
- Timber industry efforts to develop a common scale for hardwood saw logs.
- Michigan universities' conducting an economic study comparing Michigan forestry industry returns to the economic returns from those of other major Michigan commodities.
- Michigan State University (MSU) collaborating with the University of Wisconsin on a forestry economy specialist.
- Working with the DNR, conservation organizations, hunting groups and other interested groups to reduce wildlife populations to acceptable levels that will not deplete the regeneration of new seedlings in woodlots and forests.
- Michigan Farm Bureau providing expertise and advising the creation of an industry-driven initiative supporting forestry research, education and outreach with MSU, University of Michigan, and Michigan Technological University, funded by State of Michigan appropriations for forest management.
- The DNR and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development prioritizing growing and developing new markets, new products, and processing facilities.
- Conservancies and other non-profits having to pay an average of the qualified forest property tax rate in that county.

- County Farm Bureaus working with local school districts to retain the ownership and use of school forests. Retaining school forests helps preserve educational opportunities for students, conserve forest resources, and provide both short and long-term income for school districts.
- County Farm Bureaus referring members to local conservation districts for a list of qualified foresters for woodlot owners.
- Removing unnecessary rules that are restricting growth and viability of the forestry industry.
- Permitting requirements being reasonable and practical for applicants as well as grounded in science with consideration from industry experts. The state permitting process should be done in an expedited manner with strict timelines for issuance. Permit requirements should be considered for removal when no adverse impact is found or possible.

We oppose:

- Logging restrictions during hunting season.
- Additional licensing or regulatory requirements on forest management professionals.
- Mandating forest-practice rules.
- Closing existing roads on state forest lands.
- Legislation restricting the sale of forest products for non-traditional use.

## **#20 Fruits and Vegetables**

Michigan Farm Bureau will cooperate with industry groups to research and implement minimum grade quality standards for fresh fruits and vegetables that will improve product quality, meet consumer expectations and enhance Michigan's competitive position.

We recommend USDA update the grade standards for apples so the Risk Management Agency can utilize current industry standards in crop insurance.

We encourage MFB to work with Michigan State University and fruit organizations established under the Michigan Agricultural Commodities Marketing Act (PA 232 of 1965) to encourage research on the development of new varieties for growing and marketing that are specifically for Midwest growers. Other growing regions are doing this to remain competitive within the marketplace and to offer consumers better products.

## **#21 Intellectual Property Rights**

Research institutions, especially land grant universities, are scaling back agricultural research and are requiring agricultural commodity groups and associations to help fund both research and staff positions.

Because the licensing policies of Michigan State University (MSU) Technologies directly or indirectly affect cost, profitability, and marketing of Michigan agricultural commodities, it is necessary for the affected parties to have input on the licensing system.

We support:

- A standing committee from Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and producers representing affected commodities being included in the process of MSU Technologies in licensing products or materials that would affect the profitability or marketing of an agricultural commodity.
- A portion of revenues derived from licensing intellectual property rights flowing back to funding groups and organizations.
- Licensing and commercialization opportunities remaining primarily with Michigan-based companies.
- The right of commodity groups and organizations to have first and last right of refusal in the licensing of intellectual property rights that were funded in part by grower investment and developed at public institutions.

It is imperative that our intellectual properties and food security be protected. We encourage MFB to support protecting our food security and agricultural industries.

## **#22 Labeling**

We support consumer friendly, science-based labeling of agricultural products which provides consumers with useful information concerning the ingredients and nutritional value of food sold in the United States. We oppose false, misleading or deceptive marketing, promotion and/or labeling claims. Agricultural products that are made using government approved technologies should not be required to display individual inputs or specific technologies on the product label.

## **#23 Maple Sugar Production**

Maple sugar production is among the oldest forms of agriculture in Michigan, where our vast maple resources are underutilized and have much potential for expansion. Michigan Farm Bureau supports growing Michigan's maple sugar industry and the promotion and marketing of pure, Michigan-made maple syrup, maple sugar and associated products.

We support:

- Michigan State University continuing research of maple sugar production and utilization.
- Changes to Environmental Protection Agency regulations to allow the use of isopropyl alcohol in cleaning sap lines.

## **#24 Marketing and Bargaining Legislation**

The Michigan Agricultural Marketing and Bargaining Act (PA 344, as amended) has proven to be a fair and equitable procedure through which marketing and bargaining associations and processors negotiate fruit and vegetable prices and other terms of trade.

We support:

- Legislation or legal actions that strengthen the operation and effectiveness of PA 344 including but not limited to returning the definition of the "opt out clause" to its original intent and meaning.

- Efforts of producers under PA 344 to further enhance their position in the marketplace and secure the sale of their product through the provisions of the marketing and bargaining legislation.
- The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development aggressively enforcing this program.

## **#25 Michigan Alliance for Animal Agriculture**

The dairy and livestock industries are integral to Michigan's agricultural economy. Segments of our industry are constantly challenged by the lack of animal related research and workforce development training. To help address these issues, the Michigan Alliance for Animal Agriculture (M-AAA) was established with representatives from Michigan Farm Bureau; animal agriculture stakeholder organizations; Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development; and Michigan State University's Extension, College of Veterinary Medicine, Department of Animal Science, AgBioResearch, and College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

We support M-AAA efforts to develop a proposal for establishing a state-funded animal ag research program modeled after the successful Project GREEEN (which addresses plant-based industry priorities). The group has established the Michigan Animal Agriculture Innovation and Workforce Development Initiative, which focuses on sustainability within Michigan's animal agriculture sector through a targeted annual investment in research, extension and workforce development. Many dairy and livestock groups are contributing to this effort and we strongly encourage state funding to enhance the effort.

## **#26 Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development**

We recognize the evolving role of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) in the state's agriculture and food system and supporting rural development.

We support the continued individual existence of MDARD within state government. We challenge MDARD to continue to be proactive, focus on core programs and eliminate redundancies where possible. Program areas of a stronger, more encompassing MDARD might include, but would not be limited to consumer protection, environmental protection, resource-based economic development programs, aquaculture, privately-owned Cervidae, commercial fishing and forestry programs.

We have concerns with the lack of expertise and understanding of farming in other state departments. Therefore, we request MDARD be the primary representative of government on our farms. We oppose multiple inspections by a variety of jurisdictions.

We encourage MDARD to follow these recommendations when prioritizing their budget. Regulatory or enforcement program funding should be taken from the general fund with a limited portion from industry fees. We support strategic investments in MDARD with the following funding priorities:

- Food safety
- Regulatory program oversight

- Animal and plant disease protection and agriculture security
- Producer protection
- Agricultural product integrity
- Market access inspections
- Statistics and information
- Industry and trade advocacy

We support:

- Changes to the Bodies of Dead Animals (BODA) Act that make the MDARD director or their designee the lead authority in mass carcass disposal and BODA.
- Modification of the BODA Act, with input from farmers and dead stock haulers, to allow legal commercial or cooperative mortality management.
- Modifying the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA) to clarify that animal mortality disposal is not considered in the definition of production site waste.
- Making considerations for inclement weather impacts on animal mortality management and disposal timeframes.
- The creation of a study group initiated by MDARD, led by Michigan State University (MSU), and which includes representation from agriculture and livestock commodity groups to determine and recommend necessary updates to the BODA Act.
- Protecting animal health through testing, quarantine and depopulation, if necessary.
- State funding of all required testing.
- Controlling disease through plant inspection, testing and quarantine.
- State on-farm inspectors protecting farmers from excessive regulations being advanced by federal inspectors.
- The abandoned and neglected orchards program and amendments to include other perennial crops. With the involvement of stakeholders and other departments, we support developing rules to strengthen program enforcement provisions, including appropriate funding.
- Reviews and specific expirations for quarantines or movement restrictions.
- Indemnification for farm income loss when agricultural commodities or products are impounded, farms are quarantined, or movement or sales are restricted in the public interest. MDARD should consider at least one local appraisal of fair market value in determining indemnification.
- In the case of widespread animal disease outbreaks, indemnification should reflect prices that were current prior to the outbreak.
- Investigating the feasibility of a livestock insurance fund to complement existing state or federal indemnification programs. The feasibility study should consider loss of livestock and production due to disease outbreak, depredation, funding options, species participation and producer control of the fund.
- A mechanism for loans or direct compensation for income loss due to depopulation, quarantine or condemnation of agricultural products.

- Enforcement of food safety laws, animal identification requirements, and inspection programs, focused on working with producers to resolve problems in a timely fashion before issuing fines and penalties.
- An increased use of technology and sampling and a decreased use of inspections to ensure a safe food supply.
- Photographic evidence taken as part of the inspection process being exempt from the Freedom of Information Act.
- Certifying the accuracy of weights and measures, including moisture testing equipment.
- Reviewing the point system for Pesticide Applicators Certification to increase efficiency.
- MDARD's utilization of state certified third-party privatized contracting and technology for inspections, review and oversight for some programs, including virtual online courses.
- MDARD working with the MSU Pesticide Safety Education program to ensure that training materials for pesticide applicators include appropriate information on proper use, risk, volatility, and application of pesticides and chemicals, especially when near sensitive crops.
- Online and in-person testing for pesticide applicator licensing.
- Additional pesticide applicator training for Dicamba based products, only when use or formulation has changed.
- MDARD meeting with industry representatives prior to regulatory enforcement rule changes.
- Forming an industry committee to advise the MDARD director regarding the inclusion of injurious plants on the nuisance plant list. Consideration should be given for a phase-in for any commercial plant species added to the nuisance plant list.
- Aggressive promotion and labeling of Michigan-grown products and commend the efforts of MDARD for its leadership in highlighting the importance of the agricultural industry to the state.
- Any block grant funds received under the Federal Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act be distributed to Michigan specialty crop commodity sectors on a pro-rated basis with input from a stakeholder group comprised of representatives from the specialty crop industries. All specialty crop sectors, including the nursery and greenhouse sector, should have the opportunity to receive an equitable portion of block grant funds.
- An economic development and agricultural innovation fund that is overseen by industry officials designed to support innovations, economic growth and direct research for all segments of Michigan agriculture.
- Further development of meat processing and marketing opportunities through cooperation between the industry, MDARD, MSU and the Michigan Meat Association.



- Returning to a USDA-equivalent state meat inspection for local custom processors as soon as possible to support value-added opportunities. We will support adequate funding for this program.
- Michigan Farm Bureau working with MDARD to investigate having state inspectors service small scale or portable slaughter facilities in sparsely populated rural areas.
- MDARD having sole authority to license and regulate all terrestrial and aquatic plants for sale or commercial use.
- MDARD working more closely with the aquaculture industry to clarify and streamline the process for aquaculture operations to harvest and sell directly to the consumer.
- MDARD reevaluating current emergency preparedness procedures to enable more timely responses and communication towards the Michigan agricultural industry. Consideration could be given to the creation of a directory of individuals including veterinarians familiar with industry practices to assist with emergency situations (disease outbreaks, data breaches, etc.).

## **#27 Michigan Meat Processing Industry**

The livestock industry and meat processing are integral to Michigan's agricultural economy. Local meat processing facilities provide food availability and economic opportunity. Excessive regulation and limitations on retail packaging/sales greatly reduce public access to locally produced meat.

To help address supply chain challenges, burdensome regulations and limited market access, we support:

- Systematic evaluation of Michigan's meat packing industry, retail sales, custom exempt facilities, market access, regulation and opportunities for expansion.
- Michigan State University (MSU), community colleges, career technical schools and the livestock industry coordinating to develop and establish an ag tech-type livestock harvest and meat processing certification program.
- More federally inspected meat processing facilities in Michigan.
- Investment in and promotion of mobile agricultural processing labs in Michigan.
- Creating a Michigan-based meat inspection and licensing system for in-state processing and retail sale of meat.
- A partnership between the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) and USDA to train and authorize state level employees to conduct USDA inspection services of small, independent processing facilities.
- Increased utilization of the meats laboratory and professional expertise at MSU to support the meat industry, educate students and train meat industry professionals.
- Limiting regulations on small and medium-sized meat processors while protecting and enhancing food safety.
- State and federal funding to increase the number of new — and enhance current — small and medium sized meat processing facilities and on-farm/exempt operations.
- State and federal funding and low interest loans to help small and medium-sized meat processing facilities meet or comply with regulatory requirements.

- Government funding to offset the regulatory burdens placed upon small and medium sized meat processors.
- The further establishment of MDARD approved meat processing facilities that allow for donation to food banks and pantries.

## **#28 Nursery, Floriculture, Sod and Greenhouse Industry**

Ornamental horticulture, nursery, landscape, floriculture, sod, Christmas trees, and greenhouse productions are unique forms of agriculture and must be recognized as such by local, state and national regulatory bodies.

The nursery, greenhouse, sod, and Christmas tree industries have experienced several inequitable trade practices with Canada, including phytosanitary inspection standards and procedures.

We request Michigan Farm Bureau work with allied industry organizations and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) to identify areas of concern and formulate appropriate solutions.

We urge MFB to continue cooperating with plant industry groups regarding revisions to both PA 189 of 1931 and PA 72 of 1945 including, but not limited to, elimination of intrastate inspections of nursery stock, and to no longer recognize mums as a hardy perennial. This change will allow the reallocation of resources to provide improved inspections of interstate and international shipments, and voluntary in-state inspections as requested by the industry.

We encourage MFB and other industry groups, including Michigan State University Extension, MDARD, Michigan Nursery and Landscape Association, and Michigan Greenhouse Growers Council to collaborate and formulate ideas to create new digital training materials.

We support:

- Funding for researchers, research infrastructure, and grant funding through USDA's Specialty Crop Research Initiative and Specialty Crop Block Grants to support the nursery and greenhouse industry.
- Research on mechanization, development of new pesticides, pesticide resistance, and advanced technologies to propagate and grow plants.
- Greenhouse and nursery crop insurance programs and the indemnification of plants after a disease or pest outbreak. We further support action to develop and complete these programs.

We oppose:

- Legislation regulating the use of neonicotinoids, organophosphates, pyrethroids, methocarbamates, or organochlorines by state agencies, unless research or conclusive scientific evidence prove that these compounds pose adverse effects on the environment when used according to label.
- Legislating science from the bench of a court/jury without peer-reviewed scientific proof, well-documented scientific studies from respected scientists, scholars, government bodies, and universities regarding the safe use of necessary tools such as chlorpyrifos and glyphosate without extensive research and study.

## **#29 Payment Protection and Security for Growers**

Michigan Farm Bureau supports the Farm Produce Insurance Authority (FPIA) which protects producers' interests when selling their products.

Farmers need maximum payment assurance for commodities delivered. Many parties suffer when a receiver — whether a closed-cooperative, regular cooperative, or commercial company — becomes insolvent or declares bankruptcy. The impact on farmers is significant because of the perishability and seasonality of many commodities.

We support:

- PA 198 of 2013, updates to the Grain Dealers Act that provided assurance that growers receive a priority lien position and full payment for commodities delivered.
- Farm Bureau working proactively with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to expand the FPIA to include fruit and vegetable crops, and creating an appropriate funding mechanism.
- Exploring all possible options, including amending the Uniform Commercial Code, to ensure a fully secured position payment for commodities delivered.

## **#30 Plant Pests and Diseases**

Plant pests and diseases create quarantine situations that restrict intra and interstate marketing opportunities.

We support research to do the following:

- Determine the impacts of the Spotted Lanternfly.
- Determine the impacts of Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD) by supporting and coordinating with the SWD initiative through Michigan State University and the Michigan Cherry Committee.
- Develop new chemical and biological controls for disease detection, control, and eradication.
- Enhance the use of natural plant pest predator species or bio-controls after reviewing potential environmental consequences.
- Address viable control methods for Spotted lanternfly, *Phytophthora capsici*, downy mildew, overall spruce decline, *Armillaria* root fungus, and other plant pests or diseases.
- Address replant issues in the asparagus industry.

Additionally, we support:

- Industry-led efforts to control and prevent crop losses due to plant pests and diseases.
- Aggressively advocating for pesticide manufacturers to develop new chemistries for existing and emerging pest threats.
- Development of regulatory protocol, inspection procedures and pest control methods to allow shipment of quarantined commodities.

- Indemnification for losses of farm income when agricultural commodities or products are impounded, farms are quarantined, or sales are restricted in the public interest.
- Holding suppliers responsible for compensation of all losses due to imported plants with diseases.
- Zero interest/fixed loan or direct and/or indirect compensation to producers for sudden market loss due to invasive species, including SWD, hemlock woolly adelgid and others.
- Vomitoxin testing in corn field trials. We encourage ethanol plant operators to spot-check for vomitoxin in corn entering the plant and dried distillers grains leaving the plant.
- Development of more consistent Vomitoxin testing equipment.
- The creation of a grain inspectors license program administered by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD).
- Requiring a grain inspectors license for any person administering a grain quality test, on behalf of a licensed grain dealer, with the intent of applying a discount/rejection based on the test result.
- An industry-driven, comprehensive rewrite of Michigan's Plant Pest Protection Act.
- Educational efforts to help producers and consumers understand their importance in preventing the spread of plant pests and diseases.
- A review and update of the invasive species quarantine rules in Michigan. We urge MDARD to develop a permitting system allowing agricultural products to be shipped directly for in-state processing throughout the year during a quarantine period.
- Quicker review and approval of species by the councils maintaining the lists for noxious terrestrial weeds and invasive species as defined by PA 451 of 1994.
- Encouraging conservation districts to take measures to keep noxious weeds controlled.

We oppose banning neonicotinoid-based pest control products when there is a lack of research or conclusive scientific evidence linking them to declining bee and other pollinator populations.

### **#31 Right to Farm**

We believe Michigan's Right to Farm Act is a model for the country, allowing all sectors of commercial agriculture to utilize existing and new technologies through generally accepted management practices on a voluntary basis while enhancing the environment.

The integrity of Michigan's Right to Farm Act and science-based Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs) should not be weakened or jeopardized by including practices not integral or directly related to farming.

We recognize the fundamental differences between farming operations in terms of size, soil types, and location. We urge all producers to be aware of applicable GAAMPs and encourage them to employ the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program

(MAEAP) and provisions of the farm bill as management tools in the production of agricultural products and possible expansion of their operations.

We support:

- Developing realistic land-use plans that allow agriculture to evolve, incorporate technology and produce commodities based on market demands.
- Research on improving manure storage and processing, building design, vegetative barriers and types of livestock feed that could mitigate nuisance odors.
- Developing an odor estimation model tailored to Michigan's climatic conditions.
- Changing the Agricultural Disclosure Statement (ADS) to include:
  - Seller notification to the potential buyer.
  - A separate document at the time of closing.
  - Updating the ADS to include additional agricultural practices.
- The Michigan Right to Farm Act protecting users of existing and new technology, including energy production for on-farm use.

We oppose:

- Agricultural operations being restricted to operating only under their historical use.
- Expanding livestock farms being deemed nuisances as a result of new non-farm home construction within the approved setback distance after Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) site approval but prior to expansion's completion.
- Right to Farm protection extending to cannabis growing facilities until growing the plant becomes legal at the federal level.
- Ballot initiatives seeking to control generally accepted livestock production and management practices.
- The inclusion of commercial wind turbine or solar facilities in the definition of a farm.

### **Cooperation**

We will work with MDARD and Michigan State University to inform farmers, local units of government, and other interested individuals of the positive benefits of the Right to Farm Act and GAAMPs. We encourage all farmers to follow the recommendations to demonstrate positive concerns for our neighbors and the environment. We encourage greater farmer participation on township boards and planning commissions to review existing ordinances, help educate about Right to Farm and GAAMPs, and assist in creating ordinances consistent with the Right to Farm Act. We encourage the State of Michigan and local units of government to structure programs, ordinances, and community development plans in a manner consistent with the Right to Farm Act.

We urge Michigan Farm Bureau to study and recommend amendments to the Right to Farm Act to provide additional protection for agricultural producers enrolled in PA 116 or a permanent farmland preservation program.

### **GAAMPs**

GAAMPs should be viewed as guidelines rather than statutory law, as they are reviewed and updated annually to reflect current agricultural practices. Consideration should first be given to amending existing GAAMPs to address areas of concern, followed by investigation into creating new GAAMPs as necessary.

We support:

- Action by the Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development to remove language specific to local zoning from the siting and farm market GAAMPs.
- The GAAMP for Site Selection and Odor Control for New and Expanding Livestock Facilities retaining specific setbacks and scientific parameters.
- Creating a GAAMP for ag labor housing.
- Creating a greenhouse GAAMP that provides nuisance protection for permanent and temporary greenhouse structures used for commercial or production agricultural purposes (except cannabis), regardless of population, zoning, or tax classification.
- Continued use of GAAMPs to define acceptable farm management practices in Michigan.
- A cooperative effort between MDARD, MFB, and other stakeholders to define “commercial production of farm products” within the GAAMPs.
- Greater producer participation on all GAAMP committees.

We oppose:

- Using non-farm residences to define setbacks for manure structures and stacking.

We are concerned about the exemption of GAAMP applicability to municipalities with a population of 100,000 or more.

### **Complaint Process**

The electronic complaint process should include a complete description of the law, including the process and implications for verified and unverified complaints. Following the official Right to Farm visit, follow-up correspondence and appropriate action shall be communicated promptly to the farm owner and the complainant, including MDARD’s ability to enforce action against the farm and/or the complainant.

We urge MDARD to notify all complainants of the law allowing MDARD to levy a penalty for unverified complaints. We strongly urge MDARD to recoup the costs of investigating unverified complaints, as provided for in the Right to Farm Act. We do not support anonymous Right to Farm complaints.

### **#32 Sheep Industry**

We believe the sheep industry will provide a substantial source of income for Michigan farmers, with proper leadership and research.

We support:

- Developing and researching new uses for wool and new convenient lamb products for consumers.
- Including lamb prices in market reports.
- Researching lethal and non-lethal methods of predator control, such as adoption of a "toxic collar" program.
- Funding for an indemnification program for losses from predators.

We urge sheep owners to participate in the National Scrapie Eradication Program.

### **#33 Sugar Industry**

Michigan Farm Bureau supports efforts to minimize negative impacts to the U.S. sugar industry from trade agreements.

We support:

- Basing sugar imports on total sugar content, regardless of its refinement level upon entry into the United States.
- Domestic sugar production allotments being reallocated to current production trends.
- The early harvest period for sugarbeets in Michigan ending on October 20 for crop insurance purposes.
- The USDA Risk Management Agency using recoverable white sugar per ton instead of percent sugar for determining Actual Production History for Michigan growers.

### **#34 TB - Mycobacterium Bovis Tuberculosis**

We urge the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) and Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to be more assertive in their efforts to eradicate Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) and move Michigan to TB-free status. We also urge the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to receive and provide feedback and implement recommendations in a timelier manner. We strongly encourage producer and hunter cooperation in all segments of our eradication efforts and support the departments and industry utilizing the latest technological advancements.

