Project GREEN thanks Legislature for support

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

A group of Michigan’s largest agricultural organizations today assembled to thank the Michigan Legislature for its support of the National Market System, a high-profile marketing organization that has been instrumental in implementing a new national marketing order for Michigan-grown food products.

The group, which included representatives of the Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan State University, and the Michigan Department of Agriculture, delivered a basket of Michigan-grown products to legislators in a gesture of appreciation for their support of the National Market System.

As of Dec. 1, the voluntary statewide milk marketing order, 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 dairy marketing cooperative and dairy processors participating. Recently, two milk handlers pulled out of the pool, sending the industry into a debate surrounding the need for the order.

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 in early November, as the CFTC's proposal was adopted by the Board of Trade at its Nov. 1 meeting. The proposal, which was approved by a vote of 8 to 7, establishes new delivery specifications for corn and soybean futures contracts that are based on the underlying cash markets for these commodities.

The CFTC's proposal was part of a larger effort to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of the futures markets. The commission had been investigating the issue for several years, and had received numerous complaints from traders and industry groups about the current delivery process.

The new delivery specifications include changes to the current delivery locations and the timing of the delivery process. The new specifications are designed to increase efficiency and reduce costs for both buyers and sellers.

Dairy superpool faces collapse Dec. 1

As of Sunday, Michigan's dairy superpool, a mechanism that adds money to the milk price paid to dairy farmers, will no longer be in place. The voluntary pool was established five years ago, but due to a lack of participation, it will be phased out.

The Michigan Milk Pool, which represents more than 80% of the state's dairy farmers, announced in late November that it would be discontinuing the program due to a lack of participants. The pool was created to help dairy farmers by providing them with a higher milk price than the traditional wholesale market.

However, with the decline in participation, the pool has been unable to sustain itself. Dairy farmers have been increasingly turning to other markets and alternative methods of selling their milk, which has led to a decrease in demand for the superpool.

The Michigan Farm Bureau, which has been a strong supporter of the pool, is disappointed with the decision to phase out the program. "We are deeply concerned that this decision will have a negative impact on our dairy farmers," said Ron Stumpf, the bureau's president. "The superpool has provided a valuable benefit to dairy farmers, and we urge the Michigan Milk Pool to reconsider its decision and explore other options for supporting the dairy industry."

Cover Story

State milk marketing order could be only way

At its Nov. 4 meeting, the Board of Directors of the Michigan Milk Pool, which represents 80% of the state's dairy farmers, recommended that the state of Michigan should consider proposing a state milk marketing order as the only way to ensure a high-quality, high-value milk market for Michigan dairy farmers.

"We recognize that the superpool is facing significant challenges and that a state milk marketing order could be a viable solution," said Stumpf. "However, we also recognize that the superpool has provided a valuable benefit to dairy farmers and that a state milk marketing order would be a radical departure from our current system."

The Michigan Milk Pool has been in place for five years and has helped to maintain a high-quality milk market and a stable price for dairy farmers. However, with declining participation, the pool is struggling to maintain its viability.

The Michigan Department of Agriculture, which regulates the dairy industry, has been supportive of the superpool and has been working to find ways to support the pool. However, the department has indicated that it will not be able to provide additional funding to support the pool.

The Michigan Farm Bureau has also been supportive of the superpool and has been working to find ways to support the pool. However, the bureau has indicated that it will not be able to provide additional funding to support the pool.

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The proposed rules also change the definition of the "agricultural" category to include more than one crop or yield and for the exception for expenses incurred when plants are destroyed by disaster.

The proposed expansion of expenses covered by UNICAP is simple—result in producers who often have a significant investment in establishing new orchards and other high-cost crops, with little or no income for three to five years.

Cherry producers, in fact, often have costs of $10,000 to $50,000 per acre invested in establishing a new block of cherry trees. Apple producers can have more than $7,000 per acre invested in establishing high-density apple orchards. Asparagus growers, likewise, can have over $12,500 per acre invested in just one crop cycle alone.

The IRS proposal would deal a deathblow to the state's cranberry industry, still in its infancy. Costs to establish a cranberry bog can be as high as $40,000 per acre, not including land costs.

Without the ability to cash-expense development costs, or what can cost cash expenses, producers will have yet another disincentive to invest for the future, which will have a direct and detrimental impact on our state and local economies.

Consider also the bookkeeping nightmare that such a rule would create. Many U.S. consumers know what a disaster this proposal will be for Michigan agriculture, particularly for our state's $20 million-plus fruit industry. With the second most diverse concentration of fruit production in the nation, we stand to lose a market of over $1 billion that will have a far greater impact on our agricultural industry.

Even if your farm enterprises don't include any of those previously mentioned, let me assure you that the proposed rule would most likely be of concern. Other tax provisions such as income averaging and deferred payment contracts can provide some measure of predictability. If there is a silver lining in this proposal, it lies in the fact that it also idles one more rail in the coffins of an antiquated tax system and eases the burden on our national economy.

Let's hope our elected officials follow through on their rhetoric and make those changes reality.

Richard Annis
Executive Director
Michigan Farm Bureau

Michigan corn growers to vote on referendum

Beginning Dec. 1 and continuing through Dec. 12, all Michigan farmers who have sold $800 worth of corn in at least one of the past three years will have the opportunity to vote on the one-cent-per-bushel checkoff.

According to the Michigan Department of Agriculture, ballots will be mailed in November to those who have qualified.

