

■ **Aug. 18 to Nov. 6 — County Farm Bureau annual meetings.**  
County Farm Bureau members will meet to adopt policies on local issues and make policy recommendations on state and national issues affecting agriculture. **Jeremy C. Nagel, (800) 292-2680, ext. 6584.**

■ **Dec. 2-5 — Michigan Farm Bureau 89th Annual Meeting** at the Amway Grand Plaza in Grand Rapids. The event features policy development, educational workshops, award presentations, and more. **Jill Corrin, (800) 292-2680, ext. 6585.**

# AgriNotes & News

**Sept. 25, 2008**

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Jill Corrin, Manager  
Media Support Services  
Phone: (517) 323-6585  
Fax: (517) 323-6541  
E-mail: [mfbinfo@michfb.com](mailto:mfbinfo@michfb.com)

Visit our site on the World Wide Web! You can find Farm Bureau at [www.michiganfarmbureau.com](http://www.michiganfarmbureau.com)



## **THIS WEEK:**

The Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) is pleased to hear that President Bush plans to follow the lead of Congress and consent to the Great Lakes Compact, an agreement that will protect the Great Lakes basin from large-scale water diversions. **For more information, contact Ryan Findlay, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2025, or Scott Piggott, ext. 2021.**

**Spotting a nook or cranny on the Sklarczyk Seed Farm that has not been touched** by the nimble green thumbs of father-and-son operators Don and Ben Sklarczyk is nearly impossible. From top to bottom and inside and out, the farm's greenhouse and farm fields employ the best and newest practices for environmental stewardship, energy efficiency and wildlife conservation. **For more information, contact Carrie Vollmer-Sanders, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2026.**

**A new set of Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs)** for farm markets will be developed now that the Michigan Commission of Agriculture has approved a final report of the state's Farm Market Task Force. **For more information, contact Ken Nye, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2020.**

**MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU**

7373 W. Saginaw Hwy.  
Lansing, MI 48917

# AgriNotes & News

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## **MFB praises Congress for approval of Great Lakes Compact**

### *Organization looks forward to President's consent; state implementation*

**Contact:**

Ryan Findlay,  
(800) 292-2680,  
ext. 2025, or  
Scott Piggott,  
ext. 2021

**LANSING, Sept. 25, 2008** — The Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) is pleased to hear that President Bush plans to follow the lead of Congress and consent to the Great Lakes Compact, an agreement that will protect the Great Lakes basin from large-scale water diversions.

The landmark legislation was approved by the Senate last month and clinched in the House of Representatives this week. With the exception of Rep. Bart Stupak (D-Menominee), all of Michigan's Congressional delegation voted in support of the agreement.

"The Michigan Farm Bureau commends the Compact supporters from Michigan's Congressional delegation and thanks them for their tenacity in moving this important legislation swiftly through Congress in the current session," said MFB President Wayne H. Wood. "Agriculture is an industry that relies on water to produce food, so we look forward to the President's consent and the Compact's implementation in Michigan."

MFB has been a longtime supporter of the Great Lakes Compact, as reflected in MFB member-developed policy calling for the compact's ratification. Under the Compact, large-scale water diversions require the approval of the eight states and two Canadian provinces located in the Great Lakes Basin, and each Compact partner must implement its own water conservation rules and standards.

"It was important to Farm Bureau members that authority for regulating large-scale water withdrawals from the Great Lakes stay with the states and Canadian provinces actually located in the Great Lakes basin, in addition to Michigan legislation that recognizes the powers of the Michigan Legislature and other Compact partners," said Scott Piggott, manager of the MFB Agricultural Ecology Department.

"Once President Bush provides his consent as he's indicated he will do, attention can be focused on Michigan's new Water Resources Conservation Advisory Council, which has been charged with, among other things, making recommendations on the development and implementation of the state's water conservation and efficiency program under the Great Lakes Compact," said Piggott, a Governor-appointed member of the council.

# AgriNotes & News

## **MFB honors Otsego farm for environmental thoroughness, foresight** *Organization's Ecology Leadership Award goes to Sklarczyk Seed Farm*

### **Contact:**

Carrie Vollmer-Sanders,  
(800) 292-2680,  
ext. 2026

**LANSING, Sept. 25, 2008** — Spotting a nook or cranny on the Sklarczyk Seed Farm that has not been touched by the nimble green thumbs of father-and-son operators Don and Ben Sklarczyk is nearly impossible. From top to bottom and inside and out, the farm's greenhouse and farm fields employ the best and newest practices for environmental stewardship, energy efficiency and wildlife conservation.

