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For Immediate Release  
February 19, 2010

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### **Michigan Corn Growers Attend National Leadership Academy**

LANSING, MICH. – Twenty of the nearly 35,000 National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) members were chosen to attend a leadership academy organized by the NCGA. The three-day program, *Leadership at its Best*, was held in Washington, D.C. and was sponsored by Syngenta. This meeting focused on interaction with legislators, coalition building, and devising effective grassroots legislative strategies. Michigan Corn Growers Association (MCGA) board members Jeff Sandborn, MCGA treasurer and a corn grower from Portland, and Alvin Ferguson, a corn grower from Allenton, attended the academy.

“The leadership academy is an excellent opportunity for me as a Michigan grower,” said Ferguson. “At the academy, we honed our leadership skills and brought back knowledge we can implement in our own states and on our own boards.”

The Washington, D.C. portion of the academy provided attendees with information on the ins and outs of policy making on Capitol Hill. The program’s goal was to build knowledge and skills in order to help corn growers educate legislators about key issues facing the corn industry. Attendees were updated by NCGA staff on legislative issues and were educated on the importance of building coalitions. Participants also made congressional visits with their state’s legislators to talk about pressing issues in the agricultural industry. This final session built off the first session of the leadership academy, where participants attended classes on association management, public speaking, presentations, media training and etiquette.

“Many of the attendees at the academy are already great leaders within their own state organizations and the program is set up to encourage increased participation at the state and national levels within the NCGA such as action teams, committees, the corn board and elected-officer positions,” Jody Pollok-Newsom, Corn Marketing Program of Michigan (CMPM) and MCGA executive director.

“Becoming a stronger leader means not only increasing your own involvement, but also encouraging and recruiting others to become leaders as well,” said Sandborn. “Increasing the involvement of others within an organization, as well as bringing political leaders on board to support vital legislation will help strengthen the corn industry. This academy has helped to build better leaders and build stronger organizations at both the state and national levels.”

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 nearly 311 million bushels. For more information, visit the website of the MCGA and the CMPM at [www.micorn.org](http://www.micorn.org).