



MICHIGAN WHEAT PROGRAM

ANNUAL REPORT
2018-2019



Better together:

Building partnerships to reach common goals

Michigan Millers Association

• Michigan State University •

MSU Extension • MSU Extension

Pest Management Meetings

• Great Lakes Crop Summit •

Breakfast on the Farm • National

Association of Wheat Growers •

Michigan Crop Improvement

Association • Annual Winter

Grower Meeting • Michigan

Wheat Summer Field Day

A REPORT BACK TO THE GROWERS:

THE MICHIGAN WHEAT PROGRAM IS LEVERAGING ITS WORK ON BEHALF OF GROWERS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS THE SPECTRUM.



David Milligan and Sonny Perdue,
US Secretary of Agriculture

Dear Fellow Michigan Wheat Farmer:

I am pleased to report back to you on the state of affairs of the Michigan Wheat Program for the past fiscal year. We can all recognize that we are living in challenging and quickly changing times.

Cable TV is giving 'way to "streaming" channels. Bricks-and-mortar retail is being challenged by online retailing. Everything is going wireless. Technology is being added to virtually every piece of farm equipment, and much wheat research is embracing disease-resistant, high-yielding genomic material.

One thing that stays strong in turbulent times is good working relationships and better collaboration toward strategic, common goals. As chairman of the Michigan Wheat Program board since it began in 2011, I believe our check-off has built very strong, ever-lasting partnerships.

In fact, we've called our 2018-2019 Annual Report *"Better together: Building partnerships to reach common goals."* We want to make you aware of the many ways the Michigan Wheat Program is stretching our check-off funds by partnering with others and developing projects, by adding more partners with similar goals.

Some of the key partnerships we have grown during this past year include:

- Joint partnership with the Michigan Dry Bean Commission to support the purchase of a new MSU combine for better research results;
- Joint partnership with the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee to support the upgrading of an existing combine to ensure accurate research results;
- Partial payment of pledged funding for MSU land purchase at Saginaw Valley Research and Extension Center to ensure wheat is a constant part of the research program;
- An emerging agreement with Michigan State University to support the release of new wheat varieties; and
- Increased support of staff including Dennis Pennington, wheat specialist and Martin Nagelkirk, retired MSU Extension.

On behalf of our board of directors, I sincerely hope you enjoy this report and we welcome your questions and suggestions.

Looking forward to working in partnership!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David J. Milligan".

David J. Milligan
Chairman, Michigan Wheat Program

ON BOARD FOR THE FUTURE

The Michigan Wheat Program board has nine directors. Eight directors are growers who come from wheat production areas across the state and the ninth represents industry. In June 2018, Governor Rick Snyder made his final three appointments to the board, including one new director and two reappointments.

Reappointed for a third term are board members Bill Hunt of Davison and Art Loeffler from Star of the West in Frankenmuth.



Bill Hunt has served on the Michigan Wheat Program board since 2011, and was involved in forming the wheat check-off prior to that. Hunt produces corn, wheat and soybeans on Hunt Farms in Davison, and has wanted to be a farmer since he was a child.

Hunt also serves on the County Committee for the Farm Service Agency and as vice president of the Genesee County Farm Bureau.

Bill Hunt (District 4), Davison



Also serving on the board and helping establish the Michigan Wheat Program is **Art Loeffler**, chairman of the board of Star of the West Milling Company. He holds a bachelor's degree in business from Michigan State University, and represents the business side of wheat production.

Loeffler has also served as controller of Star of the West, and previously as an internal auditor for Kraft Foods, and an auditor at the Yeo & Yeo CPA firm. Loeffler has served as the wheat program's vice chairman, before becoming secretary of the board.

Art Loeffler (Milling Representative), Star of the West, Frankenmuth

Newly appointed was:



New to the board in 2018, **Jason Dunning** is an active partner in Dunning Farms, LLC, a 5th generation family farm that produces feed and cash crops, including wheat and 900 dairy heifers. He has worked in agronomy for the last 18 years, and is currently district sales manager for Dairyland Seed Company. He holds a B.S. in agribusiness management from Michigan State University.

Dunning said wheat has always been an interest of his, from field to flour. He joined the board not only to advance his knowledge of the wheat industry, but to provide input as to where funding is valuable for growers.

