



U.P. Ag Connections Newsletter

June 2025

Agricultural News from MSU Extension and AgBioResearch

Volume 29 Issue 6

In this issue:

Page 2

- Down on the Farm

Page 3

- Celebration LIFT-UP

Page 4

- Help Shape the Future of Regenerative Agriculture in Michigan

Page 5

- Foundations of Gardening Course
- Emergency Commodity Assistance Program

Page 6

- Advertisers

Page 7

- Advertisers
- Classifieds
- Market Report

Page 8

- Follow us on Facebook

News and Views

By Frank Wardynski

Last April was both cold and dry, prompting me to write about preparing for drought conditions. However, that dry spell was quickly followed by an unusually wet May—eight inches of rain fell in the western Upper Peninsula. Concerns about drought faded, and we ended up with one of the best hay crops in recent memory.

This year, the pattern seems to be repeating. We received only 0.2 inches of rain throughout May, and once again, I find myself discussing drought management strategies. Interestingly, we've already had 0.75 inches of rain in June, and it's raining again today. Perhaps my concerns will prove unfounded. Still, when it comes to drought preparedness, early planning is essential. Waiting until a drought is in full swing to figure out how to produce enough forage is far too late. So, I'll ask again: if we face a drought this summer, are you ready?

If you're just beginning to plan, consider drought-tolerant, high-yield crops like sorghum-sudangrass. This crop thrives in warm temperatures, making it ideal for planting in the Upper Peninsula after mid-June—even mid-July isn't too late. Another option is to purchase hay now. There's still a surplus of high-quality hay from last year, which could serve as excellent feed later in the summer if pastures dry up. Buying hay now might also allow you to graze some of your hay fields.

Now, my next suggestion may be a bit controversial. I understand—I've been there myself. I grew up in Illinois on a large cash crop farm, where we used to moldboard plow corn stalks. Over time, we transitioned to reduced tillage, replacing the moldboard plow with a chisel plow. We used to cultivate corn three times and soybeans twice each summer. It wasn't until I saw a rainfall simulator comparing tilled soil to sod that I truly understood the impact of tillage. Tilled soils lose aggregation and become slow to absorb water. In contrast, soils with strong aggregation and deep root systems allow for better water infiltration and retention.

To address this, I've been implementing grazing practices aimed at improving soil health. Primarily, I've extended rest periods between grazing events, which has significantly enhanced root development and soil aggregation. Water now infiltrates more quickly and in greater volumes. I've also used bale grazing with similar results.

I'm currently seeking farmers interested in adopting these practices and potentially hosting pasture walks later this summer. In my view, the best drought management strategies began five years ago—with improved grazing practices, reduced tillage, and the use of cover crops.

If you're interested in demonstrating or learning more about these approaches, please don't hesitate to reach out. wardynsk@msu.edu 906-281-0918

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY | Extension

Michigan State University

AgBioResearch

Down on The Farm

By Miranda Fletcher

This spring, MSU UPREC hosted nine farm field trips for students from schools in Alger and Marquette counties – including Ishpeming’s new Career Technical Education Agriculture class and one school that traveled all the way from Ann Arbor! A total of about 280 students visited. Our visitors experienced both The South and North Farms, while interacting with our staff and trying some local food.

When visiting The South Farm students got the chance to see our cattle up close on a “People Mover” ride, chauffeured by Darin Tyrner. While marveling at the cows, the students were educated by resident cowboy and Farm Manager Paul Naasz, who explained breeds and how we care for them on the farm. The students then brought this knowledge to our Director James DeDecker, who showed them how we grow forage, the equipment we use, and how grazing plays a part in soil health. Before leaving The South Farm, students got to enjoy lunch in the grass while trying a local food sample of maple cream offered by Michelle Coleman.

At The North Farm, students broke into groups to experience four different activities related to farming and the environment. We were lucky to have input from MSU Extension staff who contributed to these activities. The students got to learn about pollinators with a pollinator relay race, run by Calli Tomasoski and Brian Wibby. The life of trees with the activity “Every Tree for Itself” was run by Anna Ellis and Tyreen Prunick. An integrated pest management station with a mock scouting activity was run by James DeDecker. Students also learned about the companion planting method of The Three Sisters with help from Abbey Palmer.

Getting to work with students and having the opportunity to make these connections with the community is always an honor and privilege. Thank you to all who visited us. Also, a very special thank you to everyone who helped make these farm tours a reality; the Growing UP Agriculture Association, the staff at MSU UPREC and our Extension volunteers. We look forward to hosting more Farm Field Trips and serving the community through these youth agricultural literacy and career technical education experiences in the future!



Students enjoy a Farm field trip at UPREC 2025
Photo credit: Miranda Fletcher and James DeDecker

Celebrating LIFT-UP!