MDARD should draft an aggressive action plan with benchmarks and dates to achieve the goal of statewide TB-free status. This plan should involve industry stakeholders and request adequate funding for implementation. The legislature must provide oversight for accountability.

We oppose MDARD creating, implementing, or enforcing rules or regulations on cattle producers that would be more stringent than USDA's published rules regarding bovine TB.

To expedite TB eradication, we support:

- A bounty and/or income tax credit for deer taken in any Michigan county that is not TB-free and contiguous counties.
- Funding the entire TB program from DNR's budget, and tying that budget to deer-herd reduction and TB prevalence.
- A late hunt in February or March, not January.
- MDARD, USDA, DNR and other state and federal agencies involving producers from all affected areas of the state in decision-making processes regarding bovine TB eradication.
- Producer implementation of a Wildlife Risk Mitigation Plan (WRMP).
- State and federal funding for hiring a third-party designated agriculturalist to assist with WRMP development, implementation, and inspection.
- A complete and approved WRMP on file should empower producers with the authority to manage nuisance/destructive species on their land, including access to disease-control permits to reduce deer and elk interaction with cattle or livestock feed to minimize disease transmission. Additionally, farmers should be able to shoot any deer 24/7 within a designated farmyard circle.

- In counties deemed high-risk or positive for TB, and all contiguous counties, white-tailed deer harvest should be allowed year-round by any legal hunter without requiring a permit.
- Establishing and implementing a science-based zoning approach and testing process to address disease risk (e.g., a 10-mile radius zone around new TB-positive livestock herds).
- Eradication of white-tailed deer within a 10-mile radius high-risk zone established after TB-positive deer or cattle are found.
- Changes to the national TB-testing requirements that eliminate the need for an individual test for animals moving from a lower disease prevalence zone to a higher disease prevalence zone.
- Tying indemnity payments to the development and implementation of a WRMP on each farm in the modified accredited TB zone.
- State and/or federal funding for all required identification and testing.
- Producer compensation for all livestock injured or ordered removed during mandatory testing.
- The free use of state-owned equipment for producers required to perform state-mandated TB testing.
- Continued cooperation between MDARD and USDA to return Michigan to TB-free status by advancing the status in areas where TB has not been found, or those proven to be disease-free through science-based testing.
- State and federal funding for comprehensive and concerted research to further understand the transmission, persistence, detection, eradication, and vaccinations necessary to prevent disease transmission.
- Science-based and species-specific testing protocols.
- Developing an exit strategy for the entire state to upgrade the Modified Accredited Zone (MAZ) to TB-free status.
- Research into a buyout program for cattle producers in Deer Management Unit 487.
- MDARD pursuing aggressive action with surrounding states to open their borders to Michigan cattle.
- Dramatic reduction of the deer herd in any TB-infected Michigan county and contiguous counties. Action should include agency culling, spring hunt, unlimited fall hunting, and no-cost licenses.
- State support for deer-exclusion fencing around entire contiguous cattle farms and deeming such barriers acceptable options for farmers requesting a WRMP.

When herds are quarantined for disease control, we strongly urge MDARD/USDA to remove and test suspect animals as quickly as possible. Upon confirmation of infection, we support:

- Depopulation, or test-and-remove, within 60 days of when the disease was confirmed, and indemnity payments issued within 60 days after an indemnification agreement has been accepted by all parties.



- If a farm is depopulated because of bovine TB, and was operating under a WRMP with no intention of repopulation, indemnity should not be contingent on modifications to the plan.
- Requiring state and federal agencies to harvest and test potential carrier animals on and around TB-positive farms, including on state-owned land.
- Transparency from USDA Wildlife Services, including accounting and reporting of its monthly deer harvest.

In zones where TB is found, we support aggressive use of all wildlife management tools to control all animal disease transmission. Limits and bans on baiting and feeding may sometimes be justified and practical, but we do not support a statewide ban.

Continued state and federal funding is critical to complete eradication of the disease in free-ranging wildlife and livestock populations.

To ensure Michigan TB eradication efforts are not compromised, we encourage the MDARD director to require reciprocal requirements for the importation of breeding, show, and sport cattle.

We request state and/or federal funds be made available to producers for implementing WRMPs involving large expenditures. In the MAZ, we support the test-and-remove option for herd owners who have implemented a WRMP. We support whole-herd depopulation as the most effective method of disease eradication. We request USDA count herds positive only for the months in which they contain positive animals.

The current memorandum of understanding (MOU) between USDA, MDARD, and DNR establishes ambitious quotas for collecting deer heads in the MAZ counties, and in surrounding TB surveillance counties. To achieve these goals, we support:

- A more aggressive approach by DNR to meeting deer-head collection requirements.
- Identification, transportation and testing in the MOU.
- A plan for coordinated effort between DNR, processors, Michigan State University Veterinary Diagnostic Lab, Farm Bureau, and the hunting community in deer head collection by September 1 of each year.
- Weekly updates and reporting of completed deer-head testing beginning September 1 of each year.
- Payment for each deer head turned in until the requirements of the MOU are met, paid by the DNR.
- Accountability from state and federal agencies for not meeting MOU requirements.
- Reduction and possible elimination of cattle testing in buffer counties at the end of the current MOU.
- Compensation from the DNR budget to offset farm and MDARD testing expenses rooted in failed agency MOU compliance.
- Requiring heads from all deer taken on private and public lands in that region to be submitted for testing.

In order to meet testing requirements from USDA, MDARD, and DNR, all deer heads taken from the seven counties around the MAZ for crop damage permits, as well as those taken on private and state lands, should be picked up by DNR and submitted for TB testing. DNR

should also be required to pick up all vehicle-killed deer in that area and submit those heads for TB testing.

To maintain market access for cattle producers in a known TB positive region, we support the movement of cattle out of that region through normal channels as long as testing and movement requirements are met.

### **#35 Urban Farming**

Developing management practices unique to new and expanding urban agriculture, including livestock care standards, crops and cropping standards, and environmental standards, is important to increasing understanding of and support for agriculture in Michigan. For food safety reasons, all rules, regulations, and licenses applicable to commercial agriculture should be applicable to urban agriculture.

We support:

- Urban farming as defined by the Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- Economic development practices to accept agricultural businesses as part of urban centers.
- Developing agreements that allow urban agricultural production, but also protect the rights of farm businesses with production sites within Michigan municipalities.
- Recommendations of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) Urban Livestock Workgroup.
- Michigan Farm Bureau's continued collaboration with MDARD, Michigan State University Extension and other stakeholders to write a model local ordinance to promote protection of and guidelines for urban agriculture.
- Urban agriculture training and education programs and curricula.
- Assisting and educating farmers in urban areas in acquiring grants and financial assistance available through local, state and federal agencies.

We oppose:

- Compromising Right to Farm protections for commercial agricultural practices.

### **#36 USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service – Great Lakes Field Office**

The agricultural industry has developed many mechanisms for reporting the size and progress of crops and other agricultural commodities. Most widely adopted by the industry is the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service program (NASS). To ensure accuracy of these reports, farmers should provide NASS full cooperation. We will vigorously defend the confidentiality of individual farm information. Michigan Farm Bureau will continue working with NASS to improve and simplify information gathering, such as exploring the use of producer information already reported to the Farm Service Agency. We encourage the use of modern technology, including satellite imagery, on-farm electronic data, and a streamlined data collection system.

We recommend USDA and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) adequately fund their full portion of this cost-share service. Accurate and timely third-party statistics are essential to the further development of Michigan

agriculture, finding new markets, and attracting new processing facilities. We support cooperative agreements with Michigan State University, MDARD and private sources for funding state-specific statistical analysis.

We encourage producers to cooperate with NASS in conducting the U.S. Census of Agriculture. We support distribution of the data to producers in a timely and usable format.

We support developing an accurate system to calculate county yields based on actual test results or scientific data considering irrigated vs. dry land yields and seed corn production.

### **#37 Wheat Industry**

Wheat plays an important role in Michigan's economy with half a million acres planted annually.

We encourage coordination of industry-needs, research priorities and processor requirements through the Michigan Wheat Program, ultimately leading to profitability.

We support:

- Michigan Farm Bureau collaborating with representatives of the crop insurance industry, wheat millers, and the Michigan Agri-Business Association to discuss transparency in wheat pricing and statewide standards for wheat sampling.
- Continued education and certification efforts to improve sampling and testing procedures to ensure accurate and consistent falling number and Vomitoxin testing results.
- Continuation of the wheat checkoff program.
- The Great Lakes Yield Enhancement Network, which evaluates the production practices of wheat producers, and we encourage stakeholders to help fund this research.

### **Risk Management Agency (RMA)**

We commend RMA for recognizing results of the falling number test when determining quality loss adjustments for white wheat. However, the coverage must be expanded to include all classes of wheat, and discount factors must be comparable to the level of discounts experienced by producers in the marketplace.

We also recommend RMA explore developing a new insurance policy recognizing the differentiation between wheat classes.

We encourage RMA to standardize wheat planting deadlines with the Farm Service Agency to reflect current climatic conditions.

## **EDUCATION**

### **#38 Agriscience, Food, and Natural Resources Education and the FFA Organization**

Michigan Farm Bureau commends the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) Office of Career and Technical Education on its support and recognition of food and agriculture as a greater than \$100 billion industry in the state through the adoption of the Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources Cluster. This cluster enables future agriculture leaders to obtain foundational

knowledge helping shape their careers and promote the sustainability of the agriculture industry.

Michigan's 100 plus Agriscience, Food and Natural Resources Education (AFNRE) programs and FFA programs are important to the future success of Michigan agriculture. These programs develop future leadership in the agriculture industry and many programmatic and leadership opportunities for non-farm students to learn about and understand agriculture, natural resources and the environment.

AFNRE and Michigan FFA chapters have been supported for years by local school districts, added-cost funding administered by the MDE, federal Perkins dollars, and FFA Foundation funds, including the Glassbrook FFA Endowment. These appropriations are essential for public school districts to retain AFNRE and the FFA as program priorities, and as an incentive to expand these programs into other school districts.

We support:

- Expanding and creating new junior high/middle school and high school AFNRE programs and FFA chapters as vital tools for educating young people, providing career and technical training and development of leaders to work in careers related to Michigan's agricultural industry.
- Agriscience and natural resources courses fulfilling the criteria and being recognized as a science credit by all high schools, colleges and universities in Michigan.
- Providing regional administrators, local district superintendents, principals and counselors-information on AFNRE curriculum requirements so they can encourage student participation.
- The MDE adequately funding AFNRE and career and technical student organization programs to provide educational and career opportunities in agriculture and natural resources because added-cost funding available is declining.
- Retaining the word agriculture in the Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources Career Cluster title.
- Reporting information regarding graduates, or completers, from agriscience and natural resources programs within the state to increase added-cost funding for each student enrolled.
- Instructors taking an active role in the information gathering and reporting process.
- MFB and county Farm Bureaus assisting in state and local FFA activities.
- FFA alumni associations and their efforts to strengthen agriscience and natural resource education across the state and nation.
- AFNRE emergency certification programs and hiring retired ag teachers to fill these positions without retirement penalties, due to the lack of qualified people available to lead these programs.
- Considering student loan payoff or scholarship programs to help promote AFNRE programs through private or public partnerships.
- Continued activities of private and public companies and organizations, like those of AgroLiquid, St. Johns, which provide an educational opportunity to the public to learn and experience the role, importance, and economic impact of agriculture on food production for generations to come.

- Access to and financial support of agriscience programs and FFA chapters in all Michigan schools.
- Continued support and promotion of the Agricultural Experience Tracker (AET) and AFNRE agriculture credential for high school AFNRE students to use when seeking employment in the agriculture and natural resources fields.
- Utilizing funding for agriculture internships and apprenticeships through the National Apprenticeship Act.

### **#39 Educational Reforms**

We believe Michigan children should have an equal opportunity for quality education. Education at all levels must meet the constantly changing needs of society.

We support:

- Requiring state foundation grant aid reimbursement be determined annually by June 1.
- Funding special education programs for teacher training, children with special needs and gifted children.
- Fully funding new or revised state mandated programs.
- Funding for state mandated programs should not decrease the basic pupil grant for other students.
- Ensuring the per pupil foundation funding grant follows the student to the school of their choice.
- Requiring state school aid funding to reflect current year enrollment based on average student attendance and eliminate official count days.
- Public schools, private schools, charter schools and home schooling.
- Local school boards having the ability to establish policies such as starting and ending dates, classroom hours in a school year, personnel management, student discipline, and use of local facilities and resources.
- Collaboration between the local school district and the intermediate school district to establish an integrated calendar.
- The utilization of local Farm Bureau members and organizational resources to assist in reviewing classroom curriculum for accurate information concerning agriculture before its adoption.
- Michigan Farm Bureau continue to promote and develop Michigan Agriculture Education Units to increase agricultural literacy among Pre-K-12 students.
- Colleges and universities offering dual credit opportunities for high school students.
- Agriscience instructor certification.
- Standardized programs in specialty fields like agriculture to increase occupational readiness and employability of students.
- Consolidated districts maintaining existing FFA and agriscience programs.
- Review of the foundation funding grant for education.
- School districts must exercise fiscal responsibility and look for efficiencies to maximize the use of financial resources.

- Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, (STEM) education in Pre-K-12 and acknowledge agricultural education as an effective vehicle to deliver this programming. We encourage county Farm Bureaus to highlight opportunities for school districts to meet STEM requirements through agricultural concepts.
- Funding opportunities for elementary schools like grants or scholarship programs to source agriculture education resources such as the FARM Science Programs.
- County Farm Bureaus working with school districts to increase Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) flexibility acceptance. MMC standards must be balanced to recognize the importance of Career and Technical Education (CTE) and provide more opportunities for students to enroll in vocational training programs and mentor-based programs.
- A well-rounded education containing basic curriculum, including college-prep or vocational/technical courses.
- School counselors and faculty informing students about opportunities in vocational training, agriculture, and related fields.
- Counselors' continuing education courses encompassing CTE opportunities.

#### **#40 Michigan Ag Council**

The Michigan Ag Council (MAC) is comprised of more than 15 agriculture related groups, including Michigan Farm Bureau. The efforts of MAC are needed because it is imperative for stakeholders to write the narrative of Michigan agriculture. Through its collaborative structure, MAC promotes a positive image for agriculture and takes an assertive, proactive approach in telling the story of modern agriculture as a result of technological advancements.

We encourage MAC to expand national and regional collaboration.

Funding for the MAC is critical; to be successful, it needs to come from a variety of sources focused on Michigan including commodity groups, financial institutions, food processors and retailers. We encourage county Farm Bureaus and individual members to financially support MAC and Farm Bureau members to consider joining MAC as business members. A mix of financing for this joint effort will allow MAC to do more positive education and promotion about agriculture, and multiply its ability to reach consumers at all levels.

#### **#41 Michigan State University**

In 1855, the Michigan Legislature passed Public Act 130 which provided for the establishment of the Agricultural College of the State of Michigan. Michigan Agricultural College was the first college in the United States to offer agriculture courses for credit. Today, Michigan State University (MSU) is recognized as a leader in higher learning and agricultural research, extension and youth development. To maintain this status, we support the following:

- Expanded utilization of current farmland assets on campus at MSU with the goal of no net loss of farmland/farm and agriculture education facilities.
- State funding for MSU placing it in a comparable academic and financial status with other distinguished land grant research universities.

- MSU to publish a strategic plan for the future of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (CANR) that meets the needs of students and farmers in Michigan.
- The CANR and the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM)'s efforts to provide a strong foundation for educating individuals involved in agriculture at the state, national, and global levels. We urge these colleges to work closely with stakeholders, including producers, to provide relevant curriculum to the students while addressing the research, resource, and informational needs of the agricultural industry.
- A higher rate of CVM graduates to address the shortage of large animal veterinarians practicing in Michigan.
- MSU forming partnerships with affected farmers and state agencies to research PFAS soil contamination and how the land can be safely used and mitigated for continued agricultural use.
- The Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources Education bachelor's and master's degree programs.
- Efforts to increase the number of graduates certified to teach at state approved agriculture, food & natural resources career and technical education (CTE) programs.
- Re-establishing the Agriculture and Natural Resources Communications bachelor's degree.
- Programs and policies to increase enrollment of students in agricultural degree programs.
- Incorporation of agricultural literacy in programs preparing elementary and secondary teachers in other degree areas.
- Students' ability to apply directly to the CANR and CVM, not the University as a whole.
- CANR and CVM expanding their recruitment efforts within the state, including efforts to work through existing organizations to promote educational and career opportunities.
- Encouraging students to apply in the spring of their junior year of high school to CANR, and to CVM for veterinary nursing.
- Reestablishing the MSU CVM stakeholder advisory committee.
- Reestablishing/filling the MSU Extension (MSUE) equine position in CVM and CANR.
- CANR and CVM making a concerted and focused effort recruiting students from FFA chapters, 4-H programs and agricultural businesses in Michigan.
- MSU's Institute of Agriculture Technology (IAT), a two-year agricultural technology program which provides a valuable service to Michigan agriculture and should be recognized as a highlight of the CANR.
- Improvements to the MSU IAT program to better serve the needs of students, employers, businesses, industry and consumers.
- MSU IAT credits being allowed to fully transfer into four-year programs at MSU.

- Continued expansion of partnerships with community colleges and other four-year institutions throughout the state to increase development of MSU IAT career tracks offered by the CANR.
- A more realistic financial performance requirement from the university administration for the farms based upon the realities of the real-world farming business while working in the university setting.

### **Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) and AgBioResearch (ABR)**

MSUE and ABR must work closely with production agriculture, agribusiness and other research entities to conduct research and disseminate the results. This outreach should focus on prioritized industry needs.

We support:

- Increasing state and federal funding for MSUE and ABR, to maintain historical high standards of agricultural research and outreach programs.
- Funding for Project GREEN, including additional funding for three to five-year projects.
- A re-emphasis and expedited hiring process for filling MSUE coordinator and instructor positions and research-related faculty positions. This should address the emerging needs and priority issues of the production agriculture industry.
- MSUE considering years of applied career experience in lieu of a master's/bachelor's degree as an alternate avenue to recruit top-tier applicants into MSUE educator and 4-H program coordinator/instructor positions.
- Public posting of administrative level positions to find the most qualified candidates.
- The research/extension specialist program on and off campus to provide direct contact with stakeholders invested in field-applied research.
- A focus on core agricultural programs.
- MSUE 4-H youth programs and encourage Michigan Farm Bureau and county Farm Bureaus to assist in state and local 4-H activities. We recognize the educational efforts and impact of youth experiences in animal and plant science projects.
- MSUE plans for 4-H staffing and programming involving volunteer stakeholders as they are critical to program success.
- MFB continuing its partnership with the 4-H Capitol Experience. The partnership will encourage students to participate in a high-quality youth leadership experience, with continued support from county Farm Bureaus.
- The formation of an advisory board of MFB members to guide MSUE agricultural staffing plans and programs.
- MSU continuing to share financial information regarding investments in agricultural programming at the university and within ABR and MSUE programs in order to facilitate stakeholder partnerships and better support research faculty.

### **University and Industry Collaboration**

To strengthen relationships between MSU and Farm Bureau, we encourage:

- MSU, MSUE, and ABR to partner when appropriate with county Farm Bureaus to promote MSU CANR and CVM to prospective students.



- Attendance and participation between county Farm Bureaus and MSU staff/faculty at respective activities.
- County and regional MSUE personnel attending county Farm Bureau board meetings on a regular basis.
- Fostering relationships between MSU IAT, community colleges and county Farm Bureaus.
- Promotion and support of Collegiate Farm Bureau activities at MSU and MSU IAT community college programs by county Farm Bureaus and MFB.
- Agriculture representation on the MSU Board of Trustees.
- Greater Farm Bureau and farmer representation on the MSUE/ABR stakeholder council, CANR, and department stakeholder advisory committees.
- An emphasis on filling on and off-campus vacant teaching positions in a timely manner.
- MFB to continue to meet with the leadership of MSU to discuss the critical importance of the land grant mission to Michigan agriculture.
- MFB continued partnership with other agriculture industry leaders to work with leadership at MSU to reevaluate the university's educational and outreach programs and refocus the university's efforts on core programs directly or indirectly related to agriculture.
- MFB collaborating with MSU to create a committee to develop recommendations for alternatives, in addition to grower check offs, to fund university agriculture faculty start-up packages.
- MFB collaborating with MSU in the development of tools/training programs to address the agricultural labor/on farm training needs of current and future farm employees.
- MSU explore continuing education in farm stress and rural mental health for professionals working in mental health and public service.
- Exploring options to develop a center within MSU CANR dedicated to agriculture technology advancements, including artificial intelligence, drones, field sensors and emerging fields.

## ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY

### #42 Broadband

Rural access to broadband internet service is a major factor impacting the ability of rural Michigan residents to compete and participate in the economy. A comprehensive policy is vital to provide statewide universal broadband access that is equitable in cost and quality in rural and urban settings.

We support:

- Allowing county, township or municipalities to utilize special assessment districts to expand broadband.

- Tax credits or other incentives for residents purchasing internet services for educational or employment purposes.
- Encouraging federal, state, and local municipalities to allow public and private internet providers easy and affordable access to build and attach equipment to public-owned communication towers, water towers, and ground.
- Public-private partnerships developing cooperative, alternative funding measures to expand broadband in underserved areas.
- Internet providers taking advantage of the available state and federal government loans and grants.
- Continued cooperation between the Michigan Public Service Commission, broadband providers, and groups such as Connect Michigan to expand unlimited high-speed internet access in rural and underserved areas.
- Publicly available, well-defined/site-specific high-speed internet coverage maps.
- Allowing municipalities to create service thresholds when negotiating broadband franchise territories.
- Requiring electric utilities to allow access to their power poles for the hanging of high-speed fiber-optic lines.
- Encouraging rural electric co-ops to continue expanding broadband offerings.
- A report from the Michigan High-Speed Internet Office on the progress of new broadband technology deployed through state and federal money.

We oppose granting exclusive franchises to broadband providers in municipalities without guaranteed minimum service.

### **#43 Renewable and Biomass Products**

Ethanol fuels and biodiesel are excellent sources of renewable energy, contributing to a cleaner and safer environment through major reductions in vehicle exhaust emissions.

We applaud the increased interest in ethanol and biodiesel and the positive impact to grain farmers. At the same time, we caution the entire agriculture industry to understand the economic impact to livestock production. We urge balanced economic decision-making as we expand alternative energy options. A level playing field is important for all segments of agriculture to prosper.

