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Corn and Soybean Farmers Benefit from Center for Excellence

LANSING, MICH. – Any farmer will tell you that every year they plant their crops they are fighting the odds and taking a gamble – a wet spring, extreme heat and too little rain are all uncontrollable factors that have an impact on a farmer’s livelihood. However, when a farmer tries something different such as utilizing a new technology or cropping practice, the risk escalates exponentially. To minimize the personal danger for farmers, the Center for Excellence has done the risky work for them and many growers attended their annual field day to see the results of their many trials and to learn about new technologies for innovative farming.

The Lenawee County Center for Excellence is an extensive research and demonstration project made possible through the collaborative efforts of the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan (CMPM), the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, the Lenawee Conservation District, the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Through the Center for Excellence, new practices and technologies are tried in test plots so that farmers from across the state may evaluate the data and learn from these trials without it affecting the bottom line of their own farming operation.

“Corn and soybean farmers throughout Michigan have benefited from check-off and privately funded research at the Lenawee County Center for Excellence for many years,” said Clark Gerstacker, CMPM president, National Corn Growers Association board member and a corn grower from Midland. “The Center for Excellence allows corn farmers to see the effects of new agricultural innovations and techniques without having to assume the risk themselves.”

The Lenawee County Center for Excellence 2011 Field Day was held near Clayton, Mich., on August 17. An excited group of attendees began the day at Bakerlads Farm and in the afternoon moved to the Raymond and Stutzman Farm. During lunch participants listened to Dr. Tracy Blackmer from the On-Farm Network discuss precision agriculture tools and technology and how their utilization can increase growers' profits. Topics of discussion throughout the day included cover crops, economics, fungicide management, nitrogen management, resin capsule technology, soil quality, different tillage systems and more.

The field day provided corn farmers with the opportunity to take a first-hand look at this year’s plots and research trials. “This was a great chance for farmers to look at innovative new agronomic practices they could not afford to test privately in their own fields,” explained Jody Pollok-Newsom, CMPM executive director. “After seeing the results, farmers can now use the information to continue to make educated production decisions that will positively affect their own farming operations.”

Headquartered in Lansing, the CMPM is a legislatively-established statewide program that utilizes one-cent per bushel of Michigan corn sold. Investments are made in the areas of research, education, market development, and new uses in an effort to enhance the economic position of Michigan corn farmers. The CMPM works cooperatively with the Michigan Corn Growers Association (MCGA), a grassroots-membership association representing the state’s corn grower’s political interests since the 1970’s. Michigan’s corn industry adds more than one billion dollars to the state’s economy annually and in 2010, Michigan’s corn farmers harvested a record setting crop of more than 315 million bushels. For more information, visit the website of the MCGA and the CMPM at www.micorn.org.