By Miranda Fletcher and Abbey Palmer

2025 marks another successful year for the LIFT-UP (Locally Integrated Food Teams - Upper Peninsula) program. This year, three schools, Negaunee High School, Munising High School and Ishpeming High School, each wrote grant proposals and received \$2,500 in grant money to support a project the students developed around the question, “how do we get more local food into the school lunchroom?”

In Munising, Hilary Ludecke’s class focused on strengthening and improving gardening infrastructure at the school in collaboration with Yooper Country Farm. The students worked on fixing up their hoop house, adding raised beds to the structure, and adding an irrigation system. They also started to experiment with food to see if they could add anything new to their school’s menu. Each recipe had ingredients that could be grown at the school or sourced locally. Sometimes getting back to the basics can be rewarding and tasty!



High school students ate a local lunch while sharing their LIFT-UP projects. Photo credit: Miranda Fletcher

Todd Backlund’s class in Negaunee also focused on improving their school garden resources in collaboration with Little Parsley Farm. The students focused on improving, and creating more, raised garden beds. They also expanded into the realm of hospitality by working on an insect hotel. This hotel aims to attract and support pollinators that will help their school garden thrive. Finally, the students wanted to focus on the classroom by improving and updating the health curriculum. Overall Negaunee has a very healthy approach to improving their relationship with local food!

The Hematites in Ishpeming, under the guidance of Melissa Meldrum, also turned their focus to education in collaboration with Partridge Creek Farm. The students developed recipes and provided taste tests of delicious and nutritious food to their classmates and elementary school students, as well as passing information about how those recipes were received along to their foodservice director. The local foods featured included carrots grown at MSU UPREC and potatoes that students helped to grow at Partridge Creek Farm, which were processed at Northwoods Test Kitchen. They have also been working on educating their fellow students on how to properly compost so that the nutrients that don’t get eaten are never wasted, continuing a collaboration with Partridge Creek Compost. What a way to boost the community!

A celebration of student work was hosted at Belsolda Farm, where students from each school presented their projects to one another. They also heard about opportunities to continue studying agriculture at MSU’s Institute of Agriculture Technology program at Bay College. Students were treated to a local food lunch provided by Northwoods Test Kitchen.

Help Shape the Future of Regenerative Agriculture in Michigan

Attention U.P. Farmers: We Want to Hear from You!

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD), in partnership with Conservation Districts, is launching an exciting new Regenerative Agriculture Program designed to support farmer prosperity, soil health, and vibrant local food systems. To ensure this program meets the real needs of farmers across the state, the MDARD is inviting you to share your insights through a brief Regenerative Agriculture and Michigan Agricultural Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) survey.

This survey gives you the chance to:

- Share your unique farm perspective to help MDARD understand the real-world needs, perceptions, and goals of Michigan producers.
- Guide the development of new tools, including interactive soil health assessments and testing services tailored to your operation.
- Provide feedback on regenerative practices you're using or considering and the challenges you face in implementing them.
- Support the creation of resources and partnerships that reduce barriers to regenerative practices and promote the success of farmers.
- Help shape farmer-led groups and peer networks that encourage innovation, mentorship, and collaboration.
- Offer your input on MAEAP participation, benefits, and areas for improvement to strengthen support for environmental stewardship.

All farms, regardless of their size or type, whether you are conventional, no-till or organic, are encouraged to participate. This includes farms that raise livestock, grow vegetables, fruits, and row crops, as well as those that harvest hay and manage pastures. Your input is valuable and crucial for accurately representing the diverse agricultural landscape of the Upper Peninsula.

Please scan the survey QR code or contact your local Conservation District Conservation Technician to request a paper copy of the survey.



For any questions, feel free to reach out to your local Conservation Technician:

Holly Moss: (906) 553-7700 x102 Covers: Alger, Delta, Dickinson, Marquette, Menominee, and Schoolcraft Counties.

Megan Bertucci: (906) 253-8053 Covers: Chippewa, Luce, and Mackinac Counties.

If you're located in Baraga, Iron, Gogebic, Houghton, Keweenaw, or Ontonagon Counties, please contact Michelle Sweeten, MDARD Regenerative Agriculture Field Coordinator, at (517) 420 -7509.

Visit MDARD's Regenerative Agriculture webpage:

<https://www.michigan.gov/mdard/environment/regenerative-agriculture>

MSU Extension Foundations of Gardening (FOG) Course

Are you interested in the next [MSU Extension Foundations of Gardening \(FOG\)](#) course? FOG is the horticulture course for those wishing to apply to our MSU Extension Master Gardener Program® and those seeking horticultural training for other personal reasons.

