

**State of Michigan
Commission of Agriculture
Meeting Minutes**

October 7 and 8, 1997

**Dean Pridgeon Conference Room
Ottawa Building, 4th Floor
Lansing, Michigan**

PRESENT:

Norman R. Veliquette, Chairman
Douglas E. Darling, Vice Chairperson
Jordan B. Tatter, Secretary
Leanna Stamp
Director Dan Wyant
Ron Zellar, Assistant Attorney General
Michigan Department of Agriculture Staff

PUBLIC APPEARANCES:

Albert Almy, Michigan Farm Bureau
Scott Everett, Michigan Farm Bureau
Howard Kirkpatrick, Michigan Milk Producers Association
Dennis Muchmore, Michigan Dairy Foods Association
Bob Naerebout, Michigan Independent Co-operative Milk Producers Association
Ron Nelson, Michigan Farm Bureau
Egan Stuby-Young, MACDE

ROLL CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chairman Norman Veliquette called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m. on October 7, 1997. The roll was called with Commissioners Veliquette, Darling, Tatter and Stamp present; Commissioner Skogman was absent.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Commissioner Darling moved to accept the October 7-8, 1997 agenda as presented. Seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Tatter moved to approve the August 13-14, 1997 minutes as presented. Seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

NEXT MEETING

The next Commission of Agriculture meeting is scheduled for November 4-5, 1997, in the Dearborn Conference Room, Ottawa Building, 4th Floor, Lansing, Michigan. The Commission will review the 1998 Commission of Agriculture meeting schedule at the November meeting for publication prior to the end of the year.

APPROVAL OF COMMISSIONERS' PER DIEM AND TRAVEL

Commissioner Tatter moved to approve Commissioner Stamp's per diem and travel expenses on September 9, 1997, to attend the Resolution 5 meeting with Dairy Industry Representatives and MDA staff in Lansing, Michigan. Seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF DIRECTOR'S OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL

Commissioner Darling moved to approve Director Dan Wyant's travel to attend the One-Day Dairy Summit on September 16, 1997, in Kansas City, Missouri and the Future Farmers of America Convention on November 13-15, 1997, in Kansas City, Missouri. Seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

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PRESENTATION OF RESOLUTION

Chairman Veliquette and Director Wyant expressed their appreciation to Jean Valley by presenting her with a Commission of Agriculture Resolution honoring her many years of service to the Commission and the Michigan Department of Agriculture.

COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Douglas Darling thanked Director Wyant for judging the livestock contest at the Monroe County Fair. Commissioner Darling reported that he participated in a Monroe County Soil Conservation District tour and the annual meeting of the County Farm Bureau. He commented on the Chicago Board of Trade's proposal to the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) that would change the point-of-delivery system. The CFTC has ruled that Toledo will be retained as a point-of-delivery for soybeans, but not corn. It is hoped that the CFTC will request the Chicago Board of Trades to develop a contingency plan to address the potential problems of this delivery system. A hearing is scheduled for October 15, 1997 in Washington, D.C. at which the Board of Trades will testify and respond to the CFTC ruling.

Commissioner Darling briefly shared information about his 15-day visit to China, which was made at his own expense. The trip was very educational and offered the opportunity to observe production practices. China offers many opportunities for Michigan agriculture. Theresa Houck is the agriculture liaison at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing. She is a MSU graduate and has been very helpful in assisting Michigan commodities. Commissioner Darling would like an opportunity at a later date to share with the Commission some of the opportunities available for Michigan agriculture in China.

Commissioner Jordan Tatter reported that sunshine and warm temperatures brought crop maturities even with last year; however, crops are still seven to ten days behind normal. Apple

rowers, who have attractive labor housing facilities and size-controlled trees, have plenty of help. Poor housing and big (old fashioned) trees discourage harvest help and those growers are short-handed. Commissioner Tatter attended the Michigan State Fair and participated in the Michigan Grape and Wine Council Reception, as well as the Governor's Luncheon. He also took part in the Michigan Food Processors Association Annual Harvest Outing in St. Joseph and hosted west Michigan fruit and vegetable processors to a luncheon and golf outing. He participated in a local planning meeting for the upcoming ANR Products Tourism Conference that will be held in Kalamazoo, November 6-7, 1997.

