

# MICHIGAN COMMISSION OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Agro-Culture Liquid Fertilizers  
3055 West M-21  
St. Johns, MI 48879

## MEETING MINUTES February 18, 2015

### **PRESENT:**

Fred Walcott, Vice Chair, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Dru Montri, Secretary, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Diane Hanson, Past Chair, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Bob Kennedy, Past Chair, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development  
Jamie Clover Adams, Director, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development

### **ABSENT AND EXCUSED:**

Trever Meachum, Chair, Michigan Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development

### **CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Vice Chairperson Walcott called the meeting of the Commission of Agriculture and Rural Development to order at 9:18 a.m. on February 18, 2015. Commissioner Montri called the roll with Commissioners Hanson, Kennedy, Montri, and Walcott, and Director Clover Adams present.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER HANSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MEETING AGENDA FOR FEBRUARY 18, 2015. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KENNEDY. MOTION CARRIED.**

### **APPROVAL OF JANUARY 21, 2015, MEETING MINUTES**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER MONTRI MOVED TO APPROVE THE JANUARY 21, 2015, MEETING MINUTES. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER HANSON. MOTION CARRIED.**

### **NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING**

The next scheduled meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 18, at GreenStone Farm Credit Services, 3515 West Road, East Lansing, beginning at 9:00 a.m.

### **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND TRAVEL**

**Commissioner Montri** attended the Urban Livestock Workgroup meeting on January 26, an effort that has been a truly engaged process. Currently, draft recommendations are being reviewed and the next meeting is February 23. She will be attending a meeting tomorrow with Director Clover Adams and the Telecommunications Association of Michigan related to Commission policy priorities. Upcoming events in which she will

be involved are the Michigan Meat Association Convention on March 6-7 and the Michigan Farmers Market Conference March 10-11.

In terms of farming, their operation is still harvesting spinach and carrots, but that is the end of their winter crops. They recently placed their spring seed order and planting will begin by March 1.

In response to inquiry from Commissioner Walcott, Commissioner Montri advised the Michigan Meat Association is represented primarily by small-scale processors and slaughter houses, as well as some of their suppliers; and normally, 120-150 of them attend the convention each year.

**Commissioner Hanson** attended a meeting in late January at the Chatham Research Station during which Upper Peninsula (UP) activities were shared and research trials were reviewed. Last week, she attended the Winter Potato Conference held at Shanty Creek Resort, with 210 people participating. There were numerous speakers, including Chief Deputy Director Wenk, as well as various informative break-out sessions.

The UP has endured very cold weather lately. It was minus 23 degrees on Sunday and blizzard conditions the day before closed several major highways for 18-19 hours.

**Commissioner Kennedy** attended the Michigan Agri-Business Association Winter Convention. As typical during the winter, he is involved with numerous farmer meetings across the area. Much has changed with the current market structures and concern has caused a drawback, or bit of a vacuum. Still, producers remain optimistic and an adjustment period is anticipated.

In response to inquiry from Commissioner Walcott, Commissioner Kennedy advised there is some transition from corn to beans in some areas. There also appears to be growing interest in specialty crops to capture current premiums. The adjustment period could spur new ideas and growth in different areas.

The Director asked about extra work required to grow non-GMO (genetically modified organism) soybeans for tofu. Commissioner Kennedy advised the effort is concentrated on the chemistry side, requiring several sprayings and more tedious harvest procedures.

**Commissioner Walcott** has been conducting winter meetings with contract finishers. His area of the state has been receiving a great deal of snow. Farmers there are talking about converting acres to beans, barley, or cover crops.

In addition to travel previously mentioned, Commissioners Hanson, Kennedy, Walcott, and Montri traveled to attend today's meeting. There was no other travel submitted for approval.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER HANSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE COMMISSIONERS' TRAVEL. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER KENNEDY. MOTION CARRIED.**

## **DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Director Clover Adams reported a delegation from the Jiangsu Province in China visited the later part of January. She first met the group during a trip to China with the Governor in 2013. The delegation's day here was spent discussing aquaculture and she hopes to tour their operations on a return trip to China later this year, with the intent of fostering cooperative efforts.

Industry stakeholder workgroups to discuss fees have been formed. Discussions actually began early in 2014 and those will continue as the budget moves forward.

