

Northern Michigan FruitNet 2013

Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Center

Weekly Update

January 8, 2013

2013 NORTHWEST MICHIGAN ORCHARD & VINEYARD SHOW

Grand Traverse Resort & Spa

Costs: **Registration Fee: \$30/person for both days**
 Fruit Industry Luncheon, Jan. 21: \$15
 CMI Luncheon, January 22: Free to cherry growers; pre-register with CMI

Sponsors: **Grand Traverse Fruit Growers' Council**
 Cherry Marketing Institute
 Michigan State Horticultural Society
 Parallel 45 Vines & Wines Inc.
 Michigan State University Extension
 Michigan State University AgBioResearch

Educational sessions coordinated by:

Dr. Nikki Rothwell

Northwest Michigan Horticultural Research Center Coordinator & Educator, MSUE

Dr. Duke Elsner

Small Fruit Educator, MSUE

Monday, January 21

8:00 **Registration Desk Opens**

8:00 – 10:30 *Coffee and Rolls in Exhibit Hall*

Tree Fruit Session – Governors Hall

Moderator: **Dr. Nikki Rothwell**

9:00 – 9:10 **Welcome and Overview**

Paul Hubbell, Grand Traverse Fruit Growers' Council

9:10 – 9:35 **First Year Report on Bird Damage Studies in Tree Fruit**

Dr. Catherine Lindell, Michigan State University

9:35 – 10:00 **MAEAP: Updates and Opportunities for 2013**

Garrett Coggon, MAEAP Technician

Jessica Rasch, MAEAP Technician

10:00 – 10:30 **After 2012, How Do I Prepare for the Future**

Curtis Talley, Michigan State University Extension

10:30 – 11:00 **VENDOR BREAK**

11:00 – 11:30 **Delaying Bloom in Montmorency Cherries**

Dr. Jim Flore, Michigan State University

11:30 – 12:00 **Life Without AZM: Pest Management Options for
Cherry Growers in 2013**