Jason Dunning (District 1), Fremont

MICHIGAN WHEAT PROGRAM BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2018-2019

Front row seated The officers in 2018-2019 were:

Frank Vyskocil, Treasurer; **Bill Hunt**, Vice Chairman; **Dave Milligan**, Chairman; and **Art Loeffler**, Secretary.

Back row: **Jody Pollok-Newsom** Executive Director, **Jerry Heck**, **Jason Dunning**, **Marc Hasenick**, **Brent Wagner**, and **Sally McConnachie**.



MICHIGAN WHEAT PROGRAM ANNUAL BUDGET

As in other recent years, the board's budget for 2018-2019 walks the fine line between continuing research projects that will improve productivity and profitability for individual wheat producers, while respecting reduced production and prices statewide.

The funding percentages shown here highlight the focus of the organization for 2018-2019.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2018-2019 RESEARCH AGENDA OF THE MICHIGAN WHEAT PROGRAM

In fiscal year 2018-2019, the Michigan Wheat Program invested just over \$450,000 on 19 research projects, including support for the MSU wheat specialist position. The projects fall into the areas of high-management trials, nutrient and nitrogen management, weed and disease control.

Several projects now being funded are on-going, advancing the findings from prior years, such as control of *Fusarium* head blight. As soon as results are in, the lead researchers are sharing them with wheat producers during plot tours, winter meetings, in our *Wheat Wisdom* e-newsletter, and at the Michigan Wheat Program's Annual Winter Meeting and summer Field Day.

Many projects – notably high-management wheat production trials – have already yielded promising data that growers can consider in making plans for the next crop year, or when considering crop inputs or variety purchases.

In deciding whether to fund or continue to fund a project for the coming year, each August the wheat board reviews the researcher's previous year data and his or her proposed plan and funding request for the year ahead.

Our partner in this two-day deep dive into proposals is Nathan Danielson, a research consultant who has worked with the board on intellectual property opportunities and results-driven projects since 2013.

Since the Michigan Wheat Program was founded in 2011 and began funding research in 2012, it has invested nearly \$3.2 million of grower funds into more than 130 research projects. The overarching goal is moving the wheat industry forward by helping Michigan wheat growers with their two biggest needs: Increasing yield and improving wheat quality.



ONGOING RELATIONSHIPS CREATE ADVANCES IN WHEAT RESEARCH

Roughstalk bluegrass. In 2017, the Michigan Wheat Program began funding research on a new weed species that was invading wheat fields in the state: Roughstalk bluegrass (RBS) (*Poa trivialis*).

Plant, Soil and Microbial Sciences professor **Dr. Christy Sprague** became aware that RBS was becoming a problem in wheat and hayfields in the state, and worked with the board to develop an aggressive research program focused on the weed.

Given that RBS is relatively new to Michigan, no one had yet worked out the most effective type of herbicide control, the best time of year to apply it, at what rate and other considerations to get effective RBS control, or even the yield reductions caused by RBS infestation. In fact, RBS was not even something most growers were scouting for.

This research project continues and Sprague has developed fact sheets, presented on this topic at winter meetings and the Summer Field Day and added RBS to the *MSU Weed Control Guide for Field Crops*.



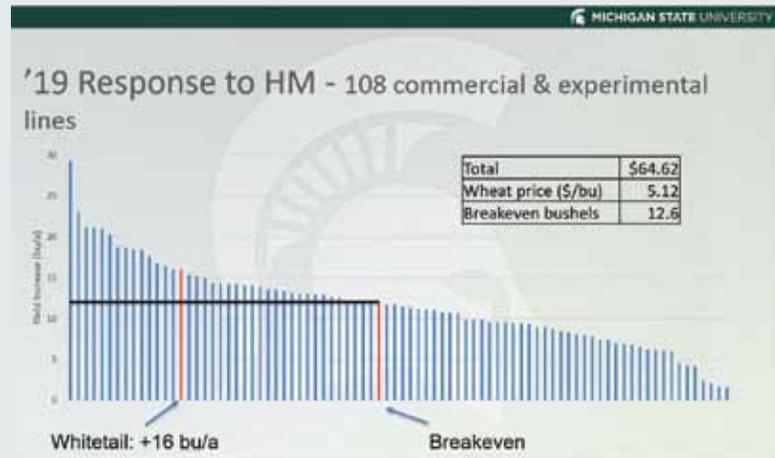
High management production. For seven years now, the Michigan Wheat Program has been following its strategic goal of improving yield and profitability for wheat producers. An important part of that research regimen is variety trials comparing “high-management protocols” to conventional management, as significant variability in responses exists among Michigan wheat varieties – from very positive to no influence.

