

Michigan Farmer Column for August 2020 edition

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As we begin wrapping up our summer activities and plan for the Fall, you'll soon be hearing our Michigan Wheat Program leaders talk about the check-off's 10-year anniversary! It's hard to believe we're coming up on a decade since the state's wheat farmers voted the Program into existence.

When you Google the traditional 10-year-anniversary gift, we learn such gifts should be crafted of tin or aluminum because they are both flexible and durable representing the early growth years of a commitment.

Certainly, the first 10 years of the Michigan Wheat Program have required both flexibility and durability of our industry leaders.

Flexibility was needed by our charter board members, as they sought to create a work-able, strategic plan to move wheat production forward in Michigan. Since Michigan hadn't had a wheat check-off ever before we were creating a program out of nothing and had to have durable plans, that were flexible to handle changes and the evolving marketplace.

Flexibility was also important as our budget was adjusted – mostly down – to account for lower yields and sagging prices of wheat and other grains in recent years.

But durability has been our backbone. Despite budget cuts, the board continued its commitment to research.

Moreover, since the Michigan Wheat Program was founded in 2011 and began funding research in 2012, we have invested nearly \$3.2 million of grower funds into 130 research projects. Almost 60% of growers' check-off dollars have been channeled into research, with another 23% going to grower events and communication to share program activities and results.

Over the last 10 years, our board has identified and refined key industry priorities – notably increased yields and improved quality – and stayed the course in funding research to meet these needs. In some cases, we've sacrificed other important objectives to focus on what matters most, research.

Our nine-person board is a mix of young and experienced farmers from across the state, and industry who share determination to think "outside the box" as we branch into our second decade of flexibility and durability.

Look for more of our accomplishments throughout Michigan Wheat's "Decade of Dedication" celebration over the next months.

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As you're purchasing seed and dreaming of the 2021 wheat harvest, imagine yourself joining the exclusive Michigan Wheat Warriors club!

The Michigan Wheat Program has created a Michigan Wheat Yield Contest to recognize outstanding wheat growers in the Great Lakes State. The program is modeled on the popular 5-year-old National Wheat Yield Contest sponsored by the National Wheat Foundation.

We know Michigan wheat farmers produce much more than the national average of 49 bushels per acre, particularly in 2016 when Michigan had an average 89 bushels per acre yield!

What we *don't* know, is which farmers grow it best in Michigan and how they're achieving those yields.

The Michigan Wheat Yield Contest offers Michigan growers an opportunity to compete against one another, as a way to inspire creative thinking to solve production challenges in Michigan.

The next round of applications will be accepted in Spring 2021 just before harvest. Winners will be chosen as a straight-up highest per bushel yield in irrigated and dryland wheat for both red and white wheat.

Contest winners will become "wheat warriors," winning prizes and being asked to share their farming tips as a way to help others. The first winners will be recognized at the Michigan Wheat Program's Annual Meeting this coming March.

More details about the co-entry National and Michigan Wheat Yield Contests may be found on our website www.miwheat.org under the Farmer Perks tab. We already have our first sponsor: Star of the West Milling Company.

Watch our website and our monthly e-news for details on this light-hearted competition!

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