We support:

- Requirements for the use of biomass fuels and fuel additives in areas that exceed the 1990 federal Clean Air Act standards.
- Continued production of biomass products such as ethanol and other bio-based fuels and products.
- Year-round statewide availability of E-15.
- Efforts to encourage biomass fuel production facilities in areas of available feedstock production and co-product utilization.
- Funding and support for new, existing, and expanding facilities for the generation of sustainable aviation fuel, renewable diesel, and biodiesel from agriculture and forestry products.

- Research and development being encouraged through tax and cost-share incentives to find ways to reduce the cost of production of biomass products, expand feedstocks, co-product utilization (including those from food processors), and expand the application of technologies such as anaerobic digestion, fermentation, distillation, burning of organic materials (pyrolysis) and hydrogasification.
- Research on the use of 100 percent biomass fuels for some vehicles, as well as blending biomass fuels with petroleum-based fuels.
- The state of Michigan including biomass fueled vehicles in its motor pool fleet. We strongly urge all state-owned diesel and E-85 vehicles be fueled with their respective fuel source when possible.
- Expanding the biomass fuel distribution infrastructure, including blending capability at the retail level.
- Encouraging manufacturers to expand offerings of renewable fueled vehicles.
- Research, development and use of renewable energy sources for on-farm production applications.
- Establishing economic incentives and streamlining the permitting and licensing process to encourage biomass fuel production.
- Broadening the use and distribution of biomass fuel with incentives consistent with other renewable energy sources targeted to producers, blenders, distributors and end-users.
- Requiring new biomass fuels or renewable energy commercial production facilities utilizing public funding, tax deferments or grants to offer an investment opportunity to Michigan citizens to keep gains realized in rural America.
- Encouraging schools and municipal governmental units to use bio-based products.
- Educating consumers about the benefits of biomass fuels and renewable sources for heating.
- Utilizing the latest science-based information to promote biomass/renewable products.
- Research and demonstration programs using ethanol for fuel cell engine development.
- Research and demonstration programs to expand the use of ethanol, biodiesel, and farm generated methane.
- Increasing engine efficiency through practices such as raising octane levels by utilizing farm sourced biofuels.
- Identifying fuel stations featuring E-85 and biodiesel with interstate highway signs.
- The scientific measurement and rating of fuels and alternative fuels regarding carbon dioxide levels.
- The increased utilization of forest products and other biomass material, including non-native plant species, for renewable energy production.
- Exemptions from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy permitting process to encourage the development of renewable biomass energy production and utilization on farms.

## Anaerobic Digesters

We support changes to state law and regulation to allow:

- Comingling of product from different farms without additional permitting requirements.
- Utilization of yard and food waste with manure, without additional regulation.
- Registration of an anaerobic digester without surface water or ground water permits.
- Changes to gas purity standards that allow for digester gas to be added to existing fuel/gas while still protecting the current infrastructure.
- Electricity being generated from digesters to be eligible for Renewable Identification Numbers (RIN).
- Increased usage of renewable natural gas (RNG) as a transportation fuel.
- The use of life cycle and combustion methodologies in the analysis of RNG.

## #44 State Energy Policy

We support Michigan Farm Bureau advocating for adequate and affordable energy for residents and businesses. We recognize agriculture's vulnerability to energy interruptions and price volatility and support immediate and long-term solutions including:

- Agriculture having consistent, reliable, and affordable access to all forms of energy.
- Upgrading, expanding and protecting our current electrical generating systems and grid.
- Development, expansion, promotion and incentives for affordable access to natural gas for farms, homes, and businesses.
- Developing a state energy policy that prioritizes agricultural enterprises, such as production, processing and storage facilities, allowing them the same power quality and timely access as other industries, regardless of utility territory.
- A statewide study of transmission connectivity needs including, but not limited to, transmission connections between the two peninsulas.
- MFB working with county Farm Bureaus to study electrical rate disparities across the state. The study should consider the causes and potential policy recommendations promoting affordability in all regions of the state.
- Electric car production and usage being matched by concurrent approval for the construction and/or upgrades for reliable electric generation facilities to deliver the power needed.
- The creation of a charging network for electric vehicles in rural communities.

## Michigan Public Service Commission and Utilities

We support:

- Standards for utility companies to resolve power quality issues such as electrical pollution on-farm and urge all parties to maintain their equipment and utility right-of-way to decrease the possibility of neutral-to-ground electrical pollution.
- Net-metering legislation or regulation enabling producers to sell excess power generated on farms back to utilities at an equitable rate.

- Establishment of an agricultural rate classification for electrical service.
- Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) allowance for seasonal inactivity (e.g., irrigation/grain drying) to eliminate the occurrence of non-use monthly charges.
- Voluntary utilization of smart meters.
- All permanent easements owned by utilities, not preserved for future use, being reverted or offered for sale, to the underlying owner at no more than fair market value.
- Including agricultural representation on the MPSC.
- MPSC being responsible for determining capacity needs and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy being responsible for only environmental permitting.

### **Enhancing Production & Programs**

We support:

- The continued operation and upgrades of Line 5 and similar pipelines with strict safety precautions to protect land and water resources.
- Incentives for renewable energy efficiency and conservation that reduce energy use and costs on farms, food processing firms, and agribusinesses.
- Incentives for renewable energy production for sale or use for private applications. Examples include cogeneration, silvicultural material, methane digestion, wind, hydro, and solar power.
- Increasing incentives to broaden the use of biomass blended fuels.
- Education and policy programs to promote sound energy conservation.
- Options expanding domestic energy exploration, incentives to accelerate expansion of liquid natural gas facilities, implementation of technology to utilize domestic coal reserves, and the development of fuel cell technology.
- Programs to increase the utilization of energy sources to minimize adverse environmental impacts.
- Incentives for additional refineries.
- MFB obtaining the services of an in-house grant writer to assist members with the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) and other grant programs.

### **Farmland Protection and Land Use**

We support:

- Requiring decommissioning plans to return property to the original state as a part of the permitting process for all new energy projects, including posting an adequate performance bond, or funds before final approval.
- Incentivizing the production and use of renewable energy on non-agricultural use areas such as brownfields, public property, especially state-owned or leased buildings with suitable land for solar, Michigan Department of Transportation rights-of-ways, state parks, state-owned forests, state-owned or leased marginal open space, marginal lands, as well as industrial, residential and agricultural buildings, to reduce easements across farms for renewable energy projects and to protect prime farmland.

- Solar developers disclosing chemical and electronic components of solar panels and equipment to the landowner and local government prior to offering any lease or approval.
- Commercial solar operations notifying landowners and disclosing chemicals used for weed and pest control on leased acres.
- Requiring public lands to share in the advancement of renewable energy goals created for the public interest. Since state and federal governments own over 20% of land in Michigan, public lands have the opportunity and responsibility to lead by example and host at least 20% of renewable energy development.
- All wind generator towers being assessed using multiplier tables established by the MPSC through the process of public hearings and sworn testimony.

We oppose:

- Utility companies inflating land rental rates on their property to well above fair market value of contiguous property.
- Attempts to restrict or ban the use or production of natural gas, LP gas propane or any fossil fuel.

#### **#45 Unmanned Aircraft Systems**

The use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), like drones, will continue growing as costs for this technology are reduced. The proper use of this technology in agriculture can result in significant benefits, however privacy and public safety issues are becoming more prominent.

Many of the issues surrounding UAS are governed by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), however a number of state-level issues need to be resolved. We encourage Michigan Farm Bureau to work with the Legislature to address issues regarding UAS use. Also, we urge MFB to continue to increase their knowledge and understanding of UAS issues like:

- Privacy and private property rights
- Nuisance
- Reckless endangerment
- Proprietary data
- Safety
- Insurance
- Authority enforcement and jurisdiction consistent with FAA regulations

We support:

- The use of UAS for commercial purposes within agriculture, forestry, and natural resources.
- Requiring UAS operators to gain consent of landowners or farm operators, if the UAS will be surveying or gathering data about the property below navigable airspace.
- Treating the UAS as an extension of the operator subject to trespass regulations.

- The regulation of UAS as recreational aircraft.
- Internet and cellular providers including support within rural networks for agricultural equipment connections.
- Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development policies supporting the use of autonomous farm equipment.
- Michigan State University increasing autonomous farm technology research.
- The use of UAS operations in accordance with FAA regulations to include all waivable operations such as use of multiple drones and limited nighttime operations.

We oppose:

- Federal, state and local agencies using UAS for regulatory enforcement, litigation and as a sole source for natural resource inventories.
- Use of drones for investigation without a search warrant or equivalent documents.
- UAS surveying and gathering data without the consent of the landowner and/or operator below navigable airspace.

#### **#46 Utility Placement**

New or replacement above and underground utility distribution equipment should be placed or relocated in the existing road right-of-way. When utilities are being replaced, the utility owner should remove the replaced sections upon installation of new utilities, including all poles and all lines. We urge all utility and subcontractor companies to communicate with landowners before beginning the renovation of lines or relocation of individual poles. As farm equipment increases in size, the placement of utility services becomes a concern. Adding to the potential problem, other utility lines such as telephones and cable television, are installed below the existing electric lines. Access to, or operation in, a field or orchard with farm equipment creates the potential for contact with the lines.

We support:

- Utility companies following the National Electrical Safety Code (NESC) and Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) regulations to protect both the farmer and the utility from accidents that could cause injury to an individual or service interruption.
- Legislation or regulation creating a minimum height requirement of 17 ½ feet for all overhead lines. All new underground utilities should be installed and maintained to NESC standards. If NESC standards are not met, utility companies are responsible for liability, damages, and repairs.
- Government enforcement of utility height and depth standards.
- All parties (e.g. landowners, road commission, drain commission) communicating prior to utility installation, including a minimum 30-day notice to landowners for non-emergency projects that affect utility and drainage on private property or within the right-of-way.

- The principles of Public Acts 173 and 174 of 2013, which provide clarity on the MISS DIG process for farmers by focusing efforts on risk management and providing greater incentives for compliance. We encourage farmers to enroll their property in the MISS DIG system.
- Farmers considering cost-sharing of utility pole relocation for safety and productivity of field crops.
- Utility companies putting additional emphasis on upgrading and placement of poles in the right-of-way to reduce long-term maintenance costs and crop damage.
- Utility companies completing timely repair, maintenance, and expansion to prevent damage to personal and public property.
- MISS DIG markings being removed or made of a non-metallic biodegradable material and encourage Michigan Farm Bureau to work with appropriate entities to promote this change.
- The MPSC's cost review for line extensions, transformer upgrades and moving charges, and comparing these costs with other utility charges for the same work.

We understand the value of utilities, including broadband communication, and support reasonable efforts to minimize damage to infrastructure. New utility equipment should not impede any existing drainage structure. We believe a utility company should promptly settle for damage to crops, soil compaction, existing sub surface drainage, irrigation, and other similar agricultural infrastructure.

We oppose loss of local control regarding solar energy projects.

## **INSURANCE & LABOR**

### **#47 Agricultural Worker Housing**

With aging infrastructure and the continuing lack of housing, renovating and building new agricultural worker housing is more important now than ever. However, continuing pressure with lower commodity pricing and increased input costs has made it difficult for farmers to make these improvements and maintain competitiveness in the market.

At the same time, the overlapping of administrative oversight and inspection of agricultural worker housing requirements presents a fragmented format of rules. The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) Migrant Labor Housing Inspection Program is vital to agricultural employers and Michigan's agricultural economy. This program verifies that agricultural employers have acceptable housing for employees and provides licensing for employers whose housing meets program standards/requirements. This licensing provides protection for both employers and employees.

We support:

- Legislation developing uniform housing standards and requirements across state and federal agencies for agricultural workers.
- MDARD being the sole inspecting licensor of agricultural worker housing in Michigan.



- The U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) should recognize a current license issued by MDARD as proof agricultural worker housing is acceptable.
- Federal and other state agencies should be in audit positions only and shall refer any apparent violations to MDARD, rather than issuing an immediate penalty.
- That once agricultural housing is inspected and licensed by MDARD and then occupied, the USDOL and/or other agencies may not enter the dwellings, which are the homes of the employees, without the employee's permission and proper advance notification to the farm owner.
- MDARD continuing to provide a publication explaining the current licensing, inspection procedures, and regulations for agricultural worker housing.
- The MDARD Migrant Labor Housing Inspection Program being a fully funded state program that includes pre-occupancy, post-occupancy and complaint-driven inspections, supplemented, if necessary, by reasonable fees based on licensed occupancy.
- The State of Michigan and MDARD providing licensing protection to employers who show a good faith effort to maintain their agricultural worker housing to MDARD standards.
- Once agricultural worker housing has been inspected and licensed, any violations created by the occupant should not be held against the licensee.
- Defining rights and responsibilities between an employer and an employee living in housing facilities provided rent-free by the employer, as well as procedures to be observed when the occupant is no longer an employee.
- Legislation that creates a not more than seven-day eviction process for employer provided housing.
- Increased state funding for agricultural worker housing development.
- Agricultural employers renovating or demolishing abandoned housing.

#### **#48 Agricultural Workforce**

Michigan Farm Bureau should continue informing consumers about the agricultural workforce and correct misconceptions about farm workforce conditions.

Michigan does not have a labor relations law for farm workers and they are using basic contract law as the basis for achieving successful labor agreements.

The lack of an agricultural labor relations law allows for consumer and secondary boycotts of perishable farm commodities. We are not opposed to removing the agricultural labor exemption from the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and prefer this action over enactment of a state agricultural labor relations law. While we are opposed to a separate agricultural labor relations board, we believe a separate counsel and staff, cognizant and understanding of the challenges of agriculture, should be designated if the agriculture exemption to the NLRA is stricken.

State legislation must protect the rights of the workers, farmers and consumers against the loss of crops during labor disputes and should:

- Preserve the right of secret ballot elections for farm workers.
- Prohibit secondary boycotts.

- Include workable provisions on bargaining units.
- Prohibit strikes by workers during critical periods of growing and harvesting.
- Guarantee the right of agricultural employers to reduce labor needs through mechanization.
- Not include any requirement for a successor clause in a labor contract.
- Ensure the continuation of the piece rate of payment for workers.
- Ensure the equal opportunity to work without being forced to join a union or be required to finance or collect on behalf of a union.
- Ensure that organizing activities do not infringe on the safety of the workers' and employers' lives and property.
- Ensure union organizing activities do not interfere with agriculture production.
- Ensure if a union agreement is in effect, money from workers' dues could not be used for political issues, candidates or parties without the individual union member's authorization.

The family farm exemption in the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Workers Protection Act is being eroded by the expansion of the terms "recruitment" and "transportation." We oppose the inclusion of gratuitous referrals and transportation in the course of employment when the vehicle is not driven by a family member, in the determination of whether the family farm exemption applies.

The North American Industrial Classification System (NAICS), sector 11 should be the standardized definition for agriculture and farm work for all state labor legislation.

MFB should continue participating in recruiting efforts to ensure an adequate and legal agricultural workforce. Recruiting methods and programs currently being used should be evaluated for effectiveness. Efforts should be ongoing to more effectively encourage workers to come to Michigan.

The State Workforce Agency should only refer legally authorized workers to all employers. We support:

- The concept of an inmate vocational training program in cooperation with Michigan Works or other educational institutions to provide non-violent inmates the skills to be reintroduced to the workforce through the agricultural industry.
- MFB efforts through its affiliate company, Great Lakes Ag Labor Services, to assist growers in navigating the cumbersome H-2A program. We encourage expansion into other viable visa worker programs. We support this program continuing as a "user pays" system and available to all MFB members.
- The right of farm employees to join, not join, or resign from a union by their own convictions.
- Reestablishing Michigan as a Right to Work state, where employees only voluntarily associate themselves with a union.
- Expanded opportunities for employment of young people in agricultural operations.

We oppose:

- Efforts by purchasers of farm commodities to force farmers to legally recognize and negotiate with specific labor organizations.

- Purchasers of farm commodities enticing farm employees to join unions by paying their union dues.
- Third party organizations attempting to force organized labor negotiations between farmers and farm employees.
- A specific segment of our workforce being targeted for mandatory testing or regulatory compliance.

## **#49 Immigration**

Immigration laws and border security should be strictly enforced as the responsibility of the federal government. We oppose state mandates on employers to use E-Verify or similar programs.

We support improving worker availability in agriculture. Michigan Farm Bureau should continue working to address agriculture workforce challenges.

## **#50 Insurance**

We oppose assessments on individual insurance policies for costs not directly related to the coverage provided to the individual purchaser of that insurance. This further increases the cost of insurance and is a hidden means of taxation.

We support the principles in Michigan's no-fault insurance law that allow people injured in automobile accidents to receive economic compensation more quickly and equitably.

We support the following improvements to no-fault insurance:

- A realistic cap on Personal Injury Protection (PIP) benefits.
- Optional limits of PIP coverage (e.g., medical, wage loss, economic damages).
- Using a schedule for medical and PIP benefits, like the workers' compensation fee schedule.
- Better defining "injuries arising out of the ownership, maintenance or use of an automobile."
- Requiring motorcycles to comply with the same rules as automobiles and trucks.
- Place limits on attendant care.

We support legislation improving no-fault insurance, reducing the cost of auto insurance, and passing the majority of savings on to the consumer.

We oppose legislation attempting to equalize auto insurance rates. Additionally, we will not support auto insurance rollbacks unless they are offset by reforms that reduce costs.

Michigan's no-fault insurance law provides that drivers having accidents or tickets can be charged more for automobile insurance. To ensure that proper insurance premiums are charged, we support improved accuracy of the Secretary of State's accident/violation records.

The Michigan Auto Insurance Placement Facility, which insures high-risk drivers, should be fully self-funded.

Uninsured motorists increase costs to law-abiding citizens. We recommend increased law enforcement and an increase in fines and impoundment of the vehicle for uninsured motorists.

We urge the exploration of methods to change the collections for the Michigan Catastrophic Claims Association Fund to ensure equity amongst motorists.

### **#51 Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration**

We encourage farmers to become aware of occupational hazards and voluntarily adopt safety programs. If the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA) establishes a standard for agriculture, Michigan Farm Bureau should work with MIOSHA to ensure minimal negative impacts. Non-mandatory guidance principles should be included in any final regulation.

We recommend heat-related labor regulations account for the diverse workforce requirements of agriculture and not be so restrictive as to create unnecessary difficulty in completing tasks essential to farming.

As MIOSHA continues as a policy-making body, it is essential that representation be provided for agriculture on applicable agency commissions.

We support:

- Appropriate safety regulations.
- Including construction standards and health standards in the agricultural exemption in MIOSHA administrative code MI R325.50171.
- Educational programs and no-penalty first-time inspections and/or violations.
- A portion of the Consultation, Education and Training funding, derived from Workers' Compensation premiums, being used for agricultural safety training.
- Legislation allowing employers to provide employee safety information in an electronic format.
- Changing reporting requirements for accidents/fatalities for agricultural operations to include 911 or other first responder supported reporting.

We oppose:

- MIOSHA regulations that exceed federal OSHA standards and/or guidance.
- Enforcement action against an owner/operator resulting from a self-imposed accidental injury.

### **#52 Wages and Compensation**

Although most farm employees are paid above the minimum wage level, it does serve as a floor for wage rates. The state minimum wage and piecework rates should not exceed the federal minimum wage.

We support:

- An agricultural exemption from paid sick leave requirements.
- Agriculture, as defined in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS 11), remaining exempt from overtime wage payments.
- Piece rates as a method of payment to allow for the variable situations found in agricultural employment. Piecework rates enable skilled agricultural workers to earn income above the average and/or minimum hourly wage.

- The Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity (LEO) working with the agriculture community to support the payment of piece rate in compliance with state and federal law.
- Minimum wage increases being tied directly to increases of all wage-based employer thresholds, such as unemployment compensation insurance, frequency of withholdings, and frequency of deposits.
- Investigating a state surveying mechanism and auditing of the survey for calculating ag wages including adverse effect wage rate (AEWR).
- Unemployment payments should never exceed 80% of previous full pay and should not exceed 20 weeks.
- Fair market value for employer provided housing should apply toward fulfillment of minimum wage and AEWR requirements.
- An evaluation of the current Unemployment Insurance Agency to make it user-friendly and accurate.
- The Registration and Seeking Work Waiver be extended from a 45-day to a 120-day waiver for agriculture and seasonal agriculture-related businesses.

Economic development initiatives are important to the future of Michigan agriculture. We oppose any attempts to mandate union wage scales in economic development projects involving agriculture.

We oppose Workers' Compensation rules that mandate fringe benefits be included in the base-rate premium, including housing and health insurance. We support the continued full liability coverage for employers who exercise due diligence in employee verification.

We oppose local units of government setting a minimum wage rate.

We oppose the concept of predictive scheduling of employees due to the unpredictable nature of agriculture and agriculture related businesses.

We oppose additional tax on payroll wages for health care.

More farms have added roadside markets and agritourism venues to their business. We believe LEO should view all workers used for roadside markets and agritourism venues to be considered agriculture employees. We encourage Michigan Farm Bureau to work with LEO to develop and improve agriculture classification codes.

We strongly oppose the Improved Workforce Opportunity Wage Act (PA 337 of '18) and the Earned Sick Time Act (PA 338 of '18). We urge the adoption of reforms similar to PA 369 of '18, restrictions to the policy applying only to employers with more than 50 employees, or outright repeal of the two acts.

We oppose legislation to give the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs full control of youth labor in Michigan. Even the exemption for on-farm children is not enough as the new policy would be detrimental to feed mills, landscapers, and other ag-connected industries.

### **#53 Worker Protection Standards**

Michigan Farm Bureau should continue to work with Michigan State University Extension and Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) to provide education regarding Worker Protection Standards (WPS) for farmers and farm employees.

We encourage MDARD to make the initial inspection and those should be educational rather than punitive.

We oppose the regulation of WPS by local units of government.

We support continued authority of MDARD to implement and enforce WPS.

#### **#54 Zoning of Agricultural Worker Housing**

Adequate housing for agricultural workers is critical for Michigan agricultural producers and should not be negatively affected by local zoning ordinances.

We support:

- The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development having exclusive responsibility for inspection and approval of occupancy for seasonal farm worker housing.
- Amending the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act to allow farm worker housing, including multi-family housing and dormitories, as a use by right in all zones.
- Creating a statewide migrant labor housing policy that preempts local authority.
- Legislation allowing farmers to share agricultural worker housing.
- Developing state tax assessing guidelines that support agricultural worker housing.

We oppose:

- Local zoning ordinances that are stricter for agricultural worker housing than that of any residential home.

## **LAW & MISCELLANEOUS**

#### **#55 Agricultural Vocational Rehabilitation**

We support the concept and use of AgrAbility to keep producers, employees, and migrant workers viable, who have issues with walking, carrying, lifting and normal movements in day-to-day farm activities.

We encourage the state of Michigan, Michigan State University Extension, Michigan Farm Bureau and county Farm Bureaus to continue funding AgrAbility and publicizing its services, recognizing a 2.7:1 match from the U.S. Department of Education.