The purpose of the Corn Marketing Program is to enhance the economic position of Michigan corn growers by providing for the growth and research that will stimulate the demand for corn,

Keith Madewell, executive director of the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan, said one of the other hurdles of the activities of the Corn Marketing Program. The checkoff applies only to corn sold.

The first purchase is responsible for collection. For all kinds and varieties of corn grown in Michigan and sold in a form included except sweet corn, seed corn, popcorn and corn grown for silage.

The outcome of the vote will determine if the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan can continue for an additional year.

During the county Farm Bureau annual meeting process throughout the state, 16 individual county Farm Bureau resolutions passed in support of the continuation of the program. The Michigan Farm Bureau board of directors also passed a resolution in support of the checkoff.

If you have any questions about the referendum, call the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan office at 800-323-6601.

Panel: EPA overestimates atrazine risk

The Environmental Protection Agency overestimates the cancer risk posed by the widely used herbicide atrazine, an internal panel of EPA toxicologists has concluded. Agency sources say the finding could help EPA ease the way to regulate atrazine.

During the past several years, environmental groups have pressured EPA into tightening its regulation of atrazine. The clouded-raining of the chemical is a major source of drinking water contamination. But the panel report could push the agency to relax its current drinking water and water quality standards. EPA officials say the findings don’t mean the chemical is not dangerous. But they say the findings are still encouraging.

Richard Annis
Executive Director
Michigan Farm Bureau

Conservation tillage growing in United States

The number of acres of conservation-dyed farm land continues to grow on U.S. farms, according to the Conservation Technology Information Center. A county-by-county survey shows 109.6 million of the nation’s 292.6 million acres of cropped land continued to be used in 1998 conservation tillage, according to the Conservation Technology Information Center. A county-by-county survey shows 109.6 million of the nation’s 292.6 million acres of cropped land continued to be used in 1998 conservation tillage, that's a 6-million-acre increase from last year.

These systems not only replenish and build organic matter in the soil for improved future food productivity, but they also protect water quality and enhance wildlife and the environment for future generations.

Michigan Farm Bureau, 7373 W. Coolidge Hwy., Lansing, MI 48911-9943

Organizational Briefs

1998 AFBF annual meeting to feature Dole

Part of the preconvention news at the 69th annual meeting with this year's featured speaker Elizabeth Dole.

Elizabeth Dole, president of the American Red Cross, will be the keynote speaker at the 1998 AFBF annual meeting to be held in New Orleans in November.

Michigan Farm Bureau members will be in attendance at the conference, which will be held at the Opryland USA Resort in Nashville.

The AFBF annual meeting is scheduled to begin Dec. 1 at Opryland USA Resort.

Best Return

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Breaks

For more information, call Jane Mary Miller at Michigan Farm Bureau by Dec. 1 at 980-262-080, ext. 345.

New sugar beet germplasm released to breeders

Sugar beet breeders can now get three new sugar beet lines that carry resistance to two diseases that are the destruction of the Michigan sugar beet industry: bacterial leaf blight and white mold.

The new sugar beet lines were developed by scientists at the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station, part of USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS).

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**NATIONAL**

**Apple firelight**

There is good news to report on congressional action on an appropriation bill for the second year of apple firelight research.

Earlier this year, the House and Senate approved the Agricultural Appropriations bills for FY 1998, which began Oct. 1, 1997. The bills contained $355,000 for the second year of the apple firelight research fund, which is the same amount appropriated for the first year of the research.

Because of other differences between the $4.5 billion in agricultural appropriations bills, they were referred to a joint House-Senate Committee to reconcile the differences. The Committee has completed its work. The good news is that $355,000 was increased to $600,000.

**OSHA reform**

The Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee has approved S.1237, known as the Safety Advancement for Employees Act (SAFE Act). The bill would strengthen OSHA rather than widespread, sweeping reforms. The two reforms that could be beneficial to farmers are:

- **Require a written review of new OSHA standards to be conducted by the National Academy of Sciences.**

- **Allow for OSHA safety reviews of workplaces by safety professionals, certification of workplace safety and exemption from OSHA inspections for two years.**

Other provisions will be necessary to become a valuable service that could be performed by user-friendly entities such as state Farm Bureaus, state Farm Bureau Insurance companies and others not permissible under current law.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau strongly supports the money needed for apple firelight research. Firelighting is becoming essential to crop and plant disease prevention and poses a serious threat to the apple production in Michigan as well as other states.

**Contact:** Al Alle, ext. 2460

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**NATIONAL**

**Canadian dairy subsidies**

Representative U.S. Rep. Dave Camp (R-Mi) has introduced H.R. 2596, known as the Agricultural Reform Bill. The bill makes specific reforms to OSHA that could be beneficial to farmers are:

- **Legislative topics in the agricultural appropriations bills, they appropriated for the first year of the research.**

- **Approved separate agricultural appropriations bills for $325,000 for the second year of the apple firelight research.**

- **Approved the conference report.**

The bill makes specific reforms to OSHA ratifying H.R. 2596, known as the Agricultural Reform Bill. The bill would be a cornerstone in establishing new milk standards to be conducted by the National Academy of Sciences.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports S.1237.

**Contact:** Al Alle, ext. 2460

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**Foreign trade barriers**

U.S. Rep. Dave Camp (R-Mi) has introduced H.R. 2596, known as the Agricultural Market Access Act of 1997. The bill is designed to give the federal government the tools to break down foreign trade barriers for U.S. farm products.

