



# U.P. Ag Connections

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## NEWS & VIEWS

By Frank Wardynski, MSU Extension Educator

In the contents of the newsletter I hope you'll find a selection of events and programs that will be very useful. Events like the Ag for Tomorrow Conference will be a great event with another selection for every farmer in the UP. There will also be educational programs that will be critically important to the production of safe food, such as the Safe Food for dairy producers.

My thoughts have been clear for some time, for any farm to maintain sustainability; they must be profitable, with the responsibility of producing safe, wholesome food and protecting the environment. That challenge is huge, and Michigan State University Extension and the Ag and Bioresearch Station is committed to helping farmers accomplish that mission.

Agriculture in the Upper Peninsula is uniquely diverse, to say the least. It's no accident that milk is the largest revenue commodity produced here in the UP. The UP has a land base that can grow high quality forage based feeds. The UP grows more grass by accident than many other places that try. And beef production runs a close second. But the crops being grown across the UP are extremely diverse. Corn, small grain, oilseed, and even soybeans are being grown here, and not just in the southern portion. Fruit and vegetable production is growing rapidly both in hoop houses and in the fields, probably at a faster rate than any other crops. The farmers markets and other local market sales are being developed at a rapid pace.

There are so many reasons to be optimistic about agriculture right now. It has great potential to grow rapidly here in the U.P. and is doing so. Commodity prices are at historic highs. Fellow Yoopers are buying food from their neighbors, both for their family and their businesses.

The challenges are great, also. Fuel, fertilizer and other production costs are rising as fast as commodity prices. Pay attention to any national media stories and our food products are being attacked. Weather uncertainty is another constant concern as we saw last year through much of the Midwest. The greatest concern probably comes from the uncertainty of so many aspects of the farming operation.

I challenge all the farmers across the UP to take this opportunity to evaluate the status of their farming operations and conduct some futuristic planning. Do you have a plan of dealing with next year's drought? What are you going to do if your commodity prices drop by 25%, or your fuel/fertilizer/feed costs double? Use this time to be futuristic in your planning and thought process to try and protect yourself from the risks and capitalize on the opportunities.

~Frank

### Table of Contents

2. -Market Report  
-For Sale/ Wanted  
-Forage Educational Meetings  
-Good Food-Safe Food
3. - Annie's Project  
- Michigan Shepherds Weekend  
- Beginning Farmers Webinar
4. -Beef Cow Calf Webinar  
- Soil Health & Soil Quality
5. -FSA News
6. - Pasture Walk update
7. -Sponsors
8. -Calendar

## Market Report (as of 12/20/2012)

By Frank Wardynski, MSU Extension Educator

### Market Ready Prices

|                 |             |              |
|-----------------|-------------|--------------|
| Choice Steers   | \$115-\$126 | per 100 lbs. |
| Holstein Steers | \$100-\$115 | per 100 lbs. |
| Hogs            | \$52-\$57   | per 100 lbs. |
| Lambs           | \$90-\$110  | per 100 lbs. |
| Cull cows       | \$65-\$80   | per 100 lbs. |
| Calves          | \$75-\$110  | per 100 lbs. |
| Goats           | \$60-\$190  | per 100 lbs. |

### Breeding and Feeder Animals

|                             |                 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Grade Holstein Cows         | \$1,700-\$2,000 |
| Grade Holstein bred heifers | \$1,400-\$1,600 |

### Feed Prices across the U.P. (as of 11/26/2012)

|         | <u>Avg. \$/cwt</u> | <u>Avg. \$/ton</u> | <u>Price Range</u> |
|---------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Corn    | \$18.08            | \$361.53           | \$320-\$436        |
| Soymeal | \$32.73            | \$654.54           | \$519-\$772        |
| Oats    | \$15.72            | \$314.34           | \$265-\$378        |
| Barley  | \$16.52            | \$330.34           | \$259-\$372        |

Average price/100 wt. for 1 ton lots

## Wanted & For Sale Listings

Personal ads will be removed monthly. We reserve the right to edit your ad. Free ads must be no more than 110 spaces. Please respect the space requirements. You can always purchase an ad if more space is required. Please call or email your ad no later than the 15th of each month. Call the Ontonagon County MSU Extension office at 906-884-4386 or email msue66@msu.edu.