Dr. Larry Gut, Michigan State University

12:00 – 1:30 **FRUIT INDUSTRY LUNCHEON**

Keynote: Dr. Fred Poston, Dean,

College of Agriculture & Natural Resources, MSU

Emcee: Duke Elsner, MSUE

1:30 – 2:00 **VENDOR BREAK**

Moderator: **Dr. Nikki Rothwell**

- 2:00 – 2:45 **Mechanical Harvesting of Tart Cherries and Other Fruits**
Dr. Richard Holownicki, Research Institute of Horticulture, Skierniewice - Poland
- 2:45 – 3:15 **Cherry Leaf Spot: The Challenges of Managing this Disease in 2012**
Dr. George Sundin, Michigan State University
- 3:15 – 3:35 **Fireblight Update**
Dr. George Sundin, Michigan State University
- 3:35 – 4:05 **High Density Sour Cherry Tree Management**
Dr. Richard Holownicki, Research Institute of Horticulture, Skierniewice - Poland
- 4:05 – 4:35 **High Density Tart Cherries in Michigan: Progress so Far**
Dr. Ron Perry, Michigan State University
Dr. Dan Guyer, Michigan State University
Ken Engle, Engle Ridge Farm
Ed Oxley, Oxley Farms
- 4:35 – 5:05 **Why Michigan Apple and Cherry Growers Should Care About International Maximum Residue Limits**
Dr. Mark Whalon and Dr. Julianna Wilson, Michigan State University
- 5:05 **Fill Out Pesticide Recertification Credits**
- 5:15 **Beverages & Hors D'Oeuvre Social Hour**
Concurrent Grape & Wine Session- Michigan A & B
Moderator: Dr. Duke Elsner
- 9:00 – 9:10 **Welcome and Overview**
Jay Briggs, Parallel 45 Vines and Wines Inc.
- 9:10 – 9:40 **Grape Acreage & Production Survey Results**
Jay Johnson, USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, Michigan Field Office
- 9:40 – 10:40 **New Wines from New Vines**
Paolo Sabbatini, Dept. of Horticulture, MSU
- 10:40 – 11:10 **VENDOR BREAK**
- 11:10 – 11:35 **First Year Report on Bird Damage Studies in Vineyards**
Dr. Catherine Lindell, Michigan State University
- 11:35 – 12:00 **Bird Netting and Other Bird Management Practices**
Grower Panel - to be determined
- 12:00 – 1:30 **FRUIT INDUSTRY LUNCHEON**
Keynote: Dr. Fred Poston, Dean, College of Agriculture & Natural Resources, MSU
Emcee: Duke Elsner, MSUE
- 1:30 – 2:00 **VENDOR BREAK**
- Monday Afternoon Grape & Wine Session**
Moderator: Dr. Duke Elsner
- 2:00 – 2:25 **Parallel 45 Vines & Wines Inc. Annual Business Meeting**
Jay Briggs, President
- 2:25 – 2:55 **Parallel 45 Activities in 2012**
Parallel 45 Board of Directors
- 2:55 – 3:25 **MAEAP & Your Vineyard Operation: Updates and Opportunities**
Garrett Coggon-MAEAP Technician
Jessica Rasch-MAEAP Technician
- 3:25 – 3:50 **Managing Grapevine Brush**
Tom Zabadal, Southwest MI Research & Extension Center
- 3:50 – 4:30 **A Novel Approach for Controlling Cluster Compactness and Fruit Rot in Wine Grapes**
Tom Zabadal & Jenny Wells, Southwest MI Research & Extension Center
Duke Elsner, Small Fruit Educator, MSU Extension
- 4:30 – 5:00 **Spotted Wing Drosophila and Other New Insects**
Steve Van Timmeren, Dept. of Entomology, MSU
- 5:00 **Fill Out Pesticide Recertification Credits**

- 5:15 **Beverages & Hors D'Oeuvre Social Hour**
- Tuesday Morning, January 22**
- 8:00 Registration Desk Opens
- 8:00 – 10:30 *Coffee and Rolls in Exhibit Hall*
- 8:15 – 9:00 **NWMHRC Foundation Board Meeting
(open to the public)**
- Moderator: Mollie Woods, Ag Economics, MSU**
- 9:00 – 9:35 **Frost Protection Methods in Michigan**
Amy Irish-Brown, Michigan State University Extension
- 9:35 – 10:10 **CLIMARK: A Project Looking at Long-Term
Weather and Growing Tart Cherries**
Dr. Julie Winkler, Michigan State University
- 10:10 – 10:30 **VENDOR BREAK**
- 10:30 – 11:00 **What to Consider when Evaluating the Purchase of Crop Insurance**
Dr. Roy Black, Michigan State University Extension
- 11:00 – 11:30 **Have Weather Issues Affected Growers' Decisions on the Farm**
Veteran Growers' Panel:
Jim Bardenhagen, Bardenhagen Farms
Ken Engle, EngleRidge Orchards
Don Gregory, Cherry Bay Orchards
Emerging Growers' Panel:
Patrick McGuire, Royal Farms
Travis Bratschi, Bratschi Orchards
Bruce Veliquette, Cherry Ke Orchards
- 11:30 – 12:00 **CMI Report to the Industry**
Phil Korson, President, Cherry Marketing Institute
- 12:00 – 2:00 **CHERRY MARKETING INSTITUTE LUNCHEON**
- 2:00 – 2:30 **VENDOR BREAK**
- Moderator: Dr. Duke Elsner**
- 2:30 – 2:50 **2002 and 2012: A Look at Supply, Price and
Demand of Tart Cherries**
Mollie Woods, Michigan State University
- 2:50 – 3:10 **MI Apple Committee Update – Looking Ahead to the Referendum**
Diane Smith, MI Apple Committee
- 3:10 – 3:50 **Tall Spindle Performance at the Clarksville
Horticulture Research Station**
Phil Schwallier, Michigan State University
- 3:50 – 4:20 **How Long Will It Take to Recover from 2012?**
Dr. Roy Black, Michigan State University
- 4:20 – 4:55 **What is the Impact of the Quality Deer Management (QDM) Program?**
Ashley Autenrieth, Deer Program Biologist, Michigan DNR
Grower Panel:
Ben LaCross, Leelanau County
Greg Shooks, Antrim County
Isaiah Wunsch, Grand Traverse County
- 4:55 – 5:15 **The Challenges of Bacterial Canker: How will we Deal with this
Disease in the Future?**
Tiffany Lillrose, Dept of Horticulture, Michigan State University
- 5:15 **Fill Out Pesticide Recertification Credits**