H.R. 2596 would require the U.S. Trade Representative to each year designate as priority countries foreign countries whose agricultural trade policies and illegal trade practices have the greatest adverse impact on U.S. farm products. After identifying a country as a priority country, the U.S. would be required, with limited exceptions, to initiate a streamlined case to be concluded within six months against the unfair and illegal practices.

The bill may be added to the fast track legislation if it is voted on by the House.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports H.R. 2596. It would be a cornerstone in establishing and maintaining trade relationships with other countries.

**Contact:** Al Alle, ext. 2460

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**Pipelines**

S. 422: Congress (R-Mi) introduced S.B. 322. It has passed the House and Senate and has been presented to the governor for signing.

The bill would amend PA. 16, of which regulates the transportation and sale of crude oil and petroleum products through pipelines, to establish certain requirements for persons constructing a crude oil or petroleum pipeline.

A person who constructed survey work for a proposed crude oil or petroleum pipeline would have to notify all affected property owners or, if working before a survey crew entered the owners' property.

**MFB position:** Farm Bureau supports S.B. 322.

**Contact:** State Everett, ext. 2460

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**STATE**

**Oil and gas post-production cost update**

Rep. Larry DeLyrae (R-Houghton) has introduced S.B. 543 dealing with oversize permit fees.

The bill would amend P.A., 22, of which regulates the transportation and sale of crude oil and petroleum products through pipelines.

**Action needed:** Continue to call or write state representatives in support of the legislation. Farm Bureau supports H.B. 562 and S.B. 562.

**Contact:** Scott Everett, ext. 2460

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**Contact:** Scott Everett, ext. 2460

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**Contact:** Scott Everett, ext. 2460

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Dairy industry leaders join forces to help producers plan for the future

Dairy industry leaders will be presenting educational seminars across the country for dairy producers considering expanding their current facilities or building a new facility. Bou-Matic, FiveG Consulting, Agri, Inc., and Laster Building Systems have joined forces to help dairy producers plan for the future.

"Dairy producers from around the country are very interested in this educational information," said FiveG Consulting Economist Donald Grable. "Many county Farm Bureaus are promoting their local events and the dairy producers planning big-dollar expansions need to educate themselves. Proper planning can help avoid costly mistakes in the future."

The special Dairy Design Seminars will educate dairy producers on a facility that will meet their current and future production goals. The knowledge will benefit dairy producers by helping

them to develop long-term growth plans and profitability strategies.

The topics to be covered include farmstead layout, the planning process, building and remodeling options, park scattering and corridors, the complete dairy, common overnight housing considerations, and waste management systems.

Participants will take part in technical discussions, question-and-answer session, and will hear from featured dairy producer speakers. Everyone will also receive a copy of the planning manual "Designing Today's Dairy To Meet Tomorrow's Requirements," complete with detailed information on design considerations and photos of working facilities. A nominal seminar fee will be charged.

The Dairy Design Seminars in Michigan will be held Feb. 25, 1998, in Lansing. For more information, call 800-527-1050.

Biodiesel considered, critics unhappy

The Energy Department is considering allowing the use of biodiesel fuel as an alternative fuel for government vehicles. The fuel, which is a blend of 80 percent straight diesel and 20 percent soybean-based biodiesel, has been criticized by some as a deter fuel than natural gas, alcohol or electricity. Under the federal Energy Policy Act, 75 percent of all new state and federal cars and trucks, and 90 percent of all cars and trucks used by gas and electric utilities, must be fueled by alternative fuels by 2008. The law is expected to put 500,000 additional diesel engines on the road. Critics of the proposal to allow biodiesel into the fray say biodiesel will defeat some of the purpose of the law.

"Farm products" takes place.

STATE

Amendments to the Recreational Trespass Act

S B 767, sponsored by Sen. Mat Dunaskis (D-Lake Orion), and S B 768, sponsored by Sen. Loren Bennett (R-Canton), were introduced and referred to the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Tourism. The following is a summary of S B 767.

Definition of navigable

A "navigable public stream" has historically been defined as a river, stream, creek or drain able to float a log, which in some circumstances has become a "stick" rather than a river. This definition dates back to the logging days in Michigan and is a very difficult definition to understand. The bill poses a "question and answer" session, and will hear from featured dairy producer speakers. Everyone will also receive a copy of the planning manual "Designing Today's Dairy To Meet Tomorrow's Requirements," complete with detailed information on design considerations and photos of working facilities. A nominal seminar fee will be charged.

The Dairy Design Seminars in Michigan will be held Feb. 25, 1998, in Lansing. For more information, call 800-527-1050.

In addition to the conference presentations, question-and-answer sessions, and working group meetings, the participants will have access to coverage under insurance plans. This will be opposed by many who see this as a new mandates.

The definition of navigable is important. When it comes to quality and durability, an an industry is the standard of excellence. Rural Builder Magazine has awarded K.A. Helm Enterprises the Gold Key Excellence Award 14 years in a row, for their commitment to quality. Pro-engi- neers to meet local wind and snow loads, these builders are custom designed to meet any need you might have. You work hard for your money so make your next investment work for you. WedgCor building systems because you deserve the best.

MICHIGAN FARM NEWS
November 15, 1997

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ACA® Plus can be impregnated on dry or blended into liquid starter fertilizers, placed in furrow or on the side at planting, broadcast pre-plant, or top-dressed on a wide variety of crops to help boost yields. See the difference in yield with quality, user-friendly products

Better Root Systems, More Vigorous Plants, Easier Harvesting, Increased Profit from Increased Yield Potential — Proven Performance!