A Quality of Life (QOL) Media Roundtable event was held recently. MDARD issues focused on water quality, the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP), and what agriculture is accomplishing to improve water quality. There is still more to be done and farmers are ready to meet that challenge.

During early February, she attended the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) Winter Policy meeting. Because of the weather, she unfortunately missed the day during which food safety was addressed. She did participate in discussions about pollinators, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) plans regarding pesticide labels, and resultant response by the states. MDARD will facilitate a broad-based stakeholder workgroup to address labeling issues, particularly those for fruit and vegetable growers. She also had the opportunity to meet with several of the new members of Congress while in Washington, D.C.

On Monday, she participated in a press conference with Senators Stabenow and Peters held in St. Joseph which focused on Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) federal fund dollars Michigan was able to obtain, including \$6.5 million over five years with Indiana and another \$17 million over five years in the Western Lake Erie Basin. The Director pointed out that MAEAP was the reason Michigan was able to win that funding and noted growers are not only participating in cost share programs, but are paying for 80 percent of the cost for MAEAP, representing a true commitment by producers. The department looks forward to continuing efforts through MAEAP.

## **DIRECTOR'S TRAVEL**

Director Clover Adams advised NASDA requested she participate in a NASDA Strategic Plan Workgroup to develop the Association's plans for the next five years. She requested approval for travel to join a meeting of that workgroup being held March 29-31 in Washington, D.C.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER KENNEDY MOVED APPROVAL OF THE DIRECTOR'S TRAVEL. SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER HANSON MOTION CARRIED.**

## **PUBLIC COMMENT (AGENDA ITEMS ONLY)**

There was no public comment relative to agenda items.

### **BUDGET UPDATE: Maria Tyszkiewicz, Budget Officer**

Ms. Tyszkiewicz reported the Governor's proposed fiscal year (FY) 2016 budget for the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) is \$84.1 million, including \$42.4 million in general funds. The proposal reflects a 7.7 percent general fund decrease from the FY 2015 enacted budget.

Program enhancements proposed would include one-time funding for laboratory equipment in the amount of \$500,000 and a \$2.5 million allocation in the Department of Technology, Management, and Budget (DTMB) to support the replacement of MDARD's multiple legacy licensing and inspection IT systems. This would support the final phase of this project which began in September of 2014 and is expected to be completed in FY 2016.

Proposed continuation funding includes (1) \$1.8 million of general fund dollars for the Food and Dairy Safety Improvement Initiative to improve the monthly rate of compliance by food establishments, as well as meet the growing demands from the dairy industry; (2) \$2.4 million in general fund to support the administration of the Qualified Forest Program; (3) \$5 million in general fund to support a joint effort between the QOL agencies to prevent, detect, and manage both terrestrial and aquatic invasive species; and (4) \$300,000 in general fund to support the administrative costs of the Farmland Preservation Program, which is needed because the revenue for this program has been declining over the last four years.

As was required of all departments, MDARD needed to develop areas for budget reductions and those total \$3.4 million from general funds. These would come from reductions in the County Fairs Capital Improvement and Value-Added Rural Development Grants, and elimination of the Commercial Forest Audit Program, Shows and Expositions Grants, and one-time funding for the Strategic Growth Initiative, Muskegon Farmers Market, and Ottawa County Agriculture Incubator.

Several fee increase proposals are included in the Governor's recommendations, including (1) \$1.5 million in restricted revenue from retail food establishment fees, which were last updated in 2000, and would support the implementation of Phase II of the Food Safety Improvement Initiative and allow the department to meet the growing demand for business compliance assistance and maintain adequate evaluations of licensees to ensure public safety; (2) \$1.2 million restricted revenue from pesticide and fertilizer registration and inspection fees to stabilize funding that has not been adjusted in over a decade to ensure safe storage of agro-chemicals and proper application of pesticides; and (3) \$500,000 restricted revenue for feed tonnage and license fees from a growing sector that have not been adjusted in 40 years to provide for improvements to adequately address consumer protection, animal feed contamination, laboratory operations, and emergency preparedness.

Proposed FY 2015 reductions include \$600,000 of general fund in the one-time funding for the Strategic Growth Initiative.

