

MICHIGAN FARM NEWS

MICHIGAN'S ONLY STATEWIDE FARM NEWSPAPER

MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU



MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU

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Dairy superpool faces collapse Dec. 1



As of Dec. 1, the voluntary statewide milk marketing over-order premium pool, commonly known as the superpool, will no longer be in place as a mechanism to add money to the milk price paid to dairy farmers. The voluntary pool was established five years ago with every Michigan milk marketing cooperative and dairy processor participating. Recently, two milk handlers pulled out of the pool, sending the industry into a debate surrounding the need for the order.

Project GREEN thanks Legislature for support

In late October, representatives from the bulk of Michigan's plant-based agriculture descended upon the state capitol to deliver a basket filled with Michigan-grown food products to legislators to thank them for their support of Project GREEN.

Project GREEN (Generating Research and Extension to meet Economic and Environmental Needs) received a \$1 million appropriation from the Legislature earlier this year (\$500,000 recurring plus \$500,000 one-time) to fund research projects on apples, blueberries, cranberries, potatoes, wheat, sugar beets and tomatoes.

"When producers and growers thank legislators for appropriations received, it creates a great deal of curiosity," explained MFB Legislative Counsel Ron Nelson. "Typically we ask for things and fail to thank; in this case we're thanking without asking."

At the event, an aptly colored green basket filled with dry beans, tulip bulbs, apples, cranberries, corn-derived HaloSalt, baby carrots, dried cherries, soybean crayons and sugar was delivered to key legislators who made the funding of GREEN possible. More than 60 volunteers from all facets of Michigan agriculture assembled to deliver the baskets.

"It was an excellent representation of the diversity of Michigan agriculture, from apples to zucchinis," Nelson added. "If it weren't for the Project GREEN initiative, we would never have been able to assemble such a large cross section, representing Michigan's plant agriculture, united as a group."

"The idea behind Project GREEN began more than a year ago when Michigan Farm Bureau, commodity groups and food processors asked the university to develop a plan preparing them to meet the coming century's economic and environmental challenges," said Bob Boehm, MFB field crops manager. "It's a plan to generate needed research and educational programs meeting a wide range of economic and environmental needs identified by growers and processors."

"The benefits from GREEN's plan are not only for Michigan agriculture," Boehm said, "but the opportunities in Michigan's plant industry have the potential to create more than 21,000 new jobs and add more than \$1.4 billion to the state's economy."

According to Nelson, the funding of GREEN provided commodity groups, food processors and MSU the resources to continue their research. "Funding of GREEN has translated into results for growers, producers addressing questions, issues and problems."

"There is a need for additional funding to continue and expand those projects," Nelson added. "We have demonstrated to the Legislature and the governor that, with very limited additional funds, we have started down the road to results."

CFTC issues final order to Chicago Board of Trade on delivery specifications

The year-long battle between the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) and the Chicago Board of Trade (CBT) came to a final resolution Nov. 7, as the governing agency ordered proposed changes, which includes retaining Toledo as a delivery point for soybeans, to take effect beginning in the year 2000.

The delivery changes are part of an 11-month conflict arising from the CFTC desire to improve the delivery system for grain and the CBT's proposal based solely upon delivery points along a 150-mile stretch of the Illinois River between Pekin and Chicago, Ill.

According to the CFTC, the final modifications to CBT's proposed delivery plan include soybean futures contracts retaining the current delivery locations of Toledo and St. Louis in addition to the proposed delivery locations of Chicago and the northern Illinois River, and make soybeans at the Chicago and Toledo delivery locations deliverable at par.

"This is the final rule as issued by CFTC," explained MFB Field Crops Manager Bob Boehm. "We are pleased with the retention of Toledo as a delivery point for soybeans, but disappointed that the CFTC did not require the same provision on corn contracts."

"Through producer comments during the public review process we were able to modify other provisions, including basis adjustments on the 150-mile stretch of the Illinois River," he added. "The CFTC had never before taken such action against a U.S. futures exchange under its jurisdiction. One of the things we were not able to prove was the need to retain Toledo as a delivery point on corn. The CFTC is bound by the provisions of the Commodity Exchange Act and apparently was unable to justify the retention of Toledo for corn contracts based on the scope of that authority. There will be continued

scrutiny over the next several years to monitor CBT corn contract operation under the revised system."

One such person upset with the loss of Toledo as a corn delivery point is Michigan Congressman John Dingell, ranking member of the House of Representatives Commerce Committee. "The CBT's proposal is short-sighted and misguided," Dingell said. "It is unfortunate that the CFTC was not stronger in its response. This proposal will benefit a few traders and hurt American farmers, producers and consumers."

Boehm agrees that the big unknown is how volatile the corn market will be once the new delivery system is in place. "Usually with change there is added risk," he said. "In that initial period, the market will be unsure about how the new contract will perform; typically that means a wider basis to offset risk of the unknown. Hopefully, that doesn't mean a dramatic shift in price, but that's the concern."

The CFTC also found that the lack of price differentials at all river-based delivery locations for both the corn and soybean futures contracts failed to reflect the differentials in the underlying cash markets for corn and soybeans as required by Commodity Exchange Act. The governing body therefore ordered that differentials be added to both the corn and soybean contracts.

Two other modifications the CFTC made to the CBT proposals revolved around the reliance chiefly on a single mode of transportation on the Illinois River for delivery and elimination of the \$40 million net worth requirement of issuers of shipping certificates. "This renders the contract susceptible to significant disruptions in transportation on the Illinois River, increasing the possibility of price manipulation, market congestion, or the abnormal movement of corn and soybeans in interstate commerce," the CFTC said in a release statement.

COVER STORY State milk marketing order could be only way

At its Nov. 4 meeting, the five representatives comprising the Michigan Commission of Agriculture voted unanimously to support the concept of a state milk marketing order once all other avenues for Michigan's dairy industry to keep the voluntary pool have been exhausted.

"What the commission hoped to do was force the industry to the table to re-establish voluntary order," explained MFB President Jack Laurie. "If that could be done, I firmly believe it would have already happened. The effect of this will probably delay any attempt to make a decision as to whether or not we go forward with a statewide, legislated order."

"Our members have indicated very clearly that they support a volunteer-type order program such as we've had in the past, because of the equity and stability and security that a pool program brings to the whole industry," Laurie said in testimony to the commission. "Absent a volunteer program, they would then support a state-legislated program to address an over-order premium."

"This doesn't preclude them [the commission] from supporting a state order," explained Michigan Milk Producers Association General Manager Walt Wosje. "Basically what it said is the industry should get together and talk it over to see if there's some unanimity of opinion. I thought we had done that and discovered there wasn't. And that's why we're at the table today."

"If the industry comes together, they can effectively resolve this," said Ken Martin, with Quality Dairy, which opposes a mandated state milk marketing order. "It has worked in the past, and I

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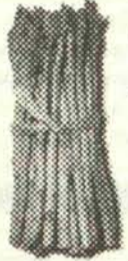
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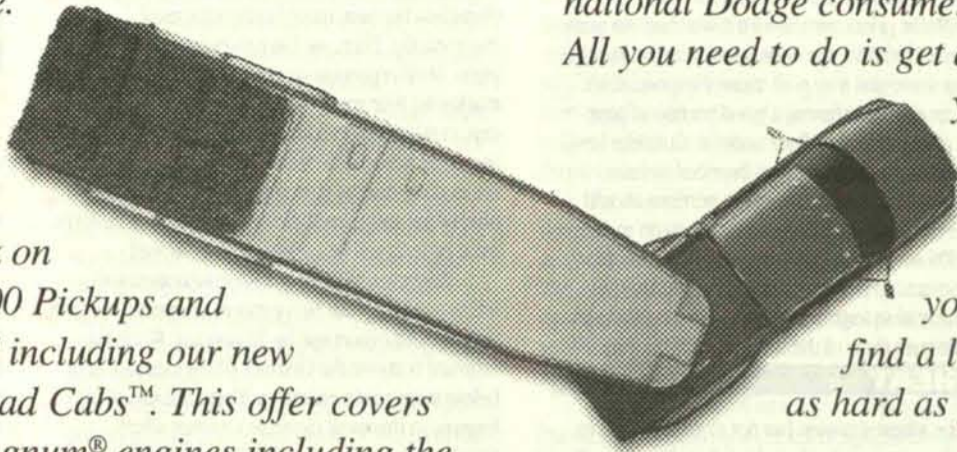
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1997 Census of Agriculture ready to count nation's farms

Farm operators across the nation are about to participate in a statistical portrait of U.S. agriculture through the 1997 Census of Agriculture. This portrait will provide a clear picture of agriculture at the county, state and national levels, showing in detail how farmers stand today compared with five years ago.

The picture will focus on key information, including the number of farms, farm size, operator characteristics, crop and livestock production, agricultural products sales, and production expenses of farmers and ranchers.

Data reported by individual farm operators in the census is held confidential by law (Title 7, U.S. Code). Data are summarized to prevent identification of individual farms. Statistical results are analyzed and made available in printed and electronic form.

Farmers can do several things to make this census an effective tool to help chart the future. They can return their census forms and make sure the information is complete, accurate and timely. They can also use the statistics to plan practical improvements in U.S. agriculture.

How do Census of Agriculture numbers provide practical information to improve farm operations and agribusinesses? Here are some examples:

- Farm organizations, Congress, and state and local

governments plan programs to help farm operators get the most for their investments.

- Farm machinery manufacturers more effectively target their industries to where they are needed by using county and state statistics, resulting in economic benefit for farm operators.
- Seed and fertilizer producers can compare yields and other information to help operators do the most effective job.
- Irrigation specialists, water resource developers and irrigation equipment manufacturers can learn much from census data and convert that knowledge into practical advice for farm operators.
- State and national lawmakers can determine where to allocate funds that will benefit agricultural producers.
- Farm broadcasters and agricultural editors can convey census results to their audiences and use the data to help focus their stories.
- Researchers and legislators can use county-level data to define problem areas and help farmers recover from outbreaks of disease and pests.
- Census information is used for evaluating programs affecting agricultural production.

Report forms will be mailed late in December to the nation's farmers to collect data for the 1997 calendar year. Farmers will be asked to return their

forms by Feb. 2, 1998.

Many questions will be similar to those asked in the 1992 census. Data will be collected from all farmers on land use and ownership, crop acreage and quantities harvested, numbers of livestock and poultry, value of crops and livestock sold, and operator characteristics. New items include area and value of cut Christmas trees harvested, acres of maple trees tapped, and number of taps.

The agriculture census has been conducted 25 times since 1840. It was conducted every ten years until 1920 and typically every five years since 1925. The census is the only source of uniform, comprehensive information about agricultural production, inventories, sales and expenditures, and other items for each county and state.

Don Bay, the NASS administrator, stresses that the same law requiring a census of agriculture also forbids revealing information about individuals. "We publish only county, state and national statistical totals, and only sworn NASS employees see the completed forms," Bay said.

Report forms sent to 25 percent of farmers include additional questions on production expenses, fertilizer and chemicals, machinery and equipment, market value of land and buildings, and income from farm-related sources. The report

1992
Census of Agriculture



AG2-A-27
Volume 1
GEOGRAPHIC AREA SERIES

Part 22
Michigan
State and County Data



U.S. Department of Commerce
Economic and Statistics Administration
BUREAU OF THE CENSUS

Data was collected from farmers five years ago for the 1992 Census of Agriculture.

forms are tailored by region to make them less burdensome on respondents.

Advice from farmers, farm organizations, agricultural universities, members of the Census Advisory Committee on Agriculture Statistics, and state and federal agencies was used in developing the report forms. Farmers represent a major sector of the nation's economy. ■

State milk marketing order could be only way

Continued from page 1

would believe that the producers in the state of Michigan can be very well supported by this action." The Lansing-based dairy resigned from the voluntary pool earlier this fall.

A representative from Dean Foods declined to comment on the commission's action.

What does the superpool mean to Michigan dairy producers?

Laurie pointed out the magnitude of the value of the over-order premium to producers. "According to the MSU ag economics department, in 1996 there was approximately 64 cents a hundred generated in premiums and, of that 64 cents, about 40 cents came from over-order premiums. That 40 cents translated into nearly \$22 million that went to producers."

Testifying on behalf of the Independent Cooperative Milk Producers (ICMPA), President Bob Naerbout explained that the ICMPA board of directors "looked at the issue, and we said, no, we don't feel there's a chance for voluntary pool. What's important is that we're still generating premiums. You have to realize that this is really not a consumer issue, because what we're looking at generating is no different from what we've done for the last five years. But it is a lot of money — \$1.8 million to \$2 million a month. You use a multiplier effect of five, and you're looking at \$10 million through the rural communities per month."

Naerbout also represents the Rural Development Council of Michigan and serves as the president of that organization. "The bottom line is that the dollars are not only for our farmers, but for stability in the rural areas. It's in the best interests of the producers that we represent, and of the producers of Michigan, to support the state-mandated order. If we could have a voluntary, we'd rather go that way. But that does not seem at this point to be an option."

