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Michigan Corn Growers Association Members Fuel Up on Top Issues

LANSING, MICH. – More than 100 corn growers, industry leaders, legislators and aides are better informed about corn and corn-related issues, thanks to the 2011 Michigan Corn Growers Association (MCGA) Annual Meeting.

Attendees at this year's meeting had the opportunity to hear from an exciting list of political speakers, as well as two leaders in the corn industry. First, they heard from Garry Niemeyer, a corn farmer from Auburn, Ill., who is also serving as the first vice president of the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA). Garry provided attendees with an update on corn issues and priorities on the national level. Attendees then heard first-hand from Michigan's newly elected key agricultural legislators and officials about what they see as the future of Michigan's promising agriculture industry. These individuals included: Keith Creagh, Director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development; Senator Joe Hune, Michigan Senate Agriculture Committee Chair; Senator Mike Green, Michigan Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee Chair; and Senator Arlan Meekhof, author of a promising piece of on-farm ethanol legislation that will soon be introduced in the Senate. Attendees then heard an important update about Michigan's ethanol industry from MCGA vice president Jeff Sandborn, who also serves on the NCGA Ethanol Committee. The program also included a legislative update and information on the benefits available to MCGA members.

"The MCGA Annual Meeting provides Michigan's corn growers an excellent chance to discuss policy and issues that impact the corn industry," said Ed Breitmeyer, MCGA president and a corn grower from Buckley. "By featuring key political leaders in Michigan agriculture, we were able to show our members what is in store for corn farmers in 2011 so we can really prepare ourselves for what is on the horizon."

At the meeting, the MCGA presented the "Friend of Corn" award to two deserving individuals as a way to honor them for their support of Michigan's corn industry. This year's Friend of Corn recipients were Richard Godfrey and Don Koivisto.

- Godfrey served the corn industry through his appointment to the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan's (CMPM) board of directors from 1999 to 2005. Of those years, Godfrey was the president of the organization from 2001 - 2005. In addition to his tenure on the CMPM Board of directors, Godfrey also served tirelessly on the MCGA board from 2002 -2005.
- Koivisto was a member of the Michigan House of Representatives from 1980 to 1986 and the Michigan Senate from 1990 to 2002. From 2007 to 2010, Koivisto served as the Director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture, where he positively impacted and strengthened Michigan's agricultural industry. Koivisto has gone above and beyond to support and fight for Michigan agriculture.

Another highlight of the meeting was the roundtable discussions growers had with legislators during lunch to discuss important issues affecting their farming operations. This gave growers an opportunity to talk with legislators about what is important and voice their concerns and wishes. "By inviting legislators and aides to participate in our annual meeting, we are enacting our grassroots strength and educating elected officials about our industry," added Breitmeyer. "The legislators were eager to talk about the corn industry, as well as hear the thoughts of the state's corn growers."

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During the Annual Business Meeting, MCGA members were asked to represent the state's corn growers by running for one of the six open seats on the MCGA Board of Directors. Board members re-elected for another term were: Ed Breitmeyer of Buckley for District 1; Matt Cary of Alma for District 2; Alvin Ferguson for District 5; and Scott Miller of Elsie for an at-large position. Michael Turner of Williamston and Ned Wyse of Camden were also newly elected to serve on the board of directors representing Districts 4 and 7 respectively.

The meeting also included recognition of the state's top three membership recruiters:

- First Place – Tom Vansickle, Deckerville
- Second Place – Tom Ziel, Pigeon
- Third Place – Pat Feldpausch, Fowler

In addition, the state's 2010 Corn Yield Contest winners, farms that are environmentally verified through the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) and the 2010 MCGA Scholarship recipients were also recognized. If you missed these or any of the other exciting highlights of the 2011 MCGA Annual Meeting, you can view video footage of the event at the Michigan Corn YouTube channel, located online at <http://www.youtube.com/michigancorn>.

The support of several sponsors was vital in making the event such a huge success. Sponsors for the 2011 MCGA Annual Meeting were: the American Coalition for Ethanol, Conklin AgroVantage Systems – Tom Warschefsky, Conservis Crop Tracker Software - Craig & Associates Consulting, the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan, Great Lakes Hybrids, Greenstone Farm Credit Services, the Koeman Group – Loren Koeman, Michigan Milk Producers Association, Pioneer Hi-Bred International Inc., and Pioneer Hi-Bred – Pat Feldpausch Agency.

Headquartered in Lansing, the MCGA is a grassroots-membership association that has represented the state's corn growers' political interests since the 1970s. The MCGA works cooperatively with the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan (CMPM) a legislatively-established program that utilizes one-cent per bushel of Michigan corn sold and invests in research, education, new uses and market development. Michigan's corn industry adds more than one billion dollars to the state's economy annually and in 2009, Michigan's corn farmers harvested a record setting crop of more than 309 million bushels. For more information, visit the website of the MCGA and the CMPM at www.micorn.org.

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