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Michigan Corn Grower Attends International Export Meeting

LANSING, MICH. – Ed Breitmeyer, a corn grower from Buckley, Mich., represented the Great Lakes State at the U.S. Grains Council's (USGC) recent 2011 International Marketing Conference and Annual Membership Meeting in New Orleans, La. Breitmeyer, who serves as the Michigan Corn Growers Association (MCGA) president and also on the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan (CMPM) board of directors, attended the meeting on behalf of the state's nearly 12,000 corn farmers to learn more about corn markets from a world perspective. Also attending the USGC event was Theresa Sisung, CMPM and MCGA communication and programs coordinator.

Focused on educating attendees about the importance of developing markets and enabling trade, the International Marketing Conference celebrated the USGC's 2011 theme, "The Year of Competitiveness," by focusing on infrastructure challenges. During the meeting, attendees listened to an infrastructure panel that included Kurt Nagle, CEO of the American Association of Port Authorities, and Ken Erickson, senior vice president of Informa Economics. They also heard from Pat Gallwey, COO at the Port of New Orleans, and had an opportunity to tour the ZEN-NOH Export Elevator in Convent, La.

"The USGC work is extremely important in ensuring that U.S. corn farmers have strong export opportunities," said Breitmeyer, who serves on the USGC's Membership and Communications (Mem/Com) Advisory Team. "As the USGC works to open new markets or strengthen current markets, they are adding value to the bottom line for farmers all across the United States."

Attendees at the USGC meeting had the opportunity to participate in various Advisory Team meetings where they discussed trade issues around the world. The different teams include Asia, Biotechnology, Mem/Com, Rest of the World, Trade Policy and Value-Added. Each team held individual meetings where they discussed issues specific to their area of the world or their program area. The teams also looked through the new market profiles for all of the countries the USGC works with and used these profiles to come up with priorities for 2012. The profiles provide a market snapshot, a game plan for the region and performance indicators, allowing stakeholders to know if USGC is making a difference in a region.

During Breitmeyer's team meetings, his group discussed a new strategic communications' initiative, branding the USGC and reaching out to members. "The team stressed not only the importance of communicating with members, but also communicating amongst the different teams," noted Breitmeyer. "It is vital for everyone involved with the USGC to work together to increase trade and expand global markets which will only help to improve the bottom line for me and my fellow corn farmers."

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 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.