**For Sale:** Hay, square bales, approximately 47 pounds/each, \$3/bale, analysis available  
Mackinaw County 906-477-1061

**For Sale:** Oliver 1655 Tractor w/heated cab. Diesel, wide front, 18 Spd Trans. Excellent condition.  
L'Anse 319-984-9126

**For Sale:** Oats & Straw (Small square or 5x5 round bales)  
L'Anse 319-984-9126

**For Sale:** MiraFount Model #3354S four hole livestock waterer \$300.00.  
Felch area. 906-282-7151.

For past issues of the U.P. Ag  
Connections newsletter visit:  
[http://www.agbioresearch.msu.edu/  
uprc/newsletter.html](http://www.agbioresearch.msu.edu/uprc/newsletter.html)

## Forage Educational Meetings in the UP Region

Locations, dates and times for winter forage program meetings for both dairy and beef:

**January 7, 2013**, Bruce Crossing, Twilly's (906) 827-3360,  
13909 US Hwy 45, 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. EST

**January 8, 2013**, Escanaba, Delta County MSU Extension  
Office, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. EST

**January 14, 2013**, Sault Ste. Marie, Bruce Township Hall,  
6:00 - 8:00 p.m. EST

**January 15, 2013**, Stephenson, Menominee MSU Extension  
Office, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. CST

Topics covered:

- 1) Soil health and fertility in hay fields and pasture (Min)
- 2) Potential cover crops for forage-based systems in the UP (Min)
- 3) Identifying forage and weed species (Isleib)
- 4) Drought recovery management for forages (Isleib)

For more information, contact Dr. Doo-Hong Min, MSU Extension forage specialist at (906) 439-5188, or contact the hosting county office.

## Good Food-Safe Food

Producing Antibiotic-free Milk and Meat

This 2.5 hour program will help dairy producers and dairy farm employees understand the changes in testing, the issues involved and how to avoid the possibility that meat or milk from your herd will be cited for antibiotic residues. Cost is \$20 per person.

Mail check, pay cash at the door or register online with a credit card at :

<http://events.anr.msu.edu/AvoidingResiduesMilkandMeat/>

Program:

- Consumer awareness on antibiotics in food, Frank Wardynski MSUE Dairy Educator
- Antibiotic residue in meat, Dr. Jeannine Schwehofer, MSUE
- How to avoid antibiotic residue, Dr. Ron Erskine, MSU CVM & MSUE
- The role of standard protocols in reducing problems, Renee Coyer, Thompson Veterinary Clinic
- Communication with employees to reduce risk, Phil Durst, MSUE

### Dates, Locations and Times

- Jan. 16 10:00 am – 12:30 pm (EST), **Bark River** - Island Resort & Casino  
Jan. 16 7:30 pm – 10:00 pm, **Pickford** - Marquette Township Hall  
Jan. 17 10:00 am – 12:30 pm, **Alpena** - Alpena Community College

For more information, contact Phil Durst at 989-387-5346.

## **Annie's Project**

By: Warren Schauer, MSU Extension

Annie's Project Geared to Farm Women's Needs - Getting a grip on today's agriculture technology and becoming an effective farm business partner is the focus of Annie's Project. The program is designed to empower farmwomen to manage information systems used in critical decision making processes and to build local networks throughout the state. This program had been successfully conducted in over 30 states across the nation.

In the class, farm women receive training in the areas of financial records, production records, marketing plans and risk management, communication, legal regulation and records and human resources. This women's empowerment program will be offered on Tuesday evenings in the Hancock/Houghton area. It will be held on February 26, March 12, 19, 26, April 2, and 16.

The cost is \$50 per person and class size is limited to the first 20 paid registrants. Registrations will be accepted beginning January 15. For questions or more information contact Warren Schauer, MSU Extension of Delta County at 786-3032 or [schauer@msu.edu](mailto:schauer@msu.edu). The registration brochure will also be available on January 15 on the web at [www.msue.msu.edu/houghton](http://www.msue.msu.edu/houghton) and [www.msue.msu.edu/ontonagon](http://www.msue.msu.edu/ontonagon). More general information about the Annie's program can be found at <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/annie/>.

