



# Michigan Food & Farming Systems-MIFFS

Bringing Farmers & Communities Together

# MIFFS MEMO

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MIFFS Members can request an electronic MIFFS Memo in color! Contact the MIFFS Office to get your copy!

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## Summer Events Gear up for 3rd Annual "Buy Fresh, Buy Local - Select Michigan Day"

**By: Emily Buckham**  
*Communications Specialist*

Lansing consumers and farmers' market patrons flocked to the east lawn of the Capitol on July 12, 2007 for a special "Buy Local Day" farmers' market celebrating Michigan farmers and agricultural products. More than 25 Michigan farmers and specialty food producers sold products including fruits and vegetables, honey, jams, baked goods, cooking sauces, maple syrup, wool products, fresh cut flowers, herbs, potted plants, and more.

The farmers' market, sponsored by the Michigan Department of Agriculture's (MDA) Select Michigan Program and the Michigan Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS), with funding from the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service and additional support from the Michigan Farmers Market Association and the Food Bank Council of Michigan, connected Michigan farmers to their state community. The event raised awareness and enthusiasm for local food and Michigan agriculture and geared up for the 3rd annual "Buy Fresh, Buy Local - Select Michigan Day" on September 13, 2007.

At last year's "Buy Fresh, Buy Local - Select Michigan Day" on the Capitol lawn, several vendors sold out or had



Customers flocked to the Capitol lawn on July 12 to sample and buy Michigan agricultural products and meet local farmers on "Buy Local Day."

to call in for reinforcements, and this July 12 market had the same "problem" as buyers congregated around the vendors before the market even officially started at 10:30 a.m. People lined up 10-deep, waiting to gobble up fresh raspberries and cherries or get the last bunches of fresh-cut flowers.

"You need to have more of these!" commented Lansing residents, and growers were

more than happy to oblige, asking "When is the next one?" as they packed up their wares and took down their tents at 2 p.m.

Michigan grows more than 200 agricultural commodities, generating \$60.1 billion yearly and making it the second-most diverse state in the nation in agricultural production.

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**MIFFS COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Chair: Howard Straub  
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**Director's Report: August 2007**

**The Locally Grown Season**

**By Elaine Brown**  
*Executive Director*

We may be missing some rain, but the first fresh tomatoes and sweet corn from the garden are here to enjoy.

Have you noticed the interest in locally grown, fresh food in the media lately? There have been articles about local food, farmersmarketsandcommunity supported agriculture (CSA) in the Detroit and Lansing newspapers, as well as articles in national magazines like *Time* and *Newsweek*.

The interest in locally grown food is also catching on in the grocery stores. Meijer now promotes "home grown" as the way to identify locally grown produce, and Sav-a-Lot and Spartan Stores are also doing more with identifying local products and using the Select Michigan logo. I have to believe we are making progress in the local food movement by helping citizens to find locally grown products and creating more demand for Michigan produce.

We have been doing our part to promote Michigan-grown food as well. This is the third year that "Buy Fresh, Buy Local – Select Michigan Day" has been designated by a Michigan House resolution. If you would like to know more about this and other events being held across the state or get ideas for hosting "Buy Fresh, Buy Local – Select Michigan Day" events in your community, please check out

our Web site, [www.miffs.org](http://www.miffs.org), for more details.

In addition to promoting local food, we are helping farmers learn strategies to improve their production and profitability through growing more Michigan fresh food. We are sponsoring a soil quality workshop and a grazing tour in August. Please check the calendar on the back page for details of each event. We will also be sponsoring 13 farmers to attend the USDA Risk Management Strategies for Beginning and Small Farmers and Ranchers Conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on September 12-15, 2007.

Through collaboration with MIFMA and Michigan State University, we are also helping farmers markets to be more successful. We are offering one-day rapid market assessments to help markets better understand their customers, appearance, impacts and the improvements they could make. To date, about a dozen assessments have been scheduled or implemented.