 Increase Yield Potential with ACA® Plus

ACA® Plus can be impregnated on dry or blended into liquid starter fertilizers, placed in furrow or on the side at planting, broadcast pre-plant, or top-dressed on a wide variety of crops to help boost yields. See the difference in yield with quality, user-friendly products

Better Root Systems, More Vigorous Plants, Easier Harvesting, Increased Profit from Increased Yield Potential — Proven Performance!

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When it comes to quality and durability, an an industry is the standard of excellence. Rural Builder Magazine has awarded K.A. Helm Enterprises the Gold Key Excellence Award 14 years in a row, for their commitment to quality. Pro-engi- neers to meet local wind and snow loads, these builders are custom designed to meet any need you might have. You work hard for your money so make your next investment work for you. WedgCor building systems because you deserve the best.

When it comes to quality and durability, an steel structure will outperform a pole barn every time. And when it comes to steel buildings, the steel buildings is known in the industry as the standard of excellence. Rural Builder Magazine has awarded K.A. Helm Enterprises the Gold Key Excellence Award 14 years in a row, for their commitment to quality. Pro-engi- neers to meet local wind and snow loads, these builders are custom designed to meet any need you might have. You work hard for your money so make your next investment work for you. WedgCor building systems because you deserve the best.

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November 15, 1997

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*Excludes Quad Cab. **This cash back offer is valid for members of participating Farm Bureaus, is scheduled to expire 7/31/98, and is subject to change. It may not be used in combination with any other Chrysler certificate program or certain other special programs. Ask for restrictions and details. Farm Bureau® is a registered service mark of the American Farm Bureau Federation. This offer is not available to Farm Bureau members in CA, HI, OK and TX.

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**CORN**

As the production numbers become known with more certainty, we switch our attention to the demand side. This isn't to say we won't get another surprise in the size of the U.S. corn crop. And, as we look at the demand for the U.S. crop, we will must remember how greatly it is affected by coarse grain production in the rest of the world. As can be seen in the Corn Balance Sheet (Table 1), my analysis still indicates that even with the larger supply this year, ending stocks will be near or below this past year.

On Nov. 10, the USDA comes out with their updated supply-demand estimates. My analysis of the situation is shown in Table 1. I have left the size of the corn crop the same as the USDA's October estimate. With expected growth in hog production at around 8 percent and biodiesel production at around 1 percent, I have increased year-to-year feed use by 5 percent. I have increased soybean meal use by 30 percent and soybean oil use by 10 percent. While this estimate is above the USDA October estimate, it is below many trade estimates. There are lots of un-knowns in this estimate number which translates into price risk. This lower projected ending stocks to 240 million bushels, or 9.2 percent of use. This equates to prices being in the $6.70 range, where we now are.

The market continues to say it would prefer not to pay storage, but the carry in the futures has increased. The market also continues to sell on any report and to sell on any milk price report. If a choice had to be made, I would choose to use my corn storage space to speculate on corn versus wheat. I would use the space to speculate on corn. If you insist on speculating on wheat prices, and you are using commercial storage, consider moving to a basis contract or selling futures.

The 1998 U.S. wheat crop is looking quite good according to the crop progress reports. It will be interesting to see how many acres were planted. Keep an eye on the September Chicago wheat futures. If it moves over $4, check on forward contracts being bid out for the 1998 wheat crop. You may want to start doing some forward pricing of your 1998 crop.

At this point, it is important for the industry to keep very current into February. With the large number on feed we don't need extra pounds. February feeders are at or near real interesting. But if they jump over $70, check out the forward pricing opportunities. Watch the April contract as well. If it runs over $75, you want to consider putting a pricing plan in place.

With prices seen at some Michigan feeder auctions, some feeders are probably going to pay very well when those cattle are ready for market.

**SOYBEANS**

The soybean market is giving us a lot of excitement just on the demand side, and that doesn't even count the added excitement we will get as we start the South American production season. As mentioned in the section on corn, U.S. livestock needs will be growing throughout the year and my estimate is we will use about 5 percent, 50-60 million bushels, more hogs for meal domestically. Then, we have to estimate meal exports. Meal exports in the first two months of the marketing year are up 45 percent year-to-date. Meal export sales-to-date again only two months in, up 10 percent. While these levels may not continue, it does show strong growth. Prices being offered for soybeans indicate that the trade believes meal exports will be up significantly as well.

As shown in Table 1, I have increased soybean meal use for meal by 6 percent, domestic use by 5 percent and export use by 10 percent. While this estimate is above the October USDA estimate, it is below many trade estimates. There are lots of unknowns in this estimate number which translates into price risk. This lower projected ending stocks to 240 million bushels, or 9.2 percent of use. This equates to prices being in the $6.70 range, where we now are.

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F

arm 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, allowing us to 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 farm operators.

Data reported by individual farm operators in the census is held in confidence by law (Title 7, U.S. Code). Farm operators are safeguarded from the release of individual farms. Statistical results are analyzed and made available in printed and electronic forms.