## **Michigan Shepherd's Weekend** **January 4 – 6, 2013**

Michigan Shepherd's Weekend is a series of educational sessions combined with trade show, competitions, and friendly acquaintances. The weekend is filled with activities for all ages. Program details and registration can be found at [www.misheep.org](http://www.misheep.org). Shepherd's weekend is conducted cooperatively by the Michigan Sheep Breeders Association and Michigan Boer Goat Association with programs directed towards both sheep and goat production. The event will be held at the Lexington Lansing Hotel in Lansing, Michigan. For more details, contact Maury Kaercher at 269-569-9592 or [Kaercher@msu.edu](mailto:Kaercher@msu.edu).

## **2013 U.P. Beginning Farmers Webinar Series**

This is an internet-based learning opportunity on specific farming topics. Each of the sessions will run from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. EST. You can view the sessions online, at a group viewing site, or at a "live" site.

Cost is \$15 per session. For more information, contact Alger County MSU Extension 906-387-2530.

To register mail check/money order and completed form to:

**2013 Beginning Farmer Webinar**  
**Alger Co MSU Extension**  
**E9526 Prospect St., Suite 1**  
**Munising, MI 49862**

Or register online at:

**<http://events.anr.msu.edu/upbegfarmer2013>**

### **Topics covered:**

#### **Getting Started with Grazing**, January 9, 2013

- **Presenters:** Frank Wardynski, Jerry Lindquist, and Warren Schauer
- **Topics to be discussed:** Managing plants and growth, Paddock design, Nutrient Management, Grazing Enterprise Budgets

#### **Getting Started with Grass-finished Beef**, January 23, 2013

- **Presenters:** Frank Wardynski, Kable Thurlow, and Jason Rowntree
- **Topics to be discussed:** Lake City Experiment Station Project, Grass Finished Beef from a fall calving beef herd, Marketing & Genetics/Animal types

#### **Getting Started with Field Crops and Hay**, February 6, 2013

- **Presenters:** Dan Rossman, Dr. Doo-Hong Min, Warren Schauer, and Jim Isleib
- **Topics to be discussed:** Basics of Field Crop Production and Marketing, Basics of Hay Production, Economics and Records, Opportunities in the Upper Peninsula

#### **Getting Started with Field-grown Vegetables**, February 27, 2013

- **Presenters:** Hal Hudson, Warren Schauer, and Jim Isleib
- **Topics to be discussed:** Basics of production and marketing, Economics and records, Opportunities in the Upper Peninsula

#### **Getting Started with Hoophouses**, March 20, 2013

- **Presenters:** Adam Montri, and Rowan Bunce
- **Topics to be discussed:** Basics of construction and operation, Upper Peninsula experience with commercial hoophouse production

## **Beef Cow Calf Educational Webinar** **Feeding the Cow-Calf Herd – This Year and into the Future**

A webinar will be presented live at the Gratiot/Isabella RESD and broadcast by webinar to the Delta County Extension Office on February 12, and 19, from 7:00-9:00. Local extension educators will be present to assist with generating questions and discussion

### **Session 1: Managing Feed Inventories & Evaluating Alternatives**

- Near- and far-term issues; the constraints on the cow-calf business - *Jim Hilker /Kevin Wernette* (50 min.)
- Estimating winter feed needs – *Phil Durst*
- Cow ration evaluation and pricing alternative feeds: User-Friendly Computer Resources – *Dan Buskirk and Kevin Gould*

### **Session 2: Beef Cow Management Strategies that Pay**

- Alternative crops for MI livestock farms – *Jerry Lindquist*
- Grazing management strategies to help stretch feed resources – *Kable Thurlow*
- Considerations and tactics in development of profitability for the future – *Dennis Stein & Frank Wardynski*

**Registration details available next month**

## **Soil health and soil quality**

### **Understanding the differences between soil health and soil quality.**

By **Christina Curell**, Paul Gross and Kurt Steinke, Michigan State University Extension

Soil is one of the common factors that bring all agriculture together. Regardless of what you farm, the quality of the soil is important. The terms used most often are soil quality and soil health. While many use the terms interchangeably, there is a difference between the two.