TREE FRUIT IRRIGATION/FERTIGATION/FROST 2013 WORKSHOPS

Sponsors: Michigan Pomesters, Michigan State Horticulture Society, TrickI-Eez, MSUE

Dates: Feb. 4, 5, and 6

Locations:

Monday, 4th Trickl-Eez, 4266 Hollywood Road, St Joseph
Tuesday, 5th NWMHRC, 6686 S. Center Highway, Traverse City
Wednesday, 6th Mamrelund Lutheran Church, 4085 Lutheran Church Rd., Kent City
*Local meetings may have slightly different speakers (see dates after speaker names).

RSVP: By Feb 1st to: Trickl-Eez, (269)429-8200 • Fax (269)429-6669 info@trickl-eez.com or Philip Schwallier (616) 490-7917 or schwalli@msu.edu

9:00 a.m. Registration and Coffee

Welcome and Introduction

Climate Changes & Trends, Growth Stages Changes, Enviroweather

Ridge: Amy Irish-Brown, Philip Schwallier, SW: Bill Shane, Mark Longstroth, NW: Nikki Rothwell

9:45 Combining irrigation and frost control using under-the-tree micro sprinklers.

Engineering information, water requirements, orchard layout, etc.

John Nye, Trickl-Eez Company, Saint Joseph, MI (*Feb. 4, 5, 6*)

10:15 Break

10:30 Netafim's pressure compensating micro sprinklers for frost control

Johan Oostenbrink, Netafim Irrigation, Fresno, CA (*Feb. 4, 5, 6*)

11:00 How Nelson Irrigation's under-the tree sprinklers have helped Washington growers with a return crop every year

John Rowley, Director of Rotator Division, Nelson Irrigation, Walla Walla, WA (*Feb. 4, 5, 6*)

11:40 My 8 years of experience with under-the-tree micro sprinklers for frost control

Mike Wittenbach, Belding, MI (*Feb 4 & 6; Information presented on Feb. 5*)

by P. Schwallier)

11:55 How under-the-tree micro sprinkling gave me a crop in 2012 but soaked my ground after 14 nights of sprinkling

Tom Heffron, Belding, MI (*Feb 6 only*)

12:05 Meal (Courtesy of Trickl-Eez, Nelson, Netafim)

1:00 New technologies and methods in tree crop irrigation and fertigation

John Rowley, Director of Rotator Division, Nelson Irrigation,

Walla Walla, WA (*Feb. 4, 5, 6*)

1:45 The principles of fertilizing tree fruit through our irrigation systems

John Nye, Trickl-Eez Company, Saint Joseph, MI (*Feb. 4, 5, 6*)

2:15 Irrigation field trial result in cherry at the NW Research Center

Nikki Rothwell, District Extension Horticulturist and NWMHRC Coordinator (*Feb 5 only*)

2:40 How I have increased fruit color and firmness by injecting potash through my trickle irrigation system

Ron Rasch, Grand Rapids, MI (*Feb 5 & 6*)

3:00 Adjourn

NORTHERN MICHIGAN SMALL FARM CONFERENCE YOUTH TRACK JANUARY 26, 2013

**\$20/youth, ages 8-18, lunch included
(Register by January 19)**

Youth sessions are designed for youth and presented by youth!