Conducting variety trials under high management practices that involve applications of higher nitrogen levels and multiple fungicides will identify varieties demonstrating a higher yield response to intensive management practices. This will allow growers to focus their management style and money on the areas where they can make the most impact.

In the 2018-2019 growing season, the Michigan Wheat Program supported a split-plot design project including 84 commercial varieties. **Conventional management** was 2 million seeds per acre, weed control using Affinity Broad-spec at Feekes 5, plus 90 lbs./acre of urea nitrogen (46-0-0) at Feekes 4. **High management** included the same seeding rate, herbicide and nitrogen applied early plus four additional treatments: 1) 20 lbs./acre of sulfur at Feekes 4; 2) 30 lbs./acre of 28% liquid nitrogen using raindrop tips; 3) Quilt Excel fungicide at Feekes 8.5-9; and 4) Prosaro fungicide at Feekes 10.5.1.

In this growing season, the yield advantage for high management ranged from 1.6 to 29.3 bu./acre. The high management cost was \$57.62/acre.

For the 2018-2019 season using a wheat price of \$5.25/bu., the break-even yield is an additional 11 bushels per acre. Of the 84 varieties tested, 47 of them produced more than the break-even yield. Farmers must consider many factors in selecting varieties and following high management (HM) vs. traditional cultivation. This research has provided more data to assist in the decision.



Precision planting wheat. Borrowing from standard practice with other field crops, **Dr. Maninder Singh**, assistant professor in MSU's Department of Plant, Soil and Microbial Sciences, is studying how precision planting of winter wheat could improve yield, productivity and plant health.

Seed placement is the first step in a successful crop, and it makes sense that seed spacing, seeding rate, and planting depth all matter for winter wheat, as well.

For wheat, perhaps the traditional “spill”-type drill and seeding rate of 1.5 million seeds/acre, may have negative impacts on germination, root development, tillering, disease incidence and winter injury. A farm's soil type and nutrient practices will also play into the effectiveness of a precision planting approach.

This was the second year of funding for Singh's precision planting research by the wheat check-off. In 2017, the project purchased and retrofitted a planter that for the first time allowed precision seeding of wheat in plots at the MSU Agronomy Farm and the MSU Saginaw Valley Research & Extension Center. These first trials have shown some positive results, and the work is being supported by the Michigan Wheat Program board over the next few years to arrive at more conclusive data.

A new partnership in development

The Michigan Wheat Program has been working with Michigan State University to develop a partnership to ensure the release and commercialization of new wheat varieties to increase options for growers. After years of negotiation, the agreement is nearly complete to grow the pipeline of new variety releases.

With the work of **Dr. Eric Olson** there are many more varieties that will be available for the marketplace than in years past.

The goal is to release more varieties and to get them in the marketplace. In order to highlight what they have coming, at the conclusion of the walking tour with growers at the Field Day, there was a **special session for seed companies interested in the new releases** on the horizon. It was the first time this event was held and given the interest shown, it will be a regular event.

BUILDING GROWER RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH EVENTS

Michigan Wheat Program's winter and summer education events draw hundreds!

For the 2018-2019 fiscal year, the Michigan Wheat Program held its Winter Grower Meeting in March 2019 in Frankenmuth, and its Summer Field Day in the Lansing area in June 2019.



Highlights of the 2019 Winter Grower Meeting

Three hundred wheat farmers from across the Great Lakes region turned out for the 7th Annual Winter Grower Meeting at the Saginaw Valley Research & Extension Center near Frankenmuth. Presentations embraced the theme of making wheat production more profitable, with particular interest in Dr. Eric Olson's talk about anticipated new variety releases.

Keynote speaker at the Winter Grower Meeting was Dr. Pierce Paul, professor and extension specialist with The Ohio State University's Department of Plant Pathology. Paul has international ag experience, and has been with Ohio State for 13 years. He is currently researching the epidemiology of *Fusarium* head blight of wheat in a multi-state cooperative project funded by the US Wheat and Barley Scab Initiative. Growers were particularly interested in his results.

A new format at the Winter Meeting was the researchers' round-table. Dr. Christy Sprague reported on her Roughstalk Bluegrass work. Soil fertility research with Dr. Kurt Steinke, disease control with Dr. Martin Chilvers, and agronomy advances with Dr. Maninder Singh were all included. It was followed by a popular "ask the expert" discussion with all researchers and moderators Martin Nagelkirk, MSU Extension and Dennis Pennington, MSU wheat specialist participating.