In *The Nature and Properties of Soils* (Brady and Weil) Fourteenth Edition, they describe the concepts of soil health and soil quality: "Although these terms are often used synonymously, they involve two distinct concepts. The soil health refers to self-regulation, stability, resilience, and lack of stress symptoms in a soil as an ecosystem. Soil health describes the biological integrity of the soil community-the balance among organisms within a soil and between soil organisms and their environment."

## **Soil health and soil quality (continued)**

Soil quality is a term that we use when we talk about the physical attributes of soil. Physical attributes can be as basic as color. It can also be used to describe more complex soil characteristics such as soil organic matter, nutrient amounts, soil structure, etc. These attributes can all be influenced by management practices and have the capability to enhance or diminish soil health.

Soil quality is often more discussed than soil health because practitioners can visually observe and physically affect this soil property. Dr. Kurt Steinke, Michigan State University Extension soil scientist, describes soil quality as the physical and chemical properties of a soil as indicated by the factors of soil formation that together function in support of plant growth. Soil health is a description of the condition or status of a soil and may comprise multiple factors including soil quality characteristics that come together to create a hospitable environment for soil life. These factors may include soil structure as a framework for soil life, fuel in the form of organic matter to drive the entire system, and the diversity or population of soil micro- and macro-fauna. Soil texture and soil fertility are examples of characteristics that we may attempt to enhance. We can add amendments to better our soil tilth or to make the soil more fertile but little information is available on how these practices influence soil health.

Regardless of what terminology we use, soil health and soil quality both play an important role in agriculture. Over the next several months MSU Extension educators will be working on projects and demonstrations centered on helping farmers understand soil health and soil quality. The MSU Extension website will have meeting announcements and related articles about soil health.

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).

## **Go Green!**

### **Attention Subscribers**

If you would like to help reduce our monthly publishing/ mailing expenses and also to be environmentally friendly, we encourage you to receive the newsletter by email every month.

To be added to our email list, please provide your email address to: [msue66@msu.edu](mailto:msue66@msu.edu).

## January 2013 – FSA News

### 2011 Supplemental Revenue Assistance Program Applications

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) will continue to accept SURE applications for 2011 crop losses through June 7, 2013. The SURE Program provides payments to producers when crop revenues are less than the crop guarantee. The SURE Program payment is equal to 60 percent of the difference between the crop guarantee and revenue.

To determine the guarantee and revenue for the SURE Program, all crops on all farms for a producer are included in the calculation. Payments under the SURE Program are limited to \$100,000.

To be eligible for the 2011 SURE Program, producers must have crop insurance on all insurable crops. For crops that are not covered by crop insurance such as pumpkins and cucumbers, producers must have purchased Non Insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) coverage through FSA. The Crop Insurance and NAP purchase requirement is waived for crops that are not economically significant to the farming operation. In addition, the producer must have at least one crop with a 10 percent production loss in order to be eligible.

For more information concerning the 2011 SURE Programs or other Farm Service Agency programs, contact your local FSA office or visit the Farm Service Agency website at [www.fsa.usda.gov/pas](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/pas).

### National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) Survey

NASS is in the process of contacting farmers and ranchers across Michigan to conduct the Agricultural Resource Management Survey (ARMS). The results of this survey will serve as a baseline for numerous federal policies and programs that affect U.S. farms and farm families. NASS conducts ARMS jointly with USDA's Economic Research Service. In an effort to obtain the most accurate data, the federal agencies will reach out to nearly 35,000 producers nationwide, including nearly 450 in Michigan, during the months of February and March. The survey asks producers to provide data on their operating expenditures, production costs and household characteristics. ARMS survey responses will be compiled and NASS will publish the annual *Farm Production Expenditures* report. NASS will mail our Census forms in late December to collect data for the 2012 calendar year. Completed forms are due by February 4, 2013. After receiving a form, producers can fill out the Census online via a secure website, [www.agcensus.usda.gov](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov) or fill out the form and mail it back. Respondents are guaranteed by law that their information will be kept confidential. All NASS reports are available on line at: [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov). For more information on NASS surveys and reports, please call the Michigan Field Office at (800) 453-7501.