Session I, 9:00 – 10:15am: Story of a Successful Farm Start-up, Fred Monroe, Monroe Family Organics: Monroe Family Organics is a small farm (5 acres in the first season) with a CSA that went from 0-90 members within a few months of their first year. In this workshop Fred will share the success, failures, and methods on the path to a profitable first season.

Youth Panel, 10:30 – 11:45am: How We Got Started: Learn from the experiences of AJ McArthur, owner of AJ's Berry Farm, Jon Plummer of Moomer's, and from the staff and students of The Children's House Montessori school in Traverse City and how their involvement in food and farming are making a difference in their communities, their businesses and in their lives.

Afternoon Skill-Share, 1:30 – 4:30pm: Come see, hear and touch what some of the area's youth are up to in food, farming and sustainable living projects. Demonstrations taught by youth will highlight: beekeeping, hoop houses, aquaculture, SEEDS after-school programs, and Ellsworth High School's Agriculture class.

CHILDCARE

Parents' space: ages 0-5
(children must be supervised by parent)

Youth activity space: ages 5-8
(supervision provided, 9-12 and 1:30-4:30)

FORTIFIED WINE PRODUCTION WORKSHOP

The next enology workshop will be on fortified wine production on **February 12, 2013** in East Lansing at the new Artisan Distillation Facility (2000 Merritt Road). For your convenience, this workshop is on the day before the [Michigan Grape and Wine Conference](#) in East Lansing (February 13-14, 2013 - Kellogg Center Hotel on campus). This day-long workshop will be taught by some of our own in-state expertise, and will cover the entire spectrum of fortified wine production. The workshop will be part classroom style and part hands-on experience. Please note: due to the hands-on nature of this workshop, we are limiting attendance to 30 people.

Online registration here: <http://store.chateauchantal.com/store/product/3009/MSU-Fortified-Wine-Workshop/>

2013 INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT ACADEMY

*IPMA13 will take place **February 19-20** at the Okemos Conference Center in Okemos, MI*

Michigan State University Extension is pleased to announce the second annual Integrated Pest Management Academy (IPMA13). IPMA13 will address the weather challenges of the 2012 production season with the help of **Dr. Jonathan Comstock** from the Department of Horticulture at Cornell University. Dr. Comstock will address shifting weather patterns and the related impacts affecting agricultural producers. Dr. Comstock is a climate change expert and is co-author of both the Agriculture and Ecosystems chapters of the recent [NY ClimAID Report](#), which looks at climate change vulnerabilities and adaptation strategies. Michigan State University experts will also be on hand to discuss irrigation, frost protection and changing weather patterns in Michigan.

On the second day of the event participants will opt into two, half-day sessions on the topics of their choice. Morning sessions include Apple and Cherry IPM, Deciduous Tree IPM, Scouting Techniques for

Field Crops and Forages, and Vegetable IPM. Afternoon sessions include Check it Out; MSU Resources for Hops, Saskatoons and Chestnuts, Conifer IPM, Emerging Issues in Field Crop Pesticide Resistance, IPM in Small Fruit Crops, and Vegetable IPM. For more information on what these sessions include, please visit <http://events.anr.msu.edu/event.cfm?folder=IPMAAcademy2013>

Participants will receive a notebook with program material and a complimentary IPM-related MSU bulletin. Michigan pesticide recertification credits will be available. The cost of this event is \$225; please note that snacks, lunch and parking are included. Lodging is not included but special rates are available. **Registration is open December 3 through February 12**, but space is limited so to learn more and register today, go to <http://events.anr.msu.edu/event.cfm?folder=IPMAAcademy2013>. For more information, or to request a paper registration form, please contact Erin Lizotte at taylo548@msu.edu or call 231-944-6504.