The ag commission approved this motion:

"The Michigan Commission of Agriculture encourages milk producers of this state to utilize mechanisms to enhance individual producer returns provided that any action is the will of the majority of producers, includes features that allow accommodation of marketplace changes and ensures periodic individual producer review of any plan by specific vote to initiate, continue, alter or discontinue such action. Furthermore, that the Michigan Department of Agriculture bring the Michigan dairy industry together through meetings to identify the appropriate mechanisms that will allow Michigan dairy producers to enhance individual producer returns and allow Michigan to be a leader in all aspects of U.S. dairy production and marketing." ■

Michigan Farm Radio Network contributed to this story.

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Avery headlines MEGA Conference as main speaker

A son of Michigan agriculture is returning to his home state to deliver a message of opportunity for the American farmer at a time of growing demand worldwide for agricultural products from the United States.

Dennis Avery, a food policy analyst for more than 30 years and former senior agricultural analyst with the U.S. Department of State, will kick off the 1998 MEGA Conference at its opening session on Tuesday, Jan. 20, at the Lansing Convention Center.

Avery will bring to the conference a message outlining the most dynamic opportunity in the history of U.S. agriculture. "With farm trade liberalization, biotechnology, the huge surge in incomes in Asia, which is critically short of farmland," Avery said, "for the first time in 120 years, the world does not have any farmland surplus, and it

will not have from here on out.

"We've got a saturated farm product market in the U.S.," he continued. "Our productivity keeps rising at about 4 percent a year, and we've just added another 15 million acres of crop land back from the government programs. But if Asia doesn't import food, then they're going to destroy thousands of wildlife species clearing tropical forest to grow their own."

Avery is passionate about the need for the American farmer to step forward and continue to feed the world through increased productivity, therefore protecting millions of acres worldwide from going into production. "Farmers should look at this moment as the greatest opportunity in farming history," he said. "I'm going to talk to them about immediate strategies for taking advantage of it. But if

American farmers don't lead this, it won't get done in time to prevent all of Asia from developing the kind of fortress farm policies that Japan and South Korea developed. It won't get done in time to save the wildlife, and it won't get done in time for them to pass profitable businesses on to their sons.

"The food challenge for the 21st century is, how do we triple farm output without using any more land?" Avery asked. "We've got to have high yields and free trade, and American agriculture has to lead it."

"As farmers continue to work harder at being good stewards of the land, Dennis Avery's message will be timely," explained Keith Muxlow, executive director of the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan, which is sponsoring Avery's appearance and MEGA Conference. "Farmers will learn how to

be environmentally sound, productive and make a living at the same time. He will share how we can produce enough food to meet a growing world demand while preserving our farms for future generations."

Avery is the director of the Indianapolis-based Hudson Institute Center for Global Food Issues and is the editor of the *Global Food Quarterly* newsletter. He has also authored the book *Saving the Planet with Pesticides and Plastic*. ■



Dennis Avery



"The Next Farming Generation"

January 19-21, 1998

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The 4th Annual

Michigan Agricultural MEGA-Conference & Trade Show
offers something for everyone.

Kicking off the program on Monday, January 19, is a legislative seminar, "Pending Legislation Affecting the Farm." Panelists include State Representatives John Gernaat, Michael Green and Howard Wetters; State Senator Walter North; and U.S. Representatives Nick Smith and Debbie Stabenow.

Moderated by Pat Driscoll, of the Michigan Farm Radio Network, the panelists will cover topics like: revisions in the drain code, minimum use pesticides, proposed changes in property rights, deregulation of electrical co-ops, and efforts to reduce legal truck weights.

This year's theme is "The Next Farming Generation." Speakers include Dennis T. Avery, author of "Saving the Planet with Pesticides and Plastics; the Environmental Triumph of High-Yielding Agriculture." Mr. Avery's presentation is sponsored by the Corn Marketing Committee of Michigan.

The latest in precision agriculture technology will be the focus of an educational class sponsored by DuPont. Join Doug Hartford, The Innovator in Precision Agriculture, on Tuesday.

We're also pleased to welcome Mark Hooper, of Grower Services, for an informative session on the use of infrared for the identification of pests and fertilizer needs.

Our banquet speaker, Mark Mayfield, will address stress management from a humorous and motivational perspective. His presentation, "Keeping Balance," is sponsored by the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee.

Livestock producers are all too aware of manure management issues. Join Dr. Wendy Powers, of Iowa State University, for odor reduction techniques.

Brand beef, heat detection methods including devises, reproduction in dairy herds, parasite identification, and vaccination schedules, are just some of the livestock topics slated for the Conference.

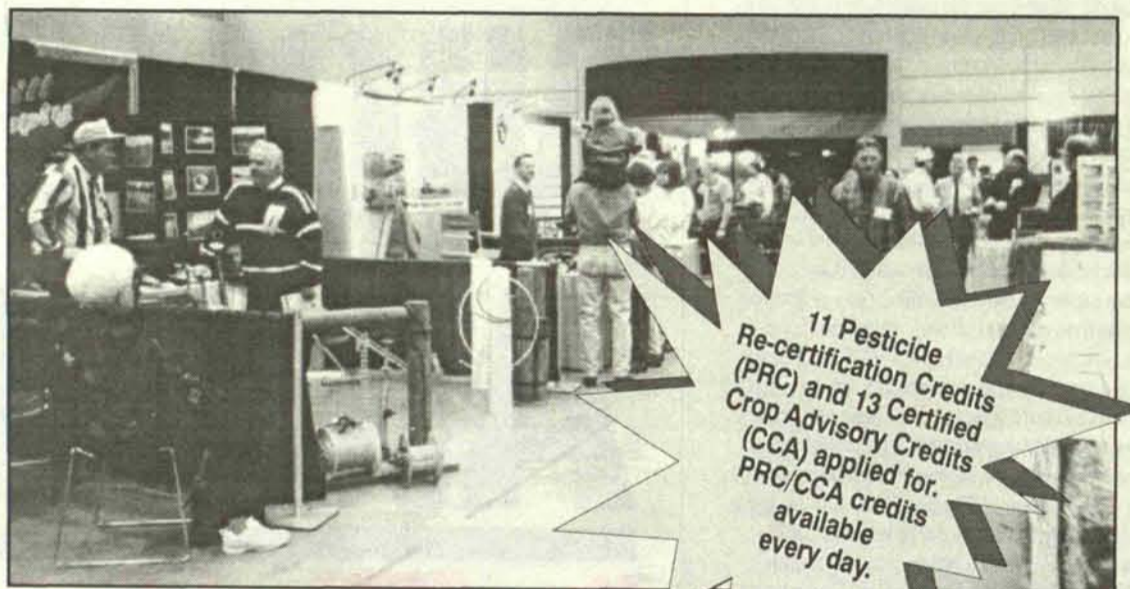
Alfalfa producers won't want to miss "Dealing with Potato Leaf Hoppers in Alfalfa," "Practical Pasture Improvement Methods," and "Disease Identification in Alfalfa."

Numerous Weeds, Diseases, and Pests classes are offered for field crop producers.

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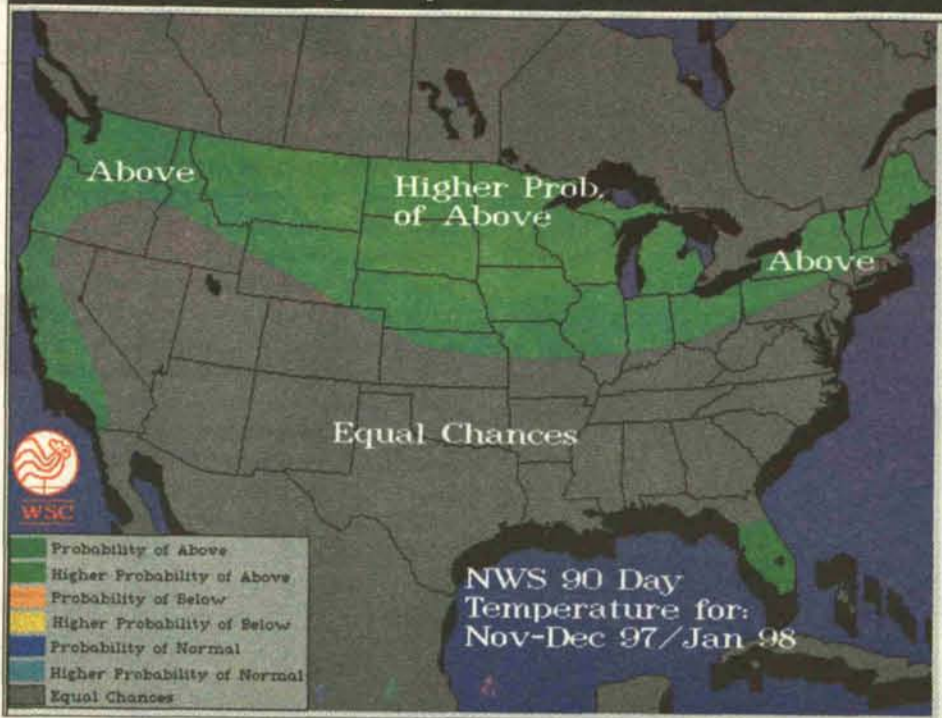
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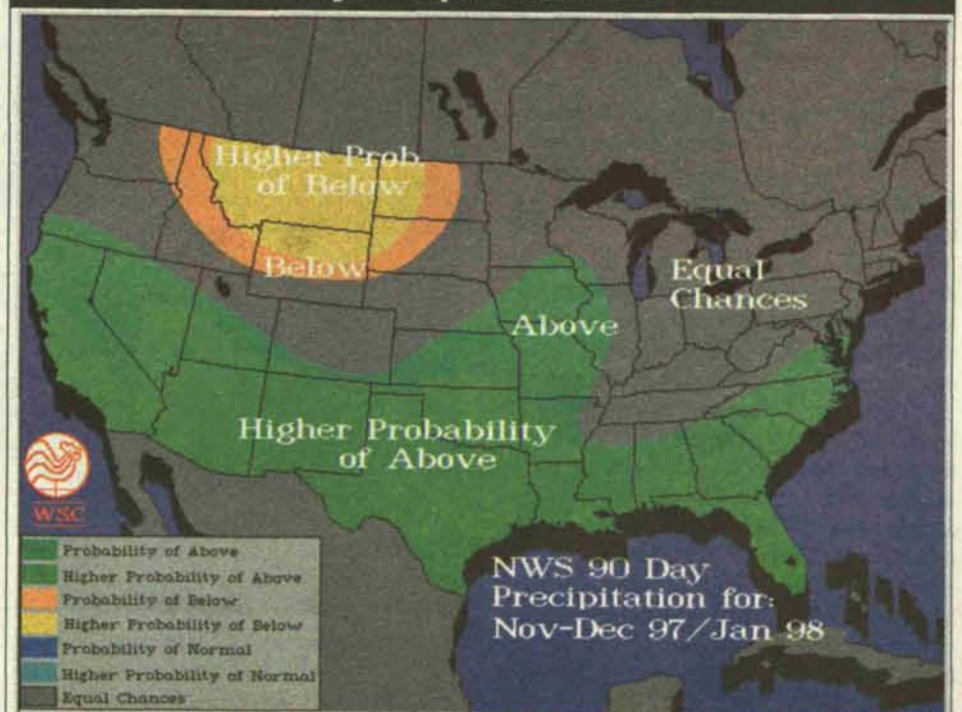
I GROW/RAISE:

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90-day Temperature Outlook



90-day Precipitation Outlook



Weather Outlook



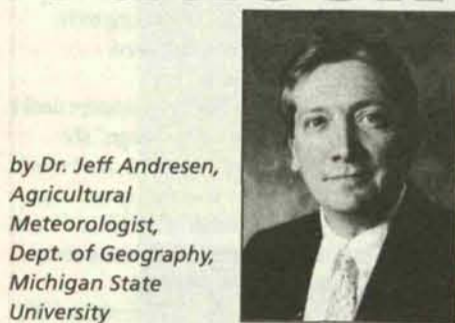
Michigan Weather Summary

10/1/97-10/31/97	Temperature		Growing Degree Days(*)		Precipitation	
	Obs. mean	Dev. from normal	Actual Acc.	Normal Acc.	Actual (inch)	Normal (inch)
Houghton	45.7	0.8	1805	1947	2.05	2.57
Marquette	45.1	0.7	1720	1947	3.47	2.57

Sault Ste. Marie	46.0	0.2	1697	1697	2.06	2.57
Lake City	45.4	-2.2	1831	2237	2.68	2.75
Pellston	47.7	1.0	1924	2237	1.76	2.75
Alpena	47.2	-0.5	1949	2159	1.27	2.40
Houghton Lake	47.2	-1.5	1954	2159	1.83	2.40
Muskegon	50.8	-0.6	2333	2484	1.34	2.94
Vestaburg	47.4	-3.1	2157	2561	1.14	2.59
Bad Axe	49.5	-1.4	2130	2617	1.87	2.41
Saginaw	50.8	-0.2	2532	2617	1.99	2.41

Grand Rapids	51.1	1.0	2519	2918	1.98	2.99
South Bend	52.9	-0.1	2785	2918	2.14	2.99
Coldwater	49.6	-3.0	2493	2831	2.00	2.41
Lansing	49.2	-1.4	2338	2831	1.55	2.41
Detroit	52.5	0.7	2728	2857	1.90	2.33
Flint	49.5	-1.4	2362	2857	1.56	2.33
Toledo	52.8	0.8	2716	2857	1.32	2.33

* Growing degree day accumulations are calculated with the 86/50 corn method and are summed beginning April 1.



by Dr. Jeff Andresen, Agricultural Meteorologist, Dept. of Geography, Michigan State University

Cold and wet weather developed across the state by the end of October in response to the formation of a large upper air troughing pattern across the Great Lakes region. The inclement weather brought harvest activities to a halt after several weeks of warm, dry and favorable conditions. Heavy snow fell in many sections of the central and southern Lower Peninsula on the 26th and 27th. The wet, heavy snow (among the heaviest on record so early in the season) led to major electrical power disruptions and likely caused lodging of crops still in the field, especially soybeans, and corn weakened by earlier corn borer infestations.