The cumulative results of these studies will also help us get a better picture of markets across the state. Plans are also in the works for the Farmers Market Workshop at the Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Expo in Grand Rapids on December 6, 2007.

MIFFS has also convened a group of partners to address the need to better network, share and leverage resources and skills about local food access.

This effort, called the



Michigan Local Food Network, has met twice this summer to develop a process for collaborating more effectively and for creating a dynamic Web site targeting consumers. This site will link consumers to information and resources about local food and create a "virtual farmers market" online. We will share our progress on this Americana Foundation sponsored effort as it proceeds. If you would like to learn more, please contact me or see page 11 of the Memo.

We welcome your ideas, time and talents to help us grow MIFFS and the local food system in Michigan. Contact me at [browne@msu.edu](mailto:browne@msu.edu) or call the office at 517-432-0712 any time to participate in this important work.

Keep your fingers crossed for more rain and take time to savor the beauty and bounty of your busy summer days.



**MIFFS' purpose is to advance and sustain food and farming systems in which agricultural productivity, environmental stewardship and profitability reinforce each other for the benefit of Michigan's rural and urban communities.**

# MIFFS Organization Updates

## MIFFS Membership Renewal

**By: Jana Nicol**  
*Administrative Assistant*

Did you forget about us? We hope *knot*!

We know you're probably all *tied* up with making summer plans, so MIFFS has been including a piece of twine in its membership renewal notices to tie around your finger as a reminder to renew your MIFFS membership.

At MIFFS, we're the *cord* that *binds* farmers and communities together by advancing and sustaining food and farming in which agricultural productivity, environmental stewardship and profitability reinforce each other for the benefit of Michigan's rural and urban communities.

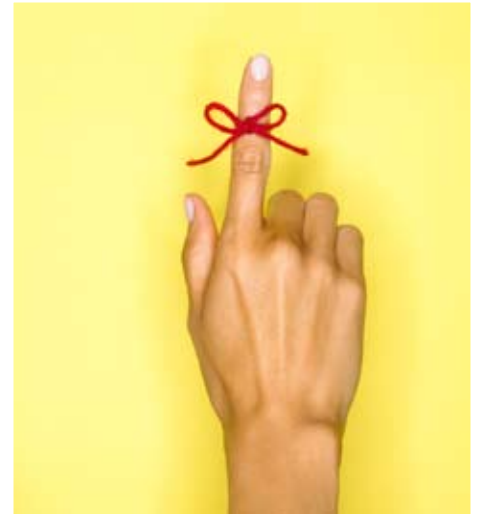
Throughout the Memo and online at [www.miffs.org](http://www.miffs.org), you can learn about the many projects that MIFFS has in progress, from promoting fresh local food through the

Michigan Farmers Market Association and "Buy Fresh, Buy Local – Select Michigan Day" to supporting small family and limited resource farmers and sustainable agriculture production practices.

These are our core strategies:

- **Assisting family farmers**, including limited resource (multicultural), underserved farmers
- **Growing market opportunities** by linking consumers, communities and farmers.
- **Supporting agricultural stewardship** and sustainable production.
- **Informing and influencing public policy** and institutional decisions that impact family farms.

To stay in the *loop*, you need to renew your membership. So don't *string* it along, renew your membership today before it *unravels*!



Don't forget to renew your MIFFS membership!

## Articles in this Memo:

### Director's Report:

- The Locally Grown Season – Elaine Brown, Executive Director

### MIFFS Organization Updates:

- MIFFS Membership Renewal – Jana Nicol, MIFFS Administrative Assistant
- MIFFS Council and Staff Build Membership Opportunities and Benefits – Emily Buckham, Communications Specialist
- MIFFS Communications Grow – Emily Buckham, Communications Specialist

### Assisting Family Farmers

- Urban Youth Down on the Farm – Morse Brown, Multicultural Farmers Program
- We Walked a Country Mile: A Day to Remember – Barbara Norman, Multicultural Farmers Program Assistant

