



Vegetable Production

Impacting Michigan's Vegetable Industry

In 2015, the state's \$56.6 million investment in Michigan State University (MSU) AgBioResearch and MSU Extension generated more than \$1 billion for Michigan residents. Every dollar the state invested in MSU AgBioResearch and MSU Extension leveraged an additional \$2.59 in federal funds and external contracts, grants and other revenues, including nearly \$1.3 million leveraged by MSU Extension children and youth programs alone. As a result, MSU Extension and MSU AgBioResearch are able to serve Michigan residents with a benefit/cost ratio of 18:1.



THE ISSUE

Michigan vegetable production takes place on nearly 3,000 farms with a value of nearly \$463 million. The state's climate and soils make it possible to grow vegetables in every county; however, commercial production is in specific areas that have a long history of fresh or processing production.

MSU EXTENSION ACTION

To meet the needs of Michigan vegetable growers, MSU Extension's work is directed by the industry through communication with vegetable commodity groups and growers. MSU Extension provides research-based crop management strategies and education with a goal of helping producers remain profitable and competitive on a global scale while maintaining environmental responsibility.

From 2014-2016, MSU Extension partnered with the Michigan Vegetable Council, Michigan Asparagus Advisory Board, Michigan Carrot Committee, Michigan Onion Committee and Celery Research Inc. to leverage \$1,072,372 in grower and Specialty Crop Block Grant money for research prioritized by grower members; this does not include additional competitive state and federal grant programs.

THE IMPACT

MSU Extension staff assists growers to take on new ventures and crops through production consultation, building budgets and tips on marketing their new produce to a variety of buyers. Growers have credited increased vegetable acreage, adjusted focus on the most marketable vegetables and adopted new marketing methods to our services.



"You saved this year's pumpkin crop!"

- Pumpkin grower, after an on-farm consultation.

Vegetable Education Programs Drive Success

Not only are MSU Extension educational programs informative, they are also effective at changing production practices to benefit the grower, the end-user and the environment.

- A sum of 1,164 participants, ranging from beginners to multi-generation family farms and experienced industry members, attended 26 workshops hosted around the state in 2015.
- At the Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Greenhouse EXPO, MSU Extension reached out to approximately 945 vegetable growers in 2015.
- Across these educational efforts, 86 out of 112 surveyed growers indicated either an increased knowledge or an intent to implement changes to reduce production risks or increase production efficiencies.

Connecting Growers to Keep Business Local

After two years of poor quality sweet onion transplants ordered from Texas, MSU Extension connected one diversified vegetable grower with a large-scale greenhouse just a few counties away to produce sweet onions from seed. The establishment and quality of these onions surpassed the Texas transplants, and kept money within the local farm economy. The acreage of Michigan-produced sweet onion seeds is now increasing.

Root Zone Nutrient Research

Five years ago, MSU Extension started monitoring soil moisture at multiple depths in the sandy vegetable production fields of southwest Michigan. Using a new portable measurement tool, it was discovered that the water and mid-season fertilizer used at multiple farms was actually being lost below the root zone from over-watering. This finding increased the efficiency of water use and reduced water usage on one farm by 50 percent.



“Thank you very much for the effort it took to get it all together and everything we were taught.”

- Participant from a vegetable production workshop targeting Amish audiences.

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