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Michigan Corn helps honor 1,000th MAEAP-verified farm

Lee Farms recognized as environmental stewardship program reaches milestone

LANSING, MI – Michigan’s corn farmers applauded Lee Sesquicentennial Farms in Shiawassee County as part of a ceremony celebrating a milestone for the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program (MAEAP) in recognizing the 1,000th farm to be verified under the innovative environmental program.

Jody Pollok-Newsom, Executive Director of the Corn Marketing Program of Michigan, on Monday joined a group of local and state officials, legislators, and other agricultural and environmental partners, to honor Lee Farms for being the 1,000th MAEAP-verified farm.

“It was a special pleasure for me to speak at the ceremony honoring the Lee family and the commitment they made to an environmental stewardship program that Michigan Corn helped develop,” said Pollok-Newsom. “Lee Farms is a shining example of what the MAEAP program is all about. Their practices typify the understanding and dedication Michigan farmers have in protecting our state’s precious farmland for future generations.”

State farmers can become MAEAP verified by completing three comprehensive steps which include attending an educational seminar, conducting a thorough on-farm risk assessment, and developing and implementing an action plan addressing potential environmental risks. The Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD) conducts an on-farm inspection to verify program requirements related to applicable state and federal environmental regulations, Michigan Right to Farm guidelines, and adherence to an action plan. When completed, the producer receives a certificate of environmental assurance.

Pollok-Newsom said that while the ceremony honored the Lee Farm’s work to become MAEAP verified, it was also a tribute to the family’s 150-year farming traditions and a testament to their commitment to the future by embracing technology and advancing best-farming practices.

“Farmers are the original stewards of the land, something the Lee’s have been devoted to for more than 150 years,” said Pollok-Newsom. “And with new technological advances, farmers like Larry and Annette, can do even more today than they could a few years ago.”

State Senator Joe Hune said one of the best things about the MAEAP program is that it is voluntary and shows that farmers are willing to take the necessary steps to protect the environment.

“Farmers who choose to go through the program are really making a commitment to practicing sound agricultural and environmental practices,” said Hune, chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee. “This program is good public policy and we were able to educate other lawmakers on its importance and get it signed by the Governor.”

State Representative Ben Glardon, also touted the benefits of the MAEAP program and how vital it is to Shiawassee County and the state.

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“The Lee Family has had a really positive influence in the community and being MAEAP verified tells their neighbors that they took this voluntary step of proactive measures to be environmentally conscious in order to protect their land and their community,” said Glardon, a member of the House Agriculture Committee. “I would put farmers and the Ag world up against anybody as far as land stewards, as they truly know the importance of protecting land.”

The MAEAP program encompasses three systems designed to help producers evaluate the environmental risks of their operation. Each system – Livestock, Farmstead, and Cropping – examines a different aspect of a farm as each has a different environmental impact. By participating in all three systems, producers can comprehensively evaluate their entire farming operation for potential environmental risks.

In conjunction with the MAEAP program, the Michigan Corn Growers Association offers \$200 scholarships to its members as well as \$75 rebates on MAEAP signs farmers place on their property to indicate that their farm is MAEAP certified.

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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.