Commissioner Walcott requested information on the road funding legislation. Chief Deputy Director Wenk advised that information would be obtained and shared with the Commission.

**RIGHT TO FARM 2014 ANNUAL REPORT AND CATEGORY DETERMINATIONS UPDATE:  
Jim Johnson, Division Director, and Wayne Whitman, Right to Farm Program Manager,  
Environmental Stewardship Division**

Mr. Johnson noted he and Mr. Whitman will summarize the FY 2014 report for the Right to Farm (RTF) Program that was provided to the Commission.

Mr. Whitman advised the majority of RTF complaints over the course of RTF have involved cows and pigs, and in recent years, horses. Over a three-year pattern, one-third are about dairy farms and most of the resource concerns involve runoff, with the next being odor from manure applied to fields. Equine complaints represent particular neighbor relations type issues due to manure piles often being close to property lines.

The RTF Program does an outstanding job of investigating complaints – one person, full time covers approximately one-half of the complaints across the state and work from about twelve other Environmental Stewardship Division (ESD) field staff on an as-needed basis regionally that cover the other half of the initial on-sight inspections. This is one of the ways the Program achieves an average response time of 3.8 business days. In response to inquiry from Commissioner Kennedy, Mr. Whitman advised the majority of dairy farm complaints originate from existing small to medium-scale operations.

During any year, there are very few complaints from counties north of Clare County, with livestock dense counties and those experiencing urban encroachment having the majority of the complaints. Until recent years, surface water had been the primary concern. In 2012 and 2013, surface water and air quality were equal in terms of the number of complaints. In about 50 percent of complaint investigations, a change is required to resolve the conflict and the program helps the farmer make changes needed in order to comply with the Generally Accepted Agricultural and Management Practices (GAAMPs). There have been very few repeat complaints.

In response to inquiry from Commissioner Montri, Mr. Johnson advised direct program staff attend conflict resolution training. Field staff from other divisions may or may not have had the opportunity to take that training. Mr. Whitman advised Civil Service provides other customer relations training as well.

Another full-time RTF staff person, along with help from two staff engineers, works to provide site verification for new and expanding livestock facilities. Dairy and pork production are the two primary type of facilities visited. Over 450 facilities over the last 15 years have completed site verification. Last year, a record 58 site verification requests were processed and those came from farms of all sizes.

In response to inquiry from Commissioner Walcott, Mr. Whitman advised the department has no authority to issue penalties; rather, it is a compliance assistance approach. The farmer is notified by letter, an appointment is made via telephone as soon as possible,

an inspection is conducted that includes a thorough discussion about the concerns, and recommendations for where they can obtain technical assistance are provided. If change is needed, opportunity is provided to develop a plan, send a letter of intent to implement, and schedule a follow-up inspection to document they are following GAAMPs. Closing letters are sent to all parties. Respective local governments receive copies of all correspondence after the initial notification and they are also notified of the date and time of each follow-up inspection.

Commissioner Walcott emphasized he personally is very pleased with the RTF Program, noting the system works very well. He complimented the department on their level of expertise in handling these sometimes seemingly no-win situations – the program does a stellar job in all aspects and he congratulated them on multiple years of outstanding work.

Mr. Johnson advised they would also like to discuss results of the changes to the Site Selection GAAMP in April 2014 and provide a siting category determinations update. Category 1 and 2 determinations are locations absolutely ideal for livestock agriculture, being extremely rural locations.

To date, a total of 20 requests for category determination have been received and are in most cases individuals experiencing local conflict. Interestingly enough, two of those were actually extremely ideal for a large number of livestock.

Category 3 sites are locations that may or may not be zoned for agriculture use, but definitely have a potential for less than 50 animal units. It could be a residential area or a location close to a public-use area. There were 12 instances where requests were categorized as Category 3 sites. Interestingly, 9 of those 12 were rural settings zoned not to allow agriculture by right; but when the methodology as approved in April was applied to those sites, they could allow for less than 50 animal units of livestock. The other three actually did allow for agriculture use. All 12 requests are approved.

Category 4 sites are those not zoned for agriculture use, and based on the criteria approved last April, the density of housing is not conducive to allowing even a small number animals. Six were received and five are currently pending, with preliminary aerial reviews having been complete and required on-site reviews yet to be conducted.

