

Michigan Wheat Program December 2012 Article

Planning for Today, Tomorrow and the Future

The Michigan Wheat Program board of directors hosted many industry leaders at its recent strategic planning. The planning held December 2nd & 3rd brought together leaders in the wheat and agricultural industries to talk frankly about the future of wheat production in the state.

Attendees ranged from board members and staff to wheat growers to millers to end users to researchers to seed industry representatives to other ag and commodity organization leaders. Discussion started with the broad charge of legislatively-established commodity organizations including research, education and communication and market development, promotion and public relations. These areas are outlined in the Michigan Wheat Program, but are very broad and needed refinement and prioritization.

Leaders attending the strategic planning session were assigned to work groups focused on one of the three areas outlined in the program and listed above. They were able to discuss strengths and opportunities for growth for the Michigan Wheat industry.

Some of the strengths outlined included the ability of the industry to work together, the inclusion of the new wheat check-off program and more grower involvement, the strength of the processing and end users in the state and the current markets and future market opportunities.

Opportunities included the addition of the new wheat breeder, Eric Olson, who was with the group for the planning and who will be in Michigan to begin his new position on May 1. Through research and breeding the group felt yield and quality issues of the past could be addressed. The role of research at both Michigan State University and MSU Extension were also addressed. Many ideas were discussed to ensure research projects focusing on increasing yield and reducing quality issues would be undertaken. Much discussion was also held regarding the infrastructure needs for wheat research and whose responsibility it was to ensure the broad base of research needed is achieved.

The group felt wheat needs to be profitable and that markets needed to be maintained and grown both domestically and abroad. Market research needs to be done to track the current grain markets and identify future opportunities.

Besides research and market development, a need for additional communication and education was identified. Work will continue through the winter to grow the email list to ensure the Michigan Wheat Program has the network in place to quickly share alerts and information with growers for the 2013 crop year. A communication plan will also be more fully developed to share information about wheat to the ag media, but other media, as well.

The Michigan Wheat Program's strategic plan development has begun. More work will continue on the document throughout the winter. Information and ideas will be shared at winter meetings to gather more input and information. If you have a meeting and would like to know more, please contact MWP executive director, Jody Pollok-Newsom at jody@miwheat.org or by calling 1-888-943-2801 (WHEAT 01). Also, make sure you add www.miwheat.org to your favorites and click on the website when you are looking for wheat information. Please send us your thoughts and ideas about the website or the organization, in general.