### Don't Miss The Deadline - Upcoming Crop Reporting Dates

January 2, 2013 – Honey (Certifying number of Colonies)  
January 15, 2013 – Apples, Blueberries, Cranberries  
February 1, 2013 – Maple Sap (Number of eligible trees and Taps)

### IRS 1099 Changes !!!!

Calendar year 2012 has brought changes to the way FSA reports farm program payments to the producer and to the IRS.

In past years, IRS Forms 1099-G would be issued to show all program payments received from the Farm Service Agency, regardless of the amount.

Starting with calendar year 2012, producers whose total reportable payments from FSA are less than \$600 will not receive IRS Form 1099-G. Also, producers who receive payments from more than one county will only receive one Form 1099-G if the total of all payments from all counties is \$600 or more.

The same changes will apply to those who normally receive IRS Form 1099-MISC from FSA.

### Guaranteed Loan Limit

The Farm Service Agency has announced that the loan limit for the Guaranteed Loan Program is currently \$1,302,000. The limit is adjusted annually based on data compiled by the National Statistics Service.

The lending limit increases every year according to an inflation index. The maximum combined guaranteed and direct farm loan indebtedness has increased to \$1,602,000.

As a reminder, the one-time loan origination fee charged on FSA guaranteed farm ownership and operating loans is 1.5 percent of the guaranteed portion of the loan.

Producers should contact their local FSA county office with questions about farm loans.

### Need A Storage Facility - GREAT Interest Rates: Farm Storage Facility Loans (FSFL)

**Remember: these loans are now available for Hay/Forage Storage as well as traditional grain storage!**

December Interest Rates: 1.125 percent for 7 years with a loan of \$100,000 or less

1.750 percent for 10 years with a loan of \$100,000 - \$250,000

1.875 percent for 12 years with a loan of \$250,000 - \$500,000

Contact your local FSA county office for January's interest rates.

### Agriculture for Tomorrow Conference

Do you farm for profit? Do you want the latest information on crops grown for energy? If so, the Michigan State University Extension's Agriculture for Tomorrow Conference is something you won't want to miss. Get the latest information and ideas from Upper Peninsula farmers, Michigan State University Extension and industry experts.

The conference will be held on Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. EST at Bay de Noc Community College, Escanaba, in the Heirman University Center.

There will be 20 different classes offered. Each participant will attend four classes. During lunch, the Keynote speaker will be, Jamie Clover Adams, Director, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Program and registration information is available from the Alger County MSU Extension office, 906-387-2530, or [msue.alger@county.msu.edu](mailto:msue.alger@county.msu.edu). Register early to receive a \$10 discount!!! Cost to register is \$25 for pre-registration, or \$35 at the door. Lunch and materials are included in the cost.

Accommodations for persons with disabilities may be requested by calling 906-387-2530, at least one week prior to March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

**Please see the insert in this month's newsletter for more details.**

## Pasture Walk Update

By: Jon Ahlberg

Donna and I hosted a pasture walk in late September, and realizing that many of you were interested in the topics but were unable to attend, I am writing about some of the things we covered during the pasture walk.

Our farm was developed sometime around the beginning of WWI. It was a logging jobbers farm that was used to house men, as well as the horses and other livestock used in that enterprise.

In 1950, my dad bought the farm, which at that point had been run down, but had great potential. During his better years he was able to make countless improvements. It was at that time he instilled in me a love for this farm.

Donna and I took over the operation in the mid 80's and in the past almost 30 years have improved on what we acquired. We are now farming a little over 500 acres divided between grazing land, hay, and some small grains. We maintain about 120 cow/calf pairs of primarily Angus breed. We graze following a management intensive grazing system (MIG), and have done so to some degree for the entire time we have been here. In that period we have slowly worked at fencing the entire farm in order to be able to extend our grazing season to about 7 months on a routine basis.