In reviewing circumstances of the requests received, logic of the changes made to the Site Selection GAAMP makes perfect and practical sense in terms of trying to avoid the potential for conflict.

In response to inquiry from Commissioner Montri, Mr. Johnson advised, because the RTF Law requires response within seven business days to complaints, those must take first priority. Siting is a second priority, because the construction season is very limited. Therefore, Category determinations are the third priority of the program; however, a streamlined, informative approach has been developed.

**AGRO-CULTURE LIQUID FERTILIZERS CORPORATE OVERVIEW: Burt Henry, Outreach and Education Manager**

Mr. Henry welcomed the Commission to Agro-Culture Liquid Fertilizers in St. Johns and emphasized they are honored to have the Commission here today.

The corporation's non-changing principles revolve around the fact we are stewards of the land for a short period of time and their products and methodology promote sustainable agriculture for future generations.

Core values are (1) honesty, integrity, ethics, quality, and giving back; (2) striving to inspire and inform growers and sellers of the "best management practices" for using products, while promoting "responsible nutrient management" practices; (3) extending our success to local communities and the industry and most of all, toward the future of agriculture; and (4) seeking collaboration with organizations sharing these same core values. Agro-Culture's vision is to optimize, strategize, and lead innovation, and its overall mission is to prosper the farmer.

AgroLiquid was started in 1963 by Douglas Cook and is still family-owned and operated. Troy and Jill Bancroft (Cook) joined the team in 1983 to incorporate Agro-Culture Liquid Fertilizers. Troy and Jill's three sons are all actively involved and hold strong values and commitment to the family business. AgroLiquid is a small town success story that has grown to benefit many, giving back to the local community and agriculture industry. When the corporation first began, it took three days to make 1,400 gallons of fertilizer. Today, the facility in Ashley alone has capacity for 3.5 million gallons.

The plant in St. Johns was started in 1986 and when the rail line went out, that production was moved to Ashley, Michigan. That plant's lighting is powered by solar energy and they filter rain water for use in the manufacturing process. Because much product is moved by rail, they own about 180 rail cars that move throughout the U.S.

A plant was opened in 2001 in Goodland, Kansas, and another in Williams, Iowa, in 2004. There are stocking stations in Billings, Montana, and Sunray, Texas. The company has been on several different lists for innovation, growth, and has gained environmental respect. They recently celebrated 17 years of 20 percent annual growth. Stockton, California, was added in 2012, and plans are underway for manufacturing facilities in Georgia and North Dakota. They have been able to create sustainability for the grower and consumer alike and their fertilizers have continued to achieve the best possible yields with less environmental impact.

Agro-Culture observes responsible nutrient management through nutrient stewardship using the right source, right rate, right time, and right place philosophy. The North Central Research Station was created in 1994 and hosts research field days and product field experiences.

The new corporate office opened in 2013, offering a great place for employees and a destination for visitors to learn. The facility is open to the public for use at very reasonable rates. The IQhub is a home to agriculture history, innovation, and exploration. It features a 9,500 square-foot agriculture education destination, which is

complimented by the Kid's Korner and offers group programming and transportation grants. There are 23 museum-quality highly interactive exhibits that create that conduit from producer to consumer to teach people about from where their food comes and how it reaches them. When the tractor simulator is operational, it will allow people hands-on experience with GPS technology.

Through group programming, about 1,200 students in the next six weeks will tour the facilities and participate in various activities. Programs are tailored to whatever a particular group's needs happen to be and contain many unique activities. Agro-Culture is excited about future potential through St. Johns designating an elementary school as an agriculture stem school. Because many times, field trips are cut from a school's budget, Agro-Culture has actively solicited grant funds to help sponsor transportation costs, and today, there is approximately \$45,000 in grant dollars available.

With the world's population projected to grow to at least nine billion by 2050, increased food production is critical and additional regulatory pressures are anticipated. The company is always looking to the future and is committed to finding what farmers need and strives to be an industry leader through environmentally friendly farming practices. Above and beyond state and federal standards the company is looking at rail spur, solar lighting, filtered rain water, and other research-proven products.