The event again featured a trade show with 16 exhibitors, which help financially support this free grower event. All videos, PowerPoints and other materials from the Winter Grower Meeting are found on the Michigan Wheat Program website at miwheat.org/education2/previous-events.



2019 Summer Field Day puts research on [wagon] wheels

The 2019 Summer Field Day had fantastic weather and excellent content, with about 150 farmers in attendance.

This is the annual Michigan Wheat Program event where growers hop onto wagons for show-and-tell out in the research plots, this year at the MSU Plant Pathology Research Farm in Lansing. The 2019 presentations included:

- **Status Update: Wheat Disease**, Dr. Marty Chilvers, Martin Nagelkirk, Dr. Frances Trail
- **Fusarium Head Blight Trials**, Dr. Eric Olson
- **Tough Talk: Roughstalk Bluegrass Weed Control**, Dr. Christy Sprague
- **Sorting Through the Puzzle: Management Options for Winter Wheat**, Seth Purucker, Dr. Kurt Steinke
- **Mixing it Up: Wheat Interseeded with Soybeans**, Dr. Manni Singh, Tom Siler
- **What it is: Wheat Singulation, Population Study**, Dr. Manni Singh, Kalvin Canfield
- **Comparing Wheat Planting Technologies**, Dennis Pennington

A new feature this year was the inclusion of an afternoon walking tour of both wheat and barley plots on the Mason Agronomy Farm. The tour was led by MSU wheat specialist Dennis Pennington and wheat breeder Dr. Eric Olson.

The Michigan Wheat Program organizes the Summer Field Day to showcase research results and provide the opportunity for Michigan Wheat farmers to walk the fields and talk with researchers one-on-one.

Another productive relationship: The Great Lakes Crop Summit

The **Michigan Wheat Program** works with our partners at the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee and Corn Marketing Program of Michigan to develop programming for the annual Great Lakes Crop Summit held each January.

Session moderators are drawn from the Michigan Wheat Committee board, which also ensures that wheat-specific programming is included. That was the situation in January 2019, with wheat sessions on:

- **Wheat: Place and Potential for Growth Regulators and Nutrients** (Dr. Kurt Steinke, Martin Nagelkirk)
- **How Does Germany Push 200-Bushel Wheat?** (Dennis Pennington, Mike Milligan, Jeff Krohn)
- **MSU Wheat Research: Diseases, Varieties and Soil Fertility** (Mikaela Breunig, John Turkus, Seth Purucker)

Seven years after its founding, the GLCS has turned into an excellent winter meeting where nearly 1,100 farmers can learn about multiple crops, talk with their peers and have access to experts in various ag fields.

Michigan wheat also co-sponsored the GLCS Opening Reception in 2019, and the 2019 Master Farmer Awards luncheon as they have in the past with the other groups.



Partners in pest management meetings

Again this year, the Michigan Wheat Program joined the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan and the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee to co-sponsor the half-dozen Pest Management Workshops organized by MSU Extension across the state. These are important regional opportunities for farmers to learn about emerging pests and weeds from the experts out in the field – including those whose work is funded by the wheat check-off.

GLCS attendees **Mary Eickholt, Dave Milligan, Dennis Pennington, Dave Eickholt, and Ty Bodeis**



Environmental assurance partnership

Since 2013, the Michigan Wheat Program board has partnered with the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP), to support this voluntary program in which risk is assessed by the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD). Staff work with farmers to review the assessment and farmers work for their farms to become environmentally assured.

The MAEAP staff has written to us:

*"Thanks to the support of the **Michigan Wheat Program** and our other partners, the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program hit a major milestone this year! More than 5,000 verifications have been earned by farms across the state, recognizing them as outstanding stewards of their land and water.*