For its progressiveness, thoroughness and dedication to caring for the environment, the Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) will present Sklarczyk Seed Farm, LLC of Johannesburg with the organization's 2008 Ecology Leadership Award, previously known as the Award for Proactive Leadership in Ecology Management.

Now in its fifth year, the award goes to an individual, farm or partnership whose natural resources stewardship practices contribute to the protection of the environment, while maintaining or enhancing productivity and profitability. The Sklarczyks will be formally recognized in December at MFB's 89th Annual Meeting in Grand Rapids.

The farm, which produces seed potatoes in a hydroponic greenhouse and grows wheat and soybeans on 500 acres, was nominated for the award by the Otsego County Farm Bureau, and selected from a field of 21 nominees submitted by county Farm Bureaus from across the state.

"Their recent Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) certification, their efforts to conserve energy with hydro-cooling pads and energy-efficient fans in all greenhouses, and their 1999 Environmental Protection Agency/National Potato Council Environmental Stewardship Award are just a few of the reasons why the Otsego County Farm Bureau feels Sklarczyk Seed Farm is deserving of this honor," said Otsego County Farm Bureau President Linc Campbell.

In nominating Sklarczyks, the county Farm Bureau submitted a letter of support from Otsego Conservation District Chairperson John Middleton who shared similar sentiments, writing "Don Sklarczyk recognizes that natural resource health affects not only his farm, but the surrounding area as well."

### ***What makes the farm special***

The Sklarczyks have a long and extensive list of improvements made over the years. The achievements are broad and range from establishing filter strips and converting to minimum tillage to reduce soil erosion, to installing a low-pressure irrigation pivot system along with a low-watt, motion-activated lighting system to reduce energy consumption.

Among the farm's biggest advancements has been the use of high-tech field gear such as global positioning system controls on tractors and yield monitors on harvest equipment. The yield monitors helped the men determine that in some fields the energy requirements to produce a crop outweighed yields; thus, it made more sense to use the fields for wildlife food plots.

The Sklarczyks have also gone to considerable lengths to protect the water quality of nearby Denny Lake. Water runoff that collects on the farm is captured in water retention basins and funneled to a holding pond where the water can be purified. Acting like a dam, water levels in the pond are regulated so that gates allowing water to flow into Denny Lake are only opened once the water has reached optimum purification.

In 2005, the farm secured a permit from the state Department of Environmental Quality to collect, receive and consume used oil. The Sklarczyks have been able to reduce liquid petroleum gas consumption on the farm by using more than 5,000 gallons a year of used oil for heating purposes.

The family sought help from the Natural Resources Conservation Service in 2006 to remove old underground fuel storage tanks and replace them with modern above-ground fuel tanks and filling areas.

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Pursuing voluntary verification in MAEAP was a natural next step for the farm. MAEAP verification signifies that a farm operates in compliance with all applicable state and federal environmental regulations and generally accepted farming practices. In 2007, the wheat and soybean arm of the business became verified in the MAEAP Farmstead and Cropping Systems. A year later the greenhouse portion followed suit, becoming one of the first MAEAP-verified greenhouses in the state.

## ***Living a legacy; helping the masses***

Conservation was instilled in the men by the farm's founder Michael Sklarczyk, Don's father and Ben's grandfather. The father and son recall the elder Sklarczyk often saying, "We use the land for a short time. Care must be given to leave it a better place than when you found it."

In addition to carrying on that family heritage, the Sklarczyks take pride in sharing newfound knowledge with others, no matter whether a person farms for a living or owns farmland for recreational purposes. As they humbly say, "it makes no difference as long as the ecosystem is benefited."

To this point, Don Sklarczyk most recently has been working with the Otsego Conservation District to design a greenhouse for the production of native plants which can be used for restoration projects throughout northern Michigan.

"His help with our project exhibits his concern for natural resources at a large scale," said Middleton.

According to MFB President Wayne H. Wood, the Sklarczyks fully embody the spirit and essence of the Ecology Leadership Award.

