



MSU Dairy Farmers of the Year: Ken & Larry Nobis

Michigan State University Department of Animal Science named MMPA members Ken and Larry Nobis this year's MSU Dairy Farmer of the Year. The award was presented at this year's Great Lakes Dairy Conference (GLDC) held in Frankenmuth in February.

The award has not been given out since 2000. The Dairy Farmer of the Year award was first presented in 1958 by what was then the Dairy Science Department at MSU. The MSU Department of Animal Science worked to reinstate the award through a new venue, the GLDC. With the conference in its fourth year and drawing more than 300 producers, the event provided a new opportunity to recognize industry leaders, allowing the Dairy Farmer of the Year winners to be honored by their peers.

"The Dairy Farmer of the Year Award recognizes leaders in the dairy industry that have had a real impact in the dairy industry as a

whole – people involved in off-farm activities that have contributed to the dairy industry," says Dr. Karen Plaut, chair of the MSU Department of Animal Science. "Ken and Larry are involved in a multitude of agricultural organizations locally, statewide and nationally. In addition, they have been extremely cooperative with the MSU Animal Science Department in working with student teaching projects and university trials."

As third generation dairy farmers, Ken and Larry began farming in the early 70's with their father at the farm's current location in St. Johns. The brothers bought their father out and formed a partnership in 1986, calling the farm Nobis Dairy Farms. Today, the farm has a milking herd of 823 Holsteins along with replacements and consists of 3,000 acres. The herd's rolling average is about 27,000 lbs. of milk, 800 lbs. butterfat and 772 lbs. protein.

From the beginning, the brothers decided to split farm duties so each would have a specialty. Ken is in charge of the cows and Larry is in charge of the crops and land. Each is involved in farming organizations that are related to their own area of expertise.

Ken, MMPA's current vice-president, got involved in MMPA leadership when he and his wife Liz, represented District 6 in the Outstanding Young Dairy Cooperative Program. His experiences there led him to be a delegate for his MMPA local, service on the Advisory Committee, and now, as his current position on MMPA's board of directors. Ken is currently vice president of the United Dairy Industry of Michigan.

Ken also serves on the Michigan Dairy Advisory Committee, finding it a good way for farmers to get in touch with researchers. His most recent appointment is as a member of the National Milk

Producers Federation's Environmental Committee, which has helped to analyze and advise the dairy industry about the Environmental Protection Agency's Air Consent Agreement.

Larry followed his expertise in cropping by getting involved in Farm Bureau, the Michigan and National Corn Growers Associations and most recently, as part of the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) Advisory Committee.

"Whenever I have been selected for any committee, I feel it is an honor and it is my responsibility to make decisions based on what is best for the industry and not just our own farm," Larry says. "Being involved in soil conservation, and in recent years with MAEAP, go along with my responsibilities on the farm. The MAEAP program is very positive for the livestock industry in the state of Michigan."

Making sure to practice what they preach, Nobis Dairy Farms has received MAEAP verification in the Livestock Program.

Being early adaptors of technology and being open to new ideas has made the Nobis Dairy Farms an ideal place to serve as an extended classroom and laboratory for professors, students and Extension educators in Michigan in addition to research trials by dairy companies. Research on bovine somatotropin (bST), reproduction, nutrition and manure management has been conducted on the farm. MSU students in both the two and four year programs have learned about calf care, cow care and artificial insemination from the Nobis herd. The farm has also been toured by local, state and national visitors seeking to learn about Michigan dairy herd management.

"We invite regulators, legislators and educators to tour our farm." Ken says. "We talk to them and help to educate them so they can understand what we do on the farm."

"Cooperation and collaboration are hallmarks of Nobis Dairy Farms," Plaut says. "Ken and Larry have opened their farm to teaching, research and Extension while remaining active industry leaders. They share their thoughts easily and aren't afraid to share their honest opinion. That kind of open communication allows the department to grow and change for the better."

A reputation for open, honest and frank communication makes

the Nobis brothers valuable members of a host of MSU advisory committees on animal science and agriculture.

Ken and Larry are humble about receiving the distinguished Dairy Farmer of the Year Award, noting that they are very honored to be recognized for their contributions to the dairy industry.

"It is nice that MSU recognizes producers that are not only trying to run a business of their own, but also trying to help the industry as a whole," Larry says. "Each and every dairy farmer has an opportunity to make a difference in the dairy industry of Michigan."

TSC TRACTOR SUPPLY CO

MICHIGAN STORES:
 ADRIAN • 517-263-2831
 ALBION • 517-630-0013
 ALPENA • 989-358-8933
 BAD AXE • 989-269-8139
 BATTLE CREEK • 269-979-8372
 BAY CITY • 989-686-2195
 BIG RAPIDS • 231-796-4642
 CADILLAC • 231-775-9478
 CARO • 989-673-2947
 CEDAR SPRINGS • 616-696-3652
 CHARLOTTE • 517-543-5858
 CLIO • 810-686-9238
 COOPERSVILLE • 616-837-8500
 DUNDEE • 734-529-5535
 FENTON • 810-629-9972
 FREMONT • 231-924-6764
 GAYLORD • 989-705-1256
 GREENVILLE • 616-754-4639
 HASTINGS • 269-945-1477
 HILLSDALE • 517-439-4363
 HOUGHTON LAKE • 989-366-9450
 HOWELL • 517-548-7600
 HUDSONVILLE • 616-662-6450
 IMLAY CITY • 810-721-1613
 JACKSON (W) • 517-796-1719
 JACKSON • 517-788-6884
 LANSING (N) • 517-323-7341
 LANSING (W) • 517-627-2179
 LAPEER • 810-664-1831
 LOWELL • 616-987-9338
 LUDINGTON • 231-843-1932
 MIDLAND • 989-832-1860
 MONROE • 734-241-6633
 MT. PLEASANT • 989-772-6343
 MUSKOGON • 231-719-9473
 NEW BALTIMORE • 586-716-1990
 NILES • 269-684-5734
 OWOSSO • 989-725-5178
 PLAINWELL • 269-685-1001
 PORT HURON • 810-984-3835
 PORTAGE • 269-323-3199
 ROMEO • 586-752-5781
 SAGINAW (N) • 989-799-3724
 SAGINAW • 989-781-3568
 SALINE • 734-944-2676
 SANDUSKY • 810-648-3014
 SAULT ST MARIE • 906-635-1132
 SOUTH HAVEN • 269-639-9664
 ST. JOHNS • 989-224-8978
 STURGIS • 269-651-4725
 THREE RIVERS • 269-279-5296
 TRAVERSE CITY • 231-943-4062
 WEST BRANCH • 989-343-1511



The 2005 FFA tractors are now on sale.



The 2005 FFA tractors are on sale.
 This year's FFA tractor is a 1/16 scale John Deere model 6410. It is available at Tractor Supply Company (TSC) stores statewide. All proceeds benefit the Michigan FFA Foundation.
Now only \$46.48.



For more information about how you can support the FFA, contact the Michigan FFA Foundation at (517) 323-6569 or online at www.michiganffa.org