Commissioner Tatter met with MSU Extension director, Dr. Arlen Leholm; regional director, MSU Southwest, Gale Arent, and Southwest Michigan Research and Extension Center coordinator, Dr. Tom Zabadal, to present his firm's ongoing annual contribution in support of the cranberry research project being conducted at the center, originally funded by MDA. He also attended a reception honoring Dr. and Mrs. Gordon Guyer, celebrating completion of the first phase fund-raising efforts to support the Gordon and Norma Guyer Endowed Internship Program at MSU.

He met with Congressman Frederick Upton, who explained federal support for local job training programs and attended the Michigan Economic and Environmental Round Table quarterly meeting; participated with Director Wyant in presenting a check for \$735,000 to the City of Harrom from the Michigan Jobs Commission to assist Gray & Company's expansion within the community and attended the Berrien/Cass/VanBuren Workforce Development Board bimonthly meeting.

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Commissioner Tatter expressed a concern that a great majority of states will likely receive free market electricity before Michigan. Michigan's electricity rates are among the highest in the Midwest and are a major economic impediment. Michigan will most likely not have free marketing in electricity until the year 2002, which is unacceptable.

Commissioner Deana Stamp stated that this is the busiest and most satisfying time of the year she has harvest is virtually completed, but is slightly less than last year. The dry bean harvest is almost complete, with good reports and quality. The soybean harvest has just begun, and the corn silage harvest is well underway. Early reports received show sugar beets are not good quality or yield, but it is early and hopefully those reports will change.

Commissioner Stamp met with industry representatives on September 9 regarding Resolution 5, Pasteurized Milk Ordinance. Discussions were held on why the resolution is so important to the dairy industry, as well as how to proceed. Sue Crawford, MDA Food and Dairy Division, said that 112 proposals were received and reviewed for a conference next week in Chicago. There are six proposals in favor of the Grade A designation; three proposals in favor of deleting the recording thermometer and one proposes looking at the parameters for thermometers, other than traditional types. Kathy Fedder added that there is a broad general agreement for Resolution 5, but there are many areas where more details and information are needed.

Commissioner Norman Veliquette reported that the red tart cherry federal marketing order continues to be a major topic for cherry growers and for other fruit growers as well. At the start

f the season, production estimates indicated that a third of the crop would have to be set side. However, the crop was underestimated by a considerable margin and, after harvesting, the board set a restricted percentage of 45 percent. Most of the 45 percent that was regulated was harvested. Producers and handlers did have the opportunity to divert the crop from the market at harvest time, but most put it into processed form.

At the same time the federal market order was put into place, a new co-op was formed in the cherry industry. This new co-op estimates it has over three-fourths of the frozen tart cherry product and has been successful in holding the line against the market collapse in view of the large supplies and the federal marketing order. There is still a question of where we go in the future with this production and with the new marketing tools. Commissioner Veliquette has been involved in the cherry harvest and said the new sweet cherry processing building has been completed.

DISCUSSION ON CREATION OF A MICHIGAN MILK ORDER - Elwood Kirkpatrick, President Michigan Milk Producers Association

Director Wyant began the discussion by stating that the dairy industry is on the minds of many in Michigan, as we have seen milk prices diminish throughout the spring and summer. It is apparent that Michigan must look at the state of our dairy industry. He introduced Elwood Kirkpatrick, President of the Michigan Milk Producers Association, to provide background information on and a proposal for a Michigan Milk Order.

Mr. Kirkpatrick began by saying that the dairy industry has some fairly depressed prices this year. The western part of the United States has very large and efficient dairies and is increasing production, while the eastern half is rapidly declining. This is causing a great deal of concern from states east of the Mississippi. It appears that there is a trend in the western part of the U.S. toward larger and more modern dairies.

Mr. Kirkpatrick read a prepared statement on behalf of the members of Michigan Milk Producers Association. A copy of the statement and the proposed amendment to the Michigan Fluid Milk Act also were distributed to the Commission.