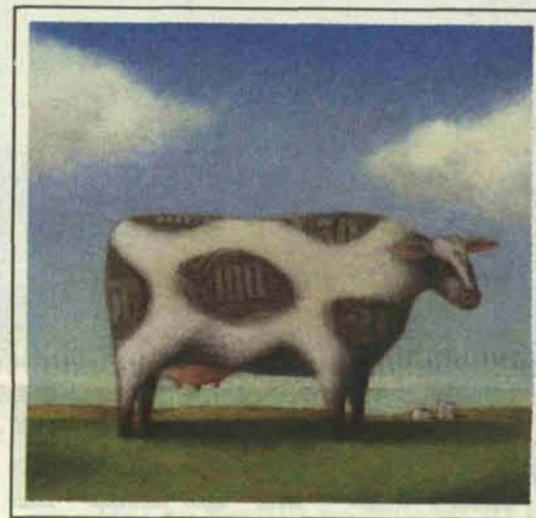
For the 1997 growing season as a whole, temperatures and growing degree day accumulations averaged significantly below normal. Abnormally warm and dry weather and a later-than-normal first killing fall freeze late in the season helped most field crops reach physiological maturity before the end of the season. Precipitation totals ranged from above normal in east central and central sections of the Lower Peninsula to much below normal elsewhere. Persistent dry weather early in the season, while favoring winter wheat yields and grain quality, may have also led to reductions in the yield potential of some summer crops.

Most recent medium-range forecast guidance suggests a very active jet stream pattern across the central and eastern United States, with a mean troughing pattern across the Great Lakes region. This would result in a relatively cold, unsettled weather pattern across Michigan during the next few weeks, with temperatures remaining below normal. Precipitation levels are likely to remain at normal to above-normal levels, especially in lake effect areas, where significant snowfall is possible.

Looking further ahead, NOAA Climate Prediction Center outlooks continue to call for greater-than-normal odds of above-normal temperatures by late in the year, and for lower-than-normal precipitation amounts by mid-winter. This pattern is expected to continue through spring of 1998, followed by near-equal odds of all temperature and precipitation scenarios (i.e., climatology) by early summer as conditions in the equatorial Pacific return to normal/neutral levels. ■

Hog inventory up

Michigan's hog and pig inventory Sept. 1 was up 2 percent from last September, according to the Federal/State Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service. Total inventory was estimated at 1,150,000 head. Market hogs totaled 1,010,000 head, unchanged from a year ago. Breeding inventory increased 12 percent to 140,000 head on Sept. 1. ■



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Food entrepreneurs gather to share their secrets

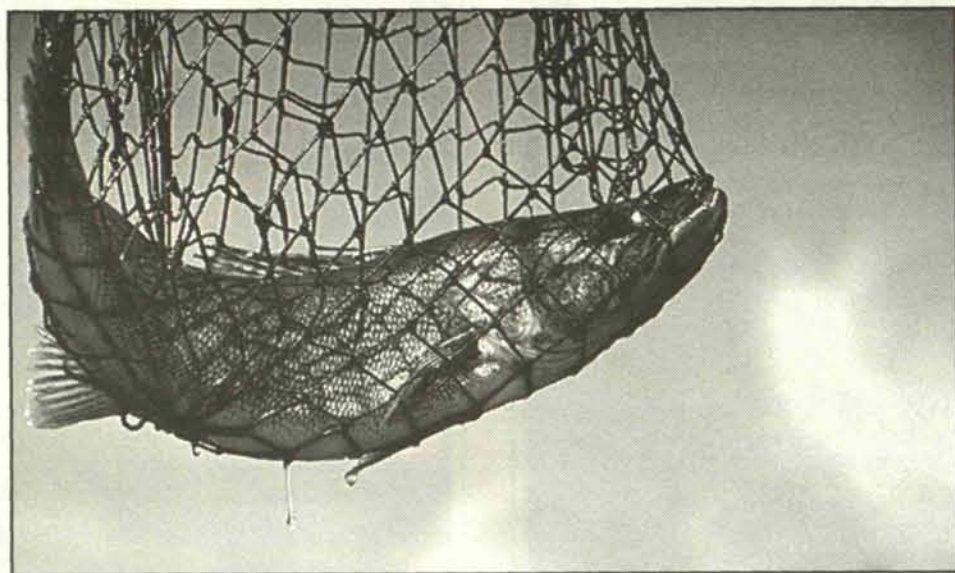
New fish company one of many unique businesses showcased

Everyone has to eat. More than 60 people attending the first-ever MSU Food Entrepreneur Day are better prepared to take their ideas about the food they produce and bring it to the end consumer.

Individuals from every level of the food-processing chain attended the event, from farmers looking for a niche for their products to restaurateurs, bed and breakfast owners and fledgling companies that have established their own market.

"We see this as phase one," explains Dr. P. Vincent Hegarty, MSU's director of the Food Industry Institute. "Bring people together; you give them a resource book. In that book there's names and addresses of lots of places in Michigan, testing labs, packers, and a variety of other things. Phase two is in how we follow up with each of these people, because you go home and personalize your opportunity, because you're getting general information here. The questions will become more specific and more personal."

"It doesn't make much sense to ship beans or corn or any other commodity out of state to have Illinois or Texas or New York get the benefit of the value-added," Hegarty added, "then for us to go back into the supermarkets and buy that product that was grown in Michigan but processed elsewhere. With the growth of the cooperative movement for farmers, they're now seriously realiz-



ing they can be not only producers, but they can also be processors, and be part of the entire chain until it actually gets into the supermarket."

The success of Mackinac Straits Fish Co.

Once such entrepreneur attending the one-day conference shared her unique story detailing not only how she entered the food business, but also the law that had to be passed for her company to exist.

Jill Bentgen, founder of Mackinac Straits Fish Company, worked for more than a year-and-a-half perfecting her whitefish smoking technique.

"Smoked whitefish is a traditional product of northern Michigan," Bentgen explained. "Anybody that goes up here buys their whole smoked fish, it was one of these historically available products that is consumed pretty much on-site."

But before she could complete her work detailing how to smoke fish, she had to work on the repeal of a decades-old law against vacuum-packed fish.

"One of the reasons that there has not been any value-added smoked fish in Michigan goes back to the early '60s," she added. "When vacuum pack-

ing technology first was made available, they were vacuum packing fish. There were no smoked fish regulations at the time."

"What vacuum pack does is it prevents any aerobic microorganisms from growing," Bentgen said. "Therefore it allows the anaerobic microorganisms to grow without being challenged by competition from other microorganisms, what happened in the '60s is that botulism was formed, that toxin was formed in the package, and several people actually died from botulism in the early '60s."

According to Bentgen, the vacuum-packing technology and safety measures put in place now prevent such tragedies from happening. "It was a result of some very abusive conditions in vacuum-packed fish. Michigan, along with a number of Great Lakes states, put in some very stringent smoked fish regulations to prevent that kind of problem in the future. And they had never been updated and challenged in light of all the new technology, new equipment, new distribution systems, new consumer needs."

"One of the problems we had is that you could order vacuum-packed fish out of the catalog and get it shipped to you in Michigan," she explained. "But me, as a Michigan producer, could not make it and sell it to a Michigan customer. I couldn't even make it and ship it out of the state."

So Bentgen went to work proving her point to the Michigan Legislature and exhibited facts that confirmed that the latest vacuum-packing techniques are not only safe, but widely used throughout the United States.

"I did not proceed to buying equipment until I knew the regulation was going to change," she added. "I waited, did lots of other work, but I wasn't going to invest until I knew it was going to change. When I finally saw a rough draft of the bill and knew that this was going to happen, I started to put my equipment in place."

"I put in my smokehouse in December of '95," she continued. "Began producing in June of '96, and it took me until December of '96 before I felt I knew how to smoke whitefish fillets, do it consistently, and then I discovered that my smokehouse had some limitations to it that wouldn't allow me to do it as consistently as I wanted to. I had to upgrade the mechanics of that smokehouse, then this past August I took that one out and put in a larger one with a lot more capability, and now I feel like I can smoke whitefish."

Bentgen maintains the consistency and quality of the fish she uses by only using fish from the Mackinac Straits area. "I buy strictly from local fishermen or processors," she said. "It's all fresh, it is filleted and shipped to me the day it's caught. I don't deal with any fish that's over 24 hours old."

According to Bentgen, about 10 million pounds of Michigan whitefish is caught per year out of the Great Lakes.

"A company like what I'm doing eventually will probably use a million pounds of that a year," she concluded. "I would expect it to have an impact on the price of fish eventually. Even though I may only use 10 percent of what's coming out of Michigan, it will affect the dock-side price, and eventually where I'll probably provide 20 to 30 jobs in the area."

Hegarty notes the success of the Mackinac Straits Fish Company and many others like it as the driving force behind bringing other food entrepreneurs together to share their experiences.

"By that synergy that develops we can better assist the new entrepreneur," he added. "Really, the growth of business in the state is going to come from these small entrepreneurs who start up on their own."

"We're a public university," he said. "If it can be part of having the expertise and the facilities made available to assist the state of Michigan and value-added, that's where the money is out of agricultural products. Otherwise, we're shipping out our raw products, having somebody else make the profit and then they ship it back to us and we go to the store to buy it." ■

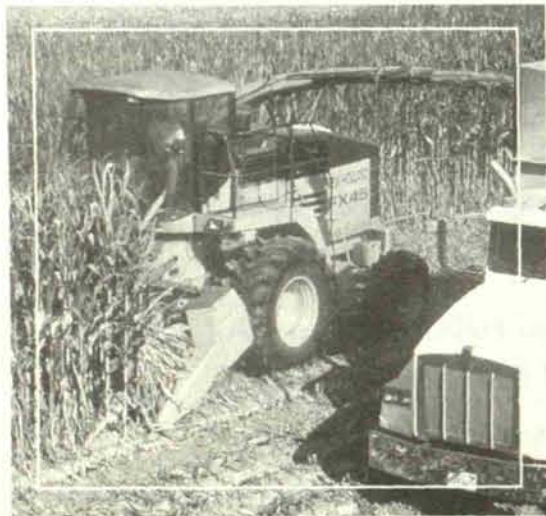
Rail mergers could cripple grain exports

Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman said recently he was worried that the recent rail mergers could hamper U.S. exports. The Agriculture Department has filed detailed comments to the U.S. Surface Transportation Board. The board is scheduled to vote on a merger between Conrail and CSX and Northern Southern Corp. in April.

"If we can't get the grain to port, we can't get our exports sold," Glickman said. "I am extremely worried about the availability of railway cars." ■

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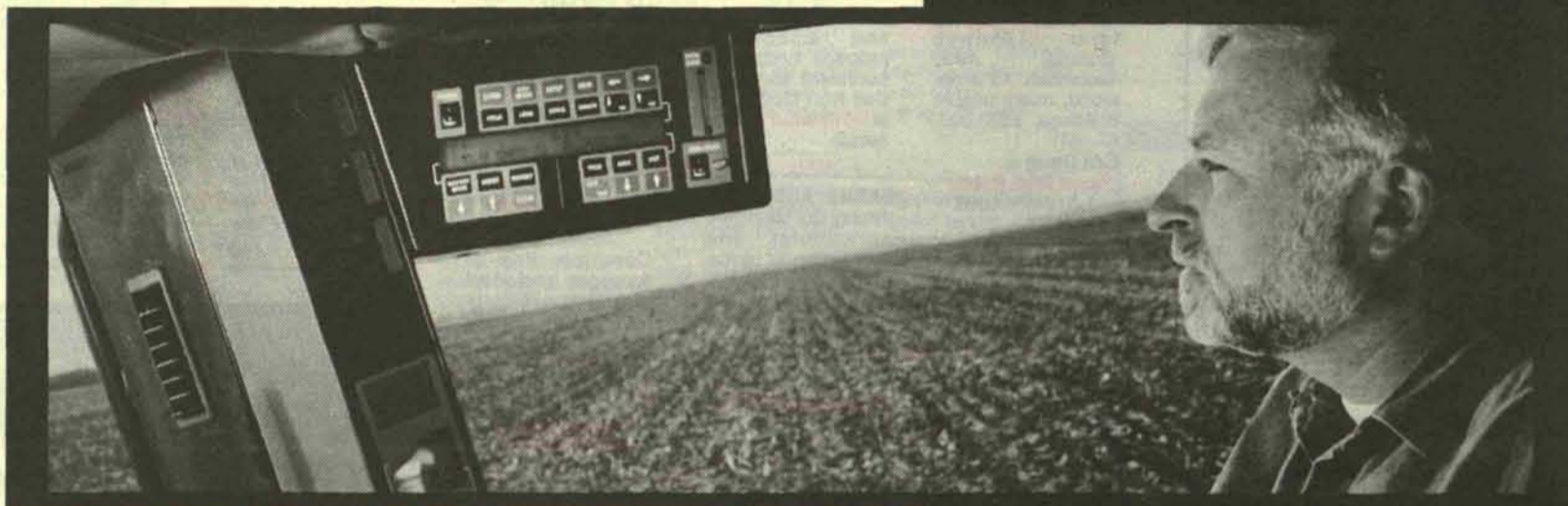
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Lapeer agriscience teacher finalist for national teacher of the year

Lapeer County Vo-Tech FFA agriscience teacher Tammy Belavek may have more to celebrate in December than the upcoming birth of her baby... she may be named the Vocational Teacher of the Year by the American Vocational Association.