We support the Farmer Veteran Coalition in their mission to help veterans identify agriculture as a viable career option after military service.

#### **#56 Agriculture Security**

The threat of terrorist attacks on America has heightened awareness of the potential for agricultural terrorism.

We support:

- Increased penalties for individuals who destroy or contaminate agricultural property to create terror.

- Increased communication between state and federal agencies in preparation for a response to an agricultural terrorist attack or threat.
- Continued testing and monitoring of food and feed.
- Evaluating the security of food and feed storage facilities.
- Increased scrutiny and screening of imported agricultural goods.
- Giving preference to domestically produced agricultural goods.
- Changes to regulations established to prevent agricultural terrorism, which need to consider the importance of maintaining an adequate workforce for agriculture and related industries.
- Increased funding for U.S. Customs and Border Protection to protect animal health and agriculture industries at airports and ports of entry.
- A stronger effort to increase biosecurity measures on farm operations and at the state and national level.
- Communication with local law enforcement and emergency services regarding suspicious activity.
- Reporting theft of fertilizer, diesel fuel, or diesel exhaust fluid.
- Verifying and validating requests for information about an agricultural facility.
- Controlled access to facilities.
- Screening of employees.

We oppose:

- Additional regulation without consultation of the agricultural community.
- Unauthorized entry by agents of the state of Michigan or the U.S. government into facilities (including worker housing units, barns, accessory buildings and fields) which violates the Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices, Good Agricultural Practices standards, and biosecurity standards.

Foreign investment in Michigan assets is a concern, especially in terms of farmland ownership. Ownership of agricultural land by nonresident aliens, foreign businesses and foreign governments should be limited if not prohibited in Michigan.

### **#57 Anhydrous Ammonia – NH<sub>3</sub>**

Anhydrous ammonia (NH<sub>3</sub>) is an important and economical plant nutrient, which requires considerable care during transport, storage and application. Four state departments have responsibility for regulations regarding the sale, transportation and application of NH<sub>3</sub>.

We support:

- The consolidation of responsibility for regulations to improve efficiency and reduce confusion.
- Designating the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development as the primary department responsible.
- Michigan Department of State Police maintaining jurisdiction for transportation issues.
- An educational effort for individuals involved with the sale, transportation or application of NH<sub>3</sub>.

- Informational and educational programs to deter theft and vandalism of NH<sub>3</sub>.
- A cost-share program for anhydrous ammonia tank locks and GloTell™ or similar product application to discourage theft of NH<sub>3</sub>.
- Stronger enforcement of laws and penalties for people engaged in the theft of NH<sub>3</sub>.
- Classification of NH<sub>3</sub> as a non-flammable gas although it remains an extremely hazardous substance.

## **#58 Antitrust**

We request the Michigan Attorney General and the Antitrust Division of the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) remain vigilant in enforcing the Sherman Antitrust Act or state and federal restraint of trade legislation. Appropriate action should be taken whenever violations are discovered.

We encourage national and state reforms to prevent monopolies from forming within the agriculture supply chain, processing, and service sectors where the lack of competition is counter to the interest of the independent farmer.

A lack of free market forces has become more evident within the agricultural sector. From meat packers to chemical suppliers, a lack of competition has created increased hardships for farmers.

We support:

- Limiting campaign donations to candidate and office holders from government regulated monopolies and utilities.
- A formal request to the Department of Justice (DOJ) by attorneys general around the United States to investigate the following sectors:
  - Meat packers, and the vertical integration of that industry.
  - The consolidation of co-ops, at all levels and in all areas.
  - The use of “loyalty agreements” by agrichemical companies to limit the use of generic crop protection chemicals.
  - The increased consolidation of retail agribusiness units.
  - The monopolistic practices of fertilizer and seed companies.
- A formal request to the FTC by state attorneys general to investigate the consolidation of Agrium, Mosaic, CF Industries, and the creation and operation of Canpotex.
- A formal request to the DOJ and congressional oversight committees regarding the foreign ownership and influence in American agribusiness.
- A formal request to the Environmental Protection Agency regarding the restrictions of the manufacture of the basic “tech material” needed to formulate crop protection products.

The tenants of the Sherman Antitrust Act are essential for the continued survival and competitiveness of agriculture. We implore state attorneys general and policy makers at all levels to remain vigilant for violations, utilize all enforcement tools at their disposal, and to urge the FTC to address violations quickly and decisively.



## #59 Elections

We believe Michigan Farm Bureau should encourage members to register to vote. We also believe MFB should continue efforts to provide education and information on elections and candidates.

Campaign reform is overdue and should be established at all levels of government and address all elements of campaigning.

We support:

- Results projections on Election Day not be released to the public until polls are closed in the continental United States.
- The Michigan Constitution be amended to increase the percentage of voter signatures required to initiate a recall election to 35 percent.
- Requiring a 2/3 vote of the people for passage of the recurring ballot question to hold a Constitutional Convention.
- Recall petitions containing proven misfeasance or malfeasance before the petition is approved.
- Requiring state legislators to wait at least one year before becoming a registered lobbyist.
- Elected officials not being allowed to pursue a different elected position, unless they are at the end of their current term or resign from their currently held elected position.
- The current primary election process for statewide offices and moving the primary election date to either the month of May or June.
- The consolidation of the May and August elections into a single election in May or June.
- Nominating Secretary of State and Attorney General candidates on the primary election ballot instead of state party conventions.
- Apol Standards for the purpose of redistricting.
- Changes to the Michigan Constitution that allow for gubernatorial appointment, with advice and consent from the Senate for the Michigan State University board of trustees, Wayne State University board of governors, and University of Michigan board of regents.
- Michigan continuing to honor the Electoral College as designated in the U.S. Constitution.
- A simplified process to opt out of robocalls.
- Farm Bureau members to become precinct delegates, and MFB to conduct educational training on becoming a precinct delegate.

We oppose:

- The concept of a part-time legislature.
- The Promote the Vote campaign of the Electoral College system.
- Election Day becoming a holiday.
- Any voting by mail except by absentee ballot.
- Electronic forms of voting without a paper trail.
- Proposals to make the popular vote the sole determinant of presidential elections.

- Ranked choice voting.

### **Ballot Reform**

We encourage MFB members to be knowledgeable about ballot proposals. We support the following ballot process reforms:

- Clear and concise language be used on ballot issues.
- Amend the State Constitution to require petitions for initiatives or referendums be signed by a percentage of individuals who voted in the gubernatorial race in the last preceding general election representing a large geographic area of the state, for example, at least  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the Michigan House districts.
- Making it unlawful to have paid circulators gathering signatures for ballot proposals or recalls.
- Limiting influences from outside our state borders on Michigan's ballot process.
- Township governments being allowed to elect local offices on a nonpartisan ballot.
- Easier ballot access for third party candidates.
- Reviewing the ballot initiative process that special interest groups use to circumvent the legislative process and force their ideals on the public and agricultural production.

### **Term Limits**

We support:

- Staggering county commissioner terms.
- Continuing to assess the effectiveness of the new term limit structure.

### **Special Elections**

Special elections accrue high costs for local taxpayers. Therefore, we support:

- Requiring that once an operating millage or bond proposal is defeated by voters, it cannot be up for another vote for at least one full year.
- Millage and bond proposal elections taking place during the November general election.
- School board elections being held during midterm or general elections to avoid unnecessary costs.

### **Election Fraud**

We support:

- Clerks maintaining an accurate voter registration list.
- A passport, enhanced Michigan ID, or enhanced driver's license, REAL ID or REAL Michigan driver's license that proves citizenship for voter registration and voting.

We oppose:

- Election and voter fraud.

## **#60 Firefighting**

Firefighters are expected to respond to situations that require training and experience. State and federal regulations mandate many hours of training to prepare firefighters for a variety of situations and should fund these mandated training requirements. Volunteers and paid on-call firefighters make a substantial commitment of personal time for training.

When a property owner is conducting a legal burn, the property owner should not be responsible for costs incurred by an unnecessary fire department dispatch.

Local governments have begun charging farms a fee for emergency preparation inspections. These inspections are completed by a local fire department to comply with requirements authorized by the Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA). We believe local governments should consider:

- Farms financially support fire protection service through property taxes.
- Farms pay a tax on fertilizer and pesticides purchased to support voluntary emergency tubes through the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program.

Therefore, we support policy that prohibits local units of government and fire authorities from charging for emergency preparation inspections. Furthermore, emergency tubes should suffice as an appropriate level of information.

Per the Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act, we encourage producers to comply with Tier II reporting of any threshold planning quantity materials (Environmental Protection Agency listed chemicals) to the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy on or before March 1 of each year.

Firefighters are welcome to visit farms to be prepared for emergency planning and firefighter safety, but at their own expense.

Michigan Farm Bureau supports the use of soy-based foam as a replacement for chemical AFFF (aqueous film-forming foam) to help eliminate PFAS contamination.

## **#61 Health**

Michigan Farm Bureau members have a real concern for their family's good health. We support:

- Requiring hospitals to report infection statistics.
- Legislation limiting malpractice liability awards, including capping malpractice settlements and strengthening licensing disciplinary action.
- Integrating delivery systems like community health, mental health and substance abuse programs, that serve the same set of counties.
- Increased suicide prevention and mental health awareness campaigns with funding and training for medical and emergency service providers.
- Assertive community treatment programs, like Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics, to serve, help, prevent, diagnose and treat those in need.
- A private and affordable health care plan that allows for additional benefits at the consumer's option.
- Methods to reduce prescription drug costs that will best benefit all individuals.
- Health education to encourage consumers of health care to question physicians, hospital staff and administration about procedures and costs regarding their own health care.
- Itemized billing.
- Increased transparency for costs of all services.
- Insurance incentives for a healthy lifestyle.
- Health insurance premiums being 100 percent tax deductible for all policy purchasers immediately.

- Health Savings Accounts and Medical Savings Accounts.
- Medicare and Medicaid payments that cover expenses in full to hospitals. Rural hospitals should not be discriminated against by using a lower cost of living scale.
- An individual's right to select treatment options which should be respected, and we encourage the use of living wills and/or Durable Power of Attorney for health care.
- Nurse practitioners, physician assistants, midwives, and certified holistic healthcare providers being able to receive reimbursement for their services from insurance companies, Medicaid and Medicare.
- Organ and blood donations.
- Programs that encourage medical professionals to locate in rural areas, including the U.S. Customs and Immigration Services programs supporting placement of foreign-born doctors in rural areas.
- The development of a method to return unused prescription drugs to a licensed pharmacist for disposal.
- Employers being exempted from mandatorily providing health care coverage to any employee who falls under the Migrant and Seasonal Workers Protection Act.
- The expansion of home and community-based long-term care.
- Local healthcare facilities be allowed to decide if they should remain open during both normal and emergency circumstances.
- All healthcare be considered essential in the event of a crisis or pandemic.

We oppose:

- State or federal programs requiring employers to provide health insurance for employees and their dependents.
- Taxes on an agricultural commodity to fund a health care program.

## **#62 Law Enforcement**

As an agricultural community, we stand behind, support and respect law enforcement officers.

We support:

- Law enforcement agencies being maintained and funded at levels to provide adequate training and service.
- Effective use of current police powers, but oppose further expansion to preserve individual rights.
- Upholding state and federal law in courts and not applying foreign law to domestic activities that could impair constitutional rights.
- Funding of rural and urban patrols to curb drug and vandalism issues.
- Law enforcement agencies to develop youth liaison programs.
- Juvenile justice reform, including youth prisons, for violent and dangerous juveniles.
- Capital punishment.

- Producers and county Farm Bureaus meeting with local law enforcement and elected officials to discuss the importance of balancing agriculture's concerns with the use of fireworks.
- Legislation defining and creating fireworks-free agriculture and livestock safety zones.
- Additional tools to aid in the identification and prosecution of individuals involved in the theft of copper wire and other recyclable materials from farms.

We oppose:

- Further restrictions on firearm rights and fully support Second Amendment rights.
- The use of state and national funding for public nuisance issues, such as seat belt enforcement zones.

### **Trespass**

We encourage legislation to strengthen private property rights on all land to protect farmers and landowners against trespassers and vandals. Due to the increased pressure on landowners from trespassers on private property, we encourage implementation of the following:

- The ability to prosecute trespassers regardless of whether "No Trespassing" signs were posted.
- Rigorous enforcement of Michigan's recreational trespass law.
- Property owners should not be held liable for any accidents, injuries, or damage to personnel, equipment, and/or property, by trespassers.
- Increased fines and penalties for trespassing.
- Amendments to Michigan statutes imposing civil liability for recreational and non-recreational trespass, that set a jurisdictional limit of \$3,000 or five times the actual damages, whichever is higher, and include incurred attorney fees and court costs, payable to the landowner and or lessee.
- Increased fines for trespass and damages for losses incurred on land enrolled in PA 116 or other land preservation programs, the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program, or land participating in a food safety or security program.
- Confiscation of unmanned aircraft, vehicle or off-road vehicle for repeat trespassers.
- Use of photography for the immediate arrest of a trespasser.
- Revocation of hunting, fishing and trapping privileges and loss of vehicles used in the violation.

### **Impaired Driving**

Driving is a privilege, not a right. For offenses which result in death or serious injury, penalties for the illegal use of handheld electronic mobile devices should be similar to those for drunk driving.

We support the development of a blood/breath test for Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) so that impaired drivers can be identified and prosecuted.

We support establishing a limit for THC for impaired driving.

We support changes to legislation that would require convicted offenders to serve consecutive, rather than concurrent, sentences for the following offenses causing death or serious injury while operating a motor vehicle:

- Operating with any bodily presence of drugs/alcohol that cause impairment.
- Operating while license suspended, revoked, or denied.
- Operating while illegally using handheld electronic mobile device.

We also support legislation establishing stricter guidelines for habitual offenders that would lower the bar for deeming a person a habitual offender. These sentences should be served consecutive to any felony convictions.

### **#63 Local Government**

We support Michigan's current township government system. Townships should not be required to combine government services they provide, (e.g. elections, property tax collections, assessor services), with multiple jurisdictions, unless a township chooses to and determines that the township's residents would be better served by the multiple jurisdiction system for certain services.

We believe:

- Local governments should not be permitted to enact regulations affecting agriculture that are stricter than existing state and federal regulations.
- Local governments should look for efficiencies through consolidation of services and streamlining regulations.
- Secondary use of agricultural property, including buildings, that does not conflict or substantially change the nature of the farm business should be allowed.
- Agricultural representation on local boards and commissions is vital.

We encourage:

- Standardized address signs be readily visible at the driveway entrance to facilitate emergency response.
- Standardized signage be developed for facilities with alternate power sources for the protection of emergency personnel.
- Emergency response procedures to allow cooperation between local governments.
- Local government officials to fully consider the long-term fiscal implications and yearly operating costs to any public acquisition.
- Local governments to publish (print or digital) audited financial statements within one year of the previous fiscal year closing, without requiring a Freedom of Information Act request.
- Local governments to take advantage of electronic mediums when possible and practical. The importance of continuing the conspicuous posting of notices in several locations and, in some areas non-electronic publishing, cannot be discounted.
- Continued emphasis on state revenue-sharing payments to local governments.
- Farm Bureau members taking a more active role in local government, especially land use planning, zoning and development and updating of master plans.

- Michigan State University Extension providing more planning and zoning education, including development of master plans for townships and counties. County Farm Bureaus should disseminate this information to members.
- County Farm Bureaus taking a more active role in recruiting agricultural representatives on local boards, township positions, and commissions. Not all positions that impact agriculture are elected, and farmer representation is important.
- Promoting existing programs at statewide Michigan Farm Bureau events, such as the Academy for Political Leadership, for members who are not only interested in seeking political office but also interested in learning more about government, its operations, and how members can have an impact.

We oppose:

- Townships requiring engineered site plans and building affidavits for agricultural buildings.

#### **#64 Public Water and Sewer Infrastructure**

The majority of Michigan residents get their drinking water from community water systems, most of which were built more than 50 or 100 years ago. Many of these municipal systems have exceeded their expected lifespan and do not meet state and federal drinking water, wastewater, and storm water standards.

These systems are often not thought about, operating largely without the public's attention, except for times of crisis. Many rural and urban water and drain systems are faced with limited financial resources, and communities are deferring the investments needed to maintain, rehabilitate, and/or replace older infrastructure. Investments need to continue to be made to provide a safe and reliable water supply.

Local governments are accountable for maintenance and operation of the infrastructure affecting their residents. Therefore, we support:

- Research to develop better materials for public water lines, wastewater and storm water systems.
- Development of better processes for the operation and maintenance of the public infrastructure.
- Long-range planning and comprehensive asset management.
- An increase in federal safe drinking water funds, USDA Rural Development water and sewer funds, and Environmental Protection Agency brownfield loan and grant funds.
- Prioritizing redevelopment and reuse in areas with existing public infrastructure.
- A third-party, independent annual financial audit of municipal water, sewer and storm water systems being conducted and reported to the state of Michigan.
- Municipalities collecting adequate revenue from system users to pay for needed infrastructure repairs and maintenance.
- Encouraging municipalities to take advantage of low interest loan plans.

- Implementation and enforcement of pollution prevention control measures on municipalities, especially phosphorus removal.

We oppose:

- A statewide assessment to pay for repair of individual municipality's water, sewer, and storm water infrastructure for any reason.

### **#65 Redress for Unsubstantiated Claims**

We support legislation making individuals, news organizations, consumer and environmental groups responsible for damages caused by their unsubstantiated claims against approved products and practices that result in market losses for producers and the filing of frivolous lawsuits against producers. Upon finding a complaint unsubstantiated, the individual or organization who filed the complaint shall be responsible for all court costs, legal fees, and costs associated with market and production losses.

A person should be prohibited from filing a liability claim if the person was trespassing, breaking a law or serving a prison sentence at the time of loss.

### **#66 Regulatory Reform and Reduction**

We strongly support regulatory reform, including the following actions:

- Repeal of occupational licensing unless required to protect public health and safety.
- Rulemaking authority should be limited by legislative actions.
- Regulations should be understandable and easy to comply with and any penalties should fit the violation.
- Requiring state agencies to conduct science-based studies, standardized risk assessments, cost/benefit analyses, and economic impact statements of proposed regulations.
- When emergency powers are enacted, any branch of government should be subject to the Freedom of Information Act so data related to the emergency powers is made available.
- Checks and balances in emergency power situations in any branch of government. Emergency power should be valid for a maximum of 21 days without legislative oversight.
- Legislative oversight of state agencies during states of emergency.
- Eliminating daylight saving time in Michigan.
- A public registry of studies.
- Easing state regulations on rural community banks to ensure their survival.
- New regulations should expire after a defined period unless a review finds substantial reasons to continue the programs.

We oppose:

- Rules that are unwarranted or retroactively penalize practices previously allowed.
- Requiring redundant studies.
- State and federal mandates that are not fully funded.



- The use of the investment and business theory known as environmental, social, and governance standards being used by government, the farm credit system, agriculture industry, or public universities in making determination of programming, loans, grants, laws, regulations, or other assistance.

## **#67 Streamlining Michigan Government**

While significant strides have been made in reforming Michigan's government, additional reform is needed to continue addressing Michigan's economic condition. We feel reform must support the following:

- Michigan provides human service programs to those in need but must be more vigilant in addressing fraud and duplication within these programs.
- The review and potential change of corrections system cost-drivers, such as sentencing guidelines, prisoner health care and administrative procedures.
- Increased efficiencies within the education system such as privatization of services, consolidation of districts, and shared services.
- Competition for higher education funds should be minimized. Duplicative research efforts performed by multiple state-funded universities should be eliminated.
- State and local governments, including schools, moving to a defined contribution retirement system.

In addition to critically necessary changes in human services, corrections, and education, we continue to support the following:

- Michigan's regulatory structure must continue fostering economic growth and eliminate unnecessary barriers to entry for producers. Policy makers should understand the impact of regulations on business before voting to support new or more stringent regulations. Regulatory agencies should maintain constitutional roles and reasonable environmental protection without creating undue regulatory burdens.
- Increased efficiencies in state and local government such as prioritizing services, reforming where possible, eliminating duplicative services, and utilizing private partners.
- Increased efficiency in state government and actual reform should be evaluated and implemented prior to levying new taxes. If faced with a new tax, any tax proposals must be broad-based and not favoring/harming any one segment of the economy, business type or demographic.
- Full transparency of government financial transactions at all levels.
- The State Legislature, Governor, and Lieutenant Governor be subject to the Freedom of Information Act.
- The concept of an emergency financial manager law.
- Allowing virtual or hybrid options for public meetings.

While agriculture is not the expert on all issues outlined in this policy, we will work with coalitions to engage in broad discussions to advance policy solutions that will create better efficiencies. We will hold elected officials accountable for their ability to operate as statespersons acting in the interest of citizens to address these core issues.

## **#68 Tort Liability Reform**

To alleviate the tremendous economic pressure placed on businesses, medical providers, local governments and others, we continue to support the following tort reform measures:

- State of Michigan return to the Open and Obvious Doctrine for premises liability.
- Perform calculations that reduce future damages to present value.
- Reform and reduce attorney contingency fee arrangements.
- A plaintiff should be responsible for paying the defendant's legal fees if the case is settled in the defendant's favor. The court should be responsible for collecting fees from the plaintiff.
- Reform the collateral source rule to mandate revealing other sources of compensation for damages available to the plaintiff.
- Mandate structured settlements for large monetary judgments.
- Reform prejudgment interest rules by reducing the interest rate, which would start accruing the day the judgment is awarded.
- Arbitration boards should be used to settle cases.
- A person who uses a product in a way other than was intended should not be allowed to bring suit.
- Court ordered mediation shall not be scheduled before the defendant in civil litigation has the opportunity to file a motion for summary disposition. Court ordered mediation should take place only if both parties agree to mediate. Any agreement reached in this mediation shall have a waiting or cooling off period of 48 to 72 hours to afford the defendant the opportunity to change his mind after weighing the consequences of this agreement or contract.
- Employers who are providing proper training and Personal Protective Equipment, and are working in good faith to protect employee health, should have liability protection.
- Exemption from personal property liability for any professional service provider who enter farm properties to perform duties at their own risk and in good faith.

## **NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT**

### **#69 Agricultural Conservation**

Conservation management programs and practices are critical for farm success. These programs and practices could include different approaches, including but not limited to, regenerative agriculture, climate-smart agriculture, soil health, sustainable agriculture, or ecosystem services programs.

We support:

- All programs and practices remaining voluntary.
- Peer-reviewed science supporting conservation practices, including manure management.
- Programs and practices that provide positive economic impact for the continued success of agriculture.

- Funding for programs and research that provide effective educational and technical support.
- Protection making individual farm data exempt from the Freedom of Information Act.
- State funded agricultural conservation programs to be funded by their own authorization bill on a multi-year basis.
- State funded programs only utilizing state employees to implement educational and technical assistance if not already provided by Michigan State University (MSU), MSU Extension, and/or conservation districts.

