



U.P. Ag Connections Newsletter

March 2018

Agricultural News from MSU Extension and AgBioResearch

Volume 22 Issue 3

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Farm Stress

Farmers have many factors that can cause stress. One of the leading stress factors is financial problems. There is no doubt that most of agriculture is facing large economic challenges. Commodity prices have dropped drastically while input prices have remained steady. Farm profits have turned into losses over the last five years and a turnaround in prices is not projected to happen soon.

Farmer suicide rates across the U.S. are higher than any other profession and higher than veterans. As I have recently seen more reporting on farm stress and farmer suicide rates, I quickly attached it to low farm prices of today. I attached it to all the reports of farm financial figures that indicate we are facing tough times in agriculture and if something does not change, the situation will worsen. Balance sheets are getting weaker as farmers have fewer dollars to pay down debt. Unfortunately, for the situation to change, something probably needs to negatively impact commodity supply.

Then I started actually reading reports. Some of the information comes from long time study that tracked suicide rates from 1992-2010. Over that time frame suicide rates for farmers are two to five times higher than the next highest profession. That time frame is after the farm crisis of the 1980's and before the current time frame of low prices. It's not a current problem, it's a continuous problem.

The Ag for Tomorrow Conference will have sessions to address some of these challenges. Suzanne Pish, Extension Social and Emotional Health Educator will be present to offer some opening comments related to farm stress and then to give two presentations. The first session, "Dealing with Farm Stress – Session 1" Farmers know how to take care of their animals and crops, taking careful steps to ensure that they are healthy and safe. Unfortunately, farmers don't take the same care in monitoring and managing their own mental and physical stress and fatigue. Suzanne will share proven tips on stress management for farmers. Her second session, "Dealing with Farm Stress – Session 2" Why is stress management useful to farmers? What is the true cost of stress? This second session gives more helpful advice about getting through stressful times. Attendance at session 1 is not required.

These sessions at the conference should be useful for farmers feeling the strain of farm life. But these sessions are just a beginning to the healing process, not an end-all cure-all. Farmers feeling the stress are encouraged to attend and start here. Or if you know someone or have a relative feeling this burden, these sessions will be helpful in identifying the signs of stress and provide assistance in offering help. The Ag for Tomorrow Conference is on Tuesday, March 13, 2018 at Bay College in Escanaba. Anyone interested in attending can register by contacting the MSUE office in Alger County 906-387-2530 or register on-line at: <https://events.anr.msu.edu/agtomorrow2018/>

Additional Farm Stress resources from Michigan State University Extension can be found at: https://www.canr.msu.edu/managing_farm_stress/

Frank Wardynski
MSU Extension Educator

Forestry Conference

The fourteenth annual Sustainable Forestry Conference will be held on 19 April in Florence, Wisconsin. All interested in forestry are invited to attend.

By Bill Cook, MSU Extension Forester

These annual conferences assemble a program of topics that influence forestry and the forest industry. Pre-registration is required and not permitted at the door. The conference fills quickly, usually before the 11 April deadline. The cost is \$30 for the day and includes great food! Continued education credits are available for both loggers and foresters.

The 2018 schedule has nine sessions, including talks, panels, research, and updates. The conference opens at 7:20 (central time) with registration and a continental breakfast. The full schedule and brochure is available on-line at www.lumberjackrcd.org, miforestpathways.net, or by calling Sabrina Leffler at 715-528-4480. The facility, "Encore on Central" fills to capacity, about 150 people, and is located right in downtown Florence.

This is one of the largest forestry conferences in the upper Lake States. Sponsors include a variety of agencies and companies. Organizers also come from a variety of employers and interests, coordinated by Wendy Gehlhoff of the Florence County EDC.

This year, the conference features speakers from the U.S. Forest Service, state DNRs, UW-Stevens Point, Michigan Tech, community colleges, Sacred Heart Hospital Sentinel Structures, Arauco, and Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association.



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It's not too late to catch some of the MSU Extension Field Crop webinars!

