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Corn-based Bags Showcased to Michigan Tourists

LANSING, MICH. – The Corn Marketing Program of Michigan (CMPM) and Travel Michigan have renewed their commitment to partner for a second year to furnish all Michigan Welcome Centers with corn-based plastic bags for visitors to fill up with helpful Michigan travel information.

There are 14 Michigan Welcome Centers around the state ranging as far south as New Buffalo, and as far north as Ironwood. Each of these welcome centers serve as a tourist information hub for the entire state. Last year alone, nearly eight million visitors stopped at the Michigan Welcome Centers. By showcasing products we use everyday, such as plastic bags made from a homegrown crop like field corn, we can help promote Michigan's corn industry, while also providing a great informational piece to the state's visitors. Last year was the pilot year for the corn-based bags and the supply of 250,000 corn-based bags has already been depleted. Due to the positive results and huge success of the project, the CMPM and Travel Michigan have both decided to continue this program for an additional year.

For many years, the CMPM has helped fund research for new corn-based product technology. The production of corn-based products opens up new markets for corn. Opportunities are endless to replace petroleum-based plastics with corn-based plastics and move toward more environmentally-friendly products. Some corn-based products include plates, cutlery, reusable coffee and travel mugs, bedding, carpet and clothing.

“More than 80 billion pounds of plastics are produced in the United States every year, and these plastics have traditionally relied on petroleum-based feedstocks,” said Clark Gerstacker, CMPM president and National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) Corn Board member. “Essentially, anything that is currently made from petroleum can, in the future, be made from corn,” said Gerstacker. “However, this transition will not happen overnight. It takes time to build infrastructure, develop markets and educate consumers.”

The CMPM has worked to educate consumers about the benefits and availability of corn-based products. To raise awareness, CMPM board members and staff have traveled across the state attending trade shows, green fairs and grower events. With new ethanol usage and production expansion taking place in Michigan, along with all of the new uses being developed for corn, it is a very exciting time in the corn industry.

“Making corn-based plastic bags available at Michigan Welcome Centers is just one way the CMPM and Travel Michigan are educating the public about products made from corn,” said Gerstacker, who is also a corn grower from Midland. “Next time you're traveling in Michigan be sure to stop at a Welcome Center and pick up a bag.”

If you would like more information on corn-based products, contact the CMPM at 1-888-323-6601 or visit www.micorn.org.

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 Michigan Corn Growers Association (MCGA), a grassroots-membership association representing the state's corn farmer's political interests. For more information on the CMPM and the MCGA, visit www.micorn.org.

Travel Michigan, a division of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation, is the State of Michigan's official agency for the promotion of tourism. Travel Michigan markets the state's tourism industry and provides valuable visitor information services. For Michigan travel news and updates, go to michigan.org.