



In this issue: Annual Meeting / 2018 Farm Bill / Garden Tour

June 2017

Your presence is requested

Please make plans to attend this meeting as it will be very informative



Michigan Greenhouse Growers Council
June Annual Meeting Invitation

Monday, June 26, 2017 9 a.m.
C. Raker & Sons, Inc.
10371 Rainey Road • Litchfield, MI 49252

The Michigan Greenhouse Growers Council respectfully invites all members and interested industry professionals to attend this event. This is the 2017 Annual Membership Meeting to replace the December Annual held at the GLE in Grand Rapids the past few years. There is NO Fee to attend this event. RSVP to the MGGC Office by June 22.

Tour of C. Raker & Sons (Susie Raker-Zimmerman)
Visit with legislators and hear legislative updates (Invited)
Senator Debbie Stabenow, US Senate, Agriculture Committee
Senator Gary Peters, Bruce McAltee - Mid-Michigan Regional Director (Confirmed)
Congressman Tim Walberg
State Senator Mike Shirkey
State Representative Eric Leutheuser

Industry Presentations
Mike Bryan, Nursery and Export Program Specialist, MDARD (Confirmed)
Heather Throne, Jodi Gruner & Terri Barker - MIDARD Agr Development (Conf.)
Bridget Behr, Michigan State University (Confirmed)
Kennis Woolen and Eric Clinton, DTE

Member Discussion
Greenhouse Opportunities
Lunch (RSVP)

Please complete and return this registration form
Email to: val@julianvail.com; Fax to: (517) 372-1501
Mail to: MGGC, PO Box 278, Bath, MI 48808

Yes, I will attend

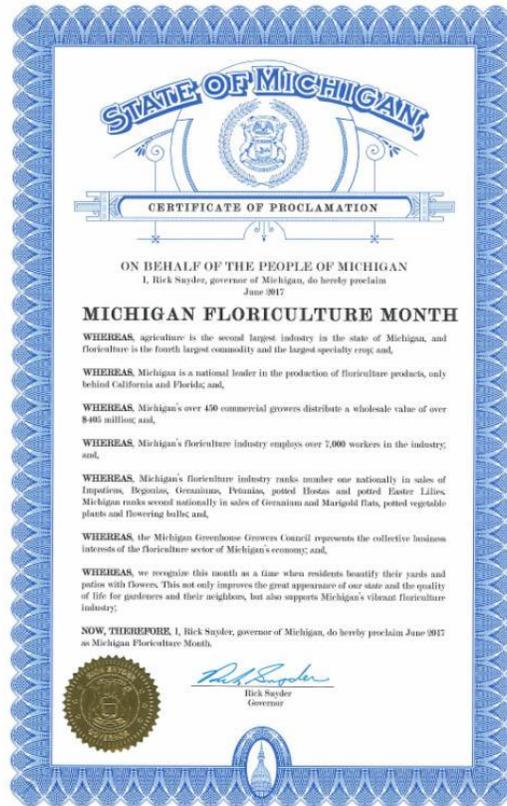
Name _____
Company _____
Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____ Email _____

Additional Guests:
Name _____ Name _____
Company _____ Company _____

Board Meeting
June 26, 2017 at
12:30 or following the annual meeting

C. Raker & Sons, Inc.
10371 Rainey Rd
Litchfield, MI 49252

[Click here for directions.](#)



**TO THE UNITED STATES SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE,
NUTRITION AND FORESTRY
MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU - PRIORITIES FOR THE 2018 FARM BILL
FIELD HEARING, FRANKENMUTH, MICHIGAN
MAY 6, 2017 - by Michigan Farm Bureau**

Chairman Roberts, Ranking Member Stabenow and members of the United States Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee, thank you for your commitment to the agriculture sector and for your continued work on the 2018 Farm Bill. We applaud you for bringing the Farm Bill field hearing to Michigan and for helping to highlight our many unique interests and opportunities.

Michigan Farm Bureau is the state's largest general farm organization, representing nearly 45,000 farming families across the state. Michigan is proud to grow and process over 200 individual crops and commodities. Because of our state's diversity, Farm Bill programs have an important economic impact on nearly all of our members. While many of the programs are working extremely well for Michigan producers, we have identified several areas in which we recommend Congress consider making changes in the 2018 bill.