Mr. Bob Naerebout, a dairy producer in Missaukee County, stated that he has served on the board of the Independent Cooperative Milk Producers Association (ICMPA) for 10 years, and presently serves as its president. Five years ago when this was an issue, ICMPA was against a state order because they felt there was an opportunity for voluntary premiums. The ICMPA board has examined the issue again this year and has determined that voluntary premiums are no longer an option. It is their opinion that premiums are important and; therefore, ICMPA is endorsing a Michigan Milk Order.

A discussion followed about the need for a voluntary pool and for establishment of a state order by legislation. Ron Nelson, representing the Michigan Farm Bureau, stated Farm Bureau is in support. Dennis Muchmore, representing the Michigan Dairy Foods Association, is in agreement that this would be an important piece of legislation. However, the Association will not take a position at this time until there is an opportunity to review the proposal with its members. Steve Seely also stated that the National Farmers Organization would take a position once they review the issue.

Director Wyant asked that the Michigan Department of Agriculture and the Commission of Agriculture be given an opportunity to thoroughly review the proposal, seek input from other segments of the industry, and invite all interested parties to the November Commission meeting for further discussion. This also would allow time to find out what other states are doing and have the proposal reviewed from a legal standpoint.

Commissioner Veliquette moved to accept Director Wyant's suggestion for further study of the Michigan Milk Order proposal and to obtain additional industry and legal input in order that the Commission of Agriculture can be more fully informed to consider this issue at the November meeting. Seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

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DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Wyant reviewed the October Director's Report with the Commission and highlighted the following:

Michigan State Fair: The department will be submitting a formal transition paper for moving the Michigan State Fair responsibilities from the Department of Consumer and Industry Services to the Michigan Department of Agriculture. Barbara Hensinger of MDA has assumed the responsibility of serving as liaison to the Michigan State Fair.

Office of the Racing Commissioner: Director Wyant, as the Acting Racing Commissioner, met with horsemen's groups to discuss alliances and promotion programs.

Stoneman Farms: He attended an open house at Stoneman Farms where over 1,100 people attended. This was an exceptional outreach opportunity by the Stonemans to talk about their facility.

Food Safety Month: September was Food Safety Month, encouraging consumers to be full partners in preventing foodborne illnesses. It was a successful month in promoting food safety awareness, with numerous radio programs talking about the consumer's role.

MDA Employees Commended: A letter received commending MDA employees Colleen Collier and Gary King was shared with the Commission. A Michigan potato farmer was having difficulty receiving payment from a dealer. Ms. Collier, Mr. King and Ron Zellar, Assistant Attorney General, worked with the parties involved to seek a favorable solution.

Gray & Company: A \$735,000 economic development infrastructure grant was presented to the City of Hart on behalf of the Michigan Jobs Commission. This grant will assist Gray & Company's funding of a new process for rinsing cherries.

Project GREEN: There was a steering committee meeting regarding Project GREEN and a presentation on the Food Quality Protection Act, hosted by the Michigan Farm Bureau. The issue of pesticide data collection, funded through USDA, is a somewhat contentious issue and debate will continue. There is no clear direction as to where the EPA is going with this issue. This is an issue that the Commission may want to hear more detail about at a future meeting.

Michigan Farm Market Month: Governor Engler declared October as Michigan Farm Market

month. MDA, Michigan Farm Bureau, MSU Extension and representatives from the agriculture industry met at Blake's Orchard and Cider Mill in Armada. This was a celebration honoring the agriculture traditions and family entertainment opportunities offered by farm markets in Michigan.

Commissioner Tatter referred to the September Director's Report and asked that the department continue to monitor the impact of shipping blueberries to Canada.

RECESS

The meeting recessed 6:18 p.m. The Commission of Agriculture attended a dinner reception hosted by the Michigan Agri-Business Association, held at the Radisson Hotel in Lansing, Michigan.

RECONVENE

The meeting reconvened at 9:05 a.m. on October 8, 1997. Commissioners Stamp and Rogman were absent. Keith Creagh represented Director Dan Wyant for a portion of the morning's meeting.

Vicki Pontz-Teachout introduced Gail Cutler of the Senate Fiscal Agency and Craig Thiel of the House Fiscal Agency.

