



Visitors to the MPPA tent got the opportunity to talk to MPPA staff members and learn more about MPPA's Energy Audit Program. Here, several members discuss issues facing today's dairy industry with MPPA President Ken Nobis.

Attendance down; vendors up at 2008 Ag Expo

Attendance numbers were down during this year's Ag Expo, July 15-17, on the campus of Michigan State University, but exhibitor numbers were up and feedback from both exhibitors and attendees was very positive immediately following the show, according to MSU Ag Expo coordinator Kirk Heinze.

The lower attendance at the three-day expo didn't hinder vendors, many who said they've witnessed lower attendance at other farm shows and fairs due to a slumping economy and the high cost of fuel. Other vendors said some of their best customers who had planned to visit Ag Expo stayed home to harvest wheat and bale straw.

"We were really pleased with the response from vendors," Heinze says. "Even though there was not as much foot traffic during Ag Expo, the vendors are telling us contacts and sales were the same as last year and they certainly want to come back again next year. Some have even expressed interest in placing

new buildings on the site or refurbishing existing buildings."

The annual Michigan FFA Foundation Auction following the Ag Expo kickoff breakfast raised \$2,500 to support agricultural education and leadership programs by auctioning off a collection of 250 hats donated by former MSU President Gordon Guyer, purchased for \$500 by MSU ANR Dean Jeff Armstrong, and a gold-plated commemorative tractor was purchased for \$2,000 by David Morris of Grand Ledge. This was the fourth time David Morris had purchased the FFA tractor during the Michigan FFA Foundation Auction.

Another gold plated tractor was presented to Heinze by MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon in recognition of this being the final Ag Expo he coordinated. Heinze is retiring from MSU this year and plans to host a radio show on WJR starting in September.

On site demonstrations were very well received during Ag Expo

and farmers flocked to the various ride and drive locations featuring articulating wheel or payloaders, telehandlers, skidsteers, utility vehicles and zero turn mowers. All of the ride and drive locations sprinkled throughout the exposition grounds featured equipment from various dealers which allowed farmers to make educated buying decisions coupled with one stop shopping.



MSU President Lou Anna K. Simon presented Ag Expo coordinator Kirk Heinze with a gold-plated FFA tractor in recognition of his final year as coordinator of the event.

Nowhere else in Michigan could farmers actually get in and test out such a wide variety of equipment from many different manufacturers.

After a several year hiatus, Ag Expo organizers brought back field demonstrations. This year, they

featured sprayers on a 40-acre field demonstration area.

“We were concerned about doing field demos because we hadn’t done them for a few years,” Heinze says. “Field demo sprayer feedback from the sprayer representatives said

that their contacts were excellent and they want to do it again next year.”

The 2009 Ag Expo will take place July 14-16 in East Lansing.

Several ride-and-drive demonstrations were available where participants could test their skills at driving articulating wheel or payloaders, telehandlers, skidsteers, utility vehicles and zero turn mowers, all from many different manufacturers. At the skid-steer ride and drive, participants were able to maneuver through a short obstacle course.



Farmers Fueled Up on Knowledge at Ag Expo

New to Ag Expo this year was the “You Heard it Here First” educational sessions tent, featuring topics of interest to many farmers. One of the more popular daily presentations explored strategies for improving the fuel efficiency of tractors.

As the price of diesel fuel continues to increase, every effort to improve tractor efficiency is important. MSU Extension Educator Mike Staton presented educational sessions that gave farmers useful strategies to keep fuel costs down.

“Diesel fuel prices have shot up dramatically in the past year. That is increasing growers’ cost of production,” Staton says. “The purpose of

this program is to help producers minimize the adverse impact that high diesel prices are having on their businesses by providing specific and proven recommendations.”

Staton discussed the best ways to minimize fuel use, which often come by paying attention to details.

“One of the practices most commonly recommended is to ballast your tractor properly. The more you get into this subject, the more questions come up,” Staton says.

Properly ballasting a tractor ensures that it is carrying the optimum amount of weight and that weight is distributed between the front and rear axles. This can be done using a scale or manufacturer estimates.

A properly ballasted tractor will maintain the optimum amount of wheel slippage, reduce soil compaction and tractor operating time, and maximize fuel efficiency. Tire inflation also plays a role in fuel efficiency.

“Inflating radial tires on farm tractors is almost the opposite of tire inflation in cars—you get the best efficiency if you let the air *out* of your radial tractor tires,” Staton says. “You’ll want to select the minimum recommended tire inflation pressure for the maximum axle load carried and maximum speed traveled.”