"It seems no stone has been unturned on their operation. From the biggest to tiniest detail they've thought about the environment in all their decision-making," said Wood, adding that the feat is impressive considering the farm produces more than 75 percent of the base seed potatoes for Frito Lay and also does business in Canada and Mexico.

"The fact that the family is so passionate about educating others is icing on the cake," he said.

MFB is the state's largest general farm organization, representing more than 47,000 farm families. MFB's annual meeting will be held Dec. 2-5 at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel and DeVos Place.

# AgriNotes & News

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## **Work under way to add farm markets to state's Right to Farm Act**

### *MDA directed to develop GAAMPs for farm markets*

**Contact:**

Ken Nye,  
(800) 292-2680,  
ext. 2020

**LANSING, Sept. 25, 2008** — A new set of Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs) for farm markets will be developed now that the Michigan Commission of Agriculture has approved a final report of the state's Farm Market Task Force.

The task force, consisting of farmers, local officials, academics, environmental groups and Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) staff, recommends that the Michigan Department of Agriculture “initiate actions to write a GAAMP for farm markets” and “take steps to initiate legislation to address aspects of agricultural tourism operations that are not covered under the (Michigan) Right to Farm Act.”

What that really means, said task force member Ken Nye, MFB's horticulture and forestry specialist, is that a new set of GAAMPs will be written to protect farm markets from nuisance lawsuits and certain local regulations under the state's Right to Farm Act.

Michigan's Right to Farm Act protects agricultural producers from nuisance lawsuits so long as the producer is following applicable GAAMPs, which represent widely accepted industry practices. GAAMPs are reviewed annually by technical committees and revised and updated as necessary. To date, Michigan has GAAMPs covering: manure management, nutrient utilization, farm site selection, irrigation/water use, pesticide utilization, care of farm animals, and cranberry production

“We have a need for a farm market GAAMP because farm market operators run into problems with local regulations. They're not sure of the regulatory requirements, and there is not a lot of information available about regulations of farm markets,” said Nye. “On top of that, Farm Bureau member-developed policy encourages a farm market GAAMP.”

Nye emphasized that a GAAMP will not exempt farm market operators from following certain local ordinances; it only sets a voluntary standard for compliance with accepted practices.

“This is not a one-size-fits-all solution, but it will provide education and a statewide standard for both farm market operators and local officials, and it will protect farmers from nuisance lawsuits,” he said. “But keep in mind that certain local and state regulations are not going to be pre-empted by this.”

# AgriTips

Sept. 25, 2008

*Editor's Note: The following story ideas are designed to provide a quick look at the issues affecting agriculture. For more information on any of these subjects, please call Jill Corrin at the Michigan Farm Bureau home office at (517) 323-6585. Or for a local angle from a producer in your area, call Jeremy Nagel at (517) 323-6584.*

## McCain, Obama outline their agriculture platforms to AFBF

The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) has released the results of its presidential election questionnaire completed by Sens. John McCain and Barack Obama. In the Q&A document, both candidates responded to AFBF's inquiries about farm bill implementation, renewable fuels, climate change and death taxes, among other issues.

In the survey, McCain said expanding international trade would be a central focus of his agricultural policy. He said upholding current trade commitments, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, while working toward ratification of pending agreements with Colombia and South Korea, would be a priority. McCain also supports Trade Promotion Authority.

Obama took the opportunity to discuss his commitment to renewable fuels. He said he has set a goal of having 60 billion gallons of U.S. fuel come from biofuels by 2022.

When asked about the farm bill, Obama said it was important to implement the 2008 bill as passed by Congress. McCain, who did not support the bill, instead focused his answers on expanding foreign markets and reforming the crop insurance program.

## Farmers markets are growing nationwide

The number of farmers markets in the United States continues to grow, reports the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), reaching a total of 4,685 in August 2008. This represents a 6.8 percent increase since mid-August 2006, when AMS reported 4,385 farmers markets nationwide.

Since 1994, when AMS began to track farmers markets, the number of farmers markets nationwide has grown by nearly 3,000.

"More and more consumers are discovering the wide array of fresh, locally grown produce available at farmers markets," said AMS

Administrator Lloyd Day. "Another reason for their popularity is food buyers like the opportunity to interact with the producers."

Both candidates pledge to cut the estate tax, with McCain promising a lower tax rate and higher estate value exemption (15 percent and \$10 million) than Obama (45 percent and \$7 million).

