



## MDEQ Ag Roundtable Meeting Set

A Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Agriculture and Rural Communities Roundtable session will take place Thursday, March 16, 2006, at the Frankenmuth Credit Union from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. The credit union is located at 580 N. Main St. in Frankenmuth, Mich.

Michigan legislators passed legislation in 2005 creating the Roundtable to evaluate how laws, rules and policies administered by the DEQ affect farmers, food processors, agribusiness and rural communities. MMPA urges all producers in the meeting area to participate in these Roundtable sessions.

## U.S. Farm Numbers Down Slightly in 2005

According to U.S. Department of Agriculture, the total number of farms in the U.S. fell slightly during 2005. The total number of farms is estimated at 2.1 million, less than one percent fewer than the previous year. Total land in farms decreased by 2.9 million acres in 2005, but the average size farm increased by one acre from 2004 to 444 acres.

In Michigan, the estimated number of farms in 2005 is 53,000. Land in farms is estimated to be about 10 million acres, unchanged from last year. The average farm size in Michigan for 2005 is 191 acres per farm, up one acre from the previous year.

## Recent Deaths Stress Need for Safety Near Round Bales

Falling round bales killed two thumb-area residents in separate farm incidents over the past few months highlighting the importance of safety when working with or near large bales.

In early November, Huron County Commissioner R. Dale Wertz of Bay Port, died when a round straw bale fell on him while he was working in Pigeon. In January, Nicholas Jimkoski, of Port Austin met the same fate while loading the large bales on a wagon.

“All farmers need to be alert and aware of the dangers of loading and unloading round bales,” MMPA president Elwood Kirkpatrick says. “These tragic deaths are a reminder to us all that on-farm safety should always be on our minds.”

## Farm Women’s Symposium 2006

The 15<sup>th</sup> annual Farm Women’s Symposium will be held at the Park Place Hotel in Traverse City, Mich. on March 8-10, 2006.

Featured presentations include: motivational farm speaker Chris Fesko, Michigan Department of Agriculture’s Jamie Zimtke-Somers and Christine Lietzau, a panel of Traverse City agriculture business owners, legislative updates and more. A tour of the Traverse City area is also scheduled.

Registration costs \$125 for three days, \$100 for two days and \$50 for one day. For more information or to sign up for FWS, contact Sheryl Smith, at (517) 543-1360, Julie Schwab at (989) 846-4764 or Agnes Talaski at (989) 269-6581. Scholarships are available for GreenStone Farm Credit Services members, contact your local GreenStone office for more details.

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