Farms 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 does Census of Agriculture numbers provide valuable information about farmers and agriculture? Here are some examples:

- Farm organizations, Congress, and state and local governments plan programs to help farm opera-

- Farm machinery manufacturers more effectively

- Seed and fertilizer producers can compare yields and

- Irrigation specialists, water resource developers and
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

The ag commission approved this motion:

Michigan Farm Radio Network contributed

The state-mandated order. If we could have a

what we've done for the last five years. But it is a lot

money—$1.8 million to $2 million a month. You use a

realize that this is really not a consumer issue, because

there's a chance for voluntary pool. What's important

"looked at the issue, and we said, no, we don't feel

ative Milk Producers (ICMPA), President Bob

centstranslated into one early $22 million that went to

of the over-order premium to producers. Accor-

Michigan can be very well supported by this action.

would believe that the producers in the state of

Michigan commissioners in person.

and ensures periodic individual producer review

plan by any plan by specific vote to initiate, continue,

allow accommodation of marketplace changes and

returns provided that any action is the will of the

majority of producers, includes features that

returns provided that any action is the will of the

constantly provides practical advice for farm operators.

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New STS® solutions, now under $20/acre.
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 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 farm land," Avery said, "for the first time in 120 years, the American farmer is returning to the American farm product market in the U.S.," he continued. "Our productivity keeps rising at about 6 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 more, 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."

Avery is the son of Michigan agriculture's good steward, Dennis Avery, who is the director of the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan, which is sponsoring Avery's appearance and MEGA Conference. "Farmers will learn how to make a living at the same time we can produce enough food to meet a growing world demand while preserving our farms for future generations, Avery said. He 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 Plants.

The 4th Annual Michigan Agricultural MEGA-Conference & Trade Show offers something for everyone.

The Next Farming Generation

January 19-21, 1998
Michigan Agricultural MEGA-Conference
Lansing Center
Easy Access and Parking - US-27, Downtown Lansing

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Includes banquets TUE & Wed 
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Avery headlines MEGA Conference as main speaker

"The Next Farming Generation"

January 19-21, 1998
Michigan Agricultural MEGA-Conference
Lansing Center
Easy Access and Parking – US-27, Downtown Lansing

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 Gernaert, Michael Green and Howard Wettem; State Senator Walter North; and U.S. Representatives Nick Smith and Debbie Stabenow.

Moderated by Pat Driscoll, of the Michigan Farm Radio Network, the panel 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 Mr. Mark Hooper, of Grower Services, for an informative session on the use of infrared for the livestock industry.

Alfalfa producers won't want to miss "Dealing with Potato Weeds, Diseases, and Pests classes are offered during the conference.

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

MEGA-Conference is pleased to be holding the district membership meeting of Noba/CRI. An artificial insemination member-owned cooperative, Noba sells dairy and beef semen to the 1998 show.

Not a member of these organizations

I GROW/RAISE:
- Beef
- Corn
- Dairy
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- Soybeans
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- Part-time Farmer

GUESTS:
- Other, please specify:

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Schedules, are just some of the livestock topics slated for the conference.

"Disease Identification in Alfalfa." and "Disease Identification in Alfalfa."

Dr. Wendy Powers, of Iowa State University, for an informative session on the use of infrared for the livestock industry.

The 4th Annual Indiana-based Hoosier Institute Center for Global Food Issues is pleased to announce the book Saving the Planet with Pesticides and Plants. 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 Plants.
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Weather Outlook

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 heavy precipitation 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 far 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 borers 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 frost 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 near-normal levels, with decreases occurring in lake effect areas, where significant snowfall is possible.

Looking further ahead, NCM 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-normal odds of all temperature and precipitation scenarios (i.e., dimunition) by early summer as conditions in the equatorial Pacific return to near-normal 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 1,090,000 head, unchanged from a year ago. Breeding inventory increased 12 percent to 60,000 head on Sept. 1.
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 tool. 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 how we follow up with each of those 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 movements for farmers, they're now seriously realizing 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 Bengtson, 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," Bengtson explained. "Nobody that goes up here buys their whole smoked fish, it is one of these historically available products that is consumed pretty much inside."

But before she could complete her work diligently on how to smoke fish, she had to work on the repeal of a decades-old law against vacuum-packing fish. "One of the reasons that there has been no 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 that time.

"This vacuum pack does it prevent any aerobic microorganisms from growing," Bengtson said. "Therefore it allows the anaerobic microorganisms to grow without being challenged by competition from other microorganisms, what happened in the '60s is that herring 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 drastic changes 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 to be 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 send it out of the state."

So Bentgen went to working proving her point to the Michigan Legislature and exhibited facts that confirmed that the latest vacuum-pack ing 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. "Regan 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 dockside 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 can pass on their experiences."

"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 to move forward.

"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 to move forward in a progressive way, then why not?"

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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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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 as the award program. What to do? Enter the role of technology. Belavek's school principal, Tom Stuber, set the interview 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 $500,000 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 programs or an agriscience program — 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 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 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 base — not agricultural products, but a more agriscience-based program, including bio-technology, 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 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 mechanics have not been well represented with this award. Health occupation instructors, automotive programs, and marketing and business people and those types of things have been receiving cut of that award, so we're pretty proud of that."

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

Crop, wet September delayed maturity of most crops in Michigan, according to the Federal/State Michigan Agricultural Statistics Service. Several 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 38 percent from last year. Although corn crop maturity was behind normal, the threat of widespread frost damage has dissolved. 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 45 bushels per acre was down 1 bushel from the previous month, but up 8.5 bushels from the previous year. Total Michigan production was scored above 1996. Soybean development fell behind normal in September; harvest began in late September.
- Dry bean yield, at 1,500 pounds per acre, was down 150 pounds from the Aug. 1 forecast. Expect production decreased 9 percent, respectively, from last year. 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. All yields are 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 1.5 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. 1, 57 percent of the crop had been harvested in the 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 marketplace.