## **#70 Agricultural Drainage**

Michigan farmland is enhanced by an adequate and well-managed drain system. Over half of Michigan's farmland requires drainage to produce food, feed and fiber.

We support:

- Members obtaining and recording drainage easements for private drains crossing neighboring properties.
- Requiring an individual or entity who breaks or damages a properly functioning and marked tile or properly marked outlet to be responsible for returning the tile to operational condition within 30 days.
- Legislation revoking the 1982 Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) Rule 8 under Part 31 Rules for Inland Lakes and Streams, designating several drains as mainstream portions of eleven natural water courses. If the rule is not revoked, EGLE should be responsible for paying maintenance costs of the waterways according to county drain standards.
- Landowners taking a proactive role and/or being timely notified and involved with their drain or water resources commissioners in routine drain maintenance and emergency repairs.
- Drain or water resources commissioners offering incentives or credits for landowners who properly maintain drains located on their property.
- Landowners voluntarily contributing to county drain maintenance through appropriate soil conservation practices working with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and county drain or water resources commissioners.
- Michigan Farm Bureau providing farmers and members with a better understanding of the Michigan Drain Code by creating an educational series available to the public.

The Michigan Drain Code provides a legal framework for landowners to organize to solve mutual drainage problems for their benefit. We support the following provisions in the drain code:

- The authority for administering the drain code should be maintained within the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the office of the drain or water resources commissioner at the local level.
- If existing ditches are moved at the request of the county or county road commission, the additional cost should be the responsibility of the county or county road commission's project.

- Current exemptions for drain maintenance within state statute are appropriate and should be maintained.
- Increasing the limit on drainage maintenance assessments (such as \$10,000 per mile), and payback time, to allow drain work to be done more efficiently and at a lower cost.

Urbanization, agriculture and technology have increased the need for water resource management. Institutional structures such as the Michigan Drain Code, Subdivision Control Act, and Wetlands Protection Act, lack the necessary uniformity to provide water management standards that meet today's demands and tomorrow's needs. Revisions to the drain code that benefit agriculture are necessary to address the following concerns.

We support:

- The concept of watershed management plan development with collaboration between drain or water resources commissioners, township and municipal officials, landowners, and conservation districts, and/or NRCS, and Army Corps of Engineers that improves county drain function. Watershed management boards should include representation from affected county road commissions and landowners throughout the watershed selected by county commissioners. Watershed management plans developed by these boards should be subject to review by county commissioners with the authority to approve, amend, or reject plans.
- The limited use of eminent domain to take private property for projects in watershed or drainage district management plans.
- Elimination of the current exemption allowing non-elected drain or water resources commissioners.
- All land in a drainage district being assessed according to benefits derived, including public lands.
- Requiring that special assessment notices include the estimated percentage and dollar amounts apportioned to the recipient's land, the estimated annual total of project assessments, and the estimated project assessment duration.
- Keeping records of public drain work in a manner so the public can view them and understand the scope of work completed and the cost associated with the types and dates of maintenance performed on a drain.
- Drain or water resources commissioners providing notice of timing and duration of scheduled drain maintenance projects to affected landowners.
- Requiring performance bonds on work done on intercounty drains where project construction costs exceed \$100,000.
- Clarification that no drainage district should be extended or established for the purpose of removing sediment from man-made reservoirs on rivers or drains.
- The drain or water resources commissioner directing the deployment of drain sediments, both organic and inorganic, to adjacent land as required to minimize sediment return to the drain.
- The drain or water resources commissioner being responsible for removing blockage of a natural watercourse if it affects the function of a county drain.
- The use of current technology.

- For new construction, a description of the work to be performed being provided to owners of property abutting the drain at least 10 days prior to the start of construction to ensure appropriate planning to handle increased storm water due to development. Alternatives to storm water retention ponds should be considered.
- Exploring strategies for a major investment into our county drain system, such as the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, a dedicated statewide fund, or other new revenue sources that lower the burden on landowners.
- The creation of a taskforce comprised of farmers, stakeholders, and state lawmakers to explore and evaluate current statute that allows county drain commissioners the almost unlimited power of taxation for drainage projects.

We oppose:

- Changes to rules developed under the Inland Lakes and Streams Act that increase regulatory burdens on farmers, drain or water resources commissioners, or road commissioners.
- Requiring all ditches to be two-stage ditches and/or requiring additional engineering or planning on every new or established drain.
- Using state funding to purchase farmland to construct retention wetlands for private benefit.
- The implementation of structures affecting the flow in waterways that negatively impacts agriculture.

## **#71 Air Quality**

Changes to state and federal air quality standards and lawsuits driven by environmental groups impact farms by forcing the development of regulation and law in the absence of peer-reviewed science. We insist government air quality policies be based on peer-reviewed science and consider economic impact.

Federal and state standards for ozone, particulate matter (dust), nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides, carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulfide and others consider agricultural practices such as livestock production facilities, fuel combustion, diesel emissions, and dust from soil tillage, crop harvesting, grain mills, grain elevators and value-added processing plants as potential sources of air quality concerns.

We urge Michigan Farm Bureau to seek out university research on agricultural air quality standards and best management practices. We urge MFB to work with the Environmental Protection Agency and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy to recognize normal agricultural production practices and the associated air particulate generated.

We support:

- MFB educating members on air quality and how this issue impacts members and Michigan agriculture.
- The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development as lead agency for agricultural air quality concerns.
- Provisions in the Michigan Right to Farm Act and Michigan Agricultural Processing Act that protect farmers and processors following the Generally Accepted Agricultural and

Management Practices and Generally Accepted Processing Practices to address air quality concerns.

- A scientific, practice-based approach to meet air quality objectives.
- Re-evaluation of emissions standards for farm and ranch equipment and other non-highway use machinery.

We oppose:

- Air emission permits for agriculture that are more stringent than federal rules and regulations and are not science or practice-based.
- Applying air quality regulations to areas of Michigan that are not pollution sources. Pollutants measured in areas of Michigan not meeting air quality standards may originate in urban/industrial settings far removed from the monitored area. Air quality concerns should be addressed at their source.
- Enforcing air quality standards for ozone and particulate matter on farms and agricultural businesses voluntarily implementing effective environmental conservation practices.
- Further emission control requirements for agricultural equipment and practices.
- Banning the burning of biodegradable household waste.

## **#72 Climate Change**

Farmers were the original environmental pioneers and have led efforts to protect land, water, and air quality since the beginning of agrarian practices. We urge Michigan Farm Bureau, with the assistance of Michigan State University, to research and communicate to its membership the impact climate change legislation and policies and the resulting legislative and policy changes will have on our industry.

We support:

- Research and investments to assist agriculture and forestry in adapting to climate variability.

We oppose:

- Mandatory restrictions to achieve agricultural greenhouse gas emission reductions.
- Mandates, such as carbon taxes or fees and cap and trade policies.
- State or federal mandates that are not fully funded.
- Attempts to regulate emissions from animals.
- Emission control rules for farming practices, farm equipment, grain handling facilities, etc.
- The Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy involvement in the state's determination of energy needs; that is the role of the Michigan Public Service Commission.
- Non-scientific assumptions linking biofuel production and international land use.

## **#73 Conservation Districts**

Enhancing farmland conservation practices and natural resource stewardship benefits farmers and the public.

Michigan's conservation delivery system — including the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), and local districts — has room for improvement to more effectively implement conservation efforts on the ground.

We encourage conservation districts to fully leverage farm bill programs, federal watershed initiative programs, and other grant opportunities to enhance services and support for farmers alongside dedicated funds. We also encourage conservation districts to promote the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) and work in collaboration with farmers to provide technical advice and assistance, including access to financial assistance through the farm bill, to address resource concerns and achieve MAEAP verification.

We support:

- Funding for conservation districts to develop and improve soil, water and forestry programs to assist agricultural landowners.
- The Michigan Legislature redirecting the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy's non-regulatory responsibilities and accompanying funding to MDARD for distribution to conservation districts.
- Adequate funding for conservation districts to ensure an efficient conservation delivery system.
- Immediate efforts to find a dedicated line-item funding source for conservation districts, which will allow them to plan long-term projects and provide competitive employee compensation including benefits, knowing funding is secure. Dedicated funds from agricultural sources should focus on providing cost-share to producers for implementing conservation practices. Until dedicated funding is secured, the state should continue to authorize appropriate general funds to support conservation districts.
- Legislative or regulatory changes to enable conservation districts with budgets less than \$50,000 to participate in grant programs by submitting a financial review in lieu of a formal audit.
- Farm Bureau members actively engaging with local conservation districts and collaborating to improve the conservation delivery system.
- Farmer leaders in conservation districts using their annual meetings as an opportunity to promote conservation programming in agriculture.

We support Michigan Farm Bureau:

- Working with conservation districts to develop educational materials for members about agricultural stewardship and supporting efforts to make the public aware of the benefits of investing in good stewardship.
- Working with the Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) and local conservation districts to ensure landowners' conservation needs are met now and into the future. These groups working together should review the current structure and delivery system, as well as determine what resources and appropriate authorities are needed for conservation districts.

We support conservation districts:

- Focusing on conservation for agriculture.

- Providing technical support to farmers utilizing Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices to protect soil, water and other resources.
- Evaluating and adopting effective programs from other conservation districts and states — such as water quality assistance and ditch maintenance with programming tailored to each county based on district board direction and agricultural needs.
- Partnering at a watershed scale.
- Providing multi-disciplinary cross-training for all conservation district technicians.
- Being the primary agency to initiate watershed management programming and technical assistance.
- Only offering non-invasive species for conservation purposes.
- Being encouraged to purchase their plant materials from Michigan private industry whenever possible.

#### **#74 Ecosystem Services Markets**

Ecosystem services markets are rapidly evolving. These include carbon sequestration, phosphorus reduction, water quality and conservation, and others. Ecosystem services markets typically function with a financial exchange for outcomes (credits).

We support:

- Ecosystem services markets remaining voluntary.
- Peer-reviewed science and public research related to ecosystem services credits addressing Michigan's diverse agricultural industries.
- Standardization, transparency, and clarity related to ecosystem services enrollment contracts, pricing, and credit(s).
- Using the most up-to-date models to estimate emissions for program standards.
- Compensation and recognition for agricultural practices that keep carbon in the soil or in plant material.
- Farmers receiving credit or compensation for maintaining previous or existing practices.
- Keeping the length of time that farmers are compensated consistent with the length of practice implementation.
- Producers being able to utilize USDA cost-share programs alongside ecosystem services programs to better support the return on investment of conservation practice adoption.
- Michigan Farm Bureau staff, Michigan State University staff, and others in their mission to support farmers as they navigate ecosystem services contracting.

#### **#75 Environmental Contaminants**

Michigan farmers are increasingly concerned about environmental contaminants — including PFAS and other chemicals — that may affect farmland, surface and groundwater, and public confidence in food safety. While protecting natural resources is a priority, farmers must not be held responsible for contamination they did not cause. Policies must ensure both environmental protection and farmer protection from unjust liability, cleanup costs, and loss of land or product value.



We support:

- Scientific, site-specific testing protocols and landowner consent prior to testing or sampling for environmental contaminants, with costs being covered by the state or federal agency.
- The acting agency being held liable for complete indemnification of current and future losses when contamination is not the landowner's and/or farmer's fault. This includes losses in commodity value, land value or access, business income, and crops, soil, or livestock determined to be contaminated.
- Funding for research and collaboration among agencies, universities, and the private sector to evaluate the health risks, develop mitigation strategies for environmental contaminants, and to develop regulatory limits.
- Use of peer-reviewed science to determine the level and extent of risks posed by environmental contaminants.
- Economic impact assessments before implementing any new regulations to determine potential costs and liabilities to affected communities.
- Legislation providing liability protection for farmers who comply with product labels, regulations, and Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs) for fertilizers and pesticides.
- Financial assistance for farms identified by the state to be contaminated with any environmental contaminants.
- State-funded research to identify safe levels of environmental contaminants in biosolids applied to farmland.
- Michigan-specific standards to ensure biosolids remain a viable and safe nutrient source without risk of soil contamination.
- Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development oversight in coordination with the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy and local governments of the disposal of moderately contaminated sediments on farmland.
- Funding for public knowledge on possible contaminants in locations of highest concern.

## **#76 Environmental Protection and Regulation**

Michigan agriculture is committed to protecting the environment, ensuring public safety, and supporting responsible production. Overlapping or inconsistent regulations can create confusion, cost, and inefficiency. Michigan Farm Bureau calls on state and federal agencies, land-grant universities, and stakeholders to collaborate in developing clear, science-based, and user-friendly programs that prioritize problem-solving over punishment and recognize agriculture's positive contributions to environmental health.

We support:

- Timely enforcement of water quality standards based on credible, scientifically valid data.
- Legislation requiring credible data be used to guide policy on air quality and water quality and quantity.

- Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) intervention on behalf of farmers who are cooperating with state agencies to address pollution challenges.
- Using enforcement penalty funds to support pollution prevention in agriculture.
- Authorizing permits at the local level in accordance with state and federal rules to provide for more timely decisions.
- Water quality testing as an alternative to strict well setback standards when siting facilities.
- Updated fertilizer and manure nutrient utilization guidelines that reflect current science and technology, including Tri-State recommendations and Extension guidelines.
- Flexibility for unlimited on-farm fuel, chemical, and fertilizer storage with uniform, consistent, and adequate containment standards and regulations across all levels of government.
- Voluntary implementation of pollution prevention practices.
- MFB doing public outreach to counter misinformation portraying agriculture as harmful to the environment

We oppose:

- A statewide septic code requiring mandatory inspections of private septic systems.
- Local fertilizer or pesticide regulations stricter than MDARD or Environmental Protection Agency standards.
- Legislation that undermines the economic viability of agriculture.
- Presuming farmers responsible for pollution without credible evidence.
- Agency labeling of farms (e.g., CAFO, GMO, or similar identifiers) in communications or public records.
- State regulation of animal agriculture exceeding federal requirements.

## **#77 Farmland Protection**

We support the creation and effective implementation of temporary and permanent farmland protection tools to stabilize the land base, help maintain the agricultural industry's competitive position, and aggressively increase its economic value to producers and the state. A successful approach to farmland protection requires strong local leadership and effective state support.

We believe investment in farmland protection is an investment in the future of agriculture and the next generation of Michigan farmers and citizens.

### **A Strategic Approach**

Farmland protection initiatives should strengthen the agricultural industry and maintain producer flexibility and control.

We support:

- A voluntary, coordinated, and incentive-driven approach at the state and local levels that protects large blocks of farmland and increases the opportunity for economically viable agriculture.

- Reviewing the local revenue-sharing formula and investigating the merits of linking revenue sharing to effective farmland preservation and urban redevelopment.

### **Funding Farmland Protection**

We support Michigan Farm Bureau and county Farm Bureaus to continue working with partners to develop innovative farmland protection funding approaches at the state and local level, including tax relief based on parcel size and duration of ownership and the linking of urban development tax credits with greenfield preservation, in addition to established concepts including conversion fees, millage proposals, tax credits, and recapture penalties.

We support:

#### *PA 116*

- The Farmland and Open Space Preservation Program (commonly known as PA 116) as an effective voluntary method of protecting farmland while providing farmers needed tax relief.
- Refraining from future changes to existing contracts that risk eroding the program's integrity.
- Local units of government zoning land under PA 116 contracts as agriculture and identifying it as agriculture in their master plan.
- All PA 116 tax credit recapture revenue being deposited into the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) Agricultural Preservation Fund.
- Continued and aggressive use of PA 116 by creating additional incentives to maintain and increase participation.
- Additional funding and staffing of MDARD and the Michigan Department of Treasury to administer PA 116 and process refunds in a timely manner.
- MDARD and the Michigan Department of Treasury developing better communication to resolve issues with PA 116 tax returns.
- Requiring the state to pay penalties for late issuance of PA 116 refunds to landowners.
- Protection and exemption from special assessments excluding agricultural drainage.
- Land enrolled in the PA 116 program being ineligible for commercial solar project development.

#### *Agricultural Preservation Fund*

- Aggressive funding of the Agricultural Preservation Fund, including but not limited to, bond issues, conversion fees, property transfer fees, the lease of mineral rights from state-owned land, and general appropriations.
- Clarification of the "conflict of interest" policy for grants, including language such as "If an applicant has a conflict of interest, they shall abstain from participating if and when their application comes before the public body upon which they serve."
- The landowner option of spreading the development rights payments over a period of years.

#### *Agricultural Security Areas*

- Legislation establishing voluntary agricultural security areas to place temporary, long-term agricultural conservation easements on farmland.

#### *Urban Revitalization*

- State programs incentivizing the redevelopment of brownfield properties in Michigan to stop the loss of farmland.
- Improving cities, maximizing utilization of current infrastructure, and redeveloping brownfields to reduce pressure on farmland development.

#### *Transfer of Development Rights*

- Transfer of development rights to facilitate the voluntary preservation of farmland where needed while allowing land development in appropriate areas without using public funds.

#### *Permanent Conservation Easements*

- Permanent conservation easements for land preservation and those working in conjunction with PA 116 tax credits.

### **#78 Game Farms and Hunting Preserves**

Michigan game breeders and hunting preserves that breed, feed, and graze privately-owned animals are an integral part of the agricultural economy. The industry is concerned about increased government restrictions on the use of farms for hunting.

We support:

- Legislation providing opportunities and protection for this growing segment of agriculture, including privately-owned Cervidae and other similar species.
- The elimination of feral swine.
- The invasive species order that went into effect on October 8, 2011, naming certain species of swine as invasive.

Continued development and implementation of regulations on swine hunting facilities should include, but not be limited to:

- Disease testing and record keeping for incoming and outgoing animals.
- Strict fencing requirements to eliminate the risk of recreationally hunted swine escaping into the wild.
- Following standard accepted practices for swine meat production operations moving animals interstate and internationally.
- Hunting swine populations consisting only of sterile animals.
- Permanent individual animal identification on animals used for breeding and stocking swine in hunting facilities.
- Regulatory costs being paid for by a licensing fee.

### **#79 Invasive Species**

It is imperative Michigan has a comprehensive state policy addressing the introduction and management of invasive species. Programs should rely on cooperative, voluntary, partnership-based efforts between public agencies, private landowners, and concerned citizens.

We support:

- Reestablishing the Michigan Invasive Species Advisory Council, with producer representation.

- The Michigan Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) formation and support of Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMAs) at the local level to educate the public and prevent the spread of invasive species, with long term funding for this program instead of the current process of annual state budget approval.
- The role of the Agriculture and Natural Resource Commissions in establishing the prohibited species list.
- Federal, state and local agencies and research institutions collaborating more effectively with private landowners to control or eradicate invasive species.
- DNR notifying all levels of local government and gaining their support before releasing a non-native species.
- Efforts to establish the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, with input from appropriate industry associations, as the state agency with responsibility for terrestrial invasive species.
- The substantial efforts by the State of Michigan to work with other agencies to stop the invasion of the Asian Carp into Michigan waters.
- Development of an aggressive plan by state, federal, and tribal agencies to address the food web imbalance in the Great Lakes that has largely been caused by invasive zebra and quagga mussels, to promote the recovery of our native and naturalized fisheries.
- An increase in funds for inspection services and facilities. Funding should also be made available for public education and outreach efforts.
- Preventing and controlling noxious weeds and other unwanted seeds in mixtures offered to the public.
- Clear and scientific criteria to delineate invasive species. Due to genetic differences between plant genera, plant hybrids, and within species, varieties and cultivars, each should be treated as an individual when delineating invasive species.
- Studying any predator species before it is introduced to control an invasive species, to determine any other damage that might occur to the environment or farmers.
- Regulations including emergency measures to allow for the timely use of chemical controls.
- Recognizing the impact invasive species may have on endangered or threatened species.
- Adequate state and federal funding to develop peer-reviewed science sufficient to determine long-term effects of invasive species.
- Indemnification of crop, nursery stock and livestock losses from invasive species when it can be documented that quarantine requirements or treatment methods are the basis for the loss.
- Public lands and rights-of-way being managed to reduce and eliminate invasive species in coordination with neighboring privately owned or leased land. Any efforts on public lands affecting the uses and private rights held by public land permittees and users shall be subject to compensation and fair market value for the taking of these property rights caused by the introduction or proliferation of invasive species.

- Proper incentives for farmers and ranchers to effectively control noxious and aquatic weeds, along with support for an integrated pest management approach.
- Consideration being given to the extent to which species may be naturalized in an environment. Any penalties associated with introductions must be realistic.
- Michigan's ballast water discharge standards reflecting the federal standards which are enforced by the U.S. Coast Guard.
- Simplification of the review process of invasive species programs.

We oppose:

- Plants being prohibited or restricted through legislation and removed from trade unless eradication is concurrently instituted on public lands.
- Invasive species being defined to include agricultural products or other beneficial non-native species.
- Regulations that interfere with or erode property rights.
- Invasive species programs creating additional restrictions on agriculture producers and landowners.

## **#80 Land Acquisitions for Public Projects**

The condemnation of property by eminent domain should be permitted only in conformance with the amended State Constitution and when there is a clear need.

When the eminent domain provision is used to acquire easements, rights-of-way, leases, etc. through a farm, condemnation payments need to reflect the loss of value to the entire parcel. If property is taken for public ownership, such as for roads, utilities and bridges, the minimum payment should be two times its present value.

We support:

- The state constitution prohibiting the use of eminent domain for private ownership.
- Legislation to stop or limit developmental grants or other state, local or federal funding to entities using condemnation procedures for private ownership.
- Direct and verifiable communication in plain language informing landowners of projects seeking eminent domain.
- Agricultural land not ranking lower than other types of land when calculating impact statements.
- A complete agricultural impact statement before productive agricultural land is condemned. The statement should evaluate direct and indirect physical and economic impacts.
- The concept of no-net gain for state and federal ownership of land in Michigan. An environmental impact statement should be a prerequisite for eminent domain proceedings.
- Efforts to further strengthen property rights of Michigan property owners, including additional opportunities for judicial review in eminent domain takings.
- Landowners having at least five years from the time of the original settlement in which to negotiate claims for damages in eminent domain cases.

- Permanent easements being given to the owners of property left land-locked through land acquired by public entities and utility companies.
- Michigan Farm Bureau working with public utility companies to ensure they pay fair and reasonable rental rates to landowners for easements.

We oppose:

- The taking of property by the government for the purpose of development of privately-owned projects.
- The ability of non-elected public or private boards, agencies, or commissions to utilize the eminent domain process.
- The practice of acquiring new rights-of-way through farmland when nearby public corridors exist, such as railways, highways, power lines, and pipelines.
- Property being condemned in fee title if a lesser interest will suffice. In cases where any portion of condemned land is not needed at the completion of a public project, is abandoned, or is no longer used for the purpose stated, the landowner should have the right of first refusal at the price paid by the government entity.
- The use of eminent domain for CO<sub>2</sub> pipeline storage projects, solar or wind energy projects.