The only problem is, her doctor won't let her fly to Las Vegas to be interviewed by a panel of judges at the award program. What to do? Enter the role of technology. Belavek's school principal, Tom Schubert, set the interviews up via satellite downlink through a local TV station.

"I will be able to compete and he will be there to receive the award, whatever it is," explained Belavek. "What a way to talk about vocational education and how the technology is increasing and how we can better communicate with the world through technology."

One of the things that garnered such a prestigious award for the teacher of seven years was her work co-authoring a \$360,000 Kellogg Grant to sponsor a fourth- through sixth-grade agriscience education program throughout the county.

"My goal has always been in the future to create a program — vocational program or an agriscience academy — for high school students to integrate all agriscience and natural resources with math, reading, English, history and government,"

Belavek said. "Those kids would come to the academy — it'd be a charter school — and get their education that way as it's integrated. We all know that students learn better as curriculum is applied to something that they're interested in."

"The one thing is that I've really wanted to expand agriscience education to everyone," she added. "We expanded the program at the local schools from 15 to well over 80 of my students alone, not including the total expansion of our agriscience program, including an evening agriscience program."

The evening agriscience is another example of Belavek getting things done with the support of her students. "Twelve students came to the board of education, with the support of the teachers, and said we will even pay \$200 a semester to start the evening agriscience program. Those 12 students paid \$200 for one semester. At the end of that semester, the board of education paid for the entire class to be sponsored throughout the school year every Tuesday and Thursday evening."

With the school district only 50 to 70 miles north of Detroit, Belavek is challenged by the relatively small number of students with any sort of farm background. "Only about 5 percent come from farm backgrounds," she said. "The expansion to a more agriscience basis — not agricultural production program, but a more agriscience-based

program, including biotechnology, aquaculture, in-depth study in animal science, not just producing animals, but how can we better produce animals through research and science — has increased our focus in our program."

How is the award scored?

"There is 100 points already from the application that was submitted with the letters of recommendation and the letters of support from community, parents, administrators and past students," Belavek explained. "The other 50 will be on the interview, and that is basically the philosophy behind vocational education that is going to count."

"Interesting enough, there are two agriculture teachers competing," she said. "The last few years agriculture has not been well represented with this award. Health occupation instructors, automobile mechanic programs, and machining and business people and those types of things have been recipients of that award, so we're pretty proud of that."



Tammy Belavek

Michigan crop production: Some crops forecast up from previous years, others down

Cool, wet September weather delayed maturity of most crops in Michigan, according to the Federal/State Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service. Some highlights of the report were as follows:

- Corn yield at 113 bushels per acre increased 3 bushels from last month and was up 19 bushels from 1996. Corn production increased 20 percent from last year. Although corn crop maturity was behind normal, the threat of widespread frost damage has dwindled. About 20 percent of acres were mature as of Oct. 1, half the five-year average for that date.
- Soybean production, at 7.4 million bushels, surpassed the 1995 record high. Yield, at 39 bushels per acre was down 1 bushel from the previous month, but up 10.5 bushels from the previous year. Total Michigan production was 58 percent above 1996. Soybean development fell behind normal in September; harvest began in late September.
- Dry bean yield, at 1,650 pounds per acre, was down 150 pounds from the Aug. 1 forecast. Expected production increased 10 percent from 1996. Wet weather in mid September dampened yield prospects. Black beans fared better than navies. Favorable harvest weather in late September pushed harvest beyond the halfway mark by Oct. 1.
- Sugarbeet yield, at 19 tons per acre, was unchanged from last month. The forecast yield was up 3.9 tons from 1996. September rains benefited the crop; harvest was set to begin the first week of October.
- All hay yield and production decreased 9 and 13 percent, respectively, from last year. Wet conditions last month reduced yields and hampered crop harvest. Alfalfa yielded 3.2 tons per acre while other hay yielded 2.2 tons.
- U.S. corn production was forecast at 9.31 billion bushels, up fractionally from 1996 and the September 1 forecast. If realized, this will be the third highest corn production on record. Based on conditions as of Oct. 1, yields were expected to average 125.8 bushels per acre, up 0.6 bushels from last month, but down 1.3 bushels from 1996.
- U.S. soybean production was forecast at 2.72 billion bushels, down slightly from the Sept. 1 forecast but 14 percent above the 1996 production. The yield forecast was 39 bushels per acre, 0.3 bushels below the Sept. 1 forecast but 1.4 bushels above the 1996 final yield. As of Oct. 5, 37 percent of the crop had been harvested in the 19 major producing states.

Checkoff making U.S. soybean meal, oil more globally competitive

The soybean checkoff is researching methods to make U.S. soybean meal and soybean oil exports more competitive in the global market.

In a recent checkoff-funded study compiled by LMC International from 1990 to 1995, production costs and tariffs were discovered to be direct contributing factors to the competitiveness of U.S. soybean meal and oil.

Of the nine primary soybean-producing countries, the United States ranks sixth with soybean production costs 6 percent (\$221.6/ton) above the world weighted average (\$208.7/ton), including wages and crop management. Argentina was 22 percent below the world average (\$163.6/ton).

In the United States, higher wages were counteracted by highly mechanized crop husbandry practices. Capital and fuel/fertilizer/chemical costs were higher than in most other countries.

Despite the higher costs of producing soybeans, the United States ranked second (\$20.3/ton) behind the Netherlands (\$20.2/ton) out of 15 countries in maintaining lower soybean processing costs. The world-weighted average is \$23.5/ton. The United States has relatively low capital processing costs, which indicates large average plant scale, high rates of utilization and high levels of efficiency.

Even with the United States being an efficient soybean processing country with higher quality products, most foreign customers' decisions are based on protecting their existing domestic production markets. For instance, many countries in Southeast Asia still prefer the use of palm oil, which is native to that geographic region, as opposed to importing soybean oil.

Corn Experts Speak Out on the Penny Per Bushel Check off

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President
Michigan Farm Bureau
Corn grower and dairyman
Tuscola County

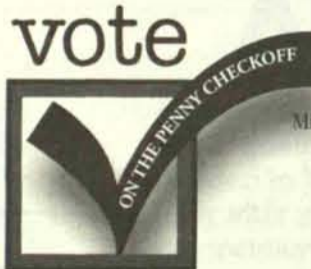
research and by investing in manufacturing that will consume more corn. It also goes for education, to help corn growers like you learn about the latest technological advances to improve your profitability.



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Fall and winter barn ventilation requires care

by Bill Bickert,
MSU Dept. of Agricultural Engineering

As fall and winter approach and temperatures drop, people tend to close ventilation openings in barns. They have good intentions, trying to keep livestock warm. Unfortunately, with reduced ventilation, excessive moisture accumulates in the air. And animals may be killed with kindness!

Ventilation system management is critical during times of changing temperatures, even in a properly ventilated barn with open ridges and eaves and open sidewalls and endwalls. This becomes even more critical later on when, at the first sign of cold weather, we adjust ventilation for winter conditions but encounter warmer weather in the meantime.

If we don't open something for additional air movement, moisture buildup in the air will occur and the result is a cold, damp environment. Not much is worse, especially for baby calves, in terms of environment. The situation worsens when periods of weather around 35-40° F are accompanied by rain.

Unfortunately, when experiencing a cold, damp barn, the tendency may be to close it up even more, in response to our feeling cold and damp, when we should provide more ventilation to flush out built-up moisture.

Changes in weather during fall, winter and spring often give rise to respiratory problems in animals, especially in calves when wide fluctuations in temperature occur. Proper attention to ventilation system management may lessen the problems. Such management is especially important in barns depending upon natural ventilation and is crucial in barns where the natural ventilation is marginal at best.

In winter, air movement through the barn should be sufficient to maintain inside temperature within 5-10°F above outside temperature. Hang a thermometer inside the barn. If the temperature inside is more than 5-10°F above outside temperature, more ventilation is necessary. Also, persistent condensation or odor indicate that additional ventilation must be provided.

Over-ventilation is better than under-ventilation! ■

Guidelines for buying high moisture shelled corn

Many dairy and livestock farmers will be short of shelled corn this year. Some cash crop farmers may have immature corn that is very wet and will not make good dry corn. Cash crop farms will be looking to those farms in need of corn as a way to market some of their crop. The question then becomes how to set a fair price for high moisture shelled corn (HMSC). Here are some guidelines to follow. When negotiating a price with a cash crop farm, determine the following:

- The amount of corn you wish to purchase, normally quoted in wet bushels (call the Extension office if you need to know silo capacities)
- The maximum corn moisture percent you will accept (for example, nothing above 34 percent moisture)
- How you will base the price. For example, routinely based on the market price of dry corn at 15 percent moisture with the HMSC price adjust-

Table A — Shrink

Corn moisture	Shrink factor	Multiplication factor
26.0	.154	.846
27.0	.168	.832
28.0	.182	.818
29.0	.199	.801
30.0	.219	.781
31.0	.239	.761
32.0	.259	.741
33.0	.279	.721
34.0	.299	.701
35.0	.319	.681

Multiplication factor = 1 shrink factor

ed to an elevator's shrink table (see Table A), according to moisture

- Offer some guarantee of payment, as you should understand sellers get nervous when they deliver \$20,000 worth of corn to a person they don't know and may never meet. Routinely, some farms are getting a guaranteed note from their lender up to a set dollar amount; others are setting up an escrow account with a third party, such as a lender, to draw out of as the corn is delivered
- Ask the cash cropper if there is a mortgage on the crop, and if there is, how the payment should be handled (this will avoid legal hassles for yourself)
- Determine trucking price, routinely \$2 per loaded mile.

How to determine pay price for delivered HMSC

- Before delivery, agree to a fair market price for 15 percent moisture corn; you can use an area elevator to give you a local price. If you have a method to determine corn test weight, you may agree to discount the market price if the test weight is below 54 (see Table B). Other possible discounts are for foreign material and kernel damage, mold or sour smell.
- Determine actual corn moisture.
- Determine delivered wet weight of truckload from the trucker's certified scale receipts.
- Then use the following equation: (multiplication factor from Table A X delivered wet weight) X market price of dry corn per bushel /56 (which is the weight of dry corn per

Table B — Test weight discounts

Test weight	Discount \$ / bu.
53	.01
52	.02
51	.03
50	.04
49	.06
48	.08
47	.10
46	.12

bushel) = value of truckload corn.

Here is an example: 47,458 pounds of wet corn delivered, your agreed market price is \$3.25 per bushel for 15 percent corn, the corn is 30 percent moisture and the trucking is to be \$2 per loaded mile delivered from 90 miles away.

$$(.781 \times 47,458) \times \$3.25 = \$2151.08 \text{ value of truckload of corn/56}$$

$$\$2151.08 = (\$2.00 \text{ per mile} \times 90 \text{ miles}) = \$2331.08 \text{ delivered price}$$

$$\$2331.08 / (47458 / 2000) \text{ tons} = \$98.36 \text{ delivered price per ton of 30 percent HMSC}$$

An adjustment to the market price may be made if the test weight of the corn is low. Shrink factors in the following condensed table have a range of 1.4 percent shrink per point of moisture up to 2.0 percent shrink per point of moisture. This increases as corn moisture goes up. It also incorporates a percent dry matter handling loss. ■

Growers develop skills to benefit agriculture industry

Kenneth Swanson, of Bannister, Mich., joined 22 fellow National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) members at a Leadership Development Program here, sponsored by Novartis Crop Protection, Inc. Twenty-one members of the American Soybean Association (ASA) also attended.

"Leadership is an acquired skill," said Wallie Hardie, NCGA president and Leadership Development Program graduate. "Even people who have natural leadership qualities benefit from honing their skills at this program. These growers come away with a sense of confidence in their abilities to

make an impact on our industry."

During the intensive, three-day program, growers learned association management techniques, how to give successful presentations and how to work with the media. Participants took part in mock news interviews, which were videotaped and critiqued by a media skills consultant. They also completed a brain dominance profile to learn more about their own strengths and weaknesses.

While in Greensboro, growers toured the Novartis Crop Protection headquarters where they learned more about the science behind crop pro-

tection technology.

This group of NCGA members will participate in a second session of the Leadership Development Program in Washington, D.C., in spring 1998. In Washington, they will take their issues directly to members of Congress after completing sessions on effective lobbying.