In response to questions from the Director, Mr. Henry advised they have yet to achieve measureable outcomes to determine impact. They do ask visitors to provide comments through an evaluation form and have received considerable positive feedback from the over 4,000 visitors hosted since last September. They are also targeting potential visitors from the more urban areas in the region.

In response to inquiry from Commissioner Montri, Mr. Henry advised the cost for the IQHub experience per student depends on the particular activities included and varying transportation costs. Their largest investment is simply the IQHub itself. Some of their transportation partners include Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB), Agriculture Foundation, Michigan Corn Growers, GreenStone Farm Credit Services, Michigan Potato Commission, and Spartan Insurance. Often groups combine a visit to the IQHub with another trip already planned.

### **RECESS AND RECONVENE**

Vice Chairperson Walcott recessed the meeting at 10:21 a.m. for a brief break. He reconvened the meeting at 10:35 a.m.

### **COMMODITY GROUP MARKETING AND OUTREACH EFFORTS: United Dairy Industry of Michigan, Saron Toth, CEO; and Michigan Wheat Program, David Milligan, Chairman, and Jody E. Pollok-Newsom, Executive Director**

#### **United Dairy Industry of Michigan**

Ms. Toth thanked the Commission for the opportunity to share some of United Dairy Industry of Michigan's (UDIM) programs. She advised UDIM is the umbrella organization for two non-profit organizations, the Dairy Council of Michigan, which began in 1927, and the American Dairy Association of Michigan, which started in 1946. The



Dairy Council of Michigan conducts nutrition education and American Dairy focuses on promotion, which today consists of promoting and protecting the industry.

Some UDIM funding is received from dairy processors in the state, but funds are primarily provided by dairy producers through a check-off program and they pay 15 cents per hundred weight. One-half of that funding goes to the national organization to ensure one voice for the dairy industry nationwide. The other half is utilized for local programming.

The national office works behind the scenes with many national brands, such as Quaker in suggesting milk be used during preparation instead of water, and McDonalds in developing the McCafé line and providing milk as the default beverage in Happy Meals. Work in school nutrition programs has been ongoing for nearly 100 years. Dairy's current flagship program is "Fuel Up to Play 60," which is a partnership between the National Dairy Council and the National Football League. It also is a recommended strategy by Governor Snyder in his 4x4 plan for health and wellness. According to surveys conducted, the program is resulting in positive changes and indicates they are reaching about 500,000 children who are eating healthier and getting more physical activity. Dairy farmers provide funding for the program, as well as technical assistance and resource materials. They work with multiple state agencies in coordinating the program projects. Because the program is unable to enter schools that do not have a total nutrition program, part of the program is promoting overall good healthy eating.

Another initiative is ensuring children at school have access to the meals they need, through work with the School Breakfast Program along other state agencies and other coalitions. School breakfasts have increased by 20 percent statewide and this has been modeled around the country.

Taking advantage of recent research on chocolate milk as an ideal post-workout beverage, a grant program was developed for high schools so those athletes can enjoy chocolate milk after practices and games. Grants have been provided to 200 high schools in the last three years and customized posters are included in the program. That program has been initiated with six Michigan colleges as well.

Work behind the scenes is also done with various Michigan retailers to encourage consumers to purchase more dairy. Once recent campaign was coordinated with Kroger, and over the holidays, it helped bridge the nutrient gap for needy families. Over 50,000 gallons of milk were donated through that effort.

Consumer confidence in dairy products is bolstered through a spokesperson network of over 100 trained people. Research indicates consumers do trust our dairy producers. Media monitoring is also conducted so if an issue should arise, they are ready to respond. In addition, crisis management drills have been conducted with other state agencies. Social media engagement reaches over 200,000 consumers every month, which has included chef outreach, recipe development, and a family meal focus.

She invited Commissioners to join the UDIM annual meeting being held in Bath next week.

In response to question from Commissioner Hanson, Ms. Toth advised that school grant program information can be found on the UDIM website. In addition, they do send notices to all athletic directors in the state.

In response to inquiries from Commissioner Montri, Ms. Toth advised one percent milk is used in schools to meet the school nutrition guidelines. All dairy is promoted, as there is a dairy to meet everyone's needs. Lactose intolerance education is focused mainly on adult consumers and they also have farm to table education pieces.