## **#81 Land Use**

Local land use planning in Michigan is essential for the long-term viability of communities. We must work together to plan the proper utilization of land for the long-term. Any plan to address land uses in Michigan must consider and protect the rights of private property owners.

We support:

- Requiring agriculture to be included in community master plans, county economic development plans and all aspects of local planning and zoning.
- Regional cooperation between municipalities, counties and townships.
- Requiring the county road commission and drain or water resources commission to collaborate with the county planning commission when developing the county's master plan and setting long-term plans.
- Intra-jurisdictional coordination between public entities in a community, including fire districts, emergency medical services, water and sewer authorities, school district, solid waste management.
- Encouraging the use of current infrastructure.
- Transportation development projects incorporating local land use planning and minimizing impacts to farmland. Transportation infrastructure placement is a primary influence on land development patterns.
- Enabling local communities to use the statutory authority of "concurrency" when negotiating new development approval. Concurrency establishes a pay-as you-go approach which ensures public facilities and services are available at the same time as the impacts of development.

- Michigan State University and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) providing technical assistance, education and research to local officials and property owners.
- Encouraging local communities to utilize existing zoning tools when appropriate to help protect farmland and farm operations by including cluster housing, buffer areas, fencing, planted tree setbacks, and site density zoning.
- Acknowledgment of the diversity and uniqueness of each community in our state. We believe that land use decisions are best made by local communities including planning and zoning decisions for energy siting and mega site development. We oppose preemption of local zoning for these purposes.
- The sale of state and federally owned land suitable for residential or industrial use to preserve farmland and increase local revenue. This development should only be considered on vacant sites with existing or nearby utilities fitting the local land use plan.
- Local governments considering alternatives to minimize adverse impacts to farms within one mile of where land is divided.
- Encouraging local governments to utilize brownfield redevelopment authorities.
- Amending the Land Division Act to:
  - Change the platting process to reduce cost, time and bureaucracy.
  - Create density in communities by revisiting the 10-year redivision requirement.
  - Allow local governments to utilize the entire Zoning Enabling Act to locally govern the Land Division Act.
  - Require site condominiums, manufactured housing developments and mobile home parks to comply with land division and/or the platting process in the Land Division Act.
- When agricultural land is within a governmental unit, a representative of production agriculture being appointed to the planning commissions and zoning boards.
- Members becoming actively involved in land use planning and zoning.
- Individuals appointed to councils, commissions and boards created by government, state legislators, and MDARD to represent agricultural interests being, or having been, directly involved in the agriculture industry.
- Legislation being enacted to prevent farmland from being annexed to a municipality without a vote of the people in the affected area. Upon approval of the people in the affected area, an annexation proposal should then be approved by a vote of the residents of the appropriate units of government.
- Requiring consent of landowners for annexation proposals. Changing the use of property must consider and protect the rights of private property owners.
- Property enrolled in farmland preservation programs having concurrent approval for annexation or public use by the contracted parties, including land owners.
- The development and uniformity of Geographic Information Systems and we encourage use by local units of government in land use planning.
- Michigan Farm Bureau assisting county Farm Bureaus with model zoning ordinances pertaining to agriculture.



- The development of entry-level or moderate-income housing to attract and maintain an agriculture workforce in rural and small communities and acknowledgement of the affordable housing shortage.
- The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) continuing and expanding the bidding, renting, and/or sale of state land for agricultural use.
- MFB appointing a committee to determine the impact that Public Act 90 of 2023, an amendment to the Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act (Act 381), will have on farmland in Michigan and report those findings to the MFB Board of Directors.

In areas where trails run through production agriculture and other private lands, the authority responsible for the trail should build and maintain fences to keep trail users on the trail and install gates so that property owners have access to both sides of their property if the trail divides the property. All trail users shall stop or yield at crossings, regardless of whether public or private.

In addition to required bonding, we believe that state and federal funding for industrial clean-up should be consistent in rural areas for any private and/or publicly funded megasite development that needs to be decommissioned.

We oppose:

- Rezoning agricultural zones if the use has not changed and the landowners have not requested the zoning change.
- Limitations being placed on state lands for recreational purposes unless there is peer-reviewed scientific justification or funding restrictions. If limitations are proposed, then justification should be in writing and public hearings conducted. When the DNR proposes public land use changes, it is imperative that those impacted are involved in the decision-making process.
- Restrictions on leases of state-owned agricultural land exceeding Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices.
- State and federal funds being used to develop farmland for non-agricultural purposes, to balance private property rights with the fact that farmland is not infinite.

## **#82 Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program**

We support the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program's (MAEAP) continuation and improvement. We urge the State of Michigan and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) to work together with the agriculture community to continue and improve the MAEAP program to foster voluntary sustainable agricultural practices. Public Acts 1 and 2 of 2011 codified this program to offer MAEAP-verified farms protection from civil fines, a presumption of meeting obligations for watershed pollutant loading determinations, and recognition that discharges from farm fields caused by rainfall are nonpoint source pollution. We urge all farm operators and landowners managing forests, wetlands and habitat to participate in the MAEAP program and complete as many recommendations as possible to help preserve the quality of our air, water and soil.

We applaud Michigan farmers for achieving 7,614 verifications as of October 1, 2025.

Michigan Farm Bureau members should lead the conversation on the definition of sustainable agriculture. We must put programs such as MAEAP and guidelines like the Generally Accepted Agriculture and Management Practices (GAAMPs) front and center, highlighting how farmers produce safe and sustainable food, fuel and fiber.

We support:

- MAEAP remaining a voluntary, confidential, statewide program.
- MAEAP technicians being housed locally, not employed directly by MDARD, with preference for technicians being housed at local Conservation Districts.
- Legislation and marketing efforts communicating to the public that MAEAP-verified farms are held to the highest standard of environmental stewardship.
- MDARD developing an outstanding and recognizable “Pure Michigan”-style labeling program — such as “Pure Michigan-Verified Farm” — to add value to products of verified farms and expand use of the MAEAP logo at point of sale.
- The MAEAP program making information available about Michigan’s Water Pollution Control Tax Exemption Form which exempts pollution control structures from property tax assessments.
- MFB working with MAEAP partners to develop educational and promotional materials for farm neighbors and the public regarding the benefits of MAEAP.
- Producers using MAEAP verification as the basis for projecting a positive farm image to the public.
- MFB continuing to pursue greater incentives for MAEAP participation, such as additional protections from frivolous complaints.
- The Michigan Groundwater and Freshwater Protection Act that funds groundwater and surface water programming through providing grants to local technicians. These technicians work with farmers to voluntarily adopt stewardship practices, which reduce nonpoint source pollution from agricultural sources. We believe funding these technicians needs to be a top priority.
- Participation in MAEAP, including information generated by assessment programs, remaining confidential. Aggregate data that would demonstrate effectiveness of the overall program could be shared.
- A review of the program, seeking new or alternative ways of meeting standards without compromising the basis of MAEAP verification.
- Farm Bureau members participating in regional water stewardship teams.
- Agriculture being the primary focus of MAEAP assistance in recognition of agriculture’s contribution to the dedicated fund.
- The changes made to strengthen MAEAP and its funding through PA 118 of 2015. Program funds come from Michigan’s General Fund and the Freshwater Protection Fund.
- The changes made to the Freshwater Protection Fund which require all fertilizer manufacturers and distributors to pay a fee into the fund.
- An annual review of the Freshwater Protection Fund finances, with the report being made available to contributors.

- Freshwater Protection Fund collection at the wholesale level, creating a voluntary contribution option, and exploring other fee collection mechanisms.
- Recognition of the Michigan law that offers MAEAP-verified farms statutory protection in watersheds with Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL). This protection should apply to the applicable systems farms are verified in that address the pollutants listed in that watershed's TMDL by acknowledging the farm meets the obligations for watershed pollutant loading determinations. Verification in all systems applicable to the farm should not be required to receive statutory protection.
- Farmers who are MAEAP-verified being considered in compliance with Environmental Protection Agency regulations.

### **#83 Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy Department Authority and Responsibility**

We support the current statute in Part 31 of the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA) that prohibits the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) from promulgating (creating or changing) rules under this part. If EGLE is granted rulemaking authority, we support requiring enhanced legislative oversight of the rulemaking process to minimize economic impacts to the regulated community.

Farmers who violate state environmental law are under the jurisdiction of EGLE. While most farms put forth a considerable effort and are environmentally safe, we recognize that environmental challenges can still arise.

State regulations and standards enforced by EGLE should not be more restrictive than federal standards.

In addition to providing pollution prevention programs for farms, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) should have an increased role in providing regulatory certainty to Michigan agriculture.

We support:

- Timely, effective and consistent enforcement of environmental laws and issuance of permits.
- Standards for dam management, maintenance, and purchases in cooperation with federal agencies.
- Applying peer-reviewed science and performing economic impact analysis to EGLE rules and standards prior to promulgation.
- Maximum use of Natural Resources Conservation Service standards within EGLE regulations.
- Appropriate timelines for producer implementation of regulations.
- Developing a third-party arbitration process for disputes between EGLE and a farmer.
- EGLE being responsible to pay legal fees incurred by the respondent from a wrongful enforcement action if the enforcement action is settled, a consent agreement is reached, or the action is decided in the respondent's favor.
- Reestablishing the EGLE Environmental Permit Review Commission.
- A farm's ability to move portable toilets within and between their farms.

- Requiring EGLE to notify local law enforcement and authorities before any actions are taken against farms.
- Individuals who lodge complaints with EGLE against farms being required to provide their name for public record. If an individual makes more than three unverified complaints within three years, that individual must pay for the complaint investigation.

### **Nutrients and Manure Management**

We support:

- The continued ability for farms of any size to manifest, move or sell animal nutrients from their farm to another farm or owner. We will vigorously oppose any attempts to limit or eliminate the ability of agriculture to utilize animal nutrients when they are being utilized according to nutrient requirements and at agronomic rates.
- The continuation of manure application to frozen or snow-covered ground in accordance with the Manure Management and Utilization Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs). We will vigorously oppose any attempt to eliminate the practice.
- The continued practice of broadcasting and injecting nutrients, including manure, in accordance with best practices identified in the Nutrient Utilization GAAMP.
- Allowing the application of animal nutrients to non-frozen, non-snow-covered ground any time during the year, regardless of type or size of farm operation.
- EGLE accepting third-party determinations that an existing manure storage structure is functioning properly for regulatory purposes.
- Regulatory recognition of the influence of extreme weather (e.g., rainfall, snow melt) on farming practices.

### **Processing Wastewater and Groundwater Regulation**

We support:

- MFB proactively working with EGLE to seek solutions that support changes to the regulatory requirement that allow ag processors to land apply wastewater without permitting under a specifically defined set of circumstances.
- MDARD working with EGLE to implement a threshold below which no Groundwater Discharge permit or testing is required for agricultural processing discharge.
- MDARD assisting EGLE to determine appropriate treatment of all types of agricultural processing wastewater that generate high-strength wastewater that has nutrients useful for land application.
- MFB continuing to work with EGLE on development of a general permit specific to slaughterhouses that permits land application of process wastewater without advance treatment.
- Allowing septic haulers licensed under Part 117 of NREPA to also haul agricultural and food processing wastewater and not requiring them to be licensed as industrial haulers under NREPA Part 121.

### **National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)**

We support:

- Legislative or administrative changes requiring a formal committee of appropriate stakeholders to be involved in all permit developments and rewrites so that input is balanced. All NPDES writing or rewrite committees should be chaired by an unbiased third-party individual.
  - An evaluation of Michigan's NPDES permitting process, with changes that provide long-term certainty for the agriculture industry and prevent shifts in policy with each new state administration. We support a study committee by MFB to establish this evaluation and make recommendations.
  - Amending state laws to more clearly define EGLE's regulatory authority under NPDES permits and where they have no authority, especially animal health which falls under the authority of the Animal Industry Act and wildlife, which falls under the authority of the state veterinarian or the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.
  - Amending or repealing Part 17 of NREPA to prevent predatory litigation by special interests to penalize farmers operating under legitimate permits issued by EGLE.
  - Timely issuance of NPDES permits, in accordance with state and federal rules.
  - Reduced permit paperwork requirements and an increased focus on performance with minimized costs to permitted farms.
  - Encouraging permitted farms to become verified in the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program by providing incentives like limiting annual reporting requirements.
  - Application of permit standards in force at the time of permit application.
  - An appropriate phase-in period for any change in permit requirements.
  - Implementation of permit requirements with scientifically verifiable standards as provided in administrative rules.
  - EGLE adopting Environmental Protection Agency aquaculture effluent guidelines and promoting feed-based Best Management Practices discharge standards.
  - Developing a general permit for aquaculture for up to 200,000 pounds of production.
- We oppose:
- EGLE implementing rules and policies that exceed their federal mandate and are not supported by scientific evidence.
  - Classification of manure, sand, accidental commodity spillage, and ag processing by-products as hazardous waste.
  - Taxation or fees assessed on the nutrient content of manure.
  - Public access to agricultural information on the MiEnviro Portal online permitting database.
  - Arbitrary moratoriums affecting the growth of animal agriculture, including limits on animal expansion and storage structure size.
  - Reducing the number of livestock that triggers the requirement for an NPDES permit.
  - Well setback distances from agriculture practices greater than 75 feet, as listed in the Grade A Dairy Law.
  - The harassment of farmers adhering to the state's pollution prevention programs for agriculture.

## **#84 Nonpoint Source Pollution and Watershed Management**

Farmers — like other rural and urban residents — are concerned about nonpoint source pollution affecting Michigan's surface and groundwater. Protecting surface and groundwater is a priority, and we recognize agriculture shares this responsibility with many others.

Nonpoint source pollution prevention programs implemented by state and federal agencies should reflect a coordinated, integrated and consistent management approach. The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) should coordinate all agricultural nonpoint source pollution programs.

Michigan's conservation districts are an important component of nonpoint source pollution programs. These voluntary programs are best administered by locally elected conservation district boards who understand their community's needs and problems.

Agriculture should lead watershed management, or the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will make efforts to place permits on the industry. We encourage full representation of agricultural interests in watershed initiative projects funded through the Clean Water Act. Any management practices prescribed by the project should be voluntary rather than mandatory. Municipalities share the same responsibilities to our environment and should be held to the same standards and penalties as private individuals.

We support:

### **Fertilizer and Nutrient Management**

- Fertilizer retailers becoming certified in the 4R (Right fertilizer source, Right rate, Right time, Right place) Nutrient Stewardship Program and/or similar fertilizer management efforts.
- Michigan Farm Bureau coordinating with neighboring states and Canada where a watershed is shared to reduce nutrient loading issues.
- University, state and federal programs promptly updating guidelines when nutrient research is completed, so farmers have time to implement them.
- Additional research on dissolved phosphorus.
- Continued education on appropriate phosphorus and other nutrient use.
- Biosolids applications being consistent with the guidelines in the Michigan Water Environment Association's Land Application of Biosolids in Michigan Management Recommendations.
- The current regulated use of biosolids as a source of nutrients on farmland as allowed in the Right to Farm Act.

### **Conservation and Pollution Prevention Programs**

- The farm bill providing opportunities for farmers to address conservation programs on farms.
- The continued refining of conservation program delivery to ensure the process is transparent, consistent and simple to participating farmers. We appreciate newly available technical and financial assistance to address on-farm above-ground fuel tanks and liquid fertilizer storage.
- Developing nutrient management plans for all farms.
- Continuing the cost-share provided to producers for conservation practices.
- A state-funded cover crop and filter strip cost-share program.

- The Clean Sweep Program with MDARD accepting responsibility for future liability for chemicals collected.
- Legislation clarifying forest management practices are not point sources of pollution.
- Developing baseline environmental standards for agriculture in line with current production standards and methods.
- Conservation program eligibility being determined by total environmental benefit rather than location within the watershed.
- Coordinated efforts to expedite soil stabilization permits.
- MFB being involved in fiscally responsible strategies to fund voluntary conservation practices.
- The existing Soil and Sedimentation Control Act exemption for plowing, tilling and other agricultural and land improvement activities.
- Eliminating the acreage cap for Michigan's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

#### **Water Quality and Watershed Management**

- Use of the Saginaw Bay Optimization Model.
- Modifying the Lake Erie Domestic Action Plan to better support farmers.
- Prioritizing funding for conservation practices to address impaired waters.
- Streamlining the funding process to improve water quality at the farm level.
- The use of peer-reviewed science to determine water quality.
- MFB taking a leadership role in developing protocols for water quality monitoring.
- An unbiased study to determine contributors negatively impacting water quality before additional regulations are imposed upon agriculture.
- Farm Bureau members participating in voluntary water quality monitoring programs, in which results are kept confidential.
- Farmer representation on local boards and commissions making decisions on environmental policies such as land use and watershed planning.
- Encouraging state and local governments to utilize buffer strips around government owned buildings and parking areas.

We oppose:

- Water quality monitoring of ditches and streams selectively performed to incriminate individuals and not performed by certified individuals in accordance with EGLE protocols.
- Additional environmental permits for agricultural non-point source pollution.
- Restricting phosphorus for agricultural use if producers follow GAAMPs or soil testing by a certified lab.
- Giving legal standing or rights to natural resources and bodies of water.

#### **#85 Oil, Gas, and Mineral Rights**

We urge members to obtain information on oil, gas, and mineral leasing from Michigan State University Extension or Michigan Farm Bureau before signing a lease. A lease checklist is available on the MFB website.

We believe *wellhead* and *point of severance* means the point at which the well is drilled or minerals are extracted. When oil, gas, and minerals are severed from the ground, everything occurring after severance is the responsibility of the lessee.

We believe government agencies, Farm Credit Services, local and state recording offices, and other state and federal chartered financial institutions should not be allowed to sever oil, gas, and mineral rights from surface rights when they resell land acquired through any land transfer. Oil, gas, and mineral rights that have been severed at foreclosure should be returned or sold to the surface property owner at fair market value.

Oil, gas, and mineral rights without activity revert to the owner of the property unless they are re-registered every 20 years by the owner of the specific rights at the register of deeds office. We believe this law should be changed to require re-registration every 10 years, and the property owner should be notified and be given the opportunity to object at the time of re-registration.

We support:

- The extraction of oil, gas, and other minerals from both state-owned and private property in Michigan.
- A streamlined and incentivized process for permitting fertilizer manufacturing.
- The Weights and Measures Division of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) studying the feasibility of regulating oil, gas, and mineral industries for the accuracy of reported volumes of oil, gas, and minerals extracted from private property. MDARD should be involved in the certification of all metering and measuring.
- Legislation requiring oil, gas, and mineral rights lessees to notify the landowner and royalty owner by certified mail of their intent to explore for, or develop, oil, gas, minerals or injection wells prior to beginning any operations on leased land and that proof of notification being submitted prior to granting any permit.
- Legislation requiring an escrow account or bond be filed before commencing operations and providing the opportunity for landowners to appeal within 10 days of proposed release to prevent surface waste. The escrow account or bond should be reviewed annually and adjusted accordingly, with a post-closure monitoring period of 40 years.
- The continued use of hydraulic fracturing with the appropriate scientifically verified environmental safeguards.
- An agricultural environmental and economic impact statement being required before the supervisor of wells issues a permit.
- Affected adjacent landowners being compensated for losses when an injection well damages the value of their oil, gas, and mineral rights.
- Sharing gas, oil, and mineral royalties from state-owned land and setting reasonable severance taxes that are shared with local units of government in the region where the commodity is removed.
- Rights of townships granted to them under the Township Ordinance Act.
- Requiring a new permit for any change in a well's use.
- Agricultural representation on the state oil and gas advisory committee.



- MFB exploring alternative distribution of the Natural Resources Trust Fund. Consideration should be given to maintaining and improving parks, roads, and wildlife habitat on existing state lands.

We oppose:

- Any deductions by the oil, gas, and mineral industries from a private lessor's share of revenue unless it is expressly provided for in the signed lease. If deductions take place, the lease must contain the definition of the deduction, specific items eligible for deductions, a clear process enabling the lessor to monitor deductions, and a maximum percentage of costs to be deducted.
- Attempts to ban exploration for oil, gas, and mineral deposits.
- The state burdening private royalty owners with the deduction of post-production costs.

## **#86 Private Property Rights**

We believe in the American free market system, where property is privately owned, managed, and operated for profit and personal fulfillment. Any erosion of this right undermines the other individual rights guaranteed by the Constitution.

We believe any action by the government diminishing an owner's right to use their property, such as the Endangered Species Act or the Natural Rivers Act, constitutes a taking of that owner's property. Government should provide for the removal of endangered species or due process and compensation to the exact degree an owner's right to use his or her property has been diminished by government action.

We believe the Natural Rivers Act should be reviewed to ensure private property owners' rights remain protected. We believe the following will not only strengthen private property rights, but create more widespread support and compliance with the Act:

- The initial request for and final approval of a Natural Rivers Act designation must originate from the local units of government in which the river is located.
- Agriculture and other industries must be fairly represented on local Natural Rivers Review Boards.
- An economic impact study should be conducted to determine the effect of a Natural Rivers Act designation on local businesses and property owners.
- If the local unit of government approves a Natural Rivers Act designation, the designation must be subject to review at least every five years.

We support:

- Legislation requiring state and local agencies to evaluate the impact of proposed rules and regulations on private property rights and compensate the landowner for any private property rights taken.
- The original description of a parcel standing and the moving of a boundary through re-measurement not being automatically considered conclusive.
- The development of a process to provide notification to all adjacent landowners when a new land survey is conducted by a registered surveyor.
- A property line survey for all arm's length property sales.
- The Doctrine of Adverse Possession continuing in property line disputes.

- Review of regulations and enforcement policies encroaching on the rights of property owners, including buildings, planted trees and travel ways placed too close to property lines. The presence of other trespassing does not constitute permission to enter private land.
- Legislation denying claims of prescriptive easement based on intentional recreational trespass.
- Developing and implementing a “purple paint law” to authorize posting of private property by using a specific paint color.
- A public awareness campaign utilizing all types of media to encourage better understanding between farmers and nonfarm neighbors as population density around farms increases.
- Increased and graduated fines for trespassing.

We oppose:

- Legislation allowing public access to or through private property without permission of the property owner or owner’s authorized agent.
- Non-private easements (except maintenance easements) being sold, traded or otherwise transferred without consent of the current property owner. This should include past and future transactions. Michigan law should protect the rights of the property owner.