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LEGISLATIVE REPORT - Vicki Pontz-Teachout, Legislative Liaison

Vicki Pontz-Teachout reviewed the October 1997 MDA Bill Status Report with the Commission. HB4255, riding in the back of pickups, passed the House with farm operation exemption; HB4337, Drain Code, Representative Wetters will be holding five public hearings in Clio, Granddusky, Kalamazoo, Monroe and Stanton; HB4613, Truck Weight Limits, lowers truck weight from 164,000 to 80,000 is in House Transportation Committee; HB4773, amends the Single Business Tax to exempt nursery sales to landscape contractors and wholesalers, passed the House with immediate effect and was reported favorably out of committee without amendments; HB5071, prohibits the sale of damaged or mislabeled foods, was referred to the House Agriculture Committee.

The House Agriculture Committee had a discussion regarding the meat inspection law, federal versus state. Dr. Chaddock and his staff are working with the ratite and cervidae industries on the development of a meat inspection law for those groups. A summary was distributed and reviewed highlighting proposed revisions to the Drain Code.

REVIEW OF THE PROPOSED FY 1998 WEIGHTS & MEASURES FEE SCHEDULE - Tom Whalen, Director, Laboratory Division and Pat Mercer, Director, MFQ and Weights and Measures Programs, Metrology Laboratory

The proposed FY 1998 Weights and Measures Fee Schedule was submitted to the Commission for review and approval. The schedule incorporates a slight increase over FY97 for the reinspection of weighing and measuring devices. This increase of three percent is tied to the average rate of inflation associated with salaries, wages, benefits, equipment operations

and other costs.

Commissioner Veliquette asked if there had been recent study on actual costs and how those costs are established. Commissioner Tatter requested that the cover letter to the Commission include how the study was done and how the fees were established. Keith Creagh stated that a report will be given to the Commission relating to the new technologies and how they relate to reducing costs.

Commissioner Tatter moved to approve the proposed FY 1998 Weights and Measures Fee schedule as submitted. Seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

REVIEW OF PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO REGULATION 636, PESTICIDE APPLICATORS - Ken Rauscher, Director, Pesticide and Plant Pest Management Division (PPM) and Brian Rowe, Pesticide Section Manager, PPM

Ken Rauscher presented the proposed amendments to Regulation 636 to the Commission for authorization to proceed with the rule-making process. The proposals are a compilation of housekeeping items, clarifications and amendments based on issues identified during the course of program administration and identified by the industry. No specific language has been developed to date, with the intent of developing the same through the negotiated rule-making process, including development of a rule-making committee representing public, private and regulated communities. There will be another opportunity for the Commission to review the rules after public hearing, before final adoption by the Commission.

Brian Rowe reviewed the proposed amendments with the Commission.

Commissioner Tatter moved to proceed with the rule making process for Regulation 636, Pesticide Applicators. Seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

UPDATE ON 1995 FARM BILL AND PARTNERSHIP SUMMIT - Jane Hardisty, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Ms. Hardisty expressed appreciation for Dr. Kurt Thelen's appointment as director of MDA's Environmental Stewardship Division. She also commended Barbara Hensinger for the wonderful job she did as acting director of that division.

Ms. Hardisty updated the Commission on the 1995 Farm Bill and on some of the positive impacts on Michigan. Under the Environmental Quality Incentive Program, over 205 contracts were awarded since last year. There were an additional 110 producer applications where funding was not available. This is proof that there is a need; producers want to take advantage of this program. Over 50 percent of the funds were awarded to livestock concerns and over 100 animal waste systems are scheduled for installation this coming year. A proposal was submitted to continue funding of ten Conservation Priority Areas next year, plus three new ones were submitted.

As a result of the sign-up under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), over 50,000 acres were accepted into the program, which includes offers or bids made by producers. Forty-four percent of the producers were accepted under CRP during this last sign-up.

Michigan was one of two states in the Midwest accepted for \$350,000 in loan assistance and

urchase of development rights under the Farmland Protection Program.

Ms. Hardisty stated that limited resources and new laws are two areas in which we must work in partnership to maintain a balanced program. Keith Creagh commended Ms. Hardisty on her efforts.