MSU Extension is offering a series of six online programs highlighting field crop production and pest management on Monday evenings. The series started February 19th and runs through March 26th, 2018. Participants will learn how to enhance their corn, soybean, small grain and forage production systems in the coming season, and have an opportunity to ask questions of MSU agriculture experts. The live webinar presentations will run 7:00-8:00 PM ET each Monday evening. One MDARD Pesticide Recertification Credit will be available through each webinar for application to one of the following categories: Private Core, Commercial Core or Field Crops. Participants can view the programs independently online. However, pre-registration is required for all participants at a cost of \$20.00 for the full series of six webinars or \$5.00 per individual webinar session. Visit <https://events.anr.msu.edu/FieldCropsWebinarSeries2018/> to register and access connection information. Contact James DeDecker at (989) 734-2168 or dedecke5@msu.edu for more information.

Beef Production Meeting

The MSU beef team will present the 2018 Cow-Calf Management Seminar on March 5, at Bay College in Escanaba from 7:00-9:00 pm EST. George Quackenbush, Executive Vice President, Michigan Cattlemen's Association and Kevin Gould, MSU Extension Educator **Bovine Tb, Current Efforts and Vision for the Future**. The session will provide an update of the current status of Tb in Michigan and current movements at the state level.

Daniel Buskirk, MSU Assoc. Professor/Beef Extension Specialist will discuss **Selection Madness: Let's take a time-out and set up a play**. Like a pendulum, beef cattle selection has seen big swings from one extreme to another. Current buzz is that cows are too big and small cows should be the rage. Commercial producers often seem overwhelmed by the sea of EPDs, yet repeatedly maintain laser focus on selecting for lighter and lighter birth weights. This presentation will discuss selection strategies that focus on "optimal" and avoiding the temptation of chasing extremes.

Frank Wardynski and Phil Durst, MSU Extension Educators will present **Cow-calf Health Risk Assessment**. Beef cow-calf herd health is usually easy and straight forward. Pay special attention at calving and weaning, then after that the health of animals on the farm is generally good. At least until problems occur. Then producers are looking backwards at what they should have done. This presentation will cover strategies to develop a herd health management calendar: by utilizing own farm risk assessment, implementing management practices to ensure good health while minimizing production cost, and by using judicious of antibiotics and chemical products to minimize organism resistance.

Cost of the program is \$10 and registration can be sent to MSU Extension Ionia County, 50 E. Sprague Rd, Ionia, MI 48846. Or register on-line at events.anr.msu.edu/2018CowCalfMgmt/

Exam offered for state certified pesticide applicators in Stephenson

MSU Extension Office—904 South US Hwy 41
Wednesday, March 21, 2018, 9am CT

- 1) **You must bring a picture ID.**
- 2) Please bring a pen and a #2 pencil.
- 3) Make checks/money orders payable to "State of Michigan". Fees are as follows:

Commercial: \$75.00 application fee

Private: \$50.00 application fee

Registered: \$45.00 application fee

Cash and/or credit cards are not accepted

Private Applicators Only: Honorably discharged veterans of the armed forces of the United States are exempt from the \$50.00 application fee. You must provide MDARD a copy of your veteran's federal form DD-214 that indicates honorable discharge status along with your application.

For more information, contact Monica Jean, MSU Extension, at (906) 786-3032 or atkinmon@msu.edu. Registration for the exam can be found at: <https://secure1.state.mi.us/opes/sessionsearchresults.aspx?county=55>

Growing High Quality Forages

Great Lakes Forage & Grazing Conference

March 7, 2018

Wednesday

AgroLiquid

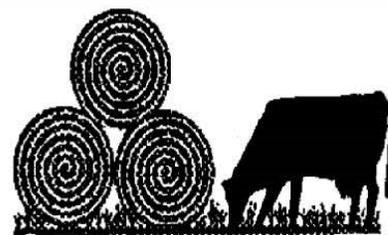
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9:00 A.M. -- 4:00 P.M.

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Michigan Forage Council

To register for the Great Lakes Forage & Grazing Conference, visit:

<https://events.anr.msu.edu/2018GLFGC/>

Shining a light on agricultural solar energy development

Meetings designed to assist farmers in understanding solar lease agreements and the implications on property rights and taxes.

