



Updates from the Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center

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A Note from the Coordinator

It is hard to believe that an entire year has passed since I started at the Farm in Chatham last May, but here I am, preparing for my second Field Day! Much has changed on our landscape (including addition of a 200' hoophouse to the Chatham skyline), but I truly believe the research mission I have been tasked with will provide great benefit to all U.P. agriculture. We do not want this diversification to be divisive, but instead to rally all farmers in the region around our goal of promoting **healthy soil, healthy food, healthy people, and healthy communities** through relevant, trusted and fact-based research.

I do hope you will take the time to visit us at our **Field Day on Saturday, July 26th from 1 – 4 pm**. The come-and-go format will be rather casual, so you're welcome to stop by anytime that afternoon. We will be showcasing the various **crop variety trial** programs we have hosted at the farm this year in partnership with Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Our **malting barley and forage research** will be special features of the program as we're joined by Dr. Russell Freed (small grain researcher, MSU) and Dr. Kim Cassida (forage specialist, MSU).

This newsletter insert will feature news and updates from the Research and Extension Center bi-monthly and will serve as a tool to communicate our efforts to our stakeholders. As always, if you have any questions, **please feel free to reach out** on the phone, online or at the Farm!

Sincerely,

Ashley McFarland

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Congratulations to **Michelle Coleman**, UPREC secretary, for being awarded MSU College of Agriculture and Natural Resources **Staffer of the Month** in May! Those that work with Michelle know this is well deserved!



Please follow us on Facebook to receive daily updates of Farm activity – www.facebook.com/MSU.UPREC

South Farm Updates

As soon as the snow left, we were busy in the field preparing for yet another growing season. Here are some updates of what has been going on at the UPREC:

- Calving season began in late-April and will continue through early-July. The Farm currently manages a herd of 80 Red Angus cows, which calved in Chatham last spring. Heifers will be retained to grow the herd and steers will be finished on-site with a grass-finish strategy.
- This spring, an integrated cropping and livestock systems trial was launched to show the effects of various management treatments to soil health over five years. The first priority was an intensive soil sampling program to understand our baseline conditions. Five “treatments” (integrated crop and livestock rotations) are replicated four times across the farm and were established in May thanks to MSU Project GREEN funding.
- The UPREC was awarded \$100,000 to explore various agronomic crop potential in the U.P. from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. Crops include oats, cereal winter rye, winter wheat, spring wheat, barley, field peas, various forages and cover crop species, and BMR forage sorghum. This will complement the statewide participation in corn, potato and alfalfa variety trial work ongoing.
- Malting barley research continues on the farm and the variety trial program has expanded to include on-farm trials in the U.P. and the northern Lower Peninsula. Grant funding from MSU Project GREEN will also allow us to commission a feasibility study of a small-medium sized malting facility in northern Michigan to see if we can re-establish this once booming industry. See page 4 for additional details.



Top – first calf of the 2014 calving season

Mid-left – barley variety trial

Mid-right – soil sampling in the integrated systems trial

Bottom – yearling calves born in Chatham in 2013

The North Farm

Farming opportunities sprout at the Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center

New grant funding supports launch of an Incubator Farm in the food insecure region of Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

Demand for local food has grown throughout the nation, but in remote regions, such as Michigan's Upper Peninsula, sourcing fresh, nutrient-rich food is challenging. However, growing conditions in extreme northern climates can be tempered through use of hoophouses and other season extension technologies. To meet this demand for local produce that currently far outweighs the supply, Michigan State University is working on not just growing food, but also growing farmers that can eventually supply the local food system.

Dr. Matt Raven, from the Department of Community Sustainability at MSU is leading efforts to develop a Farm Incubator that will focus on increasing access to local food in Michigan's most remote region. Raven commented that "One of the best ways to improve access to quality food is to source it from local producers. Our goal with the incubator farm is to provide an educational center where we can increase the number of farmers in the U.P. growing nutrient-rich foods". Launch of this project is supported by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture's Agriculture and Food Research Initiative's Foundational Grant program.

New Faces...

The North Farm is brimming with life. In addition to the new hoophouse structure (pictured below), we have added three new staff members to assist with the Farm Incubator development. Collin Thompson (pictured here) is the Program Instructor and North Farm Manager. Collin hails from northeast Iowa and has extensive experience farming in various climates and systems. His most recent appointment was with Four Season Tools, a hoophouse and season extension tool company.



Here's a taste of what we're growing at the North Farm this season:

potatoes – onions – leeks – winter squash
summer squash – herbs – eggplant
cucumber – turnips – beans
carrots – tomatoes – peppers – parsnips
rutabaga salad mix – cabbage – broccoli
brussels sprouts – cauliflower – collards
kale – beets



Find us on Facebook to receive updates from the North Farm –
www.facebook.com/northfarmatuprec



A huge THANK YOU to the 30+ volunteers that came out each day to assist with the hoophouse raising last month. This 192' x 30' structure will be an integral component to our Farm Incubator.

Upcoming Events:

MSU Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center Field Day

Saturday, July 26th from 1 – 4 pm

Our “open farm” event will showcase our various variety trial programs, including forages and malting barley. Crop researchers and outreach field staff will be on hand to answer any questions you may have regarding the various crops on display. Come and go at your convenience and be sure to enjoy an ice cream sundae with us from DeBacker Family Dairy!

Bringing barley back to the Michigan economy

In the quest for an all-Michigan beer, craft brewers in the state are constantly challenged with acquiring quality malt that has been processed in-state with Michigan grown barley. Barley acres are quite limited in the state. Furthermore, very few malting operations, or malthouses, exist in the Michigan. Historically Michigan produced upwards of 300,000 acres of barley (whereas only 8,000 acres were harvested in 2013) and multiple malthouses and brewing operations provided opportunity for in-state malt production. That infrastructure has since disappeared, but the hope still remains.

Michigan State University is exploring the agronomic potential of barley and the feasibility of processing that barley for malt in northern Michigan. The project will support variety testing at four sites through the Upper Peninsula and northern Lower Peninsula to identify which varieties are most productive; both in terms of yield and quality. These trials will be located at; the Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center (Chatham, MI), and at three separate on-farm cooperator sites in Schoolcraft County (Cooks, MI), Leelanau County (Empire, MI), and Presque Isle County (Posen, MI).

Twenty-three different varieties will be tested, selected based on their adaptability to the region and malt potential. Upon harvest, samples will be analyzed for yield, test weight, moisture, protein, and other quality analysis according to the American Malting Barley Association standards.

Another component of the grant is to commission a feasibility study for a small to mid-sized malthouse to be located in northern Michigan. This will be led by the MSU Product Center.

A critical component to increasing barley acres in the state is access to in-state processing, which at this time, those options are quite limited. Many farmers and entrepreneurs alike have questioned whether or not malting barley and malt production are feasible ventures in the region, and partners hope that with this study, that question will be answered.



MSU Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center

Main office located at E3774 University Drive, Chatham, MI 49816 – just off Highway 67 south of Chatham

North Farm located on the Rock River Road north of Chatham since 1899, Farm Incubator est. 2014

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