"NCGA is relying on these growers to represent agricultural interests to legislators," said Hardie. "The Leadership Development Program helps train them to do that." ■

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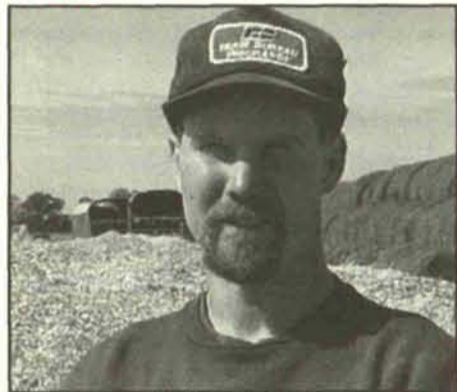
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◆ 1997 YOUNG FARMER FINALISTS ◆

Michigan Farm Bureau has announced its 12 finalists for the Outstanding Young Agricultural Leader, Young Farmer Achievement Award and Outstanding Young Farm Employee contests. The winners will be determined at the annual meeting in Traverse City, Dec. 9-12. The awards are presented to farmers who have demonstrated agricultural involvement, leadership in Farm Bureau and their communities and achievement. The 12 finalists will each receive a Carhartt jacket courtesy of Blue Cross Blue Shield. Each state contest winner will receive \$500 from Dodge Truck, an expense-paid trip to the AFBF annual meeting in Charlotte, N.C.

Young Farmer Achievement Award



Jack L. Jeppesen
Stanton, Montcalm County
Wife: Mary
Children: Kaleigh, 9; Kyle, 7

Farm operation

Owner/operator of 660-acre farm including 360 acres of corn, 150 acres of alfalfa, 20 acres of oats, along with 167 dairy cows. Farm herdsman, mechanic, bookkeeper and some field work. Supplies neighboring farms with seed corn, alfalfa and soybeans. Raises pheasants and Christmas trees on land unsuitable for cultivation.

Farm Bureau involvement

Serves on county Young Farmer Committee, board of directors as director at large and as Group Purchasing vendor. Formerly chaired Young Farmer, Local Affairs and Delegate Committees. Served as state annual delegate and county president while serving on Media Response Team, Local Affairs Committee, MACMA Committee, Candidate Evaluation Committee, Policy Development and Promotion and Education Committees. Part of state Young Farmer Committee and attended AFBF Young Farmer/Young Rancher Conference.

Community involvement

Serves as township board trustee and on township planning/zoning commission, SCS Wildlife Rehab Management Team and parent advisory committee for First Step preschool. Hosted a farm tour for local elementary, developmentally-challenged students. Volunteers selling dairy products at the "Little Red Barn" for MMPA.



Jerry Kroll
Montague, Oceana County
Wife: Beth
Children: Joel, 9; Kati, 7; Emily, 5

Farm operation

Maintains 398-acre farm with 170 acres of corn, 110 acres of alfalfa, 45 acres of wheat, 35 acres of oats and 8 acres of asparagus along with 97 dairy cows. Responsible for all areas of farm operation. Custom harvests for neighboring farmers and occasionally hauls livestock.

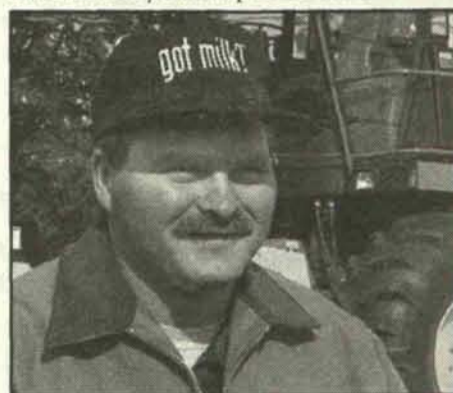
Farm Bureau involvement

Serves on county board of directors, Policy Development Committee and as Group Purchasing vendor and Membership chair. Served as a state delegate, Community Action Group chair and participated in Young Farmer Discussion Meet. Presented at Farm

Safety Camp. Attended Lansing Legislative Seminar.

Community involvement

Serves as a Sunday school teacher, youth group sponsor and AWANA leader in local church and is a church youth camp board member.



Bruce Lewis
Jonesville, Hillsdale County
Wife: Jennifer

Children: Adam, 8; Brittany, 6; Conner, 4

Farm operation

Partner in a 2,350-acre farm producing 1,000 acres of corn, 130 acres of wheat, 600 acres of soybeans, 420 acres of alfalfa and 98 acres of popcorn along with 440 dairy cows and 80 steers. Manages field crops and sales, repairs, small heifers and calves. Does some custom work for neighbors.

Farm Bureau involvement

Serves as an executive board member and formerly a member of Agricultural Accident Rescue Program, County Annual Planning and Tire Recycling Day Committees.

Community involvement

Active in local Jaycee chapter serving as past Human Service Projects chair.



Scott Miller
Elsie, Shiawassee County
Wife: Jane

Children: Randi, 10; Damien, 8

Farm operation

Cash crop farm with 1,000 acres of corn and 1,000 acres of soybeans. Responsible for all corn planting and half of soybeans. Hauls his own and area farmers' grain. Delivers seed corn and beans for a local seed company. Does some custom harvesting and spraying for neighbors.

Farm Bureau involvement

Serves on county board of directors, State and Local Affairs, Young Farmer and Annual Committees and as this year's state and Washington Legislative Seminar representative and state Liquid Fertilizer Storage Committee.

Community involvement

Serves as township board trustee, church board trustee and head freshman football coach. Coaches Little League baseball and softball and junior wrestling.

Outstanding Young Agricultural Leader



Loretta Benjamin
Webberville, Ingham County
Husband: Todd

Children: Daniel, 10; Rebecca, 6

Farm operation

Works on family farm milking 90 cows and producing 600 acres of hay, corn, wheat and beans. Promotes registered cows by showing them at state shows and county fair. Actively keeps legislators and government officials informed of priority farming issues. Helps maintain a balance between farm and family time.

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1997 YOUNG FARMER FINALISTS

Farm Bureau involvement

Chairs county Promotion and Education, Ag in the Classroom, Ag Olympics, Ag Week and Rural Education Day. Also serves on county Young Farmer and Promotion and Education Committees. Chaired county MACMA, VIP Tour, Ag Days in the City and Ag Day at the Zoo. Attended Lansing Legislative Seminar, state Promotion and Education seminar, Traverse City Outreach and Young Farmer Leadership Conference. Served as state annual delegate.

Community involvement

Chaired Webberville Playground Project. Involved in Webberville Elementary Boosters, Webberville 4-H Club, Ingham County 4-H Council and her local church. Volunteers at Webberville Elementary School.



Debra Kubacki
Sebewaing, Huron County
Husband: Timothy

Farm operation

Owns and operates 400-acre cash crop and 75-milking-cow/70-heifer replacement dairy operation with her husband. Crops include sugar beets, corn, oats, navy beans, alfalfa and wheat. Operation became a centennial farm in 1996. Maintains all field and herd management while maintaining all farm records.

Farm Bureau involvement

Serves on county board of directors, Promotion and Education Committee, membership contact program, Dairy Commodity Committee, Resolutions Committee and Young People's Citizenship Seminar. Chairs Annual Committee, Reinstate Ag in the Classroom and Little Red Barn Project. Attended Project T.E.A.M. Conference and FFA Career Leadership Conference.

Community involvement

Participates in Sebewaing Sparkettes and Sebewaing Jaycettes where she has served as president and vice president. Teaches Sunday school at Immanuel Lutheran Church and sings in the choir. Volunteers with Pheasants Forever, Sebewaing Sugar Festival, Huron County Fair and Agriculture in the Classroom.



Beth Snider
Hart, Oceana County
Husband: Aaron

Children: Luke, 12; Holly, 10; Zack, 6

Farm operation

Operates a contract turkey facility raising 65,000 annually with her husband. Maintain 135 sows raising 3,100 feeder pigs each year. Lost 60-cow registered Holstein dairy herd and barn to fire last November. Assists in raising corn, alfalfa, soybeans and other small grains on 450 acres.

Farm Bureau involvement

Currently serves on county board of directors as third member on the executive committee. Served as Happy Harvesters Community Action Group minuteman and secretary, Young Farmer chairperson, delegate to state annual meeting, Young People's Citizenship Seminar counselor, as well as a member of Policy Development, Information, County Annual, Candidate Evaluation and Promotion and Education committees. Attended Lansing and Washington Legislative Seminars and Young Farmer Leadership Conference. Participated in Young Farmer Discussion Meet, State Discussion Meet and ProFILE.

Community involvement

Volunteers as First Baptist Church organist, choir member, Sunday school teacher and AWANA Club

junior high youth leader/mentor, Oceana Christian School hot lunch program coordinator, Neighborhood Fundraising Crusader for American Cancer Society, Hart Area Recreation Program Girls Softball Coach and with Brooks Bacon Makers 4-H Club. Served as Women's Missionary Fellowship president.



Patti Warnke
St. Johns, Clinton County
Husband: John
Children: Bethany, 6; Allison, 4

Farm operation

Assists with operations on 300-cow dairy operation while producing 300 acres of hay, 300 acres of corn and 350 pasture acres. Instituted a new health plan with lower deductibles for all farm employees. Maintains all personal and household records.

Farm Bureau involvement

Served as county board president and Young Farmer chair. Member of Membership, Promotion and Education, Policy Development, Information Committees, County Annual Planning, and Community Action Group. Participated in Discussion Meet, state Young Farmer Conference and softball tournament. Delegate to state annual meeting and an AFBF representative.

Community involvement

Teaches Sunday school at Lowe Church. Volunteers with St. Johns Elementary School, Maple Rapids Library as a storyteller, R.A.V.E. child care center, Clinton County 4-H and Traditions Christmas, serving lunch to the homeless.

Outstanding Young Farm Employee



Mark Todd
Reed City, Osceola County
Wife: Sharon

Farm operation

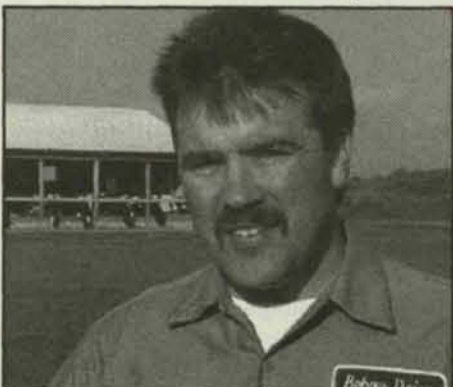
Family dairy farm consists of three centennial farms producing 300 acres of corn, 400 acres of alfalfa, 100 acres of oats and 100 acres of wheat. Milks 150 registered Holsteins and Brown Swiss while raising most of their replacements. Raise bull calves for feeders or finish them out as steers.

Farm Bureau involvement

Serves on the Osceola County Young Farmer Committee and Community Action Group since 1992.

Community involvement

Active in the Mecosta County 4-H Junior Livestock Club where he was a member for 10 years.



Eric McNeilly
St. Louis, Gratiot County
Wife: Kay

Agriculture operation

Herdsmen/dairy manager for a 600-cow operation on 6,500-acre cash crop farm. Responsible for all aspects of the dairy operation. Manages dairy employees and serves as purchasing agent for all feed and medical supplies.

Farm Bureau involvement

Member of Gratiot County Young Farmers. Attended Young Farmer Leaders' Conference. Former vice president and state delegate for Mecosta County. Former member of Mecosta County Young Farmers and Peach County, Ga., Young Farmers.

Community involvement

Volunteers at Chippewa Hills High School with FFA Dairy Judging. Provided judging and showmanship clinics to 4-H and FFA in Mecosta County and Macon County, Ga.



Peggy Miller
West Branch, Ogemaw County

Farm operation

Herd manager for a dairy farm with 150 Holstein cattle and 150 replacement heifers on 655 acres. Maintains all computerized cow and replacement heifer records, including breeding programs. Oversees all care, feeding and health management. Works with a nutritionist. Maintains all milking/work schedules.

Farm Bureau involvement

Serves as Young Farmer chair, Promotion and Education chair and Policy Development Committee member. Chaired "I Milked a Cow" booth at county fair, Ag Rescue Seminar, "Are We Losing Our Farm Heritage" fair booth and presently working on the Little Red Barn project for this fall. She has been an Ogemaw County board member since 1994.

Community involvement

Volunteers as an Ogemaw County 4-H Sheep Leader and Livestock Committee Member. Works in Ogemaw County Ag Society office. Member of Mich-

igan FFA Alumni Association. Member of Michigan State University Dairy Club where she chaired Small Animals Day and the "I Milked a Cow" booth at the Michigan State Fair. Planned a Small Animals Day for West Branch Library.



Michael Boensch
Whittemore, Iosco County

Farm operation

Employed as a mechanic/maintenance supervisor for a 3,600-acre partnership. Responsible for routine maintenance and repair of farm's 20 tractors, 14 trucks, three choppers, two combines, tillage tools and planting, harvesting and feedlot equipment. Maintains accurate records for all equipment repairs. Orders extra parts for upcoming repairs and maintains shop inventories.