#### Michigan Wheat Program

Mr. Milligan thanked the Commission for inviting the Michigan Wheat Program to present today. The Program's mission is to provide a viable, thriving, and growing Michigan wheat industry which includes input suppliers, seed producers, growers, millers, end users, and consumers.

Several years ago, a group of growers in the industry felt there was a lack of research and information for the wheat industry in Michigan and coordinated an effort to pass a check-off program; however, that effort failed. Following a second initiative, Michigan's Wheat Program was voted in by growers during the summer of 2011 and assessment collection began in May 2012. The assessment is one-half cent of the sale, including a mechanism to assess seed wheat at grain market value. This has provided for funded research, development of basic grower communications, and in September 2014, conducting of the first consumer activity. The program currently has nearly \$1 million in funding. In 2013, grower communications were initiated and recently an e-mail newsletter was added. Anyone may subscribe through their website, [www.miwheat.org](http://www.miwheat.org).

Michigan ranks 12<sup>th</sup> in the U.S. for winter wheat production, which is 2.4 percent of the country's total wheat production. Total production of all classes of Michigan wheat is approximately 40 million bushels, with an average yield of 76 bushels per acre. Soft red winter wheat produced is used in bakery goods and soft white winter wheat is also used in bakery goods, as well as cereals and crackers. Soft white is more difficult to grow and is becoming more of a specialty crop, but due to the current premium, some production is returning to that variety. Michigan milling industry is strong with numerous large processors in the state, including Kellogg, Kraft, Nabisco, General Mills, Chelsea Milling, and Star of the West Milling.

Ms. Pollok-Newsom noted that consumer education is important because of various media information today causing consumer misunderstanding, such as the Jimmy Kimmel GMO and gluten articles and two recent anti-gluten books. Misinformation has spurred a movement of gluten-free diets, much of which is based on self-diagnosis. More information is beginning to be published on the other side and the Wheat Program is increasing its efforts on this front, including partnering with other organizations.

Breakfast on the Farm events offered opportunities for consumer interaction, where they answered numerous questions about wheat and provided information around the gluten issue. They also asked visitors to vote for their Facebook page look, the result of which you see today.

Their Facebook page was established to provide consumer information and build reputation with consumers. Posts are added three times weekly, including national issues, sharing media positives, new recipes, and data to debunk national coverage. Also posted there is a recent *Consumers Report* article that talks about gluten, warning consumers a gluten-free diet most likely causes an increase of arsenic in one's diet.

Through the Michigan Restaurant Show, the Wheat Program partnered with other commodity organizations and a chef to develop new recipes, one featuring wheat berries. It provided an opportunity to share various samples, as well as general wheat and gluten information. The Program partnered with WSGW for a booth in the Taste of Home Show, highlighting Facebook "Like Us" stickers, recipes, grower involvement, and numerous samples. They plan to feature something new each year to draw interest.

She shared an article authored by Michigan State University (MSU) Extension, "Facts About Gluten," the Michigan Wheat Program Inaugural Annual Report, and the "Wheat 101: Key facts about the World's Essential Grain" brochure.

Various publications have enabled the Program to create a positive image around wheat, including the MSU gluten piece, a McDonalds publication, the *Michigan Agriculture Magazine*, Breakfast on the Farm events, items from the Michigan Agriculture Council, and the *Consumer Reports* issue.

The Program's e-newsletter, "Wheat Wisdom," targeted for stakeholders and farmers, was launched in November, with sign-up available through the website. It includes event notices, issues and research data, pertinent information for growers, previous editions, and links to additional information.

Looking to the future, the Program will continue current consumer work, further develop communication links to share information, monitor media for anti-wheat/gluten information, continue growing their relationship with food industry partners, and grow presence/trust in the consumer information arena.

In response to inquiry from Commissioner Walcott, Mr. Milligan advised the check-off assessment is collected at the elevator. Commissioner Kennedy asked about the research and chemistry potential for addressing the wheat scab issue in the state. Mr. Milligan advised use of chemicals has grown and researchers are tweaking the application variables and usage acceptance has expanded. They are also working with MSU in creating a wheat specialist position. Ms. Pollok-Newsom added that publication of variety trials, which are posted on their website, is helping to educate growers.

