

Feeding the World...Fueling the Economy

Ag Day at the Capitol 2007

From the large farm equipment parked outside the Capitol entrance to the appetizing sights and smells of Michigan food filling the interior hallways, it was difficult for legislators to ignore the state's agriculture industry during the third-annual Ag Day at the Capitol on March 21.

More than 30 commodity and agribusiness organizations, including MMPA, united in downtown Lansing to celebrate National Ag Day and host Ag Day at the Capitol, an annual event that aims to raise the Legislature's awareness of the significant economic contributions of Michigan's agriculture industry.

In the past, Ag Day at the

Capitol had been held in May, but organizers this year moved the event up two months to coincide with National Ag Day (March 21) and National Ag Week (March 18-24).

"Holding Ag Day at the Capitol on National Ag Day makes sense," said MFB Legislative Counsel Tonia Ritter. "We'd like legislators to understand that agriculture is a big industry in Michigan, and Michigan agriculture is a big player in the national agricultural scene. Supporting agriculture in Michigan is good for our state and our nation, as well as the rest of the world."

MMPA staff and board members were on hand to visit with legislators and pass out ice cream cups. The ice cream was manufactured with MMPA milk at the Michigan State University Dairy Plant.

"This event was a nice opportunity for

us to meet with several Michigan legislators, including the chairs of both Senate and House Agriculture Committees, to discuss the issues facing our state's dairy industry," MMPA President Ken Nobis said. "It allowed us to reiterate the importance of agriculture to Michigan's economy and to highlight dairy as the largest agriculture commodity in the state. Michigan dairy farmers con-



tinue to be the most productive in the U.S. We produce a very high quality product in an environmentally friendly manner.”

Agriculture is a \$60 billion industry in Michigan. Unlike other Michigan industries which are experiencing dramatic slowdowns in economic growth and production, agriculture continues to grow with new opportunities in renewable energy and a bio-economy. With this in mind, the theme of this year’s event was “Michigan Agriculture: Feeding the World ... Fueling the Economy.”

“We hope to deepen the Legislature’s appreciation for the people in Michigan who are the first links in our food chain,” said Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) President Wayne H. Wood. “We also want to point out that Michigan agriculture

has continued to grow in a challenged economy. We need continued investment in our industry to sustain agriculture’s promising contributions to our state’s economic recovery.”

To spread the message, nearly 100 farmers from across the state delivered to the governor and every legislator a gift basket chock full of agricultural items donated by participating organizations. Products for the nearly 150 baskets ranged from golf tees (representing Michigan’s turfgrass sector) to grape jelly. Legisla-

tors were also encouraged to visit the first floor of the Capitol where participating organizations doled out goodies and Michigan-made food.



Representative Jeff Mayes and MMPA President Ken Nobis had the opportunity to talk about MMPA and issues facing the dairy industry.



Jody Pollok, host of the Michigan Farm & Garden weekly television show, interviewed Ken Nobis on being elected MMPA’s President. The Ag Day event was held one day after Ken was elected president of the cooperative.

LEFT: Large farm implements helped spread the word that March 21 was Ag Day at the Capitol.

RIGHT: MMPA Vice President Bob Kran, MMPA President Ken Nobis and MMPA Board Member Tim Hood discuss the importance of Michigan’s dairy industry with Representative Tonya Schuitmaker. MMPA’s display, shown in the background, highlighted the economic benefits of Michigan’s dairy industry.