This program was developed with support from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture — National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

INTERESTED IN STARTING A WINERY? ATTEND THE FEBRUARY WINERY DEVELOPMENT PRECONFERENCE

Prospective winery owners will obtain basic information about starting a winery in Michigan by participating in the one-day winery development conference to be held Feb. 13, 2013 at Michigan State University.

Posted on **December 13, 2012**, MSU-E News, by **Joanne Davidhizar**, Michigan State University Extension, Michigan State University Product Center

With both wine grape acreage and winery numbers hitting all-times highs in Michigan, the state's winery industry continues to grow. To assist potential entrepreneurs in understanding the elements of a successful winery business launch, a one-day winery development preconference will be held February 13 in association with the 2013 [Michigan Grape and Wine Conference](#). The session will be held 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the [Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center](#), East Lansing, MI 48824.

Preconference sponsors, [Michigan Grape and Wine Industry Council](#), [Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development](#), and [Michigan State University Extension](#), [Michigan State University Product Center](#), [Michigan State University Institute of Agricultural Technology](#), and [Viticulture and Enology Science and Technology Alliance \(VESTA\)](#) will provide basic information about starting a winery in Michigan. Topics include wine grape suitability, industry trends, business planning, marketing, licensing requirements, local zoning considerations, finance, owner experiences and resources.

Over 85 percent of participants in a 2009 winery development conference lead by these partners were able to learn the specifics of starting a winery and network with successful industry people. These attendees took action toward starting 16 wineries, creating an estimated 121 new jobs and investing \$4.375 million according to a survey report by The [Michigan State University Center for Economic Analysis](#).

Dr. Miguel Gómez of the [Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management](#) at Cornell University is the session's featured speaker. Dr. Gómez will address basic business planning, cash flow, return on investment, and related financial factors for small wineries in the Great Lakes region.

For more information or to register for the session, go to: www.michiganwines.com/conference. The preconference registration fee is \$80 per person or \$100 per person after Feb. 1, 2013.

Participants are invited to attend the full conference February 14-15 to further their learning and networking opportunities.

This article was published by [Michigan State University Extension](#). For more information, visit <http://www.msue.msu.edu>. To contact an expert in your area, visit <http://expert.msue.msu.edu>, or call 888-MSUE4MI (888-678-3464).

SOME CONSIDERATIONS IF YOUR FARM HAD A GOOD YEAR

For the fortunate who had a prosperous year, here are ideas and resources for investing and sharing the wealth.

Posted on **December 11, 2012, MSU-E News**, by **Dan Rossman**, Michigan State University Extension

Farmers in a region across mid-Michigan escaped the 2012 drought and yield loss. Timely rains came in the nick of time. With good yields and prices, these farmers are faced with the decision of what to do with the additional income. This might be a tougher job than expected, especially knowing there are others with great needs locally, nationally, and even globally.

In years with good farm incomes it is wise for farmers to analyze their operations and make investments that will create better efficiencies, increase yield potential or reduce risks to generate income in the future. There are also strategies to guide year-end purchases and investments to manage taxes. A [year-end tax management guide](#) is available through [Michigan State University Extension](#) and the [Telfarm Center](#), or stop by your [local MSU Extension office](#) for a copy.

The opportunity exists for some producers that have been given once in a lifetime crop yields and prices to make exciting new investments, pay down debt and also consider needs beyond the farm. Below are not recommendations, but are just a few ideas to ponder and options to consider.