## **#87 Resource Recovery**

Vast quantities of recoverable materials are generated daily. We support Michigan Farm Bureau’s efforts to advocate for practical waste reduction and recovery. We support immediate and long-term solutions including:

- Using farm plastic recycling programs such as Clean Sweep.
- Implementing recycling programs for agricultural tires and other reusable agricultural material.
- Establishing grant or loan programs to facilitate purchasing equipment capable of processing agricultural and heavy-duty tires and tracks.
- Adopt-a-local-roadside programs.
- MFB working with universities, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy to seek solutions for composting organic materials including, animal, plant, forest and silvicultural materials, and differentiating between agricultural and commercial composters to protect the welfare of residents as well as the integrity of agriculture.
- Incentives to use biodegradable products, especially those made from renewable agricultural products.
- Amendments to the bottle law requiring a 10-cent deposit for similar containers.
- A state initiative that takes a portion of the state’s unreturned bottle deposit funds for the creation and maintenance of local recycling centers.
- Land application of properly researched and approved materials at agronomic rates without additional state or local regulation.
- Alternative uses for excess food ranging from food banks to anaerobic digesters.

- The proper recycling of heavy metal and rare earth batteries.
- Research into and the reuse or recycling of renewable energy components when removed from service.

We encourage agricultural representation on all established Material Management Advisory Committees required by the Material Management Act Part 115.

We oppose hauling waste into Michigan from other states and countries for disposal, including nuclear and hazardous waste.

## **#88 USDA Conservation Programs**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is an active partner in implementing conservation practices on farms and woodlands. We encourage NRCS to improve their relevance and ability to aid farmers with conservation issues.

To maximize agriculture's participation in farm bill conservation programs, we recommend:

### **Farm Bill Programs**

- NRCS and Michigan Farm Bureau proactively informing producers about federal farm bill opportunities (e.g., Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) financial assistance) and cooperative efforts with NRCS, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), and conservation districts, including the amount of federal farm bill conservation money provided to producers and landowners of Michigan from this cooperation.
- Simplifying farm bill programming for farmers, as NRCS programming is paper-driven and difficult to manage.
- Expediting the use of NRCS funding for conservation district programs.
- Encouraging the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to hold sign-ups in the first quarter of each year to allow additional time for educational outreach.
- All NRCS offices accepting applications for annual programs after closing dates, making them eligible for upcoming sign-up cycles.
- Continuing voluntary programs like the Wetlands Reserve Easements and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program to provide compensation for conservation easements.
- The Michigan NRCS Technical Committee evaluating the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program verification as eligibility for the Conservation Stewardship Program.

### **Practice Standards**

- Allowing more flexible standards for USDA conservation practices.
- Filter strip plant variety recommendations including pollinator supportive plants.
- The Farm Service Agency (FSA) enrolling more acres in the Conservation Reserve Program around ditches and streams to decrease the amount of nutrient runoff from fields.
- Directing NRCS and FSA to prioritize using filter strips as a nutrient management tool with flexible standards such as allowing mowing of filter strips and removal of cut vegetation.

- Preliminary technical wetland and highly erodible land determinations being made within 30 days. After 30 days, producers may hire an outside vendor to conduct the determination(s), before proceeding with the proposed land improvement project(s).
- Defining wetlands as a naturally occurring and functioning area of predominately hydric soils that presently support hydrophytic vegetation because of existing wetland hydrology.
- Requiring USDA to determine minimum acreage criteria for automatic minimal effect designation.
- Michigan USDA (NRCS and FSA) staff completing wetland and highly erodible land determinations and appeals process within 6 months.
- Promoting the economic and environmental benefits of using grid/zone soil sampling and/or variable rate fertilizer technology through the Conservation Stewardship Program.
- Michigan, Ohio and Indiana NRCS including cover crop financial assistance on all acres enrolling in RCPP, including farm tract acres with preexisting cover crop history.
- The undertaking of a study, working with the USDA and the Fish and Wildlife Division, to determine if historical property default easements are necessary and effective or if these areas are protected by other state or federal laws.

#### **USDA Offices and Staffing**

- Staffing county offices with professional personnel who have experience in administrative duties, agricultural production, and communication skills, with preference given to local candidates.
- Immediate evaluation of current USDA staffing, compensation, and training at the county, regional, and state levels, including county committees, to attain an adequate, streamlined, and talented staff that meets the programmatic needs of USDA applicants and customers.
- USDA ensuring all staff are properly trained and certified to perform all facets of their job within one year of hire.
- Michigan NRCS continuing the practice of co-locating conservation districts within their offices.
- Moving or relocating NRCS staff to areas of greater need or where their skills are better matched, while ensuring job applicants within the state have a fair and equal opportunity to apply for positions for which they qualify.
- USDA filling vacant positions in a timely manner.
- Modifying the system for county office classifications to attract staff with greater talent and experience.
- Michigan NRCS creating regional education specialists to present NRCS programs at industry meetings of farmers and woodland owners across the state.
- Creating county farmer oversight committees for local NRCS offices.
- Increasing farmer representation on the State Technical Committee.

## **#89 Water Use and Research**

The Great Lakes Basin holds the world's largest reserve of fresh water. Responsible management is essential to sustain future generations and Michigan agriculture. Food and fiber production is a reasonable and beneficial use of water that supports both the economy and the environment.

We support:

- Municipalities or other governments with jurisdiction over artificial impoundments, such as ponds and lakes, being allowed to reduce water levels to remove accumulated sediments.
- An increased role in any current or future state water use committees due to the diversity of Michigan agriculture.
- Developing water user committees to resolve water access challenges in watersheds where use may be limited.
- Water use policies and regulations based on peer-reviewed scientific research.
- Public hearings taking place in affected watersheds before considering any reclassification of stream temperature or size.
- Reclassification notices being provided a minimum of 180 days before hearings.
- Crediting landowners for recharge-enhancing practices to account for "water in" (rainfall) provisions.
- Legislation strengthening Michigan's authority to conserve and protect the waters of the Great Lakes Basin.
- Including agricultural water uses in the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP), ensuring verified producers are protected from unverified adverse resource impact claims.
- The inclusion of peer-reviewed science and environmentally protective and economically feasible water conservation measures in Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices.
- Improving the use of Michigan's Wellogic database of well drilling logs.
- Seasonal exemptions in Michigan's Well Code for shallow aquifer water withdrawals.

### **Aquifer Conflicts**

We support the Aquifer Conflict and Dispute Resolution with the following changes:

- Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development-certified well drillers to verify complaints, who cannot profit from repairs or replacements.
- High-capacity well owners not being presumed at fault until proven otherwise.
- Establishing a statute of limitations and release from future claims.

### **Research and Education**

We support:

- Advancing research on water resources and agriculture's role in the water cycle.
- Fostering public education partnerships highlighting agriculture's water stewardship.
- The voluntary use of monitoring wells and water use record keeping on farms to increase efficiency, protect producer rights to water access and validate agricultural water use as a high priority.
- Voluntary farmer collectives for data sharing and regional modeling.

- Expanding incentive-based conservation programs and water recycling/reuse initiatives.
- Encouraging accurate well data reporting and training for well drillers, and funding for geological mapping.
- The findings of the Southwest Michigan Water Resource Council, which was charged with studying water resources in the region, and the Cass County Water Use Study, which collected data and developed models to predict water use impacts from watersheds in the region.

We oppose:

- Water allocation systems preempting surface water riparian doctrine or groundwater rights.
- Applying public trust doctrine to groundwater.
- Diversion of natural Great Lakes Basin water.
- Michigan's definition of agriculture's consumptive use.
- Legislative or regulatory efforts resulting from federal, regional, state and/or local initiatives that adversely impact agriculture.
- The State of Michigan removing dams located on drains and waterways that recharge aquifers of the state.
- Not requiring owners of existing dams to maintain them.
- Attempts to limit efficient agricultural water use.
- Water use prioritization.
- Using collected agricultural water use data for regulatory purposes or to advance agendas in opposition to efficient agricultural water use.
- Well code changes placing economic or regulatory burdens on landowners in the absence of peer-reviewed science.
- The commodification of water.
- The Environmental Protection Agency designating interstate aquifers as "sole source aquifers."

## **#90 Water Withdrawal Regulation**

Michigan's farms depend on reliable access to water within the Great Lakes Basin – the world's largest source of fresh water. Protecting this shared resource must be balanced with policies that maintain the competitiveness and viability of Michigan agriculture.

Burdensome regulation is not necessary to safeguard the Basin and could undermine agricultural productivity and economic growth. Any legislation or permitting system must protect existing rights and ensure timely, science-based, and farmer-focused processes.

Any new laws must include the following protections:

- No fees shall ever be charged for agricultural water use.
- Existing documented surface and groundwater uses and sites that predate Michigan's water withdrawal law must be grandfathered in as registered uses and sites.

- Permits for withdrawals supplying a common agricultural distribution system of less than two million gallons per day in any 90-day consecutive period must be handled by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD).

We support:

- The State of Michigan making timely approvals of agricultural water withdrawals.
- MDARD serving as the primary department for agricultural water use reporting and conflict resolution.

### **Water Withdrawal Assessment Tool**

Michigan has implemented an online science-based water withdrawal assessment tool (WWAT). As there are significant differences between Michigan regions regarding water availability and use, we recognize a “one size fits all” solution may not be the best answer. The process has experienced complications and technical difficulties. According to the Michigan Geological Survey, the current data used in the WWAT is insufficient to adequately map and assess Michigan’s groundwater resources to consider applications for groundwater withdrawal. Although the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) reported the WWAT provides automatic authorization for withdrawals in nearly 70 percent of all applications statewide, Michigan Farm Bureau believes continued improvement of the WWAT is needed, including but not limited to the following:

- Continued MFB leadership in implementing and improving the WWAT, including assembling a working group of people with professional expertise in hydrology and geology to review and make recommendations on improving the WWAT, site-specific review, model development, and benefits of creating a mediation process for disputes of water withdrawal decisions.
- Enhanced data collection and model updates using peer-reviewed scientific research so streamflow depletion predictions agree with actual water withdrawal depletions.
- Continued refinement of the WWAT accounting for regional variability and privately collected data.
- Legislation or legal action requiring EGLE to update the WWAT and the site-specific review process based upon the latest research data and enhanced models.
- Third-party verification of WWAT accuracy.
- Exemptions from the WWAT where the potential for adverse resource impact is negligible based on field data.
- Private, peer-reviewed research to be accepted by EGLE and MDARD.
- Developing and using a standardized template for high-capacity agricultural water withdrawal site-specific reviews.
- Completing the Southwest Michigan Water Use Study to improve the WWAT modeling.
- Implementing and requiring the use of PA 209 of 2018 which modernized the site-specific review process with updated modeling and clearer timeframes for EGLE review.

We oppose:

- Filing fees for agricultural water use reporting.
- Fraudulent use of the WWAT to register water withdrawals.

## **#91 Wetlands Protection Act**

We support changes made to the Wetlands Protection Act under PA 98 of 2013 to retain federally delegated authority of the Clean Water Act Section 404 Program. The law provided many reforms benefiting agriculture, including:

- Defining and exempting agricultural drainage maintenance.
- Excluding drainage structures from wetland regulation.
- Exempting established and ongoing farming operations.
- Wetlands not being regulated if they are less than five acres and their only connection to an inland lake or stream is an agricultural drain.
- Exempting cutting woody vegetation and in-place stump grinding within a wetland.
- Directing the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) to create a blueberry general permit with permitting flexibility, including mitigation and a blueberry assistance program.
- Exempting construction of livestock crossings and fencing associated with grazing.
- Not regulating temporarily obstructed drains as wetlands.
- Declaring EGLE's delegated authority to be limited to application of the Clean Water Act, associated rules, or court decisions and making any further regulation the responsibility of the Michigan Legislature.
- Repealing Michigan's wetland law within 160 days if the Environmental Protection Agency withdraws Michigan's federally delegated authority over Section 404 of the Clean Water Act.
- Regulating a wetland if it meets the criteria in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' 1987 Delineation Manual and Regional Supplements.

EGLE's interpretation and enforcement of the Wetlands Protection Act saves valuable wetlands, but also places a disproportionate burden on some landowners. We recommend the following:

- Compatible agricultural uses should be allowed in wetlands. Wetland vegetation should be defined as obligate hydrophytes.
- County drain or water resources commissions should be the sole authority on public drains, culverts and maintenance.
- Statewide standards for wetland determinations and historical function must be established to ensure uniform application at all locations.
- Permits must be issued promptly.
- Where wetland regulations cause a substantial or total loss of the value of the property, the State must fully compensate the property owner. Control and access to the property must remain with the property owner.
- Cost-sharing or other incentives should be provided for wetlands restoration programs on farms.
- A fund should be established to compensate neighboring farms for their economic loss due to unforeseen problems created by wetland restoration.



- EGLE and the Natural Resources Conservation Service should completely explain in advance and in writing landowner obligations during and after restoration or maintenance of a wetland.
- Creative solutions should reflect economic and environmental realities to resolve wetlands disputes.
- Wetland violations should be heard within the court jurisdiction where the violation has been alleged.
- Government agencies should cooperate and provide a single contact for regulatory compliance to handle all issues of wetland determination, enforcement, and penalties.
- EGLE should recognize wetlands are a valuable agricultural resource for producing food and fiber, including certain crops which may only be grown on sites developed from wetlands.

We oppose:

- The EGLE statewide wetland inventory being used for regulatory purposes. Michigan Farm Bureau is concerned the inventory includes wetlands that do not meet current wetland delineation standards.
- Other states converting Michigan farmland to offset wetland mitigation.
- Regulating man-made wetlands or voluntarily established wetlands implemented as conservation practices through state or federal programs.
- Wetland determinations, violations, or disciplinary action against farmers or landowners because of activities like cleaning up field edges to original farmed boundaries or removing barriers such as brush and trees protruding into fields.
- Regulating prior converted cropland.
- Using productive agricultural land to mitigate wetlands, especially by condemnation.

## **#92 Wildlife Management**

Wildlife management of all species should be based on peer-reviewed science that ensures a healthy balance in population, alleviates property damage, and reduces the risk of disease transmission.

We support:

- The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) being the lead agency to advocate Michigan's authority to manage federally protected species.
- Michigan Farm Bureau working with DNR, and other stakeholders, to ensure effective management and ecological balance that minimizes conflict.
- Hunting and trapping as the primary tool to manage population for all species. Hunting regulations should provide the maximum opportunities to harvest game species. This includes, but is not limited to, reduced cost or no cost licenses as well as creating, revising, or extending hunting seasons.
- Programs, regulations, and methods that lead to increased harvest and help control wildlife species as well as reduction of agricultural damage.
- Decisions on baiting and feeding should be based on science with consideration given to impacts on harvest as well as ongoing disease threats. Therefore, we support

baiting to increase harvest and oppose feeding outside of hunting season to limit disease transmission.

- Agency culling.
- Financial incentives for managing wildlife species, which includes but is not limited to, sale of game meat.
- Farmers having the ability to effectively manage wildlife species that are causing damage or putting their agricultural operation at risk. Lethal authority should be given in a timely manner, provide greatest flexibility and at low or no cost.
- Increased access to processing as well as streamlined ability to donate game meat with options for free replacement license.
- Implementation of local tools and ideas in the management of wildlife issues.
- The consideration of a task force or advisory committee made up of stakeholders and landowners focused on wildlife management.

We oppose programs or regulations that have a negative impact on agriculture, which includes, but is not limited to, antler point restrictions.

## **TAXATION**

### **#93 Fees**

We are very concerned with the expansion of new and increased fees impacting agriculture because:

- Fees constitute taxation without representation.
- Fees may not be in relation to service provided and generate revenue exceeding the cost of service.
- Fees might be interpreted as a replacement for General Fund dollars.
- Fees are a cost on a select and limited sector of the economy.

We oppose any revenue-generating fees imposed by the State of Michigan that are based on a history of past violations rather than new or current violations.

Compliance monitoring and enforcement that benefit the general public should be funded through the General Fund. Likewise, general administration and operational costs should be supported by the General Fund, not by fees or fines.

Departments that rely on fee- or fine-based revenue should remain subject to annual legislative review and oversight.

An economic impact statement should be completed on the permitted entities before the fee is implemented.

### **#94 Taxation**

#### **Property Tax and Assessments**

Agricultural property in Michigan is taxed at 50 percent above the national average, which is a significant cost.

We support:

- Lowering or eliminating agricultural property taxes.

- Development of legislation allowing landowners to voluntarily enroll in a program that reduces assessments on farm buildings by up to 100 percent of their current taxable value and assesses farmland, including managed woodlots/forestland, with a goal of reaching a property tax rate of \$5-7 per acre. Voluntary enrollment in the program, open to every farmer, would be in exchange for temporary or long-term preservation of farmland for a contract period of approximately 20 years or more with a recapture penalty for early withdrawal or when property changes out of agricultural use.
- Legislation requiring assessments on farm structures to align with the current use of the structure.
- Parcels containing agricultural worker housing, licensed by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development that is solely used as ag workforce housing, be eligible for the agricultural 18 mill exemption.
- PA 162 of 2013 which states sales of agricultural land without a qualified agricultural affidavit on file will not be used in the sales studies for agricultural land.
- Development of taxation methods to more fairly distribute municipal service costs.
- Legislation to put an end to the "dark store" assessing theory, ensuring equitable, fair determinations on property tax appeal cases before the Michigan Tax Tribunal.
- Agricultural single purpose structures, such as greenhouses, grain bins and silos, be assessed using a realistic accelerated depreciation schedule considering the current practical use of the structure.
- A clarification that all temporary agricultural structures, which are moveable and not permanently attached or anchored to the ground, be exempt from sales and use taxes as referenced in Revenue Administrative Bulletin 2002-15 of June 2002.
- The Qualified Forest Property program which exempts the pop-up tax and provides a 16-mill exemption, as long as the new owner agrees to keep up the qualified forest land agreement.
- A significantly reduced tax designation or tax-exempt status for land which is designated for mandatory restricted use such as wetlands, filter strips, sand dunes, natural or scenic rivers, or other restrictions on private property.
- The retention of the right of local governing units to assess property for taxation purposes.
- The qualified agricultural exemption shall remain in effect if the Governor or USDA issues a disaster declaration for the county.
- The continued use of tax abatements and Renaissance Zones to encourage the development and expansion of agricultural facilities to enhance value-added opportunities for agriculture.
- Legislation that would allow a farm to include all parcels of the farming operation together when determining the ag classification. If the total farm would qualify for PA 116, then all parcels should maintain their ag classification. Non-contiguous parcels are being reclassified to residential unless 51 percent of the parcel is farmed. Property in Northwest Michigan, and possibly in other parts of the state, cannot be farmed at 51 percent because of the topography.

- Exempting PA 116 land from all special assessments excluding agricultural drainage.
- Local governments classifying equine therapy facilities, therapeutic riding facilities, equine rehabilitation facilities, and similar businesses utilizing horses as the major component of their business as agriculture for property tax purposes.
- The continuation of Proposal A in its current form, as it pertains to agriculture.
- The change to the summer tax collection which provided for a lifetime deferment of summer tax for qualified agricultural land if the owner files a federal Schedule "F" Income Tax Form or comparable farm income tax filing.
- The time frame for qualified agriculture property be a period of three years between the start of delinquent status to the expiration of redemption rights. We believe the private individual should have the first option to redeem delinquent property.
- Assessors following established procedures to change the classification from agricultural to industrial and use the appropriate tax tables when considering property that changed from agriculture to commercial solar electric production.
- The concept of a special assessment deferral program for landowners and encourage members to be involved in the levying of assessments and infrastructure planning in their community.
- Offering financial incentives to retiring property owners who work to transition farmland to a new generation of farmers.

We oppose:

- Assessing occupied business structures as though they were vacant.
- The reduction of taxes levied on state-owned land below current levels.
- The reclassification of agriculture and forest land to a residential classification when no residential structure exists.

### **Income Tax/Incentives**

We support:

- Deferment of crop insurance income to the year following the crop insurance payment to align with federal rules.
- Tax credits used to create jobs and tax equity for the agricultural economy.
- The concept of a beginning farmer tax credit program.
- The State of Michigan providing tax incentives rather than tax the production, distribution or sale of renewable energy or fuel including but not limited to wood, cherry pits, biodiesel, ethanol, methane digester power, geo and hydro power, as well as windmill and solar power. If the majority of the energy is used for onsite purposes, the generation of the energy and associated equipment should be tax exempt.
- Using federal adjusted gross income as the base for Michigan's income tax calculation and oppose decoupling for items such as accelerated depreciation and expensing rules (Sec. 179).
- Allowing a surviving spouse who has not remarried to continue to use the age of the deceased spouse for the purpose of the determination of qualification for pension subtraction from income.
- Allowing for a line item tax deduction for primary education (preschool-grade 12) expenses, such as tuition and teaching materials.

We oppose:

- Reinstatement of the Michigan estate tax (often referred to as the death tax).
- Any effort to tax farmer-owned cooperatives on disbursements or credits that are taxable in the hands of patrons.

### **County/State Taxes**

We support:

- PA 283 of 1909 (MCL section 224.20) be revised to indicate that all new monies generated by county boards of commissioners must be placed on the ballot in a millage election and levied only after receiving the approval of the majority of the voters.
- The sale of state land to meet its obligations and return the land to private ownership and the property tax roll.

### **Sales and Use Tax**

We support:

- The agriculture exemption from state sales and use tax based upon the use of the product.
- A continuation of the agriculture sales tax exemption for the equine industry.
- Supporters of the FAIR Tax providing education and analyzing the proposal's impacts and benefits on agriculture.

We oppose:

- Charging state sales tax on the federal manufacturers excise tax.
- Sales tax levied on new vehicles before cash back, manufacturer incentives and rebates.
- Sales tax levied on the sale of used vehicles.
- Any plan which places an undue or unrealistic tax or fee which affects agriculture, such as a tax on gross receipts, a tax on personal property or a tax on assets.
- Any tax on food or food additives including so called "sin taxes" on products like processed sugar.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **#95 County Road Commissions**

County road commissioners are responsible for maintenance and construction of most roads within a county. Michigan is the only state in the country to utilize a county road commission structure. The three or five-member boards have six-year staggered terms and are, in most cases, appointed by the county board of commissioners.

Public Acts 14 and 15 of 2012 allows a county board of commissioners to assume the duties of the county road commission. We continue to support a system of local control selection.

We believe each county overseen by a road commission should have the option to decide if it needs a three or five-member county road commission. These should be by district, regardless of population, and representative of all areas of the county. Commission members should serve four-year staggered terms.

We support properly and consistently training road commission employees to grade and maintain local roadways to uniform grade standards.

We support county road commissions having access to state run facilities and equipment.

#### **#96 Farm and Commercial Vehicles**

As farm suppliers and markets become fewer and farther between, distances farmers must travel for supplies, services and markets have increased substantially.

We encourage Michigan Farm Bureau members to use the Michigan Farmer's Transportation Guidebook as an educational tool.