By M. Charles Gould, MSU Extension Educator

Since the first part of the year, solar companies have been actively contacting farm owners in an effort to secure land for solar energy projects. This is in response to the Michigan Public Service Commission raising the avoided cost of electricity to 9.5 cents per kWh. At this rate, solar projects are profitable. The new tariff on imported solar modules will most likely have little effect on this activity. The prevailing industry thought is that the cost of a solar project will probably increase 10 to 15 cents per dc watt, which puts projects at about the same cost as they were in September 2016, a banner year for solar projects.

The real issues that need to be addressed are local government zoning provisions and the tax implications if a farmer chooses to sign a lease agreement for a solar project. In an effort to help farmers understand the renewable energy landscape, nuances of solar leases, zoning considerations and accompanying tax implications, MSU Extension, Michigan Farm Bureau and the Michigan Energy Office are teaming up to host programs for farmers at various locations around the state. MSU Extension staff with lease agreement, tax and zoning expertise will provide the educational content. Farmers who participate in the programs will leave with valuable, practical knowledge they can use to determine if a solar lease agreement is a sound decision for themselves and their community. The program will cover the following topics:

- The context for solar energy development on Michigan farmland
- A community vision for solar energy systems
- Zoning approaches for solar energy
- Siting considerations for utility-scale solar
- Integrating solar with existing ag systems
- Understanding solar energy lease agreements
- Taxation guidance including the impact on PA 116

Meetings will be held around the state and includes two locations in northern Michigan. All programs run from 10 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

March 7—Powers AND March 8—Traverse City

To register for a meeting or for further information, go to: <https://events.anr.msu.edu/shine>. The registration deadline is midnight Sunday, March 4. The registration fee is \$20/person because of the generous financial support provided by Michigan Farm Bureau and the Michigan Energy Office. Preregistration is required and registration will not be available onsite. If you have questions about the agriculture solar leasing meetings or would like more information on energy efficiency practices or renewable energy projects, feel free to contact Charles Gould at 616-994-4547 or gouldm@msu.edu.



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Are you in compliance with the FSMA Produce Safety Rule?

By Michelle Walk, MSU Extension Educator

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) was enacted into law in 2011. 2018 brings the first dates for compliance under the Produce Safety Rule. The Produce Safety Rule includes standards for the growing, harvesting, packing and holding of produce for human consumption. The Produce Safety Rule applies if you sell produce. Farms or operations that have a crop that is rarely consumed raw, is processed with a kill step, or has produce sales less than \$25,000 may be exempt from the rule. Operations that are exempt still need to keep records to be able to prove they are exempt. Farms or operations that are covered under the rule have a variety of records that they are required to keep. All growers should understand and implement practices to reduce food safety risks on the farm.

The first compliance date was in January 2018 for businesses over \$500,000. The compliance deadline for small businesses (over \$250,000 - \$500,000) is January 28, 2019. And the last compliance date for very small businesses (greater than \$25,000 - \$250,000) is January 27, 2020. Compliance dates for the water standards in the rule begin in 2022.

Under §112.22(c) farms covered under the rule need to have a supervisor or responsible party from their farm complete approved training. The [Produce Safety Alliance](#) Grower Training Course is currently the only approved training. **This course will be held in Sault Ste. Marie on March 21, 2018.**

You can register as well as find other dates and locations for the training at <https://events.anr.msu.edu/2018WinterPSA/>. The course will provide a foundation of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and FSMA Produce Safety Rule requirements. After attending the course participants will be eligible to receive a certificate from the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) that verifies they have completed the training course. Registration is required but thanks to a grant from the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the training program and materials are provided at no cost.



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Market Report

Choice Steers	\$110—\$134 per 100 lbs.
Holstein Steers	\$75—\$106 per 100 lbs.
Hogs	\$58—\$65 per 100 lbs.
Lambs	\$140—\$170 per 100 lbs.
Cull cows	\$45—\$60 per 100 lbs.
Calves	\$50—\$105 per 100 lbs.
Goats	\$150—\$200 per 100 lbs.