Every four years, AFBF's member newspaper poses questions to the presidential candidates and the result is an exclusive glimpse at what they promise to do for the nation's farmers and ranchers.

"The fact that the candidates take the time to do this during the height of the campaign season is a huge nod to how involved and influential farmers and ranchers are in policy, politics and in their own communities. It also shows how important rural votes are to both candidates, especially this year," said Lynne Finnerty, FBNews editor.

More information from the AFBF presidential Q&A can be found in the Sept. 22 edition of FBNews, available online from the FBNews link at [www.fb.org](http://www.fb.org).

**Contact: Sarah Black, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2040 or Ryan Findlay, ext. 2025**

Administrator Lloyd Day. "Another reason for their popularity is food buyers like the opportunity to interact with the producers."

To find a farm market in Michigan, consult the 2008 Michigan Farm Market and Agricultural Tourism directory, available online at [www.MichiganFarmFun.com](http://www.MichiganFarmFun.com). Links can also be found from the Michigan Department of Agriculture at [www.michigan.gov/agtourism](http://www.michigan.gov/agtourism), Michigan Farm Bureau at [www.michfb.com](http://www.michfb.com), and Farm Bureau Insurance at [www.farmbureauinsurance-mi.com](http://www.farmbureauinsurance-mi.com).

**Contact: Ken Nye, (800) 292-2680, ext. 2020**

## Michigan's weekly crop and weather

Little to no rain fell over the week ending Sept. 21, but harvest and other fieldwork remained held up from the rains received Sept. 13-14, according to the Michigan Field Office of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). See Table 1 for soil moisture levels.

As reflected in Table 2, harvest of corn for silage continued. Meanwhile, a few farmers began harvesting or said they would begin their corn for grain harvest as soon as fields dried out. Harvest of soybeans was just beginning in some areas as field conditions permitted. Alfalfa and dry bean harvests were also slowed due to damp conditions. Some farmers report that a fourth cutting of alfalfa may not be possible on their fields. Planting of winter wheat continued where conditions allowed. Sugar beet harvest has begun.

In the orchards, apple harvest was in full swing across the state.

Peach and pear harvest finished, and quality was good. Meanwhile, harvest of fall raspberries

continued, and plum harvest neared completion.

Carrot and onion harvests resumed late in the week, as potato harvest continued. The heavy rains took a toll on the remaining celery fields, with some acreage not harvested at all and the rest experiencing reduced yields. Meanwhile, pumpkins and winter squash were maturing rapidly and most will be harvested by the end of September.

The USDA-NASS-Michigan Field Office can be reached at (517) 324-5300. This information is also available online at <http://www.nass.usda.gov/mi>.

**Table 1: Soil moisture for week ending 09/21/08**

Stratum	Very short		Short		Adequate		Surplus	
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	
Topsoil	1	9	59	31				
Subsoil	4	10	62	24				

**Table 2: Crop progress for week ending 09/21/08**

Crop	This week	Last week	Last year	5-year average
	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent
All hay, third cutting	77	72	82	84
All hay, fourth cutting	24	19	22	23
Apples, harvested	26	18	37	NA
Corn, mature	34	16	64	43
Corn silage, harvested	56	41	78	65
Dry beans, harvested	19	16	44	47
Peaches, harvested	94	78	100	NA
Potatoes, harvested	38	34	43	NA
Soybeans, turning leaves	89	70	81	81

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## **Farm Bureau Quick Facts**

### *Significant Events in Agricultural History*

1607 – English colonists in Jamestown, Virginia, planted grain, potatoes, pumpkins, melons, cotton, oranges and pineapples.

1850 – About 75 to 90 hours of labor were required to produce 100 bushels of corn with a walking plow, harrow and hand planting. Yields were about 40 bushels per acre.

1858 – Mason jars, used for home canning, were invented.

1987 – Less than three hours of labor and about one acre of land were required to produce 100 bushels of corn, with the farmer using a tractor, 5-bottom plow, 25-foot plow, 25-foot tandem disk planter, 25-foot herbicide applicator, 15-foot self-propelled combine and trucks.

1991 – More farmers use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques, working with nature to lessen the need for crop protectants and other inputs.

*Source: American Farm Bureau Federation*