Commissioner Hanson emphasized the need to monitor social media because there is a great deal of misinformation being posted about various areas of the agriculture industry. The industry needs to educate the public on the facts, including the true face of agriculture today.

**MICHIGAN FARM BUREAU PROJECT R.E.D. AND AGRICULTURE IN THE CLASSROOM:  
Tonia Ritter, Manager, Promotion and Education Department, Michigan Farm Bureau**

Ms. Ritter thanked the Commission for the opportunity to talk about some of MFB's educational activities. MFB appreciates the partnership and opportunity to work with MDARD and the other partners here today. Project Rural Education Days (R.E.D.) would not be possible if those partnerships did not exist.

She shared two booklets, the first being a compilation of county activities and the great work being accomplished by volunteers. She encouraged the Commissioners to reference information about their respective counties and potentially engage with those county Farm Bureaus. The second publication was a resource guide which displays the variety of resources MFB can provide to their county Farm Bureaus and volunteers.

Project R.E.D. offers opportunities to provide agriculture awareness through farm tours and central locations from which different aspects of agriculture can be showcased. Project R.E.D. began nearly 25 years ago in Washtenaw County with three volunteers, Sue Huehl, Holly Porter, and Nancy Thelen. Today, their Project R.E.D. is a three-day event, and involves more than 2,350 students, 23 schools, and 320 volunteers.

By 2003, 12 County Farm Bureaus were hosting events and 2005 brought Project R.E.D. to MFB's state annual meeting in Grand Rapids. Typically, that program reaches more than 1,000 urban students and trains an average of 200 volunteers.

Project R.E.D. programs are typically held in late spring or early fall and target third or fourth grade students. The project includes several educational stations through which students rotate. With the numerous volunteers involved, it truly is a collaborative effort.

Planning typically begins nine months prior to a planned event. Volunteers present on various topics which vary by each specific area of the state. Many will actually bring their own animals, equipment, or plants. Volunteers include farmers, agri-business personnel, technical specialists, foresters, Future Farmers of American (FFA) students, etc., which represents a wonderful partnership.

MFB provides various resources, including how to guides, signage with commodity and agriculture facts, and other promotional items, including fact sheets that talk about GMOs and gluten. Currently, 33 counties are currently hosting Project R.E.D. or similar type events. The total average reach of Project R.E.D. and other agriculture awareness events touches at least 18,000-20,000 students and involves 1,500-2,200 volunteers and 600-700 teachers across the state annually.

Michigan Agriculture in the Classroom is another outreach effort being coordinated. MFB is the state contact for Agriculture in the Classroom in Michigan and is part of a consortium of states that have activities and programs for bringing things into the classroom. A bounty of resources are available, including books with lesson plans (some of which can be downloaded), and complimenting items such as posters, bookmarks, activity cards, etc. MFB is hosting the Regional Conference for the Agriculture in the Classroom state contacts on April 15-17 to be held at the Kellogg Center.

National Agriculture in the Classroom, of which MFB is a member, holds the vision that agriculture is valued by all. Its mission is to increase agricultural literacy through K-12 education, with an agriculturally literate person being one who understands and can communicate the source and value of agriculture as it affects our quality of life. The national matrix is an online, searchable, and standards-based curriculum map for K-12 teachers. The national website is [www.agclassroom.org](http://www.agclassroom.org), and MFB's sister website is [www.miaqclassroom.org](http://www.miaqclassroom.org).

MFB maintains an online resource catalog with Agriculture in the Classroom lesson plans for K-sixth grade that are matched to Michigan Educational Standards, as well as resources for high school students, which focus on agriculture career exploration. A teacher newsletter, *MFB Integrating Agriculture*, is a publication of MFB's Promotion and Education Department that is posted on MFB's website and shared at teacher events.

In addition, MFB offers scholarships to the National Agriculture in the Classroom conference. Those scholarships are provided through the Michigan Foundation for Agriculture, which provides the funding for everything MFB accomplishes with Agriculture in the Classroom and promotion of education at MFB. The Foundation also supports the Young Farmer Programs, State Young Farmer Committee, and more. Their resources can be found at [www.agfoundation.org](http://www.agfoundation.org), including their various agriculture "book of the year" publications that include complimenting lesson books.

