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Corn Growers Making a Difference

LANSING, MICH. – Each day as we use the hundreds of items that contain the world’s wonder crop, corn, we seldom think of the hard working farmer who made these products possible. From the fuel in our cars to the refreshingly cool soft drinks we enjoy, corn and the efforts of nearly 300,000 corn growers across the United States, touches our lives every day. This summer as we travel the countryside, passing the many corn fields on our way to county fairs and long-awaited vacations, let’s thank the American corn farmer.

Year after year, United States farmers battle the elements to plant, grow and harvest their crop. In Michigan, nearly 12,000 corn growers fight the battle. From the cold rains in the early spring to the oppressive heat of the blistering summer, corn growers are up before the sun every day working the soil, sowing their seeds and caring for their crop. Though many believe the practice of small family farming is a way of the past, family farmers still grow 90 percent of the country’s corn crop. It’s personal to them; they’re proud of their work and committed to agriculture, not just because it is important to their heritage and way of life, but because it is important to us all.

Today, corn farmers are growing five times as much corn than they did in the 1930’s – and they’re doing it on less land. Their ever increasing corn yields create record setting crops which are used for everything from livestock feed, to fuel, to food to fiber. We’re still feeding corn to our livestock, but we’re also using it to make bio-degradable plastics and a cleaner burning fuel for our vehicles. Corn-based products are cleaning up our world and reducing our dependence on foreign oil. But that’s not all corn growers are doing to contribute to the environment. Farmers have always been good stewards of the land and have made great progress in the way of sustainability; which includes good management programs and crop rotations. They’ve cut soil erosion by 44 percent and slashed fertilizer use by 36 percent in just a few short decades. In many ways, corn farmers are leading the world to a more sustainable future.

Across the country, agriculture is vital to the American way of life and to its economy. In Michigan, the agriculture industry is a leading supporter of the state’s economy adding more than \$71 billion annually. It is second only to manufacturing. Within the state’s agricultural sector, corn is the largest commodity crop. In a time when the entire country is idled in an economic recession, things are especially hard for Michigan residents. But Michigan’s corn farmers are not simply sitting back and hoping for the tide to change; they’re doing their part to get this state back on its feet. The 2007 corn crop was record setting; farmers harvested more than 290 million bushels. But their efforts went much farther than the grain mill. A Michigan State University report concluded that this production provided more than \$861 million to Michigan’s economy. The total impact of the crop through both direct and indirect routes stimulated the economy by more than one billion dollars. This figure is not only astounding, but monumental as Michigan’s families continue to struggle against foreclosures and lay-offs. With similar projected yields for the 2009 crop, corn growers are confident they can continue to provide not only a reliable food source, but a much needed economic boost for their state.

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As you pass a corn field on your way to the next baseball game or a day at the beach, take a second look. This passing countryside is a labor of love for the thousands of American farmers who pour hours of hard work, sweat and tears into the crop each year. They farm the same land that many of their families have for decades to provide a safe and abundant food supply for the nation. Their efforts are making a difference in our environment and our economy, and they deserve our gratitude.

Headquartered in Lansing, the CMPM is a legislatively-established statewide program that utilizes one-cent per bushel of Michigan corn sold. Investments are made in the areas of research, education, market development, and new uses in an effort to enhance the economic position of Michigan corn farmers. The CMPM works cooperatively with the MCGA, a grassroots-membership association representing the state's corn grower's political interests. For more information on the CMPM and the MCGA, visit the web site at www.micorn.org.

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