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Michigan Corn Growers Impact Corn Policy at National Conference

Four state representatives help set 2013 national corn agenda at Priority and Policy Meeting

LANSING, Mich. – Four Michigan Corn Growers Association members represented Michigan’s interests at the 2012 National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) Priority and Policy Conference.

MCGA president Jeff Sandborn of Portland; NCGA and MCGA board member Clark Gerstacker of Midland; MCGA secretary Alvin Ferguson of Allenton; and MCGA Policy Director Val Vail-Shirey met with farmers from across the country to draft, discuss and debate national corn priorities and policies for 2013.

The precedence set at the 2012 NCGA Priority and Policy Conference will provide direction to the NCGA throughout the year and will affect the more than 35,000 corn grower members from across the nation. Each state offered their 2013 priority areas, with Michigan’s top priorities being infrastructure, ethanol, water regulations, education, livestock, and wildlife control.

“It is always a privilege to represent Michigan corn growers while working closely with farmers from other states to set the direction for our nation’s corn agenda,” Sandborn said. “At this priority and policy conference, it is important for Michigan’s corn growers to be well represented to ensure that we have a voice in the direction taken by the NCGA.”

Gerstacker agreed that it is crucial for Michigan’s growers to have a strong voice at the national level, and said the conference provides a unique opportunity for small-group discussions because each corn state brings two participants to represent their growers.

“Only two voting representatives from each state are present at this conference to discuss proposed policy changes and debate priorities for the nation’s 300,000 corn farmers, rather than larger conferences where more than one hundred voices might be at the table,” Gerstacker said. “Taking part in these smaller-group meetings gives Michigan an equal voice and strong influence in shaping the future of the corn industry.”

Delegates at the meeting also took time to discuss and debate changes to NCGA’s 2012 Policy and Position papers. The national policy changes discussed will come before the full delegation during two sessions of Corn Congress which will be held during Commodity Classic, an annual convention and trade show presented by NCGA, the American Soybean Association, the National Sorghum Producers and the National Association of Wheat Growers. This year’s convention will be held in Nashville, Tenn., March 1-3. Corn Congress is comprised of 127 corn grower delegates from 27 states, with Michigan having four voting delegates.

The conference also included a joint session between the NCGA and the U.S. Grains Council (USGC). Since the USGC develops export markets for U.S. corn, barley, grain sorghum and related products, the two groups often have similar goals and priorities, making it important for them to discuss the top issues facing corn growers, too.

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“Both the USGC and the NCGA will be focused on expanding exports and reducing trade policy barriers,” Ferguson said. “By holding a joint Priority and Policy session, we can ensure that the two groups are working in sync with one another for the best possible results.”

Headquartered in Lansing, the MCGA is a grassroots-membership association that has represented the political interests of the state’s corn growers 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 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.

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