- Talk to your tax consultant and accountant. Know how your transactions will affect your bottom line and the positive impact it can accomplish.
- Treat your employees well. They are a part of your team and contribute to your success.
- Make sure landlords are satisfied. Their land is a valuable resource for your operation.
- Save some funds for retirement, emergencies or lean years.
- Focus your spending locally. Give business to others in your area and help make your rural community stronger.
- Give to your community. Find out if there are special needs. Many counties have a [Community Foundation](#), [United Way](#), food pantries and shelters, [Red Cross](#), [Salvation Army](#), faith-based efforts and countless others. Look around and ask where needs exist. Your tax consultant can provide you with information on the types of charitable gifts that can benefit others and provide your farm with some tax relief.
- Look to the needs in other areas. Many groups and organizations are providing important relief for the victims of storms, famine and other major crisis.
-

Every farm situation is different. Financial decisions need to be made based on your own goals, desires and future direction of your operation. [MSU Extension](#) has a team of [educators](#) located regionally across the state that can provide additional information and ideas about year-end income management and tax planning. Contact your [local MSU Extension office](#) to learn who are the educators that serve you, or use the [Find an Expert](#) tool.

This article was published by [Michigan State University Extension](#). For more information, visit <http://www.msue.msu.edu>. To contact an expert in your area, visit <http://expert.msue.msu.edu>, or call 888-MSUE4MI (888-678-3464).

WHAT MAKES THIS TAX YEAR SO DIFFERENT THAN ANY OTHER FOR FARMS? THE CHANGES ARE COMING!

There are some things to consider with the possible changes in the Federal Tax Law.

Posted on **December 21, 2012, MSU-E News**, by **Adam Kantrovich**, Michigan State University Extension

At the end of the day on Dec. 31, 2012, a number of tax benefits that many Americans have received will either no longer be available or be reduced when they wake up on the morning of Jan. 1, 2013 if the U.S. Congress and President are unable to do anything to counteract these changes. Unfortunately, these changes can have an adverse effect for many farms and their families.

According to the [United States Department of Agriculture's \(USDA\) National Institute of Food and Agriculture](#) and the [National Agriculture Statistics Services](#) 2007 Agriculture Census that almost 96 percent of farms are still family owned. The potential changes in taxes can have profound effects that flow directly to many families in rural America. Presently in 2012 if an individual's taxable income, who files "married filing jointly" is \$70,000, they would be in the 15 percent tax bracket just under the 25 percent, but in 2013 if no changes occur, the new tax bracket for this example now will be in the 28 percent tax bracket. This example does not begin to take into account all of the changes, eliminations and or reductions of any other credits, deductions, exemptions and phase-outs of all of these. But this would create a significant difference in the amount of tax liability an individual or family (and farm) would incur.

In a normal year, many farms will begin to look at their needs for the coming growing season and begin to purchase a number of items to make sure that they have secured the products they need and, in many cases, to lock in a lower price than they would receive if trying to make that purchase during the planting or growing season. The purchases are treated as expenses lowering the farm's taxable income. While this occurs, many farms have commodities and or products in storage that normally would not be sold until the coming year with the hopes of receiving a higher price.

But due to the unknowns, many farms are opting to not purchase their prepaid items and add it to their inventory and are selling their commodities/products early. This will allow them to increase their income in the 2012 tax year securing that their income will be taxed at a lower rate than if they take the income in 2013 assuming that the government will either not come to agreement on tax law and all changes will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2013 or that the agreement the government will come up with will still negatively affect America's family farms.

Once this income is received and all taxes have been paid, what's next? This needs to be given careful thought. The first thing that must be considered is cash flow. How do the changes the use of income and expenses changing in which year they occurred affect my cash flow? The farm may rely on all of that cash to maintain its ability to pay bills, if this is the case, it needs to sit in the farm's checkbook or savings account.

In many cases, we will still need to purchase inputs for the farm in 2013 that normally may have occurred in the previous year. These inputs may be considered a cash expense and lower the 2013 year's income. Capital equipment could be purchased, but it must be noted that the 2013 Section 179 direct expensing limit will be decreased from the \$139,000 (2012) to only \$25,000.

Anything that is not necessary to make cash flow, could then be used to pay down debt. Since the paying off the principal value of farm debt/loans provides no tax expense to the farm since it was taken as an expense when funds were used to purchase inputs, beyond being able to treat the loan's interest as an expense, this would be a good opportunity to pay down debt with any of the extra cash you may have.