#### **Vehicle Regulations**

We support:

- The development of State of Michigan covered farm vehicle designation to cover rented and commercially plated vehicles for use in agriculture.
- Uniformity of enforcement of trucking regulations by enforcing agencies and their employees/representatives.
- MFB continuing to provide information to members regarding the proper uses of farm-plated vehicles.
- A simple, low-cost method for the Secretary of State to verify farm or logging connection when applying for the plate designations. Schedule F forms or EINs must not be the only methods since not all farmers and loggers have those options.
- Allowing personal business to be done in the personal pick-up of a logger with a log plate designation.
- MFB seeking clarification on the licensing and registration requirements for farmers and others hauling livestock, equipment, and agricultural products to markets, events or shows, and people to events or shows.
- More flexibility in the waiting period to obtain a seasonal restricted license.
- Specialty license plates and allowing their use on farm, agri-business, and commercial vehicles.
- The continuation of permanent trailer license plates without additional fees, and allowing these plates to be transferred.
- A revenue-neutral multiyear plate renewal option for all vehicles.
- Earmarking part of state, local and county fines for roadway repair to be distributed back to counties through the Michigan Transportation Fund formula. City, township and village fines should be prohibited from being allocated for local law enforcement.
- Minor restricted license eligibility. Licenses should not be based on taxable household income, and farm size should not be a factor. Licenses will only be considered for immediate family members.
- Individuals and businesses being able to conduct business and complete transactions with the Secretary of State in an easily accessible manner including in-person, online, or mail.
- Pickup trucks, one ton and under, that have had their beds modified should still be classified as pickup trucks.

We oppose:

- Government classification of implements of husbandry as commercial motor vehicles.
- Requiring vehicles registered in Michigan to display license plates on both the front and rear of the vehicle.

### **Vehicle Size and Weights**

We support the current Michigan per axle weight limits for trucks on state highways. These axle limits should be extended and consistently applied on all county roads. We support the exemption of all farm and agribusiness vehicles of any size, up to legal weight limit per axle, from no through trucks ordinance and laws. We support trailers of common dimensional size, which are currently legal on Class A roads, be allowed to operate on all roads.

We support allowing permits to be issued for hauling over width loads of double wide loads of bales.

Due to changes in moisture and weights on farm commodities, it can be very difficult to determine if the legal weight limits are being met when loading from the field or farm. We support up to a 10 percent exemption on load limits, or up to a 20 percent tolerance over the legal weight limit on axles provided the vehicle is at or below its legal gross weight, for all farm and forestry commodities loaded out of the field or farm storage. All state highways should be brought up to Class A designation as soon as possible. Until they are, the appropriate road agencies should have the authority to give seasonal permits for movement of agricultural produce. We oppose the actions by local units of government which impose reduced vehicle weight limits on roads established or maintained with state or federal road funding.

For seasonal permits, we support:

- The use of peer-reviewed engineering principles and criteria and collaboration with surrounding counties to determine when to apply and remove spring load restrictions on county and Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) roads.
- Reasonable, standardized Frost Law permitting criteria and fees for all counties within the state.
- Requiring MDOT to issue permits for the trucking of agricultural and forestry commodities at normal load limits during spring weight restrictions on the state highway system.
- Prohibiting county road commissions from requiring to be named as an additional insured for liability coverage to obtain a permit.
- MDOT being allowed to issue all permits which allows farm equipment to be trailered on weekends, as well as weekdays, on the state highway system.

### **Autonomous Vehicles**

We support:

- Development of technology to advance the use of autonomous vehicles.
- The development of safety technology and mandatory enhanced safety features installed on new vehicles including, but not limited to, braking and cautionary sensors that create a safer driving environment for farm equipment on roadways.
- Proper regulation and licensing of road bound vehicles.

We encourage MFB to monitor future developments in autonomous vehicles and regulation regarding their use.

### **Implements of Husbandry**

Implements of husbandry have changed over time; therefore, consideration should be given to the design and functional use of the vehicle serving agricultural purposes.

We support:

- Pickups, like farm tractors, being allowed to tow two wagons or trailers, provided the combination of trailers does not exceed the towing capacity of the pickup.
- Implements of husbandry being operated and maintained with manufacturer's recommendations.
- MFB educating members about the safe and appropriate use of implements of husbandry on public roadways.
- Current statute for size and weight provisions of implements of husbandry, and abide by the posted bridge weight limits, not exceeding the vehicle axle limits.
- Clarification on the definition of "modified agricultural vehicle" and its distinction from implements of husbandry.
- A permit to allow tractors and other implements of husbandry to cross the Mackinaw Bridge during oversized load crossing times.

We oppose mandating the use of electric powered agriculture equipment or implements of husbandry.

### **#97 International Trade Crossing**

Canada is Michigan's leading trade partner, and reliable transportation between the two countries is vital to support the state's agricultural industry.

Commercial vehicle backups at border crossings are detrimental to commerce. We urge adequate staffing to prevent delays in transportation of agricultural products.

We applaud the completed agreement to construct the Gordie Howe International Bridge (New International Trade Crossing) and urge its expedient completion.

### **#98 Limited Purpose Operator's License**

Prior to 2008, Michigan law did not require a driver's license or state ID applicants to have a specific immigration or citizenship status. Applicants only needed to provide documents sufficient to prove their identity and Michigan residency.

We support the State of Michigan:

- Providing a limited purpose operator's license for individuals without proof of citizenship status.
- Setting standards for documentation required for the limited purpose operator's license.
- Increasing penalties for providing fraudulent information to the Michigan Secretary of State, including fraudulent claims of state residency.
- Requiring passage of a written and driver skill test.

The limited purpose operator's license would not be acceptable for official federal purposes. It would be issued only as a license to drive a motor vehicle and not establish eligibility for employment, voter registration, or public benefits.



## **#99 Railroads**

The transportation of agricultural and forestry inputs and commodities depends on efficient and continued railroad service. Mergers within the industry and low priority designations by railroad management have created an unstable and, in some areas, unreliable rail service.

Michigan Farm Bureau should work with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), the U.S. Department of Transportation and Congress to ensure future investment and expansion of commodity and passenger rail infrastructures in Michigan and throughout the United States.

Therefore, we support:

- Urging the responsible authorities to improve and maintain railroad crossings to current code, including replacing existing railroad cross buck signs with cross buck signs that are reflectorized on both sides, and requiring stop signs or warning lights to replace yield signs where visibility is limited.
- Legislation to require railroads to use reflectors or reflectorized paint or tape on the sides of rail cars to improve visibility.
- The use of strobe and ditch lights on railroad engines and the last car.
- Public notice and hearing process for highway projects should be used when changes in Michigan railroads are proposed to ensure the viewpoints of all affected parties are considered.
- Acceptable rail crossing alternatives be developed and railroad crossing upgrades be completed in a timely manner if existing crossings are required to be closed.
- Exempting private agriculture crossings from closure and treated as nonresidential seasonal agriculture use.
- The requesting party be responsible to pay for safety mechanisms at a private crossing if they are determined necessary.
- Fencing along the rail corridor should be erected and paid for by the railroad when railroads bisect a fenced parcel of land.
- Railway companies be responsible to keep the railroad right-of-way free of brush for a reasonable distance at road crossings.

### **Abandoned Railroads**

The changing of a railroad right-of-way from its intended use should result in compensation to property owners whose land had been originally purchased or condemned for the purpose of the railroad right-of-way. Unused railroad rights-of-way not preserved for future railroad traffic should be reverted to or offered for sale at or below fair market value, to the current owner of record of the underlying parcel of real estate from which said right-of-way was originally obtained. Whenever determined not possible, landowners shall be compensated for the condemnation of the land or a change to a non-railroad use.

MDOT, who controls the abandoned railroads, should allow the adjacent property owner to clear and remove the railroad bed to return it to agricultural production.

We propose a state standard be developed by MDOT requiring removal of non-service or abandoned grade crossing signage within a set time period after public notification of rail line

non-service or abandonment.

We support allowing horses on converted railroad trails.

### **#100 Safety on Roadways**

We continue to support legislation and education to promote highway safety and improve the interface between farm machinery and other vehicles on roadways. This information should be included in the Michigan Farmers Transportation Guidebook.

#### **Agricultural Safety on Roads**

To improve agricultural roadway safety, we support:

- Greater emphasis in driver education programs regarding how farm machinery operates on public roads.
- The creation of educational materials for use at Secretary of State offices.
- The voluntary use of reflective tape or other reflective material where appropriate, including horseback riders.
- Farmers using care to keep irrigation, field and livestock residue off roads.
- Prohibiting legal suits from small spillage of agricultural products, including feeds and fertilizers, which does not impede traffic or result in pollution.
- Farmers not being ticketed for livestock that escape onto roadways unless the farmer is negligent in the maintenance of their livestock enclosures.

#### **Slow Moving Vehicle Signs**

Michigan Farm Bureau should continue educating the public and farmers on the proper use of the slow moving vehicle (SMV) sign and implements of husbandry which is designed to warn other road users that the vehicle displaying the sign is traveling at slower than normal traffic speed.

Therefore, we support:

- Greater use of SMV questions on the driver license test.
- Labels on SMV signs to inform purchasers of the legal and illegal uses of the signs.
- Efforts to implement visible lighting and SMV signs on horse-drawn vehicles and education regarding sharing the road with equine. We recommend horse-drawn vehicles have flashing front amber lights and flashing red taillights to comply with state standards.
- Appropriate use of SMV emblems. Furthermore, enforcement actions taken when SMV signs are used for purposes other than legally intended, such as driveway markers.

#### **Visibility and Warning Signals**

To improve safety and visibility on roadways, we support:

- MFB working in cooperation with the County Road Association to establish a process for use of warning signs related to agriculture vehicles such as entering and exiting roadways.
- The use of farm and other traffic alert signs in areas of heavy farm or other traffic or similar signage allowed under the Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

- The placement of yellow flashing lights at the beginning of school zones, and appropriate signage as mandated under the Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.
- An advance stop light change warning system at major state highway intersections. This advance warning system would alert drivers to a signal change from green light to a yellow light, allowing drivers extra time and distance to slow and stop vehicles before the red light is illuminated. This advance warning system would read “when light is flashing be prepared to stop.”
- The use of low-cost measures, including reflective taping or additional signage, to mitigate accidents at rural intersections and railroad crossings.
- Where stop lights are present on highways with speed limits above 45 mph, we support the placement of a warning light and sign before the intersection that would flash a warning that “the light is about to change” in order to give trucks and large vehicles additional time to stop.
- Reflectorized material being used on the outer edge of snow blades to be more visible at night.
- Voluntary use of pollinator habitat using Natural Resources Conservation Service guidelines along roadways and at intersections to improve line of sight.
- More aggressive enforcement by local jurisdictions of laws pertaining to encroachments (e.g., mailboxes, shrines should be on one side of the road) on road rights-of-way.

### **General Public Safety**

To improve safety on our public roads, we support:

- Pedestrians walking in the roadway wearing high visibility clothing and following traffic rules.
- Further education regarding bicycle safety and rules on public roads. Additionally, traffic laws should be enforced by local authorities for bicyclists at the same level as they are for passenger vehicles.
- Bicyclists being required to ride in single file on highways, or paved shoulders when available, instead of the vehicle traffic lane.
- Revisions to the Michigan Vehicle Code to include visibility and safety standards for the operation of bicycles on public roads during daylight hours, as well as sunset to sunrise.
- Front and rear lights and high visibility clothing should be required.
- Requiring in-person driver’s license renewal for individuals over the age of 75. A vision test would be optional and at the discretion of the Secretary of State staff.

### **#101 Transportation Improvement**

Agriculture is dependent on a sound transportation system to move materials and products to and from farm and market.

Michigan Farm Bureau recognizes the importance of the state and local road network to agriculture. Investment in infrastructure, such as highways and airports, can be directly linked to growth in business and economy. Improving Michigan’s transportation system will create jobs,

attract business and strengthen our economy.

### **Transportation Revenue**

Michigan's road and highway maintenance budgets have regularly seen funding shortfalls over the last several years despite legislative efforts in 2015, and these funding deficiencies are growing due to rising maintenance costs coupled with increases in automotive fuel economy. MFB believes having adequate road funding should remain a high priority for the state. We believe state and local road agencies should be adequately funded so they are able to properly fund routine maintenance and ensure safe and efficient roadways for all motorists.

We support:

- User taxes when new revenue is needed for roads and bridges. User taxes may include, but are not limited to, gas tax, registration and other user fees. New revenues for roads and bridges shall go through the Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF). Such taxes must be in line with maintenance costs and should be consistent with neighboring states.
- Local options that raise funds dedicated to road funding from user-based fees.
- A system that allows for indexing of the fuel tax rate.
- Taxing other forms of energy that are used in transportation at an equitable rate including development of a formula to collect a road tax on electric usage for recharging of electric vehicle.
- An increase in the return of Michigan-collected revenues sent to the National Highway Trust Fund.

We oppose:

- Reverting to the property tax or special assessments as a means of building and maintaining state roads and bridges.

### **Transportation Formula**

Transportation expenditures must be examined to achieve the best and most efficient use of transportation funding. We support PA 51 of 1951 which outlines the distribution of the MTF.

We support the following PA 51 changes:

- At least 25 percent of federal road funds go to local road agencies. At least 25 percent of federal bridge funds go to the Local Bridge program for use by local road agencies.
- Before any debt is serviced, the Transportation Economic Development Fund (TEDF) shall be allocated with 25 percent to urban counties and 25 percent to rural counties, as defined in the TEDF.
- An increase in federal highway funding and the TEDF dollars used to finance a portion of the all-season road program.
- All funds from the MTF should be earmarked for maintaining and improving our transportation
- infrastructure. Eliminate non-road related earmarked administrative funding and off-the-top state debt service from the MTF.
- Allocating funding from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), at a reasonable rate, to the responsible road maintenance body, or other agency, for removal of wildlife carcasses from the roadways and rights of-way.

- More effective use of Michigan's mass transit funds. Ten percent of Michigan's transportation funds are dedicated to mass transit systems. We urge new or improved mass transit options be studied, including waterways, in appropriate areas.
- Raising the statutory limit on the amount of funds that can be transferred from primary to local road systems, provided these funds are used to match other locally raised revenue. We believe local roads should receive a higher priority.
- Adequate funding of the Michigan Forest Roads Program.
- The concept of easily allowing county road commissions to transfer federal funds to other counties and/or state road projects when applicable.

We oppose:

- Distribution of road funding based on road use or traffic volume.

### **Road Construction and Maintenance**

New road construction, improvements and maintenance, as well as issues of jurisdictional transfer of existing roads should be carried out in a spirit of cooperation between local, state, and federal agencies involving constituent groups throughout the project. We encourage local governments to continue to look for increased efficiencies in government by prioritizing services, reforming where possible, eliminating duplicative services, and utilizing private partners.

We believe the local road agency must dedicate themselves to using the most economical means possible to establish and maintain an efficient transportation system.

Regarding road planning, we support:

- Encouraging the local road agencies, as well as the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) to work in coordination with all pertinent county agencies (e.g., drain/water resources commission), townships, local planning, zoning boards, county Farm Bureaus, and affected property owners to minimize road construction cost and gather public input.
- Providing a role for counties and townships in road improvement decisions.
- Local road agencies utilizing the MDOT Asset Management Program, or similar program, to annually evaluate conditions of all roads and dispersal of funds under their jurisdiction and report such findings to the public.
- County road commissions maintaining culverts to avoid road closures. Culverts exceeding four feet in diameter should be considered bridges.
- Research to develop better materials for road and bridge construction and maintenance for proper construction and longevity.
- An emphasis on improving existing roadways prior to constructing new highways.
- Long-range planning on road construction projects considering not only future needs of the area but also the effects on agriculture.
- Every consideration being given to landowners adjacent to the roadway to provide for safe travel for farm machinery and products.
- Requiring consideration of agricultural drainage needs, including proper placement and size of culverts, when planning, designing and maintaining roads.
- Proper grading of roads and shoulders on a regular basis.

- MDOT taking into consideration the size and maneuverability of farm equipment when designing new traffic flow structures such as roundabouts or turnarounds.
- Compensation for crop losses when changes are made to the right of way from road improvements or reconstruction.
- Every effort being made to select alignments that preserve productive farmland, wetlands and historical sites.
- The use of private contractors and a bidding process for road and bridge development and maintenance.
- A preference being given to contractors with material testing locations in Michigan with proven results.
- The removal of state-mandated wage guidelines which may not reflect actual market conditions.
- An open bid process for all road construction, improvements, and maintenance projects.
- The cost of road improvements impacted from development being required to be shared by the developer when new developments have an adverse impact on the rural road system.
- The respective state agency paying for or the requirement for the project being waived, when Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy and DNR specifications increase the cost of maintaining safe bridge structures.
- The purchase of rights of way for the construction of complete cloverleafs when new freeways are built.
- The builder of a housing development near a freeway or existing highway being responsible for erecting an acceptable sound barrier, if needed.
- Highway maintenance and changes within the existing right of way not having to complete a new environmental impact study before performing the work.
- Wetlands mitigation not being required if improvements to the road are within the existing road right of way.
- Ending the inclusion of planned wildlife habitat in the construction and renovation of Michigan highways.
- Reclassifying US 23 from Toledo to Flint as an interstate highway.
- Use of improved paint technologies that are more visible and reflective on local, state, and interstate roadways.

When performing road construction, we support:

- An emphasis being directed toward the placing of crossroad, yield or stop signs at unmarked rural intersections.
- Hardtop roads of adequate width being marked with highly-reflective center lines and sidelines as an aid to safer nighttime driving.
- Engineering and design of roadways being required to have at least 20 feet clearance between obstacles.
- Proper grading and bank reseeding being completed where road construction occurs to improve road safety and reduce erosion.
- All rural roads should be marked with a name or number.

- Mail and newspaper boxes being placed on the same side of the road and as far from the traveled portion of the road as safety allows.
- Prior to non-emergency detouring of state highway traffic onto county roads, MDOT will collaborate with township government, county road departments, and local and county law enforcement, to establish reduced speed limits, establish no-passing zones along the detour route, and mark intersections with illuminated stop signs or overhead traffic lights. As part of the project cost, MDOT will make funds available for law enforcement to specifically patrol the detour.

For road maintenance, we support:

- The designated maintenance authority clearing and maintaining roadsides, roadways and intersections of hazards that obstruct the view of motorists or impede travel, road drainage, or cropland drainage. This would include dead and dying trees within the right of way. In the event the authorized authority is unable to fulfill their maintenance obligations, landowners should be allowed to perform such work. Property owners should maintain proper visibility of intersection views by using the triangular sight-line system.
- Encouraging the privatization of road maintenance and the mowing and trimming of road ditches when feasible.
- Individuals, pursuant to reasonable regulations, being allowed to harvest existing forages and trees along roadways without a permit.
- Any traveled portion of the road and shoulder having trees and overgrowth trimmed to a minimum height of 17 feet due to the increase in height and width of farm and custom application equipment. Also, a reasonably safe condition should be provided by the respective road agency.
- MDOT being required to fix and maintain fencing along state highways as part of the maintenance of that highway.
- County road commissions notifying the owner when work in the right of way will be done and will destroy crops or affect field drainage.

We are especially concerned with excessive use of road salt, the adverse effect it has on the environment, and the increased rate at which it deteriorates roads and bridges in urban and rural Michigan. We support:

- The use of Calcium Magnesium Acetate or other ag-based products for de-icing roads and bridges, including the use of sand, when environmentally and economically feasible.
- A reduction in ice melt and dust control products containing sodium chloride, and research of alternatives, with no salt being used adjacent to sensitive perennial crops and/or arable soils, wherever feasible.
- County road commissions being able to brine roads responsibly and when necessary.

## **FARM BUREAU**

### **#102 Legal Defense Fund**

The Michigan Farm Bureau Legal Defense Fund is designed to provide financial support in connection with legal issues of common concern to Michigan agriculture and those issues where the decision will be viewed as establishing an important legal precedent.

We recommend county Farm Bureaus contribute to the Legal Defense Fund a minimum of 10 cents per member, and encourage them to make additional discretionary contributions when possible. Further, we recommend that MFB continue to contribute up to a maximum of \$20,000 annually, or an amount equal to that contributed by the county Farm Bureaus.

A letter requesting contributions, outlining significant activities supported by the fund and the present status of the fund balance should be sent to the county Farm Bureaus prior to their annual budgeting process. The Chief Operating Officer of MFB should annually evaluate the need for contributions to the fund based on the accumulated fund balance and the requests for legal assistance.

### **#103 Membership and Farm Bureau Programs**

Membership is the lifeblood of our organization. Michigan Farm Bureau encourages member engagement in membership, Community Action Groups, Promotion & Education, Young Farmer, High School and Collegiate programs and other programs through county Farm Bureaus.

We support:

- Engaging, growing and maintaining membership,
- Grassroots local policy development,
- Educating youth, farmers, educators, consumers and public officials about agriculture and its importance to our economy,
- Personal and professional development leadership programs,
- Developing young and beginning farmers for the future of our industry,
- A diverse membership to promote and grow our agricultural community,
- An inclusive culture that welcomes all farmers and agriculturalists, and
- Equitable opportunities and resources for all members.

These programs help members be a successful voice for agriculture.

### **#104 Political Action Program**

With the increasing number of legislative and regulatory issues facing agriculture, it's imperative that we have as many Friends of Agriculture elected as possible with county Farm Bureau support. We need more farmers in all forms of government: local, state, university and national. Grassroots involvement is the backbone of Farm Bureau. We support programs and activities such as:

- Evaluating and endorsing candidates seeking federal, state or university office whose positions are compatible with Michigan Farm Bureau policies, without regard to party affiliation.



- Allocating AgriPac and FarmPac funds for the purpose of electing Friends of Agriculture.
- Promoting the personal and financial involvement of county Farm Bureau members in the election of Friends of Agriculture.
- Encouraging county Farm Bureaus to further engage in the electoral process.
- Having county Farm Bureau candidate evaluation committees take the initial lead on candidate evaluation and make recommendations to the MFB AgriPac Committee.

The AgriPac Committee is appointed by the MFB president, with consent of the board of directors. AgriPac designates Friends of Agriculture and provides a framework in which we can endorse, and possibly financially support. AgriPac decisions look at the big picture and are based on input from county candidate evaluation committees, voting records, and possible past Farm Bureau interaction with the candidate.

The autonomy of AgriPac is crucial to its success. Nevertheless, prompt decisions and timely communications of final decisions to each county is important. Endorsements should not be withheld simply because the candidate is running unopposed. We encourage our members to contribute to AgriPac or FarmPac.

The delegate body directs MFB to form a group/committee to look at and make recommendations of ways to increase the money in our AgriPac fund and also how we can have greater impact of those dollars.