Farm Bureau involvement

Serves as county board of directors vice president and on Policy Development Committee. Served as county president, Young Farmer chairperson and newsletter editor and has served on Membership and Candidate Evaluation Committees and as third member of the executive committee. Served on state's Young Farmer and Policy Development Committees.

Community involvement

Volunteers as a Reno Township trustee, Knights of Columbus treasurer, Pastoral Council member at St. Pius X Catholic Church and as a member of the Iosco County Agricultural Society Board of Directors.

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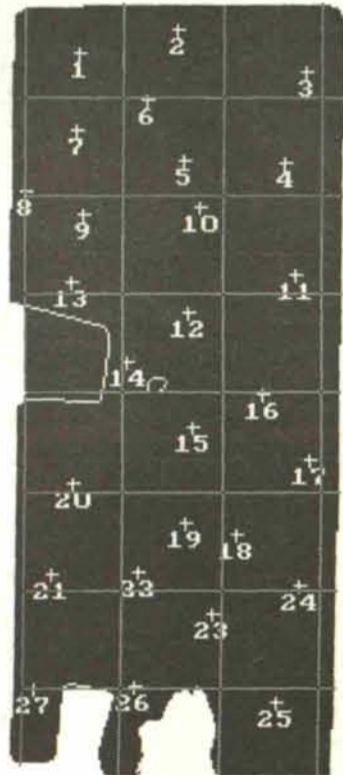
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Precision Agriculture

by Neil R. Miller

Let's face it — when the glaciers retreated north, leaving behind most of Michigan's soils, they did not vary rates or materials every 330 feet. Neither do our crop yields, and neither should our fertilizer spreaders. GPS-based services have increased dramatically in the past year, but their quality still varies widely. In order to judge the value of what you're paying for, consider the following:



Sample Locations

Figure 1 "Smart" grid sampling directs sample points to significant management zones rather than at the center of square grids.

Nature is not square

Geo-referencing management zones

For many of our clients, we have used GPS to log the actual boundaries of naturally occurring and/or human-imposed soil management zones. This is a tedious process, but it has allowed us to produce fertility maps that correlate better with yield data than virtually any other economically viable approach.

"Smart" grid sampling

If your consultant or dealer samples by grids, ask that they use soil characteristics, yield maps, and other "smart" techniques to direct their sampling points to important management zones (Figure 1). Areas of high variability should be sampled more intensively than areas with relatively low variability. These sampling techniques should improve the accuracy of fertilizer spreading maps. Staggered sampling also helps minimize the problem of skewed data caused by past spreader overlaps or skips, which tend to follow parallel lines.

Interpolation of grid point data

Regardless of how your grid points were selected, their value can be easily and dramatically enhanced by a process called interpolation (Figure 2). This is a set of mathematical smoothing procedures that estimate the value at any point in a field using data from multiple locations throughout the field. A 1994 University of Wisconsin study showed that interpolation improved grid-sampled potassium maps from an accuracy of less than 35 percent to around 70 percent. Phosphorus maps were increased from less than 50 percent accurate to 65-70 percent.

Insist on the best

Virtually every software package being used by custom applicators to spread fertilizer in Michigan is capable of some form of interpolation. SGIS (used by Crop Production Services and Star of the West) and the Vision System (Terra) automatically interpolate spreading maps. Fieldlink (used by Anderson Agri-Group, Grower Service and IMC) can apply by square grids or interpolated (contoured) spreading maps. If you are paying a consultant or elevator to grid sample your fields, insist that they use interpolation to improve the accuracy of your spreading maps. If we in the industry don't use the tools at our fingertips to deliver the highest quality product possible, we can hardly claim to be practicing "precision."



0-0-60 (lbs/acre)

Figure 2 Interpolation uses data from multiple locations to smooth variability and enhance the accuracy of spreading maps.

If you have any topic suggestions for the Precision Agriculture column, please write to Michigan Farm News, P.O. Box 30960, Lansing, MI 48909, or send e-mail to: mfbinfo@aol.com

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Wheat 2000 leadership changes; former chair to focus on sugar beets

The leadership of the Wheat 2000 steering committee, organized in 1995 to help bolster per-acre wheat yield and reverse the continuing decline in acreage planted to wheat, has changed.

Rich Hodupp, MSU Extension field crops agent, and Bob Boehm, manager of the field crops department in the Commodity and Environmental Division of Michigan Farm Bureau, are now co-chairs of the Wheat 2000 steering committee.

The change was announced at the organization's Oct. 17 meeting at MSU. Steve Poindexter, MSU Extension agricultural agent in Saginaw, has been the steering committee chair since 1995. He was appointed the MSU Extension district sugar beet agent in midsummer.

Boehm and Hodupp are charter members of the Wheat 2000 steering committee.

Hodupp says his goals are to increase grower membership in Wheat 2000, which currently has 1,050 members, and attract funding.

"Now that the organization is well established with most of the state's growers, we need to obtain funding that will enable Wheat 2000 to continue to do its work in increasing the viability of the crop in Michigan," Hodupp says.

He says there is merit in the organization becoming a permanent entity and functioning similarly to the state associations for corn, soybean and dry edible beans.

Boehm concurs, saying Wheat 2000's educational effort with growers has been impressive and needs to continue to help maintain the competitiveness of the crop with other grain commodities.

"We would like to see more grower involvement on the steering committee and greater participation of growers in on-farm wheat research," Boehm says. "We think that more on-farm research is one of the more practical ways to increase yield and the stability of the crop's position in Michigan agriculture."

He says the MFB membership strongly supports Wheat 2000 practices and goals and that the organization will help encourage other growers to participate in the program.

More information about Wheat 2000 can be obtained from Boehm by calling him at (517) 323-7000 or Hodupp at (810) 667-0341.

Processing tomatoes, snap beans, asparagus down as onions reach record high

Production of processing tomatoes and snap beans contracted for processing are down from last year, according to the Federal/State Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service.

Michigan onions are forecast to the record high yield. Record low May temperatures got the Michigan asparagus crop off to a poor start.

Estimated production of processing snap beans decreased to 66,000 tons, down 5 percent from last year. Snap bean yield decreased to 3 tons per acre, down 9 percent from 1996 while acreage increased 5 percent to 22,000 acres.

Michigan's processing tomato production is forecast at 115,600 tons, down 17 percent from a year ago. The projected yield of 34 tons per acre increased by 5 percent from 1996. Processors contracted 3,400 acres of tomatoes this year, down 21 percent from 1996. The cool, wet May has delayed maturity. Harvest will begin about three weeks late in early September.

Michigan's asparagus production totaled 263,000 hundredweight (cwt.), down 12 percent from 1996. The area harvested for fresh market and processing asparagus was 17,500 acres, unchanged from the previous year.

Michigan's asparagus harvest got off to a low start due to record cold temperatures in May that caused some frost damage. Harvest then proceeded normally and yielded 15 cwt. per acre. Fresh market production totaled 39,000 cwt. valued at \$3.12 million. Processing production totaled 11,200 tons, valued at \$14.7 million.

Michigan's onion acres for harvest is 6,000, up 3 percent from 1996. The projected production of 2.04 million cwt. is up 13 percent, and the estimated onion yield of 340 cwt. increased 10 percent from last year. Onion harvest in Michigan is underway, maturity is behind but the crop outlook is excellent. Yield is forecast at record tying high due to ideal summer conditions.

Nationally, processing vegetable production for the four major processing crops is forecast at 14.3 million tons, down 9 percent from last year and 10 percent less than two years ago.

Production of processing tomatoes, at 10.0 million tons, is off 11 percent from last year and the lowest since 1993.

Snap bean production, at 718,460 tons, is down 3 percent from last year.

Sweet corn production, at 3.07 million tons, is off 7 percent from last year, and green pea production, at 494,680 tons, is up 20 percent from 1996.

Acres for harvest for the four major processing vegetable crops, at 1.20 million acres, are 4 percent less than in 1996.

Asparagus production is estimated at 1.98 million cwt. 1 percent less than in 1996 and 2 percent below 1995. Fresh market production is up 7 percent from 1996 while processed production is off 10 percent.

The U.S. storage onion production is forecast at 35.8 million cwt. Up 8 percent from last year and 2 percent more than in 1985.

Study shows stronger link between CJD, mad cow

A study by British scientists gives stronger backing to the once-suspected link between mad cow disease and the human brain disorder Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. In a study performed at the University of Reading in England, researchers said laboratory studies show the same strain of germs that cause mad cow cause the similar CJD in humans.

The study and another corroborating study found the same infectious proteins called prions are to blame in both CJD and mad cow. In one study, researchers injected laboratory mice with ground up brain samples of persons who died from mad cow-associated CJD and injected others with another CJD variant. Mice with the mad cow-like injection exhibited symptoms similar to cattle with the disease while the other batch did not exhibit the same symptoms.

British officials say 21 people have been infected with CJD from eating contaminated beef.

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National Conservation Buffer Council promotes commonsense conservation

The National Conservation Buffer Council (NCBC), a new private-sector organization dedicated to the promotion of agricultural conservation practices, officially opened its office in late October.

"This is an exciting day for those of us who are concerned about environmental quality and profitable farm production," said NCBC President David Stawick. "These two goals are not mutually exclusive, and NCBC will be working for the attainment of both."

Stawick said NCBC will encourage farmers and ranchers to establish conservation buffers — tactically placed strips of grass and other vegetation — that reduce rainfall runoff and soil erosion. "Practices like filter strips, riparian buffers, contour grass strips and grassed waterways can be tremendously effective in protecting our water and soil resources," Stawick said.

NCBC was formed to assist in the attainment of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's goal, announced by Secretary Dan Glickman last April, of establishing buffers to protect two million miles of stream banks and lake shores by 2002. Specifically, NCBC plans to promote USDA's continuous enrollment of buffers in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Under the CRP, farmers and ranchers retire environmentally fragile land in exchange for annual

rental payments to compensate for lost production.

"Congress created and expanded valuable conservation assistance programs in the 1996 Farm Bill and USDA has worked hard to implement the programs. Now it's up to landowners to participate," Stawick said. "In addition, the private sector must also step up to the plate to encourage producers to take part."

Sponsors of the NCBC are Cargill, Inc.; ConAgra, Inc.; Farmland Industries, Inc.; Novartis Crop Protection, Inc.; Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc.; Terra Industries, Inc.; the National Corn Growers Association; and the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives. "We expect that dozens of other groups operating at the national, state and local levels will also help us get out the message," Stawick said.

Stawick comes to NCBC from the Senate Agriculture Committee staff of Chairman Richard Lugar, where he played a major role in the development of the conservation title of the 1996 Farm Bill. Prior to that, he was in charge of environmental issues for the National Corn Growers Association and earlier worked as a wire service reporter and farm broadcaster. ■

Thelen appointed director of new environmental stewardship division

To better address the environmental impacts of agriculture on the state's resources, the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) has appointed the director of its newly created Environmental Stewardship Division, MDA Director Dan Wyant announced today.

"Dr. Kurt Thelen is an outstanding individual with very strong credentials in the areas of pollution prevention, groundwater stewardship, natural resource protection and pesticide management," Wyant said. "Kurt shares my philosophy that we want to work with the industry to continually raise environmental protection in agriculture, without compromising our farmers' economic viability."

"Farmers are the original soil conservationists in this country, and the real work in environmental protection is best done at the local level," Wyant said. "By creating an Environmental Stewardship Division and working with our local partners, we will enhance and encourage Michigan farmers' efforts to reduce environmental impacts into the next century."

The Environmental Stewardship Division will work in concert with local agricultural and environmental agencies, including soil conservation districts and MSU Extension offices, Thelen said. The Environmental Stewardship Division has just announced \$3 million in grants to be used for groundwater protection and education by local soil conservation districts across the state.

Other programs within the 40-person office include the right-to-farm program, spill response for agricultural chemicals, groundwater monitoring, state pesticide management plans, interaction with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on agricultural matters, forestry on private lands, and pollution prevention. Environmental Stewardship priorities also include overseeing the inter-county drainage system, and inspection of migrant labor housing for Michigan's 842 camps serving the state farming industry.

The Environmental Stewardship Division concentrates environmental programs previously scattered in several areas of MDA.

Thelen, of Westphalia, holds bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees from the Crop and Soil Sciences Department at Michigan State University where he is also an instructor. He has worked at MDA since 1990, and previously worked at the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

In addition to his strong academic credentials, Thelen also understands the practical side of farming having been a partner in his family's 500-acre crop and dairy farm, and owns his own small cash crop, tree and beef cattle operation. He is a member of several professional organizations and has authored numerous papers on the environmental impacts of agricultural chemicals. ■

New diagnostic tool to aid in eradicating cattle TB

A new diagnostic test takes only two to three days to detect the bacterium that causes cattle tuberculosis, an improvement over current diagnostic methods that take two to three months.

Mycobacterium bovis — the culprit in cattle tuberculosis — is very similar to two other bacteria: *M. avium* and *M. paratuberculosis*. The inability to distinguish between these similar organisms has slowed down the U.S. Department of Agriculture's goal of eradicating cattle tuberculosis by the year 2000.