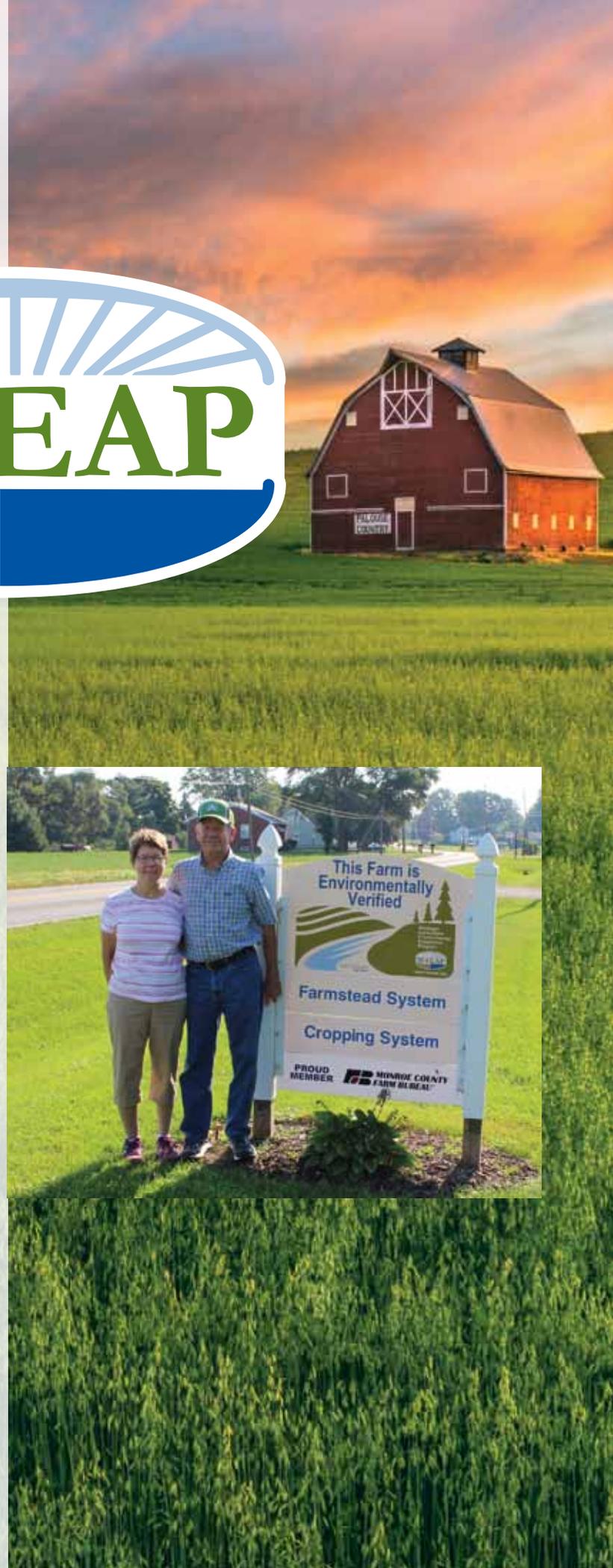
In 2018 alone we had a total of 511 new verifications and 387 re-verifications. From its focus group work, the MAEAP staff at MDARD say the key outcomes farmers want from the program are:

- *The promise of confidentiality;*
- *Succinct summary of the benefits;*
- *A concise explanation of the process; and*
- *Stories of farmers who have successfully completed it."*

While the MAEAP process is free, the Michigan Wheat Program board recognizes that it's time-consuming and can be expensive for farmers. Since 2013, the board has offered a one-time \$50 financial award for documented wheat farmers who are currently growing wheat and have obtained their first cropping system verification in MAEAP. (Details are found at miwheat.org/farmer-perks/maeap-assistance/.)

As of this fiscal year, Michigan Wheat has paid the incentive to 192 wheat farmers.

Board member **Jerry Heck** and his wife **Dee Dee** standing proud in front of their sign.





EDUCATING LEGISLATORS AND CONSUMERS

Ag Day at the Capitol

In mid-March, the Michigan Wheat Program joined dozens of other ag groups to bring some attention to wheat during the annual Ag Day at the State Capitol.

Michigan Wheat Program board member and treasurer **Frank Vyskocil**, helped staff the booth along with executive director **Jody Pollok-Newsom**.



Because Ag Day is a “working lunch” for legislators and their staff members, the Michigan Wheat Program partnered to serve up beef sliders. The wheat check-off provided popular pretzel buns that were loaded up with BBQ beef provided by the Michigan Beef Industry Commission (MBIC). They went over like hotcakes!