Breeding and Feeder Animals

Grade Holstein cows \$1200—\$1600/head

Grade Holstein bred heifers \$1000—\$1600/head

Feed Prices across the U.P.

	Avg. \$/cwt	Avg. \$/ton	Price Range
Corn	\$10.36	\$207.25	\$160-244
Soymeal	\$20.13	\$402.50	\$380-552
Oats	\$11.61	\$232.25	\$190-450
Barley	\$9.63	\$192.50	\$160-240

Average price/100 wt. for 1 ton lots



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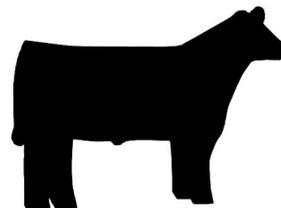
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Agriculture for Tomorrow features a wide selection of learning choices

Spend a day off the farm with your friends and family members to participate in a great local learning opportunity. The 12th annual 'Agriculture for Tomorrow' conference, organized by MSU Extension, is scheduled for Tuesday, March 13, 2018 at Bay College Heirman University Center in Escanaba. Because of the current financial challenges faced by so many farmers, the topic of 'farm stress' and ways to stay healthy and positive through hard times are front and center at this year's conference.

This year, featured speakers include:

Wayne Coblenz, USDA forage researcher from Marshfield, WI on 'baling dry hay too wet' and 'baleage – made tight, made right'.

Suzanne Pish, MSU Extension, Branch Co, MI on 'dealing with farm stress'

Erin Burns, MSU weed scientist on 'controlling weeds in UP crop rotations and pastures'

A variety of additional speakers will address beef quality assurance, soybeans in northern MI, hiring farm labor, developing a U.P. 'brand', local food hub and processing, and results of local, UP crop research projects. Registration is \$25 per person by March 2, \$35 per person at the door and includes lunch. You may register and pay on-line at <https://events.anr.msu.edu/agtomorrow2018/>, send in a paper registration with payment, or pay at the door. Generous sponsorship from many ag-related U.P. businesses and organizations keeps the registration fee low. Thanks to all our sponsors!

For more information, contact Jim Isleib, MSU Extension 906-387-2530 or isleibj@anr.msu.edu.

Upper Peninsula dairy receives national dairy quality award

Seventeen [Michigan Milk Producers Association](#) (MMPA) member farms were awarded National Dairy Quality Awards, making up over a third of the total winners. The MMPA members made up over one third of the 46 nationally recognized farms in the annual award program.

One platinum award, seven gold awards and nine silver awards were earned by MMPA members.

MMPA's large representation in the National Dairy Quality Awards underscores the hard work of the cooperative's farms while competing against other well-performing farmers across the country. National Dairy Quality Award winners were recognized at the annual [National Mastitis Council](#) meeting held in San Diego, California.

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"Congratulations to our member farms being recognized through the National Dairy Quality Awards program. Attaining consistent milk quality at this level results from proactively doing the 'right' things for animal health and comfort day in and day out," said Dean Letter, MMPA Director of Member Services. "High milk quality and animal care results from a proactive commitment to do the right thing every time, every day."

The winners were selected from a pool of applicants nationwide. The winning operations stood out for having produced high-quality milk consistently. Applications were evaluated for measures of quality, systems of monitoring udder health, milking routine, protocols for detection and treatment of clinical and subclinical cases of mastitis and strategies for overall herd health and welfare.

U.P. awardee includes William Pirman, from Skandia.

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Calendar of Events

Shining a Light on Ag Solar Energy Development

10 am—2:30 pm

March 7 – Powers (Pinecrest Medical Care Facility)

March 8—Traverse City (NW Michigan Hort Station)

Ag for Tomorrow Conference

March 13 – Bay College, Escanaba

Produce Safety Alliance Grower Training

(FSMA Certification included)

March 21 – Sault Ste Marie

Pesticide Applicator State Exam

9 am CT

March 21 – Stephenson (MSU Extension Office)

Life of Lake Superior

July 10, 12, and 17 from 8 am—4:30 pm

July 19 from 1—7 pm

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