Earlier this year, the Michigan Farm Bureau Board of Directors appointed a Farm Bill Task Force due to the importance of this issue to our membership. The group is meeting throughout 2017 to provide additional policy recommendations to our membership through our policy development process. The goal is to help position our organization in the 2018 Farm Bill debate. In addition to providing written recommendations for the Senate field hearing, we hope to continue a dialogue with the committee as work on the 2018 Act progresses.

The Farm Bill has been a critical vehicle for Michigan and U.S. agriculture for generations. While programs and stakeholder partnerships have evolved over the years, one thing has remained - certainty. Specifically, the bill has provided farmers with risk management options and tools like research, market access, and conservation assistance that benefit the industry as a whole and extends well beyond our local communities.

Earlier this year, Farm Bureau joined a group of 18 agricultural organizations in sending a letter to Congress outlining the financial pressures of the industry. Some of the points mentioned in the letter include:

- Net farm income has dropped 50 percent from just four years ago, the largest four-year percentage decrease since the Great Depression.
- The aggregate debt-to-asset ratio remains low compared to the mid-1980s farm financial crisis, but it has risen from 12 percent to 14 percent in the last two years.
- Many farmers are relying on capital reserves while many others, including beginning farmers, have already depleted reserves because they have not had the necessary good years to build them up.
- Based on averages, one in ten farmers is either highly or extremely highly leveraged. For most major commodities, the figures are significantly higher - 24 percent for wheat farmers, and 16 percent for corn farmers.
- The dollar remains strong, leading to difficulty in exporting ag products.
- Our export markets may be stifled by U.S. trade policy. Farm Bureau estimated the completion of the Trans Pacific Partnership agreement would have increased farm income by \$4.4 billion annually.
- Agricultural exports to Mexico and Canada have quadrupled since we entered the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and Canada and Mexico are our second- and third-largest export markets. Loss of market share in Canada or Mexico due to less-favorable ag trade terms in a renegotiated NAFTA or due to less-friendly relations between our countries will depress prices further.
- Other countries heavily subsidize and protect their producers. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development provides a Total Producer Support Estimate (PSE) each year for the 30 developed countries around the world. The average PSE is 18 percent, meaning 18 cents of each dollar a farmer receives comes from domestic support by the government. The U.S. is way below that average, with a PSE of only 8 percent.
- Developing countries are providing large sums of support to their producers. For 2015, China's rice, wheat, and corn subsidies are estimated to be \$100 billion in excess of the levels to which it committed. That is more than the entire safety net for all of America's farmers and ranchers over the life of one farm bill and more than half of another. U.S. farmers are willing and able to compete with farmers in other countries on a level playing field, but they cannot compete with the treasuries of foreign governments. Until there is a level playing field, U.S. agriculture requires a strong safety net.
- The 2014 farm bill contributed \$23 billion to deficit reduction over 10 years. It was the only reauthorization bill that voluntarily offered savings during the 113th Congress.
- Farm budgets are very tight this year and, with USDA predicting commodity prices to remain flat for the next several years, we need a strong, effective farm bill to help farmers and ranchers through this difficult, long-term period of depressed commodity and livestock prices.

Many unique partnerships have developed over the years that have resulted in a broader coalition of Farm Bill support. In the 1970s, a partnership was formed with the nutrition community, one that continues until today. It is imperative that we keep the nutrition title and agriculture titles together. We will not get a Farm Bill unless we bring the rural and urban support together. Today agriculture represents less than two percent of the population, yet the viability of American agriculture remains critical to all citizens and many beyond our borders in the form of exports.

Crop insurance must be adequately funded and an optional tool for all types of growers. The 2014 bill saw the expansion of options for many specialty crop growers including our state's cherry producers. We must

continue adequate funding for crop insurance and also work at expanding coverage to those crops and commodities that desire to have a coverage option. We must also work to fine tune the crop insurance tools we have today to best reflect the needs of producers.

The Margin Protection Program (MPP) for dairy producers is not working. We need a program that works for all producers and it is critical it be adequately funded. MFB remains committed to working with lawmakers on a solution that helps our state's dairy industry. In 2015 farmers paid in about \$73 million in premiums and administrative fees and only \$700,000 was paid out to 264 of the 24,000 dairy farmers that participated in the program. In 2016, \$23 million was collected in premiums and administrative fees and \$11.2 million was paid back to dairy farmers.

MFB supports the expansion of the Livestock Gross Margin (LGM) program. The \$20 million cap must be removed.

