



VEGETABLE NEWS *and* VIEWS

FROM THE MICHIGAN VEGETABLE COUNCIL

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PLAN TO ATTEND THE 2015 GREAT LAKES FRUIT, VEGETABLE AND FARM MARKET EXPO

The 2015 EXPO will be held December 8-10 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. More than 75 education sessions and workshops will be presented over three days. The trade show will offer displays by more than 450 exhibitors and will feature a new exhibit area for vendors with products and services

for farm marketers. Again in 2015, the Michigan Greenhouse Growers EXPO will be held concurrently with the Great Lakes EXPO (one registration fee covers both conferences). Two pre-conference events are scheduled for December 7 – the EXPO's Farm Market Bus Tour and the

National Vegetable Grafting Symposium.

You will save on registration fees if you **pre-register by November 18**. You can register online, as well as by mail or fax. Registering under the vegetable or fruit/vegetable categories includes membership in the Michigan Vegetable Council.

Go to GLEXPO.com for registration and program information. In cooperation with the Grand Rapids Convention Bureau, the EXPO has reserved Dash Shuttle Lot -Area #9 (250 Seward NW) for **free parking and free shuttle bus service** to and from DeVos Place Convention Center.

ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

The Michigan Vegetable Council's annual meeting and election of directors will be held during the EXPO on **Wednesday, December 9 at 11:15 a.m.** Three current directors (Chris Dyk, Mike Kenny and Dave Miedema) are term limited at the end of this year. The Council's nominating committee is responsible for contacting potential director candidates and submitting a list of nominees at the annual meeting. If you have an interest in being considered for nomination to the board, contact the chair of the nominating committee, Mike Kenny (989-643-7780, mkenny@kennyproduce.com).

Our Endowed Research and Education Fund – the Michigan Vegetable Council Fund

The Council's endowed research and education fund – the Michigan Vegetable Council (MVC) Fund – has grown to a balance of more than \$350,000 (including investment returns through June, 2015). Research grants of \$56,737 have been made from the fund. A brochure about the fund is included with this mailing. Our goal is to grow the fund to \$1 million. We encourage you to consider a contribution to the fund, which will support vegetable crop research and education now and in the future.

2015 MVC AWARD RECIPIENTS

VanSingel Farms, located in Grant, Michigan, will be recognized with the Michigan Vegetable Council's 2015 Master Farmer Award. The award recognizes well managed and innovative farming practices, as well as leadership roles in industry and community organizations and support of vegetable crop research.

The VanSingel's farm and packer/shipper operations involve brothers Stanley, Keith and Calvin. They grow about 1,200 acres of vegetables on muck soils in the Grant area, with onions and carrots being the major crops.

Matt McCallum will receive the Council's 2015 Master Farmer Associate Award. This award is

presented to an individual who, while not directly involved in farming, has made significant contributions to the well being of agriculture and the vegetable industry in Michigan. Matt is the publisher of four agricultural trade publications, including the Vegetable Growers News and Fruit Growers

News. Except for a couple years when he was off the board because of term limits, Matt has served as a member of the Council's Board of Directors for nearly 20 years.

These awards will be presented on December 9 during the banquet program at the Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market EXPO.

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— AG LABOR UPDATE —

The most alarming and permanent change in labor availability is simply an “aging out” of a generation of agricultural workers. Each farm in Michigan has its own story, but the common thread is that there is decline in the number of workers available for agricultural work. Growers are responding by shifting to fewer labor-intensive crops and relying on long-standing relationships with a pool of worker families and facilitators, when possible, that spans several generations of employers and employees.

Michigan Farm Bureau has created Great Lakes Ag Labor Services, LLC. This new organization was created to work on finding and bringing in H-2A labor. A pilot program was started in 2014 and a scaled up version of the program, including creating the LLC., commenced in 2015. The program is well run, focused and includes a growth

plan to accommodate as many participants as possible.

Michigan's Workforce Development Agency (WDA) has responded to the need for seasonal agricultural workers by attempting to source labor from the U.S. domestic population. Growers, however, have not had much success with these attempts by WDA to find workers willing to perform traditional agricultural labor.

A labor session will be held at the 2015 EXPO. It will include information on labor needs and shortages gathered in a survey by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), which was funded by Specialty Crop Block Grants including one received by the Michigan Vegetable Council. The labor session will also include a panel discussion about results of using H-2A labor this past season.

AN UPDATE ON MSU AND MSUE POSITIONS IMPORTANT TO THE VEGETABLE INDUSTRY

The search for a new Dean of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Michigan State University continues. Campus interviews are expected to be scheduled in November and early December for three or four final candidates. Fred Poston, the current Dean, is retiring at the end of December. Doug Buhler, Director of MSU AgBioResearch, will serve as interim Dean until the new Dean is named and arrives on campus.

Ray Hammerschmidt has served as interim Director of MSU Extension in 2015. For health reasons, Dr. Hammerschmidt will be stepping down as interim Director at the end of the year. Jeff Dwyer will be the new interim Director of MSU Extension, starting in January, 2016. Dr. Dwyer has been serving as a senior associate dean in the MSU College of Human Medicine with primary responsibilities related to research and community engagement.

Zach Hayden accepted an offer to fill the vegetable research and extension faculty position in the Department of Horticulture at MSU. Dr. Hayden is already familiar with vegetable production in Michigan, since he worked with both Mathieu Ngouajio and Dan Brainard at MSU during his graduate studies. His start in this new position will be delayed until September 2016, since he had already accepted a National Science Foundation fellowship in Washington D.C. for the coming year.

The Council has been involved in discussions about the need for a nematology research and extension position in the Department of Entomology of MSU. It is hoped that MSU will approve and fill such a position.

MSU Extension has approved filling an open vegetable educator position in southeast Michigan. A search for candidates is currently underway.

NEW INVASIVE PEST - SWEDE MIDGE

Swede midge is an invasive insect pest of cabbage, broccoli and other cole crops that is already affecting vegetable growing areas in New York and Ontario. This past summer the pest was identified for the first time in five organic cabbage fields in Sanilac County in Michigan's “Thumb.”

The Swede midge's developing larvae cause swelling and severe distortion of young plant tissues, resulting in the death of the growing tip or the development of blind or multiple heads in cruciferous plants. Secondary bacterial infections are common. Swede midge is a threat to both conventional and organic growers, but organic growers may be at greater risk because they lack effective chemical control options.

MSU Extension will be working to determine the extent of the infestation in Michigan, developing monitoring and control recommendations, and educating growers. Swede midge will be the topic of one of the educational sessions at the EXPO in December.