She noted another publication, *Water and the Water Cycle*, which is a factual book with an agriculture focus. MFB created a lesson guide to compliment the book, which will be presented to the Michigan Science Teachers Association next week. MFB will present the *Apple Orchard* book to the Agriculture Policy Committees next month.

The Director suggested when MFB presents the books to the legislative committees, to also include the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittees. Also, she suggested the Farm Facts publication that includes the statement that a farmer feeds 154 people should perhaps be restated so that children can understand this is not simply 154 people in the U.S., but 154 people in our world. Current research indicates that adults in the U.S don't appear to be concerned about the fact that we help to feed the world. If we point out with children that it is 154 people in our world, that ethic of taking care of other people will be instilled in our younger audience. Ms. Ritter agreed, noting it seems that sustainability of our environment messages touch our consumers much more than anything about feeding the projected nine billion people in our world. The children today actually do relate more to the subject of helping others and it would be a good investment of time to help them understand how our farmers help in feeding the world's population.

In response to inquiry from Commissioner Hanson, Ms. Ritter advised MFB carries a stock of some of the books referenced here today and can advise where the others can be obtained. Many can also be found on Amazon.

### **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: Gordon Wenk, Chief Deputy Director**

Mr. Wenk referred to the Legislative Status Update provided to the Commissioners today, which is brief because there now is a new legislative session and all legislation not enacted must be reintroduced. Each of the newly introduced bills is waiting for committee action and the department will be tracking each of these pieces of legislation.

He pointed out that House Bill 4012 would create the "Homestead Subsistence Farming Act" to allow agriculture activity to take place on any property that is lawfully used as a residence. Local government groups oppose. This would be allowed through a zoning change, not Right to Farm.

Commissioner Walcott referenced earlier discussion regarding Governor Snyder's proposal to raise the Sales Tax in order to obtain funding for Michigan's roads and bridges, and requested an update on that proposal during the March meeting. Mr. Wenk advised that certainly could be arranged.

### **COMMISSIONER ISSUES**

Commissioner Walcott reviewed retirement resolutions before the Commission recognizing Rebecca Peterson and Theresa Regina Struble.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER MONTRI MOVED THE RESOLUTIONS FOR REBECCA PETERSON AND THERESA REGINA STRUBLE BE ADOPTED WITH BEST WISHES FOR THEIR LONG AND HEALTHY RETIREMENT. COMMISSIONER KENNEDY SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.**

The Commission discussed various potential agriculture tours to coincide with their future meetings. Following consideration, it was determined that a tour of Commissioner Walcott's hog operation in Walkerville would be planned in conjunction with the September Commission meeting. Also, the Commission will accept the invitation from Great Lakes Glads to tour their operation in Bronson, and it was decided to plan that tour to coincide with the July Commission meeting.

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER MONTRI MOVED THE 2015 MEETING SCHEDULE BE REVISED TO REFLECT THE CHANGES IN LOCATION AS DISCUSSED. COMMISSIONER HANSON SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.**

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

No public comment was requested.

### **ADJOURN**

**MOTION: COMMISSIONER MONTRI MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. COMMISSIONER KENNEDY SECONDED. MOTION CARRIED.**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:52 a.m.

Attachments:

- A) *Agenda*
- B) *Agriculture and Rural Development Commission Meeting Minutes January 21, 2015*

- C) *Director Jamie Clover Adams – Issues of Interest Report*
- D) *MDARD FY 2016 Proposed Executive Budget*
- E) *Right to Farm Program Presentation*
- F) *Right to Farm Fiscal Year 2014 Report*
- G) *Agro-Culture Liquid Fertilizers Corporate Overview*
- H) *An Overview of Dairy Promotion in Michigan*
- I) *Michigan Wheat Program Presentation*
- J) *Michigan Wheat Program Inaugural Annual Report*
- K) *Wheat 101: Key Facts About the World's Essential Grain*
- L) *MSU Extension Facts About Gluten*
- M) *Project R.E.D. – Rural Education Day Presentation*
- N) *MFB-Promotion and Education County Projects Showcase Booklet*
- O) *MFB 2015 Resource Catalog*
- P) *Legislative Status – February 2015*
- Q) *Resolution for Rebecca Peterson*
- R) *Resolution for Theresa Regina Struble*