If you have any questions about agricultural taxes, please contact your local [Michigan State University Extension](#) farm management educator.

This article was published by [Michigan State University Extension](#). For more information,

visit <http://www.msue.msu.edu>. To contact an expert in your area, visit <http://expert.msue.msu.edu>, or call 888-MSUE4MI (888-678-3464).

MANAGING FOR THE UNKNOWN: MARKETS AND WEATHER

Ample precipitation and commodity price are two of the primary factors that impact the producer's bottom line. In the 2012 growing season, we experienced a great deal of variability in both.

Posted on **January 4, 2013, MSU-E News**, by **Marilyn Thelen**, Michigan State University Extension

While we don't know what challenges the 2013 season will bring, we do know that when we are armed with knowledge, we can make informed decisions on how to manage for these risks.

Dr. [Jim Hilker](#), ag economist at [Michigan State University](#), provides projections for market prices on commodities. His most recent prediction for corn price is:

"There is a 10 percent chance that the price of corn will be higher than \$8.17 and a 10 percent chance that the price will be less than or equal to \$6.39. This indicates that there is an 80 percent probability that the price will fall between these two prices. There is a 50 percent chance the price will be less than or equal to (or greater than) \$7.22." Read more on Hilker's [probabilistic price forecasts for corn](#).

While this may not narrow the field down a lot, it does provide parameters and management decisions can be made with this knowledge.

The 2012 growing season brought severe drought conditions across much of the Corn Belt. The current [NOAA drought outlook map](#), through March 2013, has most of Michigan without drought. The southwest region, where the drought was the worst in 2012, is listed as "drought likely to improve, impacts eased." Yet seasonal snowfall totals this winter in southwest Michigan are well off the normal pace.

With conflicting signals on the weather front, we know that anything we can do to increase the soil water-holding capacity would be a plus. Even slight increases in soil organic matter and soil structure can provide benefits. Cover crops on the soil surface can help water to infiltrate rather than run off, helping to provide a more even distribution of soil water across the field.

Arming ourselves with knowledge is a first step. That's why [Michigan State University Extension](#) is bringing together farmers and agricultural professionals with interests in various major agricultural commodities to learn more about the changes on the horizon. The [Growing Michigan Agriculture Conference](#) will take place Jan. 24, 2013, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the [Lansing Center](#) in Lansing, Mich.

This one-day conference is jam-packed with timely information from MSU educators and nationally renowned speakers that will help Michigan producers maximize their farms' potential. Two of the speakers will address the risk areas discussed in this article: markets and soil management.

Join us to hear from MSU's Dr. [Jim Hilker](#) and a team of MSU specialists who will discuss volatile commodity prices, increasing on-farm storage capabilities, exports and a structurally changing global feed industry. All of these factors can have an impact on farm-gate commodity prices. Dr. Don Reicosky, soil scientist emeritus, [USDA Agricultural Research Service](#), will share his expertise on managing soils to increase organic matter and soil water holding capacity. Reicosky has shared his research and practical management practices with farmers around the world. Join us and see if there are things you can do to give your crops just a little extra moisture in those dry years.

The conference registration fee is \$50 and includes lunch. You can register electronically by visiting <http://bit.ly/MSUGrowing>, or you can contact Megghan Honke at honkemeg@msu.edu or 517-353-3175, ext. 229.

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OIL AND GAS NEWSLETTER

You can find the latest news on oil and gas exploration in Michigan at www.msue.msu.edu/oilandgas.

WEBSITES OF INTEREST

Insect and disease predictive information is available at:

<http://enviroweather.msu.edu/homeMap.php>

60 Hour Forecast

<http://www.agweather.geo.msu.edu/agwx/forecasts/fcst.asp?fileid=fous46ktvc>

Information on cherries is available at the new cherry website:

<http://www.cherries.msu.edu/>

Fruit CAT Alert Reports have moved to MSU News

<http://news.msue.msu.edu>