



Legislative Watch

Issues important to today's dairy farmers

Ag Day at the Capitol 2009

—Michigan can bank on 'wholesome, honest, pure' farm families

In the midst of an economic recession, Michigan can still bank on agriculture and feel good doing it because Michigan farm families are "wholesome, honest and pure."

That's the message dozens of Michigan farmers and more than 30 agricultural organizations delivered to state legislators when they gathered in Lansing on March 18 for the fifth-annual Ag Day at the Capitol.

Ag Day at the Capitol aims to raise awareness and a deeper sense of appreciation among the Legislature for agriculture, the state's second largest industry. This year's theme was "Wholesome, Honest, Pure...Michigan Farm Families."

"Agriculture produces the nation's safe, abundant food supply so efficiently that many consumers forget we exist or take us for granted," says MMPA



MMPA Treasurer Velmar Green, left, MMPA President Ken Nobis, center, and MMPA General Manager John Dilland (not pictured) met with Lt. Governor John Cherry Jr., right, during Ag Day at the Capitol. The MMPA officials discussed the importance of agriculture to Michigan's ailing economy, stressing the importance of keeping funding for the Michigan Department of Agriculture.

President Ken Nobis. "Ag Day at the Capitol allows us to interact with Michigan's political leaders at an informal setting and remind them that our businesses come in contact with every citizen of Michigan every day of the year. It gives us the opportunity to showcase our production system and remind everyone that we provide more jobs than any other sector of the Michigan economy. Michigan agriculture is expanding; not contracting like many other businesses in our state."

"Agriculture is becoming an increasingly important aspect of our state's economic engine," Michigan Department of Agriculture Director Don Koivisto, said in his monthly Agriculturally Speaking column. "With a more than \$71

billion annual impact on Michigan's economy, it is safe to say agriculture continues to be a growing industry, despite the current economic climate. Michigan's agri-food industry is the state's second largest economic driver. It's a multi-billion dollar a year business producing over 200 different commodities—ranking second only to California in agricultural diversity."

To kick off the day, participating farmers visited every legislator's office and shared valuable insight concerning the industry and its agri-food and agri-energy sectors. To keep matters fresh in the minds of legislators, farmers left behind a gift basket of food and agriculture-related products donated by event sponsors. The items included a reusable 'got milk?' shopping bag.

Later in the day, legislators got the chance to talk with farmers

Michigan Agriculture Facts

- Agriculture contributes \$71.3 billion to Michigan's economy annually.
- Agriculture employs more than 1 million people. That's a quarter of Michigan's work force.
- The state's agricultural economy has been expanding at a rate five times faster than the growth rate of the general economy.
- Ninety-five percent of Michigan's farms are single-family operated and/or family partnerships.
- Of the few Michigan farms structured as corporations, 99 percent of those are family-owned and involve multiple generations and family members.

Continued on page 19

Ag Day - Continued from page 10

together in the coming year.

during the agricultural “showcase” inside the Capitol where they were able to sample Michigan food products—including yogurt parfaits—while learning more about individual commodities at the trade-show style showcase.

“Ag Day at the Capitol is a great opportunity to remind our elected officials of the variety and quality of Michigan’s agriculture,” Ken says. “Ag Day was very gratifying this year. We had excellent legislator attendance and had a lot of discussions with both legislators and their staff. We were able to remind them of the stature of Michigan’s agriculture industry—that it is still growing and plays a critical role in the state’s economy.”

At the conclusion of the event, Representative Kevin Daley (R-Lum) introduced many commodity representatives—including MMPA President Ken Nobis and General Manager John Dilland—to the Michigan House of Representatives during their session that day.

Ag Day at the Capitol coincides with National Agriculture Week, which runs March 15-21, and also aims to promote agriculture’s many benefits.



MMPA President Ken Nobis had the chance to visit with several Michigan lawmakers during the day. Pictured with Nobis is Representative Phillip Pavlov (R-St. Clair Twp.).



Senator Patricia Birkholz (R-Saugatuck), left, holds a yogurt parfait MMPA offered guests during Ag Day. Sen. Birkholz, MMPA President Ken Nobis, center, and Michigan Department of Agriculture Director Don Koivisto are shown discussing issues facing Michigan agriculture.



At the conclusion of the event, Representative Kevin Daley (R-Lum) introduced many commodity representatives—including MMPA President Ken Nobis and General Manager John Dilland—to the Michigan House of Representatives during their session that day.



MMPA President Ken Nobis and Michigan Farm Bureau President Wayne Wood visit with Representative Dave Hildebrand (R-Lowell)..