

# Responding to Media Calls



Michigan State University (MSU) Extension staff frequently receive calls from the media on a variety of topics. Media members know MSU Extension is a source of trusted, unbiased information and that we have a wide range of expertise to offer.



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## Tips to keep in mind when the media contacts you:

- **Respond in a timely manner.** Reporters often contact MSU Extension with hours left to finish and file their story. Ask them about their deadline, and do your best to accommodate the reporter's schedule. It is okay to ask a reporter if you can give them a call back. It's always good to take a little time, even if it's only five minutes to prepare yourself and write down some key messages you want to make sure you can use. You can also request time to seek additional information or anything else to ensure your success. But, please remember to get back to the reporter. Without a timely response, MSU Extension might lose an opportunity to get quality information to the public and serve as a valuable, educational resource in the eyes of the public and stakeholders.
- **Keep it simple.** When referring to your affiliation it is best to keep it as simple as possible. Don't say, "I'm Jane Smith, Community Food Systems Workgroup; Community, Food and Environment Institute; Gladwin County Extension." Say, "I'm Jane Smith with Michigan State University Extension."
- **Refer sensitive questions to those who can best respond.** If the reporter asks a question that makes you feel uncomfortable, particularly if it is about MSU Extension as an organization, the university at large, funding issues, etc., please refer the reporter to your district director or someone else at the administrative level who is best equipped to answer.
- **Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know."** If you don't know how to answer a specific question, it is okay to say, "I don't know." But plan to gather more information, and get back to the reporter or to let the reporter know that you're not the best person to answer a question.
- **Help the reporter find other sources.** If you are not the best source, don't be afraid to recommend other sources for the reporter to contact. If you don't know who the best contact might be, you can refer the reporter to the [MSU Extension Director's Office](#) or [MSU Extension Communications](#).
- **Ask MSU Extension Communications for help.** If you have an upcoming interview, media request or other issue, [MSU Extension Communications](#) can help. Staff can offer talking points, help refer the reporter to other contacts or data, and more.