Foundations of Gardening (FOG) is a comprehensive 10-week online course offered by MSU Extension. It is open to all adults interested in the science behind successful gardening. It is also the prerequisite for applying to the MSU Extension Master Gardener (EMG) Volunteer Program.

Participants who wish to join the EMG program can apply after earning their FOG certificate. Earning a FOG certificate does not guarantee acceptance into the EMG program, and the timeline for volunteer application steps may vary by county.



Registration for the course does not open until **JULY 2, 2025**, but we are currently accepting scholarship applications. Scholarships cover \$150 of the tuition cost. Applications are available on the FOG website and at the QR code below (https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6ArgAFKWb7LHcsm) now through June 18, 2025 or until all scholarships have been awarded. Registration for the FOG Fall 2025 session begins **July 2, 2025 and runs through August 27, 2025**.

Have you applied for the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program?

By Corey Clark

The [Emergency Commodity Assistance Program \(ECAP\)](#) is a government program administered by the USDA's [Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)](#). It provides funds to farmers to offset income loss in 2024 due to increased input costs and reduced crop prices. To qualify for ECAP, you must be actively farming and be responsible for input expenses for a covered crop. You also need to have reported your 2024 crop acreage to FSA for crops planted as well as prevented planting. Eligible crops include corn, soybeans, wheat, oats, barley, cotton, rice and many kinds of legumes and oil seeds.



Your payment is based on how many acres you planted, not how much you harvested. Each crop has a fixed payment per acre. You can find these payment amounts on the USDA's [ECAP website](#) at farmers.gov. If you planted the crop, you can get the full payment per acre. If you had prevented planting, you can get half the payment. At first, farmers will receive 85% of the total payment amount. If there are funds remaining after the application period ends, farmers may get some or all of their remaining payment amount. You can use USDA's [ECAP online calculator](#) to estimate your payment.

Payment limits for ECAP depend on how much of your income came from farming in 2020, 2021 and 2022. If less than 75% of your total income in those years came from farming, you can get up to \$125,000. If 75% or more of your income came from farming, you can get up to \$250,000. To receive the higher payment limit of \$250,000, you must include [Form CCC-943](#) with your application. This form must be certified by a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), Enrolled Agent (EA) or attorney.

Applications are being accepted until August 15, 2025. Most farmers received a pre-filled ECAP application in the mail in March. If you didn't get one, contact your [local FSA office](#). You can apply [online through login.gov](#), in person at your local FSA office, by mail or by email. All other required forms (except the [CCC-943](#)) are typically filed from other programs. For questions or help with your application, contact your [local FSA office](#) or visit [USDA's ECAP webpage](#).

IRON RANGE FARM BUREAU®

President: Rod Johnson

Secretary: Shannon Sanders

906-779-1774

S&R
Angus



Weston, WI

(715) 573-4924

www.srangus.com

Service age bulls, open females and show prospects for sale private treaty. Bulls are fertility tested and bred for calving ease



At the heart of growing America

100 years of Ag Experience

Loans, ag taxes, farm records, consulting

1801 N. Lincoln Road, Suite A, Escanaba, MI

(906) 786-4487 Fax: (906) 786-3450

Johnson Brothers Livestock

3740 18th Rd. Escanaba, MI

Buying or Hauling Cattle

St. Louis—Mondays, Gaylord—Wednesdays

Call Gary Johnson

Office (906) 786-4878 Gary Cell (906) 235-0099

Steve Cell (906) 399-2858



*Working to build
a vibrant U.P. food
economy since 1971*

Open Daily, 8 to 9 · Everyone Welcome
906-225-0671 · 502 W Washington St
www.marquettefoodcoop

REGISTERED MAINE ANJOU AND ANGUS

CLAY KNOLL FARMS

**OPEN & BRED HEIFERS AND BREEDING AGE
BULLS AVAILABLE**

BREEDING CATTLE TO IMPACT THE
PRESENT AND INFLUENCE THE FUTURE.

BREEDING STOCK—BULLS
SHOW PROSPECTS—STEERS

DUANE & LISA SIMPKINS & SONS

DUANE CELL 989-329-6141

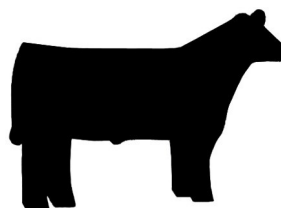
LISA CELL 989-578-0328

GARY & JAN SIMPKINS

HOME 989-426-8185

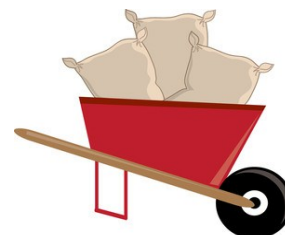
CELL 989-329-4668

GLADWIN, MI



Ray's Feed Mill

Ration & Crop
Consultants
Feed • Seed • Fertilizer



(800) 832-1822 or (906) 466-2231
Bark River & Norway

Rosebush Sale Barn, Inc.