In a recent checkoff-funded study compiled by IAC International from 1990 to 1996, 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 ($205.7/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 feed/fertilizer/chemical costs were higher than in most other countries.

Despite the higher costs of producing soybeans, the United States ranked second ($20.5/ton) behind the Netherlands ($20.7/ ton) of 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 size, higher 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.
Fall and winter barn ventilation requires care

by Bill Bickert, MSU Dept. of Agricultural Engineering

A fall and winter approach and temperature 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 ends and eves and open sidewalls and windows. This becomes even more critical later on when, at the first sign of cold weather, we adjust ventilation for winter conditions but our livestock warmer in the meantime.

If we don't open something for additional airflow, moisture build up 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 50-45°F are accompanied by rain.

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

Changes in weather during fall, winter and spring often give rise to respiratory problems in animals, especially to those with wide fluctuations of temperature. Proper attention to ventilation system management may lessen the problems. Such management is especially important is 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. Bring 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 indicates that additional ventilation must be provided.

Over-ventilation is better than under-ventilation.

Any dairy and livestock farmers will be short of shell corn this year. Some cash crop farmers may have immature corn that is very wet and not make good dry corn. Cash crop farmers will be looking to those farmers 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 shell corn (HMSC).

Here are some guidelines to follow. When negotiating a price with a cash crop farmer, determine the following:

- The amount of corn you wish to purchase, normally based on 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 adjusted.

Growers develop skills to benefit agriculture industry

K enough Swanson of Bannister, Mich., joined the board of the National Corn Growers Association (NGCA) members at a Leadership Development Program here, sponsored by Novartis Crop Protect. Inc. Twenty-one members of the American Soybean Association (ASA) also attended.

"Leadership is an acquired skill," said Walt Hardie, NGCA president and Leadership Development Program graduate. "Even people who have natural leadership qualities benefit from honing their skills in 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 brand dominance profile to learn more about their own strengths and weaknesses.

While in Greensboro, growers toured the Novartis Corn Production headquarters where they learned more about the science behind crop protection technology.

This group of NGCA 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.

"NGCA is relying on these growers to represent agricultural interests to legislation," said Hardie. "The Leadership Development Program helps them to do that."
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 for their communities and achievement. The 12 finalists for the Outstanding Young Agricultural Leader 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

Farm operation
Owner/operator of 660-acre farm including 560 acres of corn, 150 acres of alfalfa, 20 acres of oats, along with 167 dairy cows. Farm.hexen, mechanic, bookkeeper and some field work. Supplies neighboring farms with seed corn, alfalfa and soybeans. Raises pleasantries 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 Rehabilitation 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 MAA.

Montague, Oceana County
Wife: Beth
Children: Joel, 15; Kyle, 7; Emily, 5

Farm operation
Maintains 596-acre farm with 170 acres of corn, 110 acres of alfalfa, 65 acres of wheat, 35 acres of oats and 8 acres of asparagus along with 57 dairy cows. Responsible for all areas of farm operation. Custom haying and harvesting 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 state delegate, Community Action Group chair and participated in Young Farmer Discussion Meet. Presented at Farm Safety Camp. Attended Legislative Seminar.

Community 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.

Bruce Lewis
Jonesville, Hillsdale County
Wife: Jennifer
Children: Adam, 8; Brittany, 6; Connor, 4

Farm operation
Partner in a 2,500-acre farm producing 3,000 acres of corn, 1,200 acres of wheat, 660 acres of soybeans, 640 acres of alfalfa and 96 acres of popcorn along with 440 dairy cows and 80 steers. Manages field crops and sales, repairs, small chores and calving. Does some custom work for neighbors.

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

Community involvement
Active in local Jaycees chapter serving as past Human Service Projects chair.

Loretta Benjamin
Webberville, Ingham County
Wife: Todd
Children: Daniel, 15; 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.

Farm Bureau involvement
Chair, county Promotion and Education, Ag in the Classroom, Olympiads, Ag Week and Rural Education Day. Also serves on county Young Farmer and Farm Women and Education Committees. Served as OSU Dairy Club advisor for 6 years and for 6 years as a member of the Michigan State University Dairy Club. Attended Young Farmers’ Leadership Conference. Former vice president and state director 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. Participated in and judged and coached clinics to 4-H and FFA in MeCosta County and Marion County, Ga.

Dairy operation
Hard manager for a dairy farm with 350 Holstein cows and 200 replacement heifers on 65 acres. Maintains all computerized cow and replacement heifer records, including breeding programs. Oversees all care, feeding and health management. Works with a veterinarian. Maintains all mixing 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 Ag Rescue Seminar. Assisted in organizing FFA Fair and fairly 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 4-H Club Committe member. Works in Ogemaw County Ag office. Member of Michigan 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.

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Since 1990 DSR soybeans have generated over 600 top ten finishes in University trials. In 1996, Dairyland’s DSR/STS soybeans, or just plain old fashioned high yielding genetics, finish in University trials. In 1996, Dairyland’s DSR/STS soybeans have generated over 600 top ten finishes in University trials. Whether you’re looking for STS tolerance, Roundup Ready soybeans, or just plain old fashioned high yielding genetics, the DSR lineup delivers.

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Precision Agriculture

by Neil R. Miller

Let’s face it — when the gladiators roamed north, leaving behind most of Michigan’s soils, they did not vary rocks or materials every 300 feet. Neither did 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.