Scientists with USDA's Agricultural Research Service in Ames, Iowa, developed the new diagnostic test at the request of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). The test uses polymerase chain reaction (PCR), a technique that makes millions of copies of targeted genetic materi-

al found only in *M. bovis*. Making so many copies of the targeted DNA allows easy identification of *M. bovis*, which couldn't be seen before the PCR amplification. Extensive tests in other laboratories have proven that this piece of DNA isn't present in other mycobacterial species.

The researchers checked the PCR test by examining 99 known cases of TB in cattle and elk. In 93 percent of the cases, they could make an accurate diagnosis within two to three days after receiving the tissue samples. The speedier diagnosis will allow APHIS officials to take immediate action to identify the most common sources of cattle tuberculosis: imported Mexican steers, the captive elk and deer population, and large dairy herds with low levels of infection. ■

Report hands down statistic: Farmers twice as likely to be killed on the job

According to a report released by the International Labor Organization, agricultural workers worldwide are twice as likely to be killed while at work than employees in other sectors.

Out of 1.3 billion agricultural workers worldwide, 170,000 were killed each of the past 10 years. The report says mortality rates in the farm sector have remained high while other dangerous occupations, such as construction and mining, have

experienced improved safety records.

In the United States, farmers and farm workers make up only 3 percent of the workforce, according to the report. Yet, nearly 8 percent of all work-related accidents occurred in the agriculture sector.

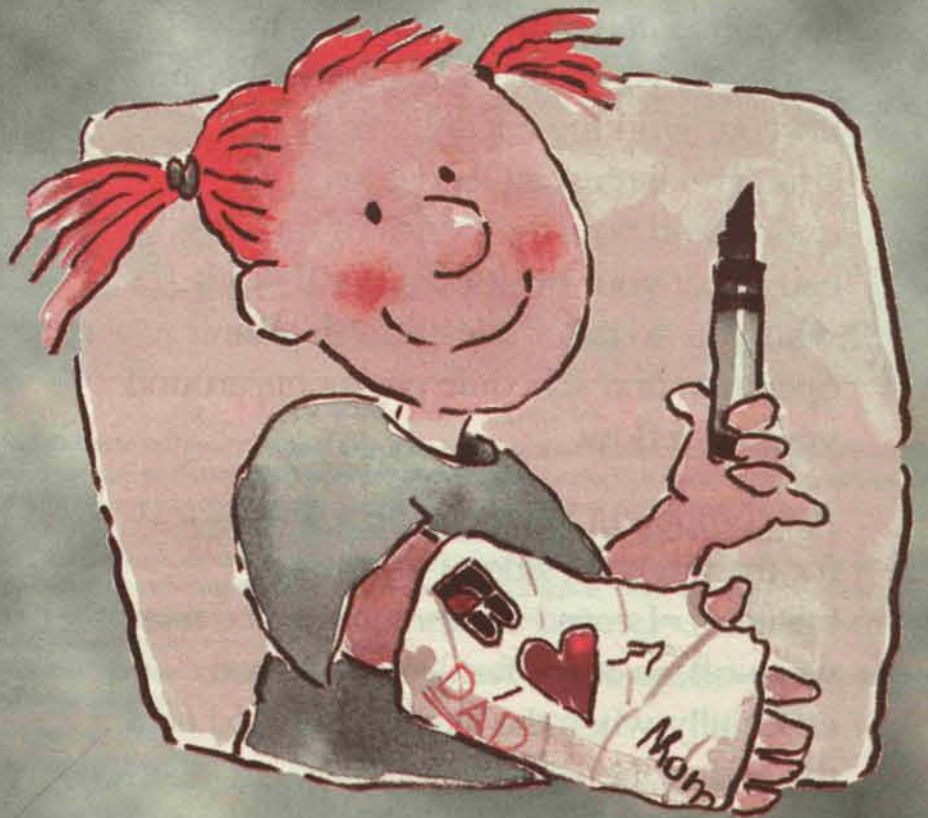
The report says cutting tools and machinery — such as tractors and harvesters — are the leading causes of death and injury, but it mentions exposure to pesticides and other chemicals as major causes. ■

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Agriculture Credit Conference focuses on adding value to farms

For more than 20 years, MSU's agricultural economics department has sponsored an annual conference geared toward credit issues facing Michigan agriculture. This year's conference was no different — but it went beyond just current agricultural credit, it looked at ways farmers are making their farming operations more profitable to compete in a world market.

The one-day conference targeted the bulk of Michigan's agricultural finance sector — those who provide the capital to keep Michigan farming. The commercial bankers, Farm Service Agency and Farm Credit Services representatives from across the state who attended learned of the move afoot to add profit to the producer's bottom line by adding value to their raw commodities.

"Value added is a very frequently used buzz term right now," explained Dr. Steve Hanson, coordinator of the event from MSU's department of agricultural economics. "People aren't exactly sure what it is or what it means. But it's happening around us and one of the goals of this conference was to increase people's awareness and get them to start to think about these issues."

"Value-added is the process of giving something more than just a commodity value," stated Jerry Thompson, vice president of commercial lending in Frankenmuth. "The way that I try to measure value-added is looking through the processor toward the ultimate end user, usually the consumer, and making a product more favorable to them in a manner that, quite frankly, the consumer is willing to pay for."

"Grower ownership of value-added processing is a key component to increasing farm income and enhancing rural economic development," explained Bob Boehm, MFB's field crops manager. "We're pleased to see the interest in the concept from agricultural lenders, because many producers will look to their lender for equity capital. Lender understanding and support of the value-added concept will play a critical role in the expansion of

grower investments in these operations."

Value-added instances

"The chipping potato is the one that's come on the strongest in the last few years," added Thompson. "There's been approximately an 85 percent change in the production that was done in the Red River Valley that has been transferred to Michigan. It's been transferred to Michigan because of improved varieties in Michigan, based on our use of technology and the investment by Michigan producers in potato storage facilities. And there is, of course, a rail transportation advantage in Michigan over the Red River Valley."

"As the people are participating with their clients," added Hanson, "they will see these activities happening more and more often, if they're aware of them, then they know how to start to think about these things and communicate with their clientele."

"Because of low profit margins in production agriculture," he said, "they're looking for other ways to expand. You can only buy so much land out there. There's a fixed land base out there, and you can only squeeze so many bushels of grain out of that land, and they're looking for ways to expand and grow. One way is to move vertically through the food system."

"Like any business decision, you need to evaluate the risk and the reward ratio," Thompson cautions. "You need to understand what it will take to add value, the reward for the value added, how consistent that added value reward will be, the competition for that product and what your market niche is."

Coming from the perspective of someone sitting on the bank's side of the table when it comes to talking financing Michigan's farmers, Thompson explained that raising credit cannot be answered by simply applying mathematical calculations across the board. "When we're talking about credit — credit is a tool, but it has to be a self-serving tool. It must pay for itself. And over and above that, it should return

something to management for the risk involved in that. So the return needs to be measured."

According to Hanson, there are three things he advises people who are looking at new value-added ventures. "It's going to be a new area for a lot of people. You're going to have to find a market for whatever product you're going to try to add value to. Often, that's going to mean associating yourself with a processor or end consumer for your product; that's done through certain types of contracting arrangements."

"It's not the same as buying another hundred acres of land and going out and farming it the same way you farmed all your other land," he said. "You're going to have to develop new technologies, and this may involve teaming with other people who have that expertise. You may end up forming alliances with people you never thought you would before and hiring people to do many of these things for you."

"The third thing that's critical will be somehow you have to fund these things," Hanson concluded. "You're going to need input from the financial sector; you may have to team up with other people to obtain enough equity capital to enter into these types of value-added activities."

"One of the biggest things that I see in the Saginaw Valley is the fact that we are in the center of a peninsula and we have to ship so much of our production south for it to be processed," Thompson added. "I like the ideas that I'm hearing about looking at abilities and ways to process the product. I think there can be some real opportunities in some of the oilseeds, but also I wouldn't rule out expanded sugar beet production and corn converted into livestock usage; that, to me, all looks like some real solid opportunity in the foreseeable future."

"From the lending standpoint," Thompson concludes. "I think that it's important for lenders to look at ways to add value and not just to loan money, so to speak, or accept deposits. I think we have to be part of the solution as agriculture goes forward."



Check on SMV signs, equipment lighting

Full harvest is a risky time for collisions between non-farm motor vehicles and farm equipment, which may be on the roadway from early evening well into the night.

Approximately 300 collisions between motor vehicles and farm equipment on the roadways occur in Michigan each year.

Howard J. Doss, Michigan State University Extension agricultural safety leader, says the two main reasons for the collisions is that motorists misjudge the speed of farm equipment or do not see the equipment in time to avoid a collision. He relates that the driver of a car traveling 55 miles an hour can have as little as seven seconds to avoid a collision with a tractor and equipment traveling 15 mph.

The SMV emblem should be clean and highly reflective. It should be replaced every two to five years. Doss says Michigan law requires every implement to have an SMV emblem on it when on the roadway.

"That means both the tractor and any attached farm implement must carry an SMV emblem that is clearly visible from the rear of the equipment," Doss says.

He advises that, in addition to the SMV emblem, all towed equipment should be marked at the rear edges by flashing warning lights or reflective tape — preferably both. Lights and flashers on tractors and combines should also be kept in good working order.

Older SMV emblems can be retrofitted with the new technology. Kits can be ordered from Gemplers (800-382-8473), SMV Technologies, Inc. (813-372-1512), or Triad Products (402-462-2182).

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Adjust — wake up to opportunity!

MFB educational workshop provides ideas on how to add value to your farm

You've read a lot about value-added agriculture. Now hear firsthand how four Farm Bureau members have done it.

Make plans to attend Michigan Farm Bureau's educational workshop, Thursday, Dec. 11, at the Grand Traverse Resort in Acme during the organization's 78th annual meeting.

"The purpose of the workshop is to get farmers together to share ideas on how to enhance profitability on their farm by taking advantage of value-added agriculture," explains Bob Boehm, MFB's manager of the field crops division.

"The changes brought on by changing consumer demand, communication technology, international trade agreements, a more market-oriented national farm policy, biotechnology and niche marketing are just a few of the things these producers will share with the group," he added.

Four individuals, representing their farming operations, will highlight what they have done to add value to their commodity.

Katrina Iott, Iott Farms, Petersburg

The Iott family farm grows over 1,300 acres of produce in southeastern Michigan. Recently, however, the over 50-year-old farm has taken their highest quality tomatoes to the Internet and sold them as Gourmetos™! By clicking on www.tomatos.com anyone in the world can order their own hand-picked and hand-packed ripe tomatoes in a three or five-pound box. Iott will share how her family's farm has captured the latest marketing arena to sell a portion of their finest produce.

Rob Steffens, Michigan Apple Packers Cooperative, Sparta

During the last two years, 15 apple growers in West Michigan joined forces to form Michigan Apple Packers Cooperative, pooling their resources to build a state-of-the-art packing facility and guarantee part of their production to operate it.

The \$2.1 million, 42,500-square-foot facility

opened in early September and can handle up to 800,000 bushels a year. It is the most technologically advanced packing facility east of Washington. Steffens will share the challenges he and other members of the cooperative faced when forming a new cooperative.

Wendell Van Gunst, Country Dairy, New Era

Country Dairy is a family-owned business that has been operating in Oceana County since 1903. Their milk processing plant started in 1983 and now ships to local stores within a 75-mile radius of their farm. Recently, Country Dairy expanded to a larger dairy operation, to meet growing consumer demand. Van Gunst will share his experiences marketing his own bottled milk during his 14 years in the business.

Andy Snider, MACMA's Hog Networking Cooperative

Michigan Farm Bureau's affiliate company, the Michigan Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Association's (MACMA) livestock division, established a three-stage, multiple-site hog networking cooperative. The new hog cooperative's goal is to offer hog producers the ability to participate in a segment of a large hog production network. Snider will explain how the concept behind the hog networking cooperative provides independent hog producers the efficiencies of a large hog operation by working cooperatively, yet retaining flexibility to own a portion of the operation.

"This is our opportunity to show farmers how to thrive in today's economy, not just survive," explained MFB Promotion and Education manager Julie Chamberlain. "The real life experiences will hopefully trigger ideas about what other Farm Bureau members can do on their own operation or with their neighbors."

During the hour-long program, MSU Extension Director Arlen Leholm will serve as moderator, fielding questions from the audience to be answered by the panel. The program begins at 2 p.m. in the Grand Traverse Mackinac Ballroom.

Hunting? Remember these firearm safety tips

Hunting season in Michigan is a time for more than one million outdoor enthusiasts to participate in one of our many great outdoor recreational opportunities. It is also a time for common sense, for in hunting, there is nothing more important than safety to make hunting an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

- Treat every firearm as if it were loaded. You can never guarantee that your chamber is unloaded. Give an unloaded firearm the same respect you would give a loaded firearm.
- Watch where you point your firearm muzzle. Never point the muzzle of your firearm at yourself or anyone else, even if it is unloaded.
- Know your firearm and its ammunition. Before you load, be sure your firearm is in safe operating condition and the barrel is free of obstructions. Double check the specifications of your ammunition to be sure it fits your firearm.
- Do not load your firearm before you are ready. Why take chances? When traveling to and from your hunting blind, take down or have your actions open, and always carry your firearms unloaded in their cases.
- Be sure of your target — and beyond — before you squeeze the trigger. Be sure that you have

carefully identified your target, then look past it to be sure it is safe to shoot. Hunters need to keep track of buildings, roadways and other hunters.

