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Holiday Season is Time to Give Thanks for Corn – America’s Homegrown, Renewable Resource

LANSING, MI – As Thanksgiving approaches, the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan (CMPM) wants to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Happy Holiday season and remind consumers of the versatility of one of America’s first and most bountiful crops -- corn.

As one of the first crops that settlers learned to grow in their fields, corn has long been important to American families at the holidays and year round. In fact, farmers are the original stewards of the land. Today, thanks to innovative farming practices, our nation’s corn growers are the most productive in the world, growing five times as much corn than in the 1930s – on 20 percent less land! With new technologies and techniques, corn producers are also protecting the environment – reducing their use of fertilizer and pesticides, preventing erosion and reducing greenhouse gasses.

Today, corn is not only a tabletop favorite and a family staple, but it is also an integral part of many other products. CMPM-funded research has led to numerous advances in environmentally friendly, corn-based products.

“Polylactic acid (or PLA) is a corn-derived polymer that can be used to create biodegradable plastics, and offers a 100-percent renewable, sustainable alternative to traditional petroleum-based plastic,” said Pat Feldpaush, CMPM President. “Some of these products include plates, cutlery, clamshell containers, bags, cups, film and plastic wrapping.”

Feldpaush said that through the CMPM, Michigan corn farmers invest in important research that focuses on new uses and expands new markets for corn. Now, corn can not only be served on your Thanksgiving plate, but can also be a primary component of that plate.

“This wide-ranging research has led to the development of corn-based plastics, fabrics and packing materials,” said Feldpausch, a corn farmer from Fowler. “And, of course, you can always choose ethanol-blended fuels when filling up at the gas station, or replace your furnace with a corn heating unit. These are all critical factors as we look to the future and help lessen America’s reliance on foreign oil.”

Even when the holiday season is over, corn still plays an integral role in everyday life.

“While many food products contain corn or ingredients derived from corn, many other products would not be in existence without corn,” said Jody Pollok-Newsom, CMPM Executive Director. “Many beef, pork, and poultry products are value-added forms of corn. The livestock industry is the largest market for Michigan-grown corn. And with the current level of ethanol production in our state, livestock farmers now have another feed option -- dried distillers grains (DDG), a valuable co-product from the ethanol process.”

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“A bushel of corn is about 56 pounds. That bushel of corn can be turned into nearly three gallons of ethanol and 17 pounds of the high protein livestock feed, DDG. About one third of the corn that goes into the ethanol process comes back to the market as DDG.”

From our pioneer settlers to today’s fast-paced world, one thing has remained constant – the importance and necessity of corn. With more available corn, technology and new markets, the use of corn-based products will continue to grow and expand. And that’s something to be very thankful for!

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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