Nature is not square

Geo-referencing management zones

For many of our clients, we have used GPS to log the annual boundaries of naturally occurring ridgelines 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 commercially viable approach.

“Smart” grid sampling

If your consultant or dealer samples by grids, ask that they use your geographic coordinates, 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. Sampled locations also help 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 or area based on grid locations throughout the field. A 1994 University of Wisconsin study showed that interpolation improved grid-sampled potassium maps from an accuracy of less than 5 percent to over 90 percent. Previous maps were therefore less than 50 percent accurate to 97 percent accuracy.

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

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

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Michigan’s asparagus crop was 85,000 acres but 9,000 acres less than a year ago. The estimated onion yield of 34 tons per acre is down 9 percent from last year while 10 percent less than two years ago.

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

Rich Hodupp, MSU Extension field crops agent, and Bob Boeheim, 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. Paul Steiner, MSU Extension agronomist 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 1,950 members, and attract funding.

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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 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—narrowly placed strips of grass and other vegetation—that reduce rainwater runoff and soil erosion. "Practices like filter strips, contour buffers, grass strip swaths and graded 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 protecting our water and soil resources. "These two goals are not mutually exclusive, but rather complement each other," Stawick said.

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 now detectable to microwave heating M. bovis and M. paratuberculosis. The difficulty in distinguishing between these similar organisms has slowed 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 material, to find only 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 testing in other laboratories has 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 populations, and large dairy herds with low levels of infection.

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. Kun 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. "Kun 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 MU Extension offices. Thelen said. The Environmental Stewardship Division has just announced $1 million in grants to be used for groundwater protection and education by local soil conservation districts across the state.

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

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 1.5 percent of the workforce, according to the report. Yet, nearly 9 percent of all work-related accidents occurred in the agriculture sector. The report says cutting tools and machinery—such as mowers 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 over the last 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 new 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 Terry Frankelmuth, MFB's field crops manager. "We're talking financing Michigan's farmers, Thompson opportunity in the foreseeable future.

Enhancing rural economic development," explained Bob Boehm, sitting on the bank's side of the table when it comes to stock usage; that, to me, all looks like some real solid concept, the sethings and communicating 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 cautioned. "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."

"Looking 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 "From the lending standpoint," Thompson said. "Bob Boehm, MFB's field crops manager. "We're talking financing Michigan's farmers, Thompson opportunity in the foreseeable future."

"One of the biggest things that we see in the Saginaw Valley is the fact that we are in the center of a potato processing area. We have a lot of farms in the production sector for spuds to be processed," Thompson added. "One of the nicest things 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 sidelines, but also I wouldn't rule out expanded sugar beet production and corn converted into bio-ethanol. For example, to me, all looks like some real solid opportunity in the foreseeable future."

"From the lending standpoint," Thompson concluded. "I think 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 trailing vehicle 35 miles an hour can have as little as seven seconds to avoid a collision with a tractor and equipment traveling 15 mph.

The SMV sign 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 sign or on it when on the roadway. "That means both the tractor and any attached farm equipment must carry an SMV sign that is clearly visible from the rear of the equipment," Doss says.

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

Older SMV signs can be remedied with the new technology. Kin can be ordered from Gemplens (800-352-8473), SMV Technologies, Inc. (913-972-1952), or Trim Products (400-442-2482).

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Adjust — wake up to opportunity!

MPF 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 38th 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, MPF’s manager of the field crops division.

“The changes brought about 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 commodities.

Katrina Iott, left Farms, Peterson

The Iott farm family grows over 1,200 acres of produce in southeastern Michigan. Recently, however, the over 85-year-old farm has taken their highest quality tomatoes to the Internet and sold them as Gourmet Tomatoes. By clicking on the website, anyone looking for a fresh, ripe and hand-packed ripe tomatoes in a three or five-pound box, Iott will share how her family’s farm has captured the largest 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, 4,500-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 1959. Their milk-processing plant started in 1985 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 Coordinator

Michigan Farm Bureau’s affiliate company, the Michigan Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Association’s (MACMA) livestock division, established a three-stage, multiple-state 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 operation. Snider will explain how the concept behind the hog networking cooperatives 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 MPF Promotion and Education Manager Julie Chalmel. “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 four-hour program, MSU Extension Director Arlen Lolehn 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 hunting, there is nothing more important than safety to make hunting enjoyable and rewarding experience.

1. Treat every firearm as if it were loaded. You can never guarantee that your chamber is unloaded. Give an unloaded gun the same respect you would a loaded firearm.

2. Where you position your firearm muzzle. Never point the muzzle of your firearm at yourself or anyone else, even if it is unloaded.

3. Know your firearm and its ammunition. Before you load, be sure to inspect it 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.

4. Do not load your firearms 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.

5. 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, roads and other things.

6. 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 jab — so watch your step.

7. Don’t take chances with a loaded firearm. Never step over fences, jump ditches or make other awkward or unexpected moves while holding a loaded firearm.

8. Use care when practicing. Make sure your backstop will prevent ricochets and protect bystanders. Bullets can ricochet off water, rocks, trees, metal and other hard surfaces.

9. Store your fireams safely. When not in use, always store firearms unloaded, away from ammunition and out of the reach of children and inexperienced users.

10. 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 predicts a 1 billion ton rice

The report recently released says a long-term 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... risk of food insecurity” in 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 now and to stabilize the world food supply.