### Growing Marketing Opportunities

- Swine Pasture Twilight Tour Highlights Natural Hogs – Jim Krenek, Market Development Director
- Michigan Farmers Markets Accept EBT Bridge Cards – Dru Montri, MIFMA Project Manager

### Supporting Agricultural Stewardship

- Mid-Michigan Organic Tour Explores Transition, Production and Marketing for Organic Products – Jim Krenek, Market Development Director
- Encouraging Managed Grazing in Michigan – Grazing Tour

### Informing and Influencing Public Policy

- Food Donations Provide a Benefit to

your Business and to Michigan Families – Kim Harkness, Food Bank Council of Michigan

- MIFFS Works to Create a Statewide "Virtual Farmers' Market" – Emily Buckham, Communications Specialist
- Summer Events Gear up for 3rd Annual "Buy Fresh, Buy Local - Select Michigan Day" – Emily Buckham, Communications Specialist

### Events and Opportunities

- 2008 Michigan Family Farms Conference
- Building Healthy Soils in Vegetable and Grain Systems Workshop

### MIFFS Members

### Donors and Sponsors

### Calendar of Events

A few of these articles are featured on the following pages to give you a glimpse of what MIFFS does. To read all of these articles, join MIFFS now by visiting [www.miffs.org/join.asp](http://www.miffs.org/join.asp). Or, if you're already a MIFFS member, contact the MIFFS Office at (517) 432-0712 or email [miffs@msu.edu](mailto:miffs@msu.edu) to get an electronic copy of the Memo in color!

## We Walked a Country Mile: Day to Remember



Barbara Norman, third from left, picks blueberries with other growers and friends during the Annual Friends and Family Farms Field Day.



Doc Anderson receives an award for his many contributions to his community and fellow farmers.

### Annual Friends and Family Farms Field Day another success!

**By: Barbara Norman**  
*Multicultural Farmers Program Assistant*

In the beauty of the Covert landscape, which is located in Southwestern Michigan, farmers, ranchers, growers, government agencies, organizations and community folk gathered for the Annual Friends and Family Farms Field Day at Barbara Norman's farm. The weather proved to be superb even for blueberry picking on yet another annual field day.

This event was sponsored by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Risk Management Agency, USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Michigan Food and Farming Systems (MIFFS), The Farm Research Cooperative (FRC) and Southern Michigan Agricultural Research Team (SMART).

Field Day 2007, which began nearly a decade ago and has been growing since, is the

brain work of Sandra Penn, USDA NRCS, and Barbara James Norman, a Covert blueberry farmer. It was conceived out of the need for a more cohesive and informative relationship between USDA, other government agencies and service organizations, geared toward and with small and limited resource producers and all small rural and urban growers.

"This is a great opportunity for all of us to build bridges across the ag community," said Mike Alston, USDA RMA Regional Director from Springfield, Illinois who welcomed the group to the event.

A widely diverse group of approximately 75 people from across the state gathered in the pear orchard on the old Simmons farm (which currently belongs to the third generation tenant, Barbara Norman) to meet, greet, share, network, and more importantly, bond in this agricultural adventure toward growing safe healthy foods while being economically viable.

Information was shared as many agencies were represented, including USDA RMA, FSA and NRCS, Michigan State University, and an added plus Inter-Care Health, who discussed how important it is for farmers to take care of themselves and their farm workers.

At this meeting, Sandra Penn honored Doc J. Anderson, long-time blueberry farmer and

mentor, with a plaque commemorating all of his contributions to the farming community in addition to his excellence in production and environmental stewardship.

Entomologist, Dr. Rufus Isaacs of MSU, was the teacher of the day with a presentation on Beneficial Insects and Native Bees on Michigan Farmland. Rufus also gave a hands-on lesson on aphids during a mile morning walk thru the back 40 blueberry fields at Barbara's farm.

Participants later enjoyed an awesome lunch of Mexican cuisine prepared by local farmers. Farmer extraordinaire she may be, but for those in attendance, we know that Barbara is not a big pot coffee maker. The afternoon was long, with the traditional u-pick trip to the blueