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Michigan growers unite to protect and maintain Michigan Agriculture and address deficit issues

Nine groups work together to bring ideas, concerns to Stabenow and Debt Reduction Committee

LANSING, MI – With important federal budget issues being considered by a special Congressional committee, nine Michigan grower groups have joined forces to provide a united voice to help protect and maintain our state’s vital agricultural industry.

The Michigan growers came together through their organizations to express their ideas and concerns to address deficit hurdles while still maintaining important farming programs that greatly affect Michigan’s economy and job creation. Michigan Corn coordinated a meeting with other commodity groups to discuss and develop priorities for the next Farm Bill and presented their thoughts to U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow, chairwoman of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee.

“Michigan agriculture is a 70-plus million dollar industry and growing. It is the fastest-growing sector in our state and has the ability to grow and expand as we look to the future,” said Philip J. Korson II, President of the Cherry Marketing Institute. “The Farm Bill plays a critical role in the success of Michigan Agriculture in making sure that cutting-edge research remains in place to keep our farmers competitive in the global market.”

By incorporating a Michigan focus to the group’s summary, Michigan farmers were well represented when Stabenow presented her committee’s recommendations to the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction earlier this week. The 12-member “Super Committee,” which includes Michigan Congressmen Dave Camp and Fred Upton, is charged with developing long-term budget solutions by Nov. 23. Many agricultural programs will be examined by the committee as they look for ways to trim the federal deficit.

Jeff Sandborn, President of the Michigan Corn Growers Association, said that decisions made by the Super Committee will have a huge impact on Michigan’s food and farming industries.

“We know that difficult budget decisions must be made to ensure a stable economy in the future while still protecting essential farming programs,” said Sanborn, a corn grower from Portland. “It was imperative that the growers came together to voice our thoughts to help protect and maintain Michigan’s growing agricultural economy.”

“We appreciate the continued open-door relationship and communication with Sen. Stabenow and her willingness to hear the concerns of Michigan corn, cherry, apple, potato, bean, blueberry and soybean growers as well the Michigan Agri-Business and Michigan Horticultural organizations. She understands the importance of agriculture and how it benefits Michigan, our economy and our families.”

Michigan corn growers and their Ag partners understand that this is a critical time for the agricultural industry as the Farm Bill comes up for reauthorization in 2012. In a letter to Stabenow, the group presented their points on the Farm Bill, and suggested areas to target for possible cost-savings and reduction.

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The agriculture committees were the only federal committees to present a bipartisan, bicameral proposal to the Super Committee. Michigan Corn and the other commodity groups thanked Senate Chairwoman Stabenow and House Chairman Frank Lucas (R-OK) for their support, as well as Ranking Members, Sen. Pat Roberts (R-KS) and Rep. Collin Peterson (R-MN).

“We need to help agriculture businesses and farmers create American jobs and reduce the deficit, and this bipartisan agreement will allow us to do both,” said Sen. Stabenow. “In a time of so much bickering and inaction in Washington, the agriculture committees were able to come together to achieve bipartisan agreement to help cut tens of billions of dollars from the deficit. Agriculture is Michigan's second-largest industry and supports one-in-four Michigan jobs, so it's important for our state to have bipartisan agreement on how to make programs more efficient and keep agriculture growing.”

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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.