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Michigan Corn Growers Attend Commodity Classic

LANSING, MICH. – Michigan corn growers attended the 2010 Commodity Classic to ensure their perspective on national policies was heard. The 15th annual Commodity Classic was attended by more than 4,200 corn, soybean, wheat and sorghum farmers from across the nation. Attendees not only discussed policy, but also learned more about upcoming issues facing the corn and agricultural industries.

Representatives from the Michigan Corn Growers Association (MCGA) and the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan (CMPM) included Ed Breitmeyer of Buckley, Matt Cary of Alma, Earl Collier of Allegan, Richard Dobbins of Concord, Tom Durand of Crosswell, Steve Errer of Filion, Pat Feldpausch of Fowler, Alvin Ferguson of Allenton, Clark Gerstacker of Midland, Mark Kies of Allen, Loren Koeman of Grand Rapids, Brian Kreps of LaSalle, Scott Miller of Elsie, Jeff Sandborn of Portland and Jake Wamhoff of East Lansing.

Commodity Classic is the combined annual meeting of the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA), the American Soybean Association (ASA), the National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) and the National Sorghum Producers (NSP). Some of the highlights this year were the general session featuring Mark Mayfield, better known as “the Corporate Comedian,” each of the four national association presidents and Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack; and an Evening of Entertainment with the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band.

In addition to the combined general session events for corn, soybean, wheat and sorghum farmers, the NCGA held the first of two annual sessions of the NCGA Corn Congress. At Corn Congress, delegates from state corn organizations vote on policy issues to guide the national organization in the coming year. The second session of Corn Congress will be held this July in Washington, D.C., where delegates will visit with legislators and update NCGA policy again.

Michigan has five delegates able to vote on policy issues during Corn Congress. During the course of Corn Congress, the state’s alternates are able to substitute for voting members and all non-voting alternates participate in the discussions and proceedings. The number of delegates a state has is determined in part by the amount of corn grown in the state and also by the number of members in the state’s NCGA-affiliated corn grower association. “It is important that we have seats on the delegate floor so we are able to present Michigan’s thoughts and views on national issues,” explained Jody Pollok-Newsom, the MCGA and the CMPM executive director.

“Since the NCGA and the MCGA are both grassroots, member-driven associations, it’s important for members to be involved in developing national policy,” explained Durand, MCGA president. “The 127 delegates voted on a variety of issues including tax issues, climate change and animal welfare.”

Other highlights during Commodity Classic included sessions on a variety of topics. “Commodity Classic truly has something for everyone. There were educational sessions on social media, marketing strategies, climate change, new technologies, farm finances and fertilizer,” Pollok-Newsom said. “It is great to know that so many people are invested in the future of agriculture and they attended Commodity Classic to learn new ways to improve profitability and productivity on their farms.”

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In addition to Corn Congress and the educational sessions, attendees were also treated to a large trade show. This year the trade show featured 816 booths on the trade show floor exhibiting the latest in equipment and technology. “Commodity Classic provides an outstanding combination of educational sessions, issues updates, and industry interactions,” said Pollok-Newsom. “Commodity Classic brings together different growers from all over the country and allows everyone to learn from one another.”

Corn growers are already looking forward to next year’s Commodity Classic which will take place March 3-5 in Tampa, Florida.

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.

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