MFB supports the development of insurance products that recognize and cover livestock products such as milk as agricultural commodities separately and distinctly from coverage developed for livestock. We are supportive of the market based dairy revenue protection concept currently before the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC).

Livestock indemnity programs must be adequately funded and compensate farmers in a timely manner. Bovine TB has been an ongoing issue in Michigan and there have been cases of very long delays in farmers being compensated for herd depopulation. Avian Influenza is also a major concern but has not been a problem to date in Michigan. We must have adequate tools in place in the event of an outbreak.

Michigan greenhouse growers are looking into an indemnity program to help them recover from a largescale disease outbreak or where their products are quarantined. We will be working with the Michigan greenhouse industry on this concept and would entertain an open dialogue with the committee on how best to address this in the 2018 Farm Bill.

We must maintain critical research and market access funding - Specialty Crop Block Grants, Specialty Crop Research Initiative and the Market Access Program are a few items that Michigan producers rely on. Our specialty crop sector is facing pressures from pests like the Spotted Winged Drosophila (SWD) and there are not many readily available tools. Our commodity groups have worked very well together and with MDARD and MSU on securing funding for critical research projects that benefit these industries. Michigan continues to be an example where this partnership works extremely well.

We support expansion of the Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program (FFVP) to include frozen and processed food products. Michigan is the 2nd most agriculturally diverse state in the country behind California, and we produce over 200 unique crops and commodities. Since fruit and vegetable production is seasonal in nature, production windows are often short and result in large amounts of any one product being harvested at a given time. As a result, products can flood the market and Michigan has found a healthy balance in a strong processing industry to help spread fruit and vegetable use over a longer period of time. Michigan's apple industry processes 60-65% of its crop annually. Michigan's cherry industry processes 95% of the state's crop annually. Processed apples and cherries (canned, frozen, dried and fresh cut) contribute significantly to Michigan producers as well as the state and local economies.

Expanding the FFVP would allow school nutritionists the flexibility to provide a wider range of healthy fruits and vegetables that schools can provide year-round to students, furthering the nutritional options in the FFVP snack program and encouraging life-long healthy eating habits. Frozen, canned, dried, and other processed options also have noted nutritional benefits.

SCBG money should not be diverted to fund Food Safety Modernization Act requirements. Farmers throughout the United States rely on block grant dollars to fund critical disease and pest management issues that are much larger than an individual grower can handle on their own. It is because of the critical partnership between the federal government, our land grant universities, state departments of agriculture and our industry groups that we are able to tackle insect and disease pressures and remain economically viable. Unfunded federal mandates must be addresses in legislation outside of the Farm Bill or we will lose the ability to collaborate on the research projects that agriculture relies on most.

We support the Tree Assistance Program (TAP) as a valuable tool for growers.

The Market Access Program (MAP) has been a critical tool for both commodity and specialty crop

producers in Michigan. We support maintaining critical funding for this program. The program encourages the development, maintenance and expansion of commercial export markets for agricultural commodities through cost share assistance to eligible trade organizations that implement a foreign market development program. Michigan soybean growers, cherry producers and others rely on this critical program to assist with selling products overseas.

Michigan Farm Bureau supports the continuation of a counter-cyclical program like the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program and a revenue program like the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) program. If ARC-County is continued, we support changes to make the program more effective and fair to all farmers.

We support maintaining funding for conservation programs. Michigan has been a leader with the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) and voluntary conservation should be the approach over regulation. Farm Bureau policy supports:

- Working lands conservation programs over retirement lands programs, with programs like Conservation Reserve Program prioritizing lands around ditches and streams for nutrient capture benefit
- Maintaining funding for federal conservation programs which maintain environmental benefits and simplifying those programs to encourage farmers to participate, as many current conservation programs are paper-driven and difficult to manage
- Maintaining the current prioritization of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) funding being targeted to livestock producers
- Farm Bureau policy opposes the DUNS system being a requirement for participation in farm, conservation and other USDA programs and supports allowing for a SAM number to be valid for the length of the USDA project for the individual producer
- Farm Bureau policy supports improvements to the State Technical Committees to make them more ag friendly by encouraging producers' participation and input
- NRCS and FSA timely filling vacant positions in local and state offices with qualified staff with excellent communication skills, and those agencies working with partners to effectively promote conservation program opportunities to farmers

Michigan Farm Bureau strong supports continuation of the sugar program. The sugar program provides a price guarantee to the processors of sugarcane and sugar beets and, in turn, to the producers of both crops. USDA is directed to administer the program at no budgetary cost to the federal government by limiting the amount of sugar supplied for food use in the U.S. market.