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Director Wyant entered the meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ELIMINATION OF BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS IN FREE-RANGING WHITE-TAILED DEER IN MICHIGAN - Dr. Michael Chaddock, Director, Animal Industry Division

Due to recording device malfunctions, a transcript of the actual presentation and discussion is not available. Following is a summary from those who were involved in the discussion.)

A report entitled "Recommendations for Elimination of Bovine Tuberculosis in Free-Ranging White-Tailed Deer in Michigan," was submitted by the State Committee on Bovine TB in Wild Deer to K.L. Cool, Director of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR), James K. Slaveman, Director of the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH), and Dan Wyant, Director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA).

The report was submitted on behalf of a statewide committee of scientists, livestock producers, wildlife managers and concerned citizens who investigated the issue of bovine tuberculosis in free-ranging deer. One recommendation is to seek authority to stop winter feeding in the affected area. There would be at least a one-year delay between seeking authority and implementing the ban. This would allow farmers, hunters and citizens an opportunity to accommodate the effects of the ban.

The department directors will be sending a letter asking landowners in the affected areas to voluntarily stop all deer feeding practices. An evaluation will be done in one year to gauge its success.

A report entitled "Economic Consequences Associated with Bovine Tuberculosis in Northeastern Michigan," was also submitted by Larry Leefers, Associate Professor, Department of Forestry, MSU; John Ferris, Professor Emeritus, Department of Agricultural Economics, MSU; Dennis Propst, Associate Professor, Department of Park, Recreation and Tourism Resources, MSU, to the department directors of MDA, DNR and MDCH. The purpose of this study is to identify the economic consequences associated with bovine tuberculosis in a five-county area in northeastern lower Michigan.

Dr. Michael Chaddock reviewed both reports with the Commission. The Commissioners expressed their concern over the economic and health impacts of this issue. Dr. Chaddock stated that education and communication are critical.

APPROVAL OF 1998 FISCAL YEAR GRANTS TO SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICTS - Gordon Wenk, Program Manager, Environmental Stewardship Division

Gordon Wenk reviewed the allocations to conservation districts for fiscal year 97-98. Operation

grants have been at the \$7,911 level per district office for the past two years. This funding level will continue current activity. Forestry grants have been at the \$30,000 level since 1991. Currently, 23 grants serve 53 districts. This funding level will continue current activity. Mr. Wen recommended Commission approval of the formula used in this grant process.

Commissioner Tatter moved to approve the 1998 Fiscal year grants' formula to soil conservation districts as presented. Seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Began Stuby-Young, Michigan Association of Conservation District Employees (MACDE), invited the Commission to attend the MACDE annual convention to be held on December 4, 1997, at the Radisson Hotel in Lansing. Formal invitations were distributed.

Don Nelson, Michigan Farm Bureau, stated that there is concern over banning deer feeding. Once a deer herd disburses, production livestock could be at risk. He expressed his appreciation to MDA for taking the lead on this issue, but feels that the economic problems need to be addressed as well.

Commissioner Darling inquired as to whether or not there would be an action plan developed. Director Wyant responded that he will work closely on an action plan that would identify practices on the farm.

RECESS

The meeting recessed at 11:45 a.m.

RECONVENE

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The meeting reconvened at 12:45 p.m.

Bill Almy, Michigan Farm Bureau distributed a handout relating to "fast track" legislation that is being considered by Congress. The fast track legislation would reauthorize the President to negotiate trade agreements. The Clinton Administration and the Senate Finance Committee have agreed to give agriculture special consideration in the fast track legislation. The American Farm Bureau Federation and the Michigan Farm Bureau is in full support of this legislation. They are seeking the Commission's support as well.

Commissioner Darling moved to support legislation that reauthorizes fast track legislation that would include specific language for agricultural concerns. Seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Director Wyant informed the Commission that Dale Sherwin will be traveling to Washington, D.C. next week to meet with Governor Engler's Washington Office. Commissioner Veliquette also suggested that the Michigan Congressional delegation be informed of the Commission's support. Commissioner Darling stated that a great deal of discussion was held with Mr. Almy concerning this issue during the luncheon portion of today's meeting.

INTRODUCTION OF NEWLY APPOINTED MDA ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

DIVISION - Dan Wyant, Director

Director Wyant introduced Dr. Kurt Thelen as the new director of the MDA Environmental Stewardship Division. The Director expressed his pleasure at having Dr. Thelen as part of the team.