- Beware of fatigue when hunting. When you've been out in the woods a long time, fatigue can cause accidents. A loaded firearm can accidentally fire with a single, unexpected jar — so watch your step.
- Don't take chances with a loaded firearm. Never step over fences, jump ditches or make other awkward or unbalanced moves while holding a loaded firearm.
- Use care when practicing. When shooting for practice, make sure your backstop will prevent ricochets and protect bystanders. Bullets can ricochet off water, rocks, trees, metal and other hard surfaces.
- Store your firearms safely. When not in use, always store firearms unloaded, away from ammunition and out of the reach of children and inexperienced users.
- Remember: Alcohol, drugs and firearms don't mix. Never consume alcohol or other mood-altering drugs before or during target shooting or hunting.

Food gap predicted

A report recently released says a larger-than-expected "food gap" will leave areas of South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa needing large amounts of imported grain, while world food output and prices could become more erratic, according to the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). The erratic supplies could mean "higher ... risks of food insecurity for the world's most vulnerable countries and people," IFPRI said.

The report cautions that the world "is not going to run out of food," but that the volume of imports needed to bridge the gap between local

food production and local demand is growing. IFPRI is urging world leaders to act and to expand and stabilize the world food supply.

The group is predicting that by 2020, developing nations will import 229 million metric tons of grains per year, which will eclipse the 95 million tons imported by those nations in recent years. The Consultative Group on International Agriculture Research has called for \$300 million in pledges to fund projects to improve crops and livestock to feed growing populations.

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Discussion Topic

December 1997
A monthly resource for the Community Action Groups of Michigan Farm Bureau



Impact of electric deregulation on agriculture yet to be determined

For the past several years, deregulation has been a popular word in Lansing and in Washington, D.C. The latest industry to be considered for deregulation is electric power.

Michigan legislators are currently mulling over bills that could remove some regulations from the business of sending electricity across the power lines. If the electric power industry is deregulated as it is expected to be, it could have users paying much lower rates. But it could also mean that farmers, who often require different amounts of electricity at different times of the day or season, have to pay dearly for power during those peak periods.

What electric deregulation ends up meaning for farmers is yet to be determined, according to Ron Nelson, Michigan Farm Bureau legislative counsel. All that's certain is that careful preparation is necessary.

Rather than write one check for electricity and the service of sending it across our power lines (like we do now), consumers would be able to buy electricity from one company and receive it across the

Electric deregulation could lead to lower prices

lines from their existing company. While the power generation would be largely unregulated, the delivery and related services would continue to be regulated.

"The whole concept here is to allow the user to shop for the best price," Nelson said. Farmers and other users of electricity will be able to go to the open market and purchase power at the lowest price they can find. Whatever power company owns the lines in their area will move that electricity to their home or business.

"We have to start thinking of electricity as a commodity that you can put in the pickup and take home," he continued. "Think of it like a bushel of corn. It can be traded, bought or sold."

The problems with power

Of course, electricity can't just be put in a pickup bed and that's where the problem lies. Unlike corn, electricity cannot be stored for when it is needed. With separate companies generating the power and delivering it, along with the fact that it cannot be stored, the whole process could be tricky.

For example, a farmer who is set up to irrigate does not know at the beginning of the season if he or she will need to irrigate all the crops or none of the crops.

How will that farmer know how much electricity to purchase ahead of time to run the irrigation equipment? If the farmer purchases too much electricity, it can always be resold on the open market, but they'll probably lose money in the process. If the farmer doesn't purchase enough electricity, it might not be available when it comes time to irrigate. And if it is available, it will probably cost a lot. Or it could be that the lines will be full and can't

transport the electricity when it's needed.

Dairy farmers could run into the same situation, only they'll face it two or three times every day. They might end up paying high prices for that extra electricity during milking, or it may not be available at all. Many farmers own generators, but that may not be enough to get by.

That means power companies will need to have enough room on their lines to service those peak times, but there will be extra capacity at other times. A question of who will pay for that "stranded cost" is yet to be answered.

"With agriculture's demand peaks from day to day and throughout the season, it does complicate the issue somewhat," Nelson said.

Other concerns include who will pay for the costs of the transition from a regulated to deregulated electric industry and how companies will "securitize" their costs. ■



Saginaw County Farm Bureau member Stuart Reinbold (left) receives a plaque of appreciation from Bill Thayer, Michigan Bean Commission chair, for his years of service.

Michigan bean industry hosts quality assurance seminar

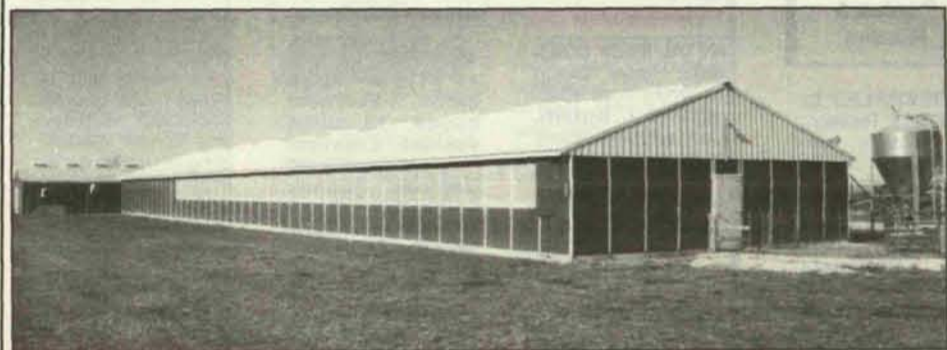
The Michigan Bean Shippers Association and the Michigan Bean Commission held the 1997 Bean Harvest Tour and Quality Assurance Seminar, Sept. 21-23.

The program featured two breakfasts held at Bay City's Bay Valley Inn, and a farm site dinner at the Saginaw Valley Bean and Beet Research Farm. The sessions were well attended with 60 people attending the breakfasts and 80 attendees at the farm site dinner.

Following the Monday morning breakfast program, the quality assurance delegates participated in field and elevator tours. Tuesday's agenda included a breakfast program and an array of different focus points that individual delegates had an opportunity to choose from upon arrival. The Monday tour provided delegate participants in this year's event to see some pulling and some limited harvesting. They also had an opportunity to evaluate up close some of the extremes in damage experienced during the growing season.

This year's event was funded by the MBSA and the Michigan Bean Commission. ■

1. Think about how you depend on electricity on your farms. Is saving money on electric power — say 20 percent — worth the risk of not always having it when you need it?
2. What are some business opportunities that could spring up because of electric deregulation?
3. What are some things farmers could do to adjust to electric deregulation?
4. Overall, is the concept of deregulation a good one? How has it affected other industries, such as the airlines or trucking?



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I AM CURRENTLY enrolled in the Michigan Farm Bureau "Farm Link" program. When I last inquired, no farmer was involved in this particular program. If you are a farmer considering retirement and have the desire to keep your farm operational and no one to carry on your work, I would urge you to contact your local Farm Bureau Representative about the program. I can be reached at 1-616-342-0413.

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Circulation over 47,700 in State Of Michigan

News for Farmowners from Farm Bureau Insurance

Heating with a wood stove? Be prepared

No matter how carefully you install a wood stove, or what kinds of precautions you take, there is always the possibility that something could go wrong. That's why you should have ...

- UL-approved fire extinguisher in the vicinity of (but not right next to) your stove.
- A smoke or smoke/fire detector near your sleeping quarters, but far enough away from the stove to keep the detector from sounding off in the presence of normal heat radiation or smoke that may result from start-up or refueling.
- Portable, folding escape ladders under beds or window sills for emergency use.
- An emergency exit plan.

We have a helpful guide to the proper installation and use of wood heating appliances. It's called *Wood Heat: The Safe Way* and is available to you free of charge. Just check the coupon below and return it to us.

More than just farm insurance

More than just your farm needs top-quality protection. Your Farm Bureau Insurance agent offers a full range of insurance services to protect you, your family, and your future.

- Life insurance
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- Business insurance
- Retirement insurance
- Auto insurance
- Estate planning
- Annuities
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- Ag work comp insurance

We also offer alternatives to bank CDs that will make a world of difference to your future. These are plans that pay a high rate of interest, offer tax-deferred growth, and guarantee you a lifetime income.

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For the right person, here's an outstanding opportunity: a career as a sales representative for Farm Bureau Insurance.

Our sales representatives offer insurance products and services to individuals, families, and businesses. They help people all across Michigan plan for financial security.

A career agent is a well-trained, hard-working professional who has a strong desire for personal growth along with a real concern for serving people.

Farm Bureau Insurance offers a bright future and real opportunity for advancement. To find out more, call 517-323-7000, ext. 2737, or contact your local Farm Bureau Insurance office.

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Farm Bureau Mutual introduced the first Farmowners policy in the nation back in 1960.

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When you choose Farm Bureau Life for your life insurance, annuity, or retirement plans, you are being protected by one of the most outstanding companies in America.

For the sixth straight year, Farm Bureau Life has been named one of the 50 most outstanding life insurers in America, based on safety, security, and superior financial performance.

The top 50 list is prepared annually by Ward Financial Group, a national investment firm that monitors the insurance industry.

We're proud of our reputation and all we are doing for the people of Michigan. Nobody cares as much about protecting Michigan farm families as we do.

We've got information for you about ...

A long-term care plan for older adults from CNA.

Multi-peril crop insurance from American Farm Bureau Insurance Services, Inc., to help you protect your business.

Disability income protection especially designed for farmers, underwritten by Illinois Mutual.

Just indicate your interest on the form below and return it to the address or fax number listed there.

Keep your farm shop safe

Service and maintenance of equipment are important jobs on the farm. Be sure your farm shop is a place where you can make repairs safely. Here are some tips:

- Organize your workshop so that everything has a designated place. Make sure items are secure so that they won't fall on someone.
- Keep walkways clear to prevent trip-and-fall accidents.
- When you're working on equipment, be sure that it is turned off, all rotating parts have stopped moving and safety locks are in place.
- Keep all shields and guards in place on power equipment.
- Have the right tools for the job. Handle them properly to avoid skinned knuckles, strains, pinched fingers and the like.
- Equip your shop with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI) to help prevent electric shock.
- Keep your shop well lighted. Be sure all heaters are properly vented and that flammable liquids are kept away from heat sources.
- Wear personal protective equipment. Standard PPE for a farm shop should include leather gloves, chemical-resistant gloves, safety glasses, face shields, ear plugs or muffs, steel-toed shoes, respirators, a hard hat, a protective apron and welding shields.

For small-business owners: Farm Bureau Life's new SIMPLE retirement plan

With Farm Bureau Life's new SIMPLE (Savings Incentive Match Plan for Employees) IRA, small-business owners can offer their employees easy and affordable retirement plans.

Like Farm Bureau Life's other retirement plans, it will have no set-up or yearly administrative fees.

To find out how the SIMPLE plan may work for you, contact your local Farm Bureau Insurance agent.

Also available from Farm Bureau Life: new Roth and Education IRAs

Congress has approved two new IRA plans that take effect for the 1998 tax year — and both are available to you from Farm Bureau Life.

Contributions to the new Roth IRA plan cannot be deducted from income. But earnings grow tax-deferred and can be withdrawn tax free in retirement (after age 59-1/2) if the account has been in place at least five years.

The new Education IRA allows annual deductible contributions of up to \$500 for each child under the age of 18. Distributions of earnings are tax free, and withdrawals can be made at any time if used for college expenses.

Call your Farm Bureau Insurance agent for more information about these outstanding new opportunities.

Drive carefully, stay safe on your snowmobile

Snowmobiling is a popular winter activity in Michigan. But it can be a hazardous one, too.

As snowmobiles become faster and more sophisticated, and as snowmobile traffic increases, experts cite three main factors in the accompanying increase in deadly snowmobile accidents: excessive speed, alcohol, and improper driving on roadways.

Here are a few safety tips to keep in mind:

- Ride at a speed that is compatible with the trail width, condition, and length. Slow down if you have a passenger.
- Don't hurdle or jump.
- Keep your snowmobile in good working condition. Be sure all your lights are operating, and don't overdrive your headlight at night.
- Always wear approved head gear and eye protection.
- Maintain a safe stopping distance between you and the machine ahead of you.
- Avoid road traveling. If you must travel on a road, and such travel is permitted, reduce your speed. When crossing a road, make a full stop, then look carefully in both directions before crossing. Try to cross at a 90-degree angle. Be wary of parked vehicles.
- Remember that alcohol and snowmobiling don't mix. Snowmobile operators who drink and drive endanger themselves, their passengers, and anyone else they may encounter on the trail.

We would like to hear from you.

Please let us know if you'd like information about:

- A Free Insurance Review
- Passing On Your Farm
- Farmowners Insurance
- Life Insurance
- Annuities
- Our video *Farm Safety: The People Factor*
- Other _____

You may also want more information about:

- Workers Disability Compensation Insurance
- RCAP — The Regulatory Compliance Assistance Program
- Long-Term Care Protection
- Disability Income Protection
- Multi-Peril Crop Insurance
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