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Michigan's Corn Growers Oppose Michigan Meatout Day

LANSING, MICH. – As farmers across the nation prepare for National Agriculture Day on Saturday, March 20, 2010, Michigan's farmers were appalled to hear an anti-ag proclamation from the state's chief executive officer. On Tuesday, March 16, Governor Jennifer Granholm proclaimed Saturday, March 20th to not be a day of recognition for Michigan's more than 56,000 farmers, but instead be Michigan Meatout Day.

In observance of the state-endorsed vegetarian day, Granholm "encourages the residents of this state to choose not to eat meat." This proclamation comes not only four days before National Ag Day, a day to recognize and celebrate the contributions and abundance provided by agriculture, but only one day before the sixth annual Ag Day at the Capitol in Lansing. Many farm and agricultural organizations across the state including the Michigan Corn Growers Association were horrified to hear of the news of the Governor's decree.

"Corn and livestock farmers have long enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship," said Jody Pollok-Newsom, executive director of the Michigan Corn Growers Association. "Livestock and poultry farmers have come to rely on the corn industry as a top source of high quality, nutritional feed. In turn, corn growers have long depended on the livestock and poultry sector as its number one customer. We support our friends and allies in those industries in their protest of this event and will not be observing Michigan Meatout Day."

Each American farmer today feeds about 155 people worldwide – meat is part of this equation. Michigan's nearly 22,000 dairy, beef, pork and poultry farmers are providing an abundant, low-cost and safe source of protein for the nation. By supplying 36 percent of their corn crop to the livestock and poultry industries, corn farmers across the state are happy to know that their crop is contributing to help feed the world.

On Wednesday, Michigan's agricultural commodities and agri-businesses gathered at the Capitol to educate state lawmakers on how agriculture contributes \$71.3 billion to Michigan's economy and supports more than 900,000 jobs. The importance of Michigan's \$2.5 billion livestock industry was also impressed upon state legislators, so much so that the Michigan Senate passed a resolution urging the Governor to rescind her Meatout Day Proclamation. As the backlash from pro-agriculture groups continued throughout the day, Governor Granholm issued another proclamation in celebration of Michigan Agriculture Day, also on March 20, 2010. In complete contradiction of her earlier Meatout proclamation, this decree called for residents to "to help celebrate this day with meals made with a variety of local Michigan ingredients, including but not limited to meat, vegetables, and dairy products." Though the MCGA is pleased to see Michigan's agricultural industry recognized by this new proclamation, we are disappointed that the Governor has yet to rescind her earlier decree. The MCGA urges you to show your support of Michigan Agriculture Day by supporting farmers and Michigan businesses by eating meat as part of a balanced diet this Saturday!

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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