APPROVAL OF 1998 GROUNDWATER STEWARDSHIP GRANTS - Dr. Kurt Thelen, Office of Pollution Prevention and Jack Knorek, Groundwater Stewardship Program Manager, Environmental Stewardship Division

A six-member team from MSU Extension, Farm Bureau, NRCS, MDA and the Michigan Agri-Business Association, plus a representative from Extension and from MDA field personnel (combined collectively for one vote) judged and evaluated the 51 proposals received. Forty-six of the 51 proposals were selected for over \$2.3 million in funding and are recommending Commission approval. Director Wyant stated that this program has been a model for the country.

Commissioner Tatter moved to approve the 1998 Groundwater Stewardship Grants as presented. Seconded. Motion carried. Unanimously.

ANNUAL REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF GENERALLY ACCEPTED AGRICULTURAL AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR CRANBERRY PRODUCTION - Wayne Whitman, Environmental Stewardship Division

These practices were first approved by the Commission in September of 1996. They have been reviewed by Bob Craig and Dr. Charles Cabbage of the Office of Agriculture Development; Dr. Eric Johnson, Soil Scientist, Dr. Ron Goldy and Dr. Eric Hanson of MSU. Dr. Goldy and Dr. Hanson are both experts in the area of cranberry production. The consensus of the group was that there are no significant changes at this time, although discussions may want to be held with MSU field staff or growers on the Cranberry Council. Once these discussions have taken place, these practices could be presented again to the Commission at its December meeting for review and approval. A public comment period could be announced and growers contacted asking for suggestions and feedback on how the practices are working.

Commissioner Tatter moved to initiate the recertification of practices for cranberry production. Seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH REPORT ON "THE DIRECTION OF THE MICHIGAN SHEEP INDUSTRY 1997" - Doug Sheridan, Office of Agriculture Development

A research report on "The Direction of the Michigan Sheep Industry 1997" was presented. There are four main segments of the industry: Purebred Industry (60 percent of the sheep producers are purebred breeders); Commercial Sheep Industry (40 percent of the total number of producers in Michigan); Lamb Feeding and the Wool Industry.

The demand for lamb is increasing as a product, as a protein source. Michigan does not have an adequate supply to be self-sufficient. Therefore, the state must import lambs. Imports have increased dramatically over the last 10 years. One positive opportunity is that Michigan is home to one of the largest lamb packing and processing facilities in the country (Wolverine Packing

company).

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The Michigan Sheep Alliance is a fairly new partnership, comprised of leaders and contributors to Michigan's sheep industry. The mission of the alliance is to enhance the economic opportunities for the sheep industry.

UPDATE ON MUSKEGON COUNTY CRANBERRY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE - Doug Luikema, Consumers Energy, Director of Economic Development; Robert Craig, Office of Agriculture Development; Dr. David Skjaerlund, Executive Director of the Rural Development Council of Michigan and Bob Naerebout, Chair, Rural Development Council of Michigan

The "Muskegon County Cranberry Production and Processing" preliminary feasibility study and proposal was submitted to the Commission. The study and proposal was completed by the Rural Development Council of Michigan in partnership with the Michigan Department of Agriculture, Michigan State University and Consumers Energy, along with the members of the Muskegon County Cranberry Advisory Team.

Michigan currently has 150 acres of cranberries and is aggressive in expanding 5,000 acres; cranberry production and processing can produce over 500 new jobs; Muskegon County has the potential and opportunity to become the largest processor of cranberries in the U.S.; the cranberry market is the fastest growing fruit market. The cranberry market will require 6,000 new acres by the year 2000 to meet current demand.

The proposed Muskegon County site is approximately 1,890 acres of large, contiguous land area, with the potential for 1,000 acres of cranberry vines. Very little investment is needed by the County, whose primary interest is jobs. There is interest by investors and a prospectus is being developed.

Mr. Naerebout distributed copies of the book "Michigan: A Rural/Metro Comparison, Rural Data Book 1997." This is a joint publication by MSU Extension and the Rural Development Council of Michigan.

