

## Promoting Michigan Agriculture Products

Agriculture is very important to Michigan and it touches us every day. It feeds us, employs us and keeps us healthy. The state's unique microclimates make it the second most agriculturally diverse state in the nation. Michigan farmers grow and raise more than 300 commodities. The agriculture industry employs more than 923,000 Michigan residents and contributes an estimated \$100.2 billion to the state's economy.

Michigan ranks in the top 10 in the nation for the production of 59 agriculture products and is number one in the nation for 14 products.

### Connecting Consumers to Agriculture

Are you ready.... to advocate for agriculture; to educate consumers about agriculture products grown and produced in Michigan; to help bridge the gap between producers and consumers? Many youth and adults do not know where their food comes from or what products are raised, grown or processed in Michigan or in their local communities, so here are some general ideas followed by more specific examples to consider:

- \* Take advantage of invitations to deliver educational programs, presentations, demonstrations or exhibits
- \* Design interactive activities or educational exhibits that showcase agriculture
- \* Develop key take-home messages that are short, to the point and age-appropriate
- \* Utilize signage on and off of the farm to help educate the public
- \* Don't forget about social media; it is a powerful tool

Michigan agriculture facts and our rank in national production can be found on the Michigan Ag Council website at <http://www.michiganagriculture.com/> or in the 2012 agriculture census data.

Visit [www.breakfastonthefarm.com](http://www.breakfastonthefarm.com) or [http://msue.anr.msu.edu/program/info/agricultural\\_literacy](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/program/info/agricultural_literacy) for more resources.

### Specific ideas from around the state and country...

- \* Create a "Walk through Michigan Ag Production" by drawing the outline of the state with flour or chalk and then place various products within the outline to indicate where they are produced and/or processed. For hands-on fun, walk around the state and talk about the major products and how they are produced.
- \* Plant crops in containers to demonstrate various stages of growth. Use educational signage and actual products or photos to show the end products.
- \* Display a variety of products that are grown in Michigan and have signage to indicate where they rank in national production.
- \* Display a variety of products made in Michigan such as Kellogg cereal, Better Made chips, Yoplait yogurt.
- \* Use the display of products and turn it into a game where the public tries to match the product with the city that it is processed or manufactured in. Alternatively, provide a map that can be taken home which shows the products and cities.
- \* Provide a "Taste of Michigan or Taste of Local Foods or a Taste of Agriculture" which could include a mixture of locally grown products and those from other parts of the state.
- \* Demonstrate the farm to table process for various commodities and/or have the public put photos that you provide in the correct order to show the process (milk from the cow to the cereal bowl and wheat from the seed to breakfast toast as examples).
- \* Display or show commodities and their byproducts which allow for a hands-on personal feel to be added to the educational display.
- \* Showcase household food brands that the consumer may not know are made in Michigan. Using common products found in the household pantry, refrigerator or freezer brings agriculture into the consumer's home.
- \* Establish relationships with local grocers and ask to set up a display in the store that features area farmers and agriculture products. Libraries, museums, ice cream and pizza parlors are also great public places to consider.
- \* Take a little bit of the farm to schools using displays and hands-on activities such as butter making or reading agriculture related books. Be creative & have fun!

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To contact an expert in your area, visit [people.msue.msu.edu](http://people.msue.msu.edu), or call 888-MSUE4MI (888-678-3364).

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