The group is predicting that by 2020, developing nations will import 225 million metric tons of grains per year, which will eclipse the 95 million tons imported by industrialized nations today. The Consolitative Group on International Agricultural Research has called for $800 million in pledges to fund projects to improve crops and livestock to food growing populations.
Discussion Topic

Electric deregulation could lead to lower prices

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 on 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 seen 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," he says. "The whole concept here is to allow the user to shop for the best price, the best supplier. Farmers and other users of electricity will be able to get 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. You 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 in 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 once or twice times every day. They might end up paying high prices for that extra electricity during milking, or it may not be available at all. "If that's the case for farmers, 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 "wasted" cost is yet to be answered.

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

1. Think about how you depend on electricity on your farm. 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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Billed as "The Original Energy Free Waterer," MiraFount® is just that. Over 180,000 are in use... from the two hole, 20 gallon model to the six hole, 100 gallon model. You can certainly find one that will fit your operation. Join the people who are saving hundreds of dollars on their electric bills every month with this hassle-free quality waterer.

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Lester knows every farmer wants buildings that look good, provide long-term reliability, and are affordable. Uni-Frame® agricultural buildings from Lester meet the highest standards for appearance, durability and value. Every structure, custom designed or standard, is pre-engineered from top quality materials and backed by the industry's leading warranty. For handsome, functional agricultural buildings, visit your local independent Lester Builder or call 1-800-826-4439.

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The program featured two breakfasts held at Bay City's Bay Valley Inn, and a farm site dinner at the Saginaw Valley Bean and Feed Research Farm. The sessions were well attended with 60 people attending the breakfaasts and 60 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 army 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 make up some of the experience in damage experienced during the growing season.

This year's event was funded by the MBBA and the Michigan Bean Commission.
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One of the top performing Mid Group II in the 1996 MI Soybean Trials. Compliments your planting schedule and fill your bin. Good emergence and is moderately resistant to BSR and Phytophthora.

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This Late Group II was at the top of the 1996 MSU Central Michigan Soybean Trials. It is an excellent emergent and stands Moderately resistant to BSR and Phytophthora.

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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 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 burning 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 insurance, and Farm Bureau Insurance agents offer a full range of insurance services to protect you, your family, and your future: Life Insurance, Boat Insurance, Business Insurance, Retirement Insurance, Auto Insurance, Estate Planning, Annuities, Workers' Compensation Insurance, and Group Insurance for small businesses.

We also offer alternatives to bank CDs that will make a world of difference to your future. These plans that pay a high rate of interest, offer no deferred growth, and guarantee you a lifetime income.

Career opportunities

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 an intense 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.

America's first — and Michigan's finest

Farm Bureau Mutual introduced the first Farmowners policy in the nation back in 1960. You and thousands of other Michigan farmers now have an easy way to cover your entire farming operation, thanks to Farm Bureau Mutual's innovation all those years ago. We were the first, and we're still the best.

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When you choose Farm Bureau Life for your life insurance, annuities 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, 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 CNP. 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

You can create a safe work environment and reduce the likelihood of accidents. The top 10 tips for farm shops are:

1. Keep all shields and guards in place on power tools.
2. Keep tools in a designated place.
3. 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.
4. Keep all shields and guards in place on power equipment.
5. Have the right tools for the job. Handle them properly to avoid skin damage, strains, pinched fingers and the like.
6. Keep your shop well-organized. Be sure all hazards are properly treated and that flammable liquids are kept away from heat sources.
7. Wear personal protective equipment. Standard PPE for a farm shop should include leather gloves, chemical-resistant gloves, safety glasses, face shields, ear plugs or mask, steel-toed shoes, respiratory protection, a hard hat, a protective apron and welding shields.

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

If you own or operate a small business, you can benefit from the same retirement plan that has helped thousands of other small-business owners grow their businesses and save for retirement. Farm Bureau Life's new SIMPLE retirement plan can help you build a retirement savings program for your employees at little or no cost to you. To find out more, contact your local Farm Bureau Insurance agent.

Other information 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 amount has been in place a full five years. The new Education IRA allows annual deductible contributions of up to $5,000 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 snowmobilers become faster and more sophisticated, and as snowmobile traffic increases, expertise one or more main factors in the accompanying increase in deadly snowmobile accidents: excessive speed, alcohol, and improper driving on roadways.

For the safety of you and all your passengers, here are a few safety tips to keep in mind:

- Ride at a speed that is compatible with the trail width, conditions and length. Go down if you have a passenger.
- Don't handle or jump.
- Keep your snowmobile in good working condition. Be sure all your lights are operating, and don't overspeed.
- Always wear approved gear and eye protection.
- Maintain a safe stopping distance between you and the machine ahead of you.
- Avoid meat traveling. If you must travel on a road, such travel is permitted; release your throttle when crossing a road, make a full stop, then look carefully in both directions before crossing. Try to cross at a 90-degree angle.
- Avoid driving in areas where there is snow, gravel, or wet mud. These areas may allow you to drive forward, but the machine may be able to move only slowly backward.
- Remember that alcohol and snowmobiling don't mix. Snowmobiling is a gift. Don't abuse it. Drive sober.

Be prepared to answer these questions:

- Why should I use Farm Bureau Life?
- What is Farm Bureau Life?
- What is Farm Bureau Mutual?
- How can I talk to a Farm Bureau representative?
- I have a question about my policy. Where do I go for help?
- How can I get a quote for my needs?
- How do I make a claim on my policy?
- How do I contact my local agent?
- What is your billing address?

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
- Health Insurance from Blue Cross/Blue Shield

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