MICHIGAN WILDLIFE HABITAT FOUNDATION - Dennis Fijalkowski, Executive Director

Mr. Fijalkowski discussed the Bengel Wildlife Center, one of the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation's largest projects. Handouts were distributed to the Commission explaining the foundation and the Bengel Wildlife Center.

A seminar was held for county drain commissioners interested in reducing their impact on wildlife. The Bengel Wildlife Center will be Michigan's only self-contained training and demonstration facility to teach wildlife habitat restoration and renewable resource management. The Foundation has a 15-year history of successfully working in partnership with private landowners, businesses and government agencies to restore habitat. To date, approximately 1.3 million of the \$1.7 million goal has been raised. Dr. Gordon Guyer and Dr. Keith Groty are the co-chairs of the Wildlife for Tomorrow Steering Committee.

Mr. Fijalkowski invites MDA and all other state agencies to make use of this facility. There are conference and meeting rooms available.

DISCUSSION REGARDING LAND USE - Margaret O'Connor, Former Legislator, and representing "Citizens for Common Sense"

Mrs. O'Connor distributed a paper entitled "Farmland Preservation--Is there a crisis?" She also presented statistical evidence to support her position. Mrs. O'Connor lives on a farm between Kalamazoo and Ann Arbor in Washtenaw County and represents a group of businessmen and farmers. The group asked her to appear before the Commission to discuss the scare tactics they believe are being used relating to farmland preservation and land use. She believes that a lot of the information disseminated is inaccurate. Environmentalists under the guise of preventing future food shortage, want to prevent people from building on farmland and are trying to get the government to help them. She believes that the entire crisis is a hoax, created by the American Farmland Trust for the benefit of environmentalists.

Commissioner Veliquette expressed the Commission's appreciation for the presentation and for Mrs. O'Connor's challenge to the Commission to be careful and critical of the sources of information they receive and use in determining Michigan agriculture policy.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Scott Everett of the Michigan Farm Bureau commented on the land use preservation issue. This is an issue discussed at every county Farm Bureau annual meeting. There is increased pressure on the farm because of urban growth. Purchase Development Rights (PDR) are also being discussed at these meetings. Public subsidies go directly to residential areas for road improvements, water, sewer, school expansions, fire and police departments, which encourage residential development. PDR provides a choice and helps to preserve farmland.

Farm Bureau policy supports private property rights, which means that if you regulate property, you should pay for the loss of the use of that land. With the PDR concept, there is a common ground between private property rights, restricting or regulating private property and some environmentalists who support paying for the restriction on land. The environmental community has realized that if you preserve the productive farmland, you are preserving wildlife, natural resources, wetlands. This is an important issue.

Commissioner Darling stated that he feels the bottom line is that we are losing valuable farmland and this is of great concern.

ADJOURN

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Commissioner Tatter moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:45 p.m. Seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

ATTACHMENTS

The following support documentation and handout materials are on file in the Commission of Agriculture office:

Attachment A August 13-14, 1997 Commission of Agriculture Meeting Minutes

.ttachment B Creation of a Michigan Milk Order

.ttachment C October Director's Report

.ttachment D Legislative Report

.ttachment E Proposed FY98 Weights and Measures Fee Schedule

.ttachment F Proposed Amendments to Regulation 636, Pesticide Applicators

.ttachment G "Economic Consequences Associated with Bovine Tuberculosis in Northeastern Michigan"

.ttachment H "Recommendations for Elimination of Bovine Tuberculosis in Free-Ranging White-Tailed Deer in Michigan"

.ttachment I Allocations to Conservation Districts FY97-98

.ttachment J FY98 Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program Grants

.ttachment K Fast Track Legislation

.ttachment L Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices for Cranberry Production

.ttachment M Research Report on "The Direction of the Michigan Sheep Industry 1997"

.ttachment N Muskegon County Cranberry Production and Processing Proposal

.ttachment O Muskegon County Cranberry Production and Processing Preliminary Feasibility Study and Proposal

.ttachment P Michigan: A Rural/Metro Comparison, Rural Data Book 1997

.ttachment Q Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation/Bengel Wildlife Center

.ttachment R "Farmland Preservation--Is there a crisis?"

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