Some of the fields are suited only for grazing and those are only grazed, whereas the fields that can be hayed are used for grazing, grain, and hay. We try to get cows onto pasture in early May and move them rapidly through the first cycle. The time that animals are on each paddock varies from 1-5 days, with the shorter duration used while forage is rapidly growing early in the year. Pastures are grazed 3-5 times during the season. Depending on weather, they are hayed, stockpiled, or used solely for grazing. By haying and grazing some of the fields we are able to stagger growth which helps us through the hot dry parts of the season. Getting cows out early and moving them quickly through the paddocks also helps add to pasture available through the hot months.

We have adopted new fencing technologies in order to make all of this possible.

Our fences are predominantly 1 wire high tensile, on a wooden post with an insulator driven with a fence maul. We use what we call a "let through" to allow animals to pass under the high tensile wire from one field to the next. Within the fields, we parcel paddocks using poly-wire on step in posts, moving cows by lifting the fence to allow passage to the next parcel. Our livestock water needs are provided by plastic waterlines running up the

high tensile fence lines with quick connects at intervals that provide for watering at the paddocks. Prior to the waterlines, we had lanes that the cows could access from the paddocks and follow to a water source.

Simple systems of fencing and water are key to making a grazing system work. Having unbroken fields using temporary fencing for paddocks allows for haying on years when you have excess forage, or to allow for grazing second growth on your hayland.

Three years ago we ventured out by grazing our yearling heifers on a remote field that hadn't been used in over fifty years. There was no electricity, and no water source. We use a solar panel to keep a battery fencer, and haul water with a 1,500 gallon tank. The predominant golden rod has given way to a predominantly legume pasture with only the addition of woodash, and of course the MIG system. We get three grazing cycles, with about 25 animals on 30 acres.

For the second season we have fenceline weaned our calves, and would never return to the more conventional system of locking calves in a corral. The calves are calmer and easier to work with. The cows bawl more than the calves but seem quieter than when they were moved a distance away.

In the time we have been on this farm, we have tried a lot of new things, and have failed enough times that we are sometimes reluctant to try another new thing. We have continued to force ourselves to take the next step. In doing so we hope that we will be able to keep improving and successfully operate well into the future.

### MSUE Lawn and Garden Hotline

1-888-MSUE-4MI (1-888-678-3464)  
Open weekdays 9:00 a.m. - noon and 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

People who call during other times are directed to the "Ask an Expert" feature at [www.migarden.msu.edu](http://www.migarden.msu.edu)

For more information please visit:  
<http://www.hrt.msu.edu/msue-lawn-and-garden-hotline>

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**Meetings & Events Calendar**

**JANUARY**

5-6 The Michigan Sheep Breeders Association annual meeting, Lansing, MI

For more information contact 269-569-9592

- 7 Forage Educational Meeting, Twilly's, Bruce Crossing, contact Dr. Doo-Hong Min (906) 439-5188
- 8 Forage Educational Meeting, Delta County MSU Extension Office, Escanaba, contact Dr. Doo-Hong Min (906) 439-5188
- 9 Getting Started with Grazing Webinar (See page 3 for details)
- 14 Forage Educational Meeting, Bruce Township Hall, Sault Ste. Marie, contact Dr. Doo-Hong Min (906) 439-5188
- 15 Forage Educational Meeting, Menominee MSU Extension Office, Stephenson, contact Dr. Doo-Hong Min (906) 439-5188
- 22 MDARD Pesticide Exam, 9:00 am EST, State Office Building, Escanaba, Contact David 906-250-3554
- 23 MDARD Pesticide Exam, 9:00 am, MSU Extension Office, Munising, Contact David 906-250-3554
- 23 Getting Started with Grass-finished Beef webinar (See page 3 for details)

**FEBRUARY**

- 6 Getting Started with Field Crops and Hay webinar (See page 3 for details)
- 12 Beef Cow Calf Webinar, 7 to 9 p.m. at the Delta County Extension office
- 19 Beef Cow Calf Webinar, 7 to 9 p.m. at the Delta County Extension office
- 27 Getting Started with Field-grown Vegetables webinar (See page 3 for details)

**MARCH**

- 5 Agriculture for Tomorrow Conference, Bay de Noc College, Escanaba, Michigan, 9:30 a.m.-4:15 p.m. EST
- 20 Getting Started with Hoophouses webinar (See page 3 for details)

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