Sale 1st Wednesday of each month

Baby heifer & bull calves sell every Tuesday at noon

Over 40 years experience in Dairy Business

If you're thinking about selling your herd, or a portion of it,
call us! We can help!

Hay & Straw available

Robert Filhart (989) 330-6005

www.rosebushsalebarn.com



Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association

WAUKON, IOWA
Feeder Sales Schedule

• 2nd & 4th Wednesdays

(563) 568-4501

www.equitycoop.com

United



Producers, Inc.

Farmer owned. Farmer values.

St. Louis Sale every Monday
Collection point in Escanaba
Call for more information (989) 681-2191



Skidders

Pickford, MI
(906) 647-5655 or
(877) 647-2500

Kubota, AGCO, Massey-Ferguson, New Idea, Hesston,
Gehl, Bush Hog, H&S, and Kverneland



Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales Association

*Collecting Cattle on Tuesdays at the
Larry Linsmeier Farm north of Menominee, MI*

(906) 863-8123

www.equitycoop.com

SMC

*Stephenson Marketing Coop-
erative*

We want to be your first choice!
Agricultural Services & Supplies

Stephenson, MI

(800) 445-6167

Powers, MI

(800) 962-3008

Market Report

Choice Steers	\$210-\$236 per 100 lbs.
Holstein Steers	\$180-\$216 per 100 lbs.
Hogs	\$67-\$80 per 100 lbs.
Lambs	\$200-\$290 per 100 lbs.
Cull cows	\$120-\$165 per 100 lbs.
Calves	\$600-\$950 per 100 lbs.
Goats	\$300-\$450 per 100 lbs.

Breeding and Feeder Animals

Grade Holstein cows top	\$3150/head
Grade Holstein bred heifers top	\$3500/head

Marlette Livestock Auction

Monthly Dairy & Feeder Cattle Auctions

Sale Date June 14, 2025

Featuring Dairy Cattle, Cow/Calf Pairs & Bred Brood Cows,
Breeder Bulls, & Feeder Steers & Heifers

Hay & Straw Auction - Every Monday @ 12:00 PM

1000+ Small Squares & 150+ Rounds/Large Squares Weekly

Livestock Auction - Every Monday @ 1:00 PM

Including Calves, Sheep & Goats, Feeders, Hogs, Bulls, Beef, &
Butcher Cows

6381 Euclid St., Marlette, MI 48453

Robert Filhart, Owner (989)330-6005

Haley Filhart, Owner (989)430-2055

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

Hayes Corn Maze & Pumpkin Patch

Well established. (24 years) and lucrative
business opportunity **FOR SALE**
will train and possibly land
contract.

Call David at 906-399-5698.



Classifieds

Wanted: Pasture for 25-35 cow calf pairs for the summer of
2025 in the Eastern UP. Will consider a custom grazing
arrangement as well. Call Ben (989) 370-3570.

FOR SALE: Hay, mixed round bales, 700# stored inside. Also
small square bales of straw. Call Jim Myers (906)399-1649 or
(906) 466-2672.

FOR SALE: small square bales of straw and small squares of
first crop hay. Call Marenger's Farm (906)384-6587.

**FOR SALE: Mixed Hay round bales 700# & 2nd cut small
square bales**, Call Alan or Karen Raynard @ (906) 647-6697,
Pickford.

Feed Prices across the U.P.

	Avg. \$/cwt	Avg. \$/ton	Price Range
Corn	\$15.19	\$303.75	\$220-510
Soymeal	\$27.99	\$559.75	\$440-655
Oats	\$18.20	\$364.00	\$319-416
Barley	\$15.08	\$301.50	\$240-386

Michigan State University
Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center
P.O. Box 168, E3774 University Drive
Chatham, MI 49816

Michigan State University

AgBioResearch

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY | Extension

NON-PROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT #77
SAULT STE MARIE, MI
49783

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Serving the Upper Peninsula Agricultural Industry

Michigan State University Extension programs and materials are open to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, age, height, weight, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, or veteran status.

U.P. Ag Connections appreciates the support of this newsletter by our advertisers, however in no way does this imply endorsement of any specific products or services.

If you do not wish to receive this publication, please contact Rene Sanderson at sande638@msu.edu or (906) 439-5114

Follow U.P. Agriculture on Facebook!

MSU Extension Upper Peninsula
Agriculture **@MSUEUPAg**
and
MSU Upper Peninsula Research and
Extension Center **@MSUUPREC**

This ad could be yours!

Paid advertising delivers this
newsletter to your mailbox each month!

Contact Rene @ 439-5114 to place an ad (\$30/month)