

Market Access

Increasing Market Access for Agriculture



Funding for Roads and Bridges

Michigan has approximately 120,000 miles of roads to maintain between state and local jurisdictions. According to the Michigan Transportation Asset Management Council, approximately 80 percent of those roads are in fair or poor condition. Additionally, 11.7 percent of all Michigan bridges are structurally deficient.

Michigan dedicates revenue from motor fuel taxes and vehicle registration fees to road and bridge construction and maintenance. However, Michigan's road and highway maintenance budgets have regularly seen funding short-falls over the last several years, and these funding deficiencies are growing due to the rising maintenance costs coupled with increases in automotive fuel economy.

Talk points:

- Investment in our transportation infrastructure is critically important to the movement and trade of agricultural products.
- Michigan Farm Bureau supports user taxes when new revenue is needed for roads and bridges.

MFB Policy #89 Highways

Michigan's road and highway maintenance budgets have regularly seen funding short-falls over the last several years, and these funding deficiencies are growing due to the rising maintenance costs coupled with increases in automotive fuel economy. All transportation expenditures must be examined to achieve the best and most efficient use of transportation funding.

We support:

- User taxes when new revenue is needed for roads and bridges. New revenues for roads and bridges shall go through the PA 51 formula. Such taxes must be in line with maintenance costs and should be consistent with neighboring states.
- A system that allows for indexing of the fuel tax rate.
- Increases of registration fees that would be used exclusively for road and bridge construction and maintenance.
- Diverting up to 100% of state sales tax collected on motor fuels from the general fund to the PA 51 formula to provide additional road funding.

- Electric car owners having to install a separate electric meter for charging electric cars. That meter usage would be taxed for the highway fund at a rate consistent with fuel taxes paid by other vehicles, or other suitable means for collecting the road tax.
- Taxing other forms of energy that are used in transportation at an equitable rate.

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Food and Agriculture Industry Growth Initiative

As agriculture advances and grows, new challenges and opportunities arise. The Food and Agriculture Industry Strategic Growth Initiative will use a competitive grant process to fund research, education, and technical assistance efforts focused on removing barriers and leverage opportunities by processors, agri-business, and those in agricultural production.

The proposal is for \$3 million in dedicated funding in the first year, through an appropriation within the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development budget. MFB supports the initiative which is based on partnership among the agriculture industry, state government and higher education institutions.

Talk points:

- Water availability, proximity to markets, and advancements in genetics and technology position Michigan to compete in the world market.
- Removing barriers relative to water and by-product discharge, adjusting to the new Food Safety Modernization Act, and research to uncover innovative ways to package food and agricultural products are critical for the continued processing industry growth.
- The outcomes of the initiative will help increase sector profitability, aid in business expansion, and increase the overall impact on Michigan's economy.

MFB Policy #41 Michigan State University

We are encouraged by the outcomes of the Governor's Summit on Production Agriculture in bringing together and renewing the focus of cooperative efforts of state government, MSU, and industry stakeholders to address critical issues facing the food and agriculture industry today. We support continuation of this dialogue as we look to develop an industry-driven initiative, modeled after the plant and animal initiatives, to support the research, education and outreach needs to grow Michigan's agriculture and agricultural processing industries.

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Workforce Development

Workforce Development



Michigan Merit Curriculum

The revised Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC) requires 18 courses be completed in addition to local school district requirements such as physical education or performing arts. This resulted in less time for career and technical education enrollment where students experience hands-on learning and acquire skills valuable in exposing students to the variety of agriculture careers available.

Talk points:

- There are too many requirements in the current MMC structure. Students need flexibility to be able to take career and technical education courses.
- Not every student is going to obtain a four-year degree and there are job opportunities for people with two-year degrees and technical certificates.

MFB Policy #39 Education

A well-rounded education containing basic core curriculum, including college-prep or vocational/technical courses, should be an attainable and achievable goal for all students. The vigorous set of statewide standards makes it more difficult for students to fit career and technical coursework into their schedule. Additionally, we believe more emphasis should be placed on studies in government, economics, and communications skills which are required for survival in today's world.

We recommend Michigan Farm Bureau work with the Legislature and the Department of Education to allow flexibility to the MMC. This will provide more opportunities for students to enroll in vocational training programs.

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Addressing Regulation

Addressing Bad Regulations



Wetland Regulation

In 2008, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized a review of Michigan's delegated authority of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) section 404 (wetlands). EPA recommended several amendments to Michigan's program to retain delegated authority. EPA determined Michigan's long-standing exemptions for agricultural activities in wetlands do not meet rules associated with the CWA. As a condition of

retaining our delegated authority, EPA is requiring Michigan to issue permits to perform exempted agricultural activities in wetlands where exempted agricultural activities have not been performed in the past.