American sugar producers are facing major economic challenges caused by Mexican dumping of subsidized sugar on the U.S. market. Our producers are encouraging the U.S. government to resolve the Mexican dumping problem, and they favor extending sugar policy in its present form in the next Farm Bill.

American consumers benefit from current sugar policy. On average, consumers in other developed countries pay 29 percent more than American consumers. On average, consumers throughout the world pay 20 percent more.

American sugar producers are among the most efficient producers in the world, ranking 20th in lowest cost out of 95 sugar-producing countries. The world market is distorted by foreign subsidies, tariffs, and dumping of excess supplies. Our farmers can compete on a level playing field with foreign sugar farmers, absent all government subsidies, but our farmers cannot compete with the treasuries of foreign governments.

The issue of farm labor availability was also a key concern mentioned at the field hearing on May 6. Although it does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Agriculture Committee, it is important to note that both seasonal and year-round labor is in short supply. Seasonal job trends, low unemployment rates, an aging agricultural workforce, more people seeking year-round employment, and a desire to stay in one place are

all impacting the pool of available domestic workers that have historically worked in agriculture. Many farmers are now looking toward the H-2A guest worker visa program as the only tool available to find labor. The program is far from ideal, and does not address the needs of year-round needs, like dairy, livestock production, and processing.

Farm Bureau policy states that only reform through legislation can solve the agricultural worker problem. In seeking a meaningful legislative solution to agriculture's worker shortage, AFBF believes that immigration reform must include the following:

Agricultural Worker Program

The uncapped Agricultural Worker Visa Program (AWP) will ensure agriculture's future legal workforce. The AWP allows both employer and employee choice and flexibility by including two options:

1. "At-Will" Visa employees have the freedom to move from employer to employer without any contractual commitment, replicating the way market forces allocate the labor force now.
2. Contract Visa employees commit to work for an employer for a fixed period of time, giving both parties increased stability where it is mutually preferred.

Current Workforce

In order to minimize the impact on current economic activity, AFBF supports an adjustment of status for experienced but unauthorized agricultural workers who currently reside in the U.S. This adjustment should include the following components:

1. These workers have a future obligation to work for a number of days annually in agriculture for several years.
2. Upon completion of this future work obligation, the workers could obtain permanent legal status and the right to work in whatever industries they choose, including agriculture.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the 2018 Farm Bill. Michigan Farm Bureau looks forward to working with the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee on developing legislation critical to our agricultural sector and our rural communities.

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The 2017 Michigan Garden Plant Tour

Date: July 24, 2017 - August 4, 2017

Location: Various Locations including MGGC Members

Contact: Erik Runkle, runkleer@msu.edu

Greenhouse growers, landscapers, garden center operators, and nurserymen are invited to visit each of these participating tour sites during the two-week period, from July 24 to August 4. Expect to learn about a wide range of ornamental crops, including popular commercial brands of annuals and perennials.

This is a terrific way to observe plant performance at different locations and grown under various conditions, both in the ground and in containers. For more, please visit <http://planttour.hrt.msu.edu>.



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Become a member!

Our membership organization represents all who grow under structures, and industries that cater to growers, on legislative and regulatory issues, research needs and business activities.

We keep members informed by providing a newsletter with concise coverage of current events that affect your greenhouse businesses. We continue to work with MSU Extension, AgBio Research, and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. We participate in legislative activities such as Ag Day at the Capitol; and each year as MGGC ambassadors we deliver flowering plants to state legislators.



Please consider joining our ranks to glean the benefits of our strength as we continue to put the interests of Michigan's greenhouse growers in the spotlight! The MGGC Board looks forward to another productive year in 2017 and the opportunity to serve your interests.

We invite you to attend a meeting of the Board of Directors or one of member meetings to learn more about MGGC. Please contact the MGGC office at (517) 367-2033 for meeting dates. We look forward to seeing you in 2017 and welcome your membership!

[Click here to download a membership form.](#)

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PROTECTING POLLINATORS IN
URBAN LANDSCAPES

Photo Courtesy of ©
Clay Bolt / claybolt.com

October 9-11, 2017

Park Place Hotel

300 E State St.

Traverse City, MI 49684

Hosted by: Michigan State University & North Carolina State University

<http://protectingpollinators.org>

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For More information [Click Here](#)

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