Pictured with **Vyskocil**, of New Lothrop, is **Gary McDowell**, the new Director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

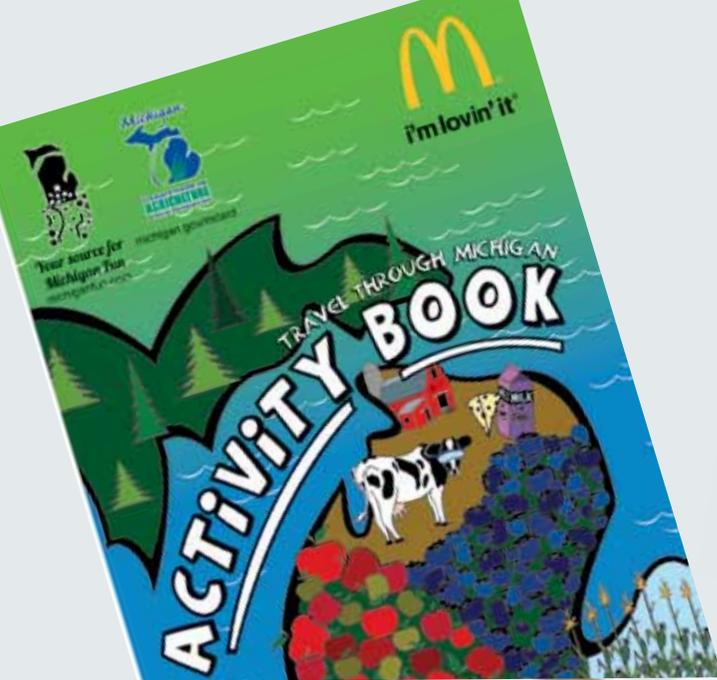
Michigan Wheat Program leaders testify before Michigan House Agriculture Committee

With every crop of new legislators – every other year – the Michigan Wheat Program is invited to testify before the House Agriculture Committee.

March 2019 was no exception, as executive director **Jody Pollok-Newsom**, chairman **Dave Milligan** and board secretary and milling representative **Art Loeffler** all testified about the wheat crop, its importance to Michigan’s economy, current wheat market opportunities and future priorities of the wheat check-off.

The House Agriculture Committee is chaired by Rep. **Julie Alexander**, with a background in dairy farming herself. She is pictured below with **Pollok-Newsom** and **George Quackenbush** of the MBIC.





McDonald's® Kids' Activity Booklet

It's a fun summer tradition to have Michigan agricultural commodities featured in the McDonald's® activity book, which is distributed in its restaurants across the state. The booklets promote Michigan agriculture to the younger set, which is a fun way to educate parents and kids about the farm-to-fork tale of Michigan-grown wheat.

The activity book is coordinated by the Michigan Festivals and Events Association.

If you have children that would like to try the games or if you need a kid handout for an upcoming event, visit us online at www.miwheat.org/consumer-info and you can download them today.



The #MotorcadeForTrade RV Tour stops by "thumb"-area wheat farm

In April 2019, the farm of Michigan Wheat Program chairman David Milligan was one of the Michigan stops for the Motorcade For Trade.

#MotorcadeForTrade was an 11-state, 3500-mile RV tour created by the coalition of Farmers for Free Trade to show support for the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA).

The tour coincided with the two-week April Congressional recess, and included stops across the Midwest at family farms, coffee shops, ag equipment dealers and small businesses, among other destinations.

Tour events highlighted American farmers' reliance on trade with Canada and Mexico, which supports millions of jobs and nearly \$40 billion in American exports each year. Michigan wheat was proud to be part of the tour to provide education about the importance of trade to the wheat industry.



The Motorcade made a stop at **Dave Milligan's** farm where he was joined by board member **Art Loeffler**.

Talkin' shop with consumers @Breakfast on the Farm

The Michigan Wheat Program's board members and staff talked to nearly 5,000 visitors at 2018's two **Breakfast on the Farm** events.

The first was held at a dairy farm in Paw Paw, and the second at the MSU Beef Center adjacent to the MSU campus. In both locations, we shared craft sheets for kids and wheat information to parents, who had enjoyed a tasty on-farm breakfast including wheat foods.



An industrious toddler dips into the wheat kernels



Pollok-Newsom and her daughter Rachel ready for the day to begin.



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*To remain informed year-around, sign up now for the free monthly **Wheat Wisdom e-newsletter** by visiting www.miwheat.org. Growers are also encouraged to follow the Michigan Wheat Program's **Facebook page: Michigan Wheat**. We also have nearly 80 wheat videos on the **Michigan Wheat Program channel** on YouTube. Tune in!*