Talk points:

- Current agricultural exemptions in state law are appropriate and should be maintained because they allow agricultural use of wetlands without diminishing the environmental benefits wetlands provide.
- If agricultural exemptions must be changed to meet the CWA, we support the development of a practice-based permit for common wetlands, lakes and streams activity.

MFB Policy #80 Wetlands Protection Act

Current agricultural exemptions in state law are appropriate and should be maintained. If agricultural exemptions must be changed to meet the Clean Water Act, we support the development of a practice-based permit for common wetlands, lakes and streams activities. The permit should have limited or no review by DEQ.

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MISS Dig

In 1974, Michigan adopted the Protection of Underground Facilities Act that established the prerequisite for excavators to contact the MISS Dig call center prior to mechanical excavation work. The Act also created liability provisions for persons who damage an underground facility.

There is an effort to update the law coming from discussions by the Michigan Damage Prevention Board to identify ways of increasing the use of MISS Dig call center prior to excavation work. Their focus is to create proactive standards with new fines and penalties for non-compliance, including fines and penalties for the call center process.

Talk Points:

- We understand the value of utilities and broadband communication and support reasonable efforts to minimize damage to infrastructure.
- We oppose applying excavation standards to normal farm tillage practices.

MFB Policy #63 Utility Placement

We understand the value of utilities and broadband communication and support reasonable efforts to minimize damage to infrastructure.

For normal tillage practices of depths of 12 inches or less beneath the surface in the road right of way, and 24 inches or less beneath the surface out of the road right of way, we oppose the following:

- These practices being defined as excavating.
- Landowner, tenant or custom operator being held liable for damage to any buried utilities.
- Landowner, tenant or custom operator being required to contact MISS DIG.

A landowner, tenant or custom operator shall not be held liable for any accidental or inadvertent breakage or disruption of service on utility lines, cables or pipelines that are not properly installed, marked or maintained. We recommend MISS DIG markings of utilities be accurate within one foot.

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Right to Farm

The Right to Farm (RTF) Act, established in 1981, provides Michigan farmers protection from nuisance lawsuits if they are in conformance with the voluntary Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices (GAAMPs). The GAAMPs are based on available technology and scientific research to promote sound environmental stewardship and help maintain a farmer's right to farm. As urban agriculture expands, some have questioned the broad application of RTF.

Talk Points:

- RTF is critical for the continued growth of commercial agriculture, and we would oppose attempts to weaken the RTF Act.
- We are interested in promoting solutions for urban centers, but are extremely concerned about opening up the RTF Act.

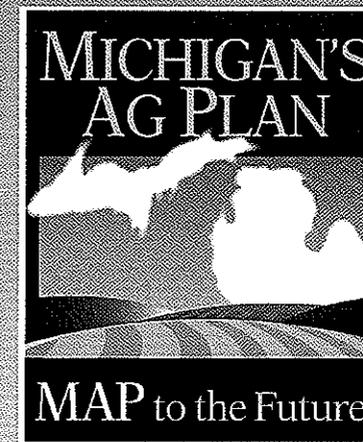
MFB Policy #33 Right to Farm

The integrity of Michigan's Right to Farm Act and science-based Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs) should not be weakened or jeopardized by including practices that are not integral or directly related to farming. We support the continued use of GAAMPs to define acceptable farm management practices in the State of Michigan.

We support economic development which accepts agricultural businesses as part of urban center economies and development of agreements which allow urban agricultural production while protecting the rights of farm businesses with production sites within Michigan cities.

We are concerned about the exemption of GAAMPs applicability to municipalities with a population of 100,000 or more.

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State Legislative Initiatives

Throughout the past several years, Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) has focused on streamlining Michigan government, while creating a sustainable environment for economic growth in Michigan and in Michigan agriculture.

In 2011, the first Governor's Summit for Production Agriculture was held, where the industry focused on five major measurable goals that would support growth in agriculture:

- Increase food and agriculture's economic impact from \$71 billion to \$100 billion. (A recent economic impact study completed by Michigan State University indicates the current impact at \$91.4 billion)
- Double agricultural exports.
- Increase food and agricultural career jobs by 10 percent.
- Increase access to healthy foods in Michigan by 20 percent.
- 5,000 Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) verifications.

To reach these goals, policy and legislative changes are necessary in some cases. In other areas, it is important to hold the line to prevent undue regulatory burdens that would hamper the productivity and prosperity of Michigan agriculture. In 2013, the Michigan Ag Plan will focus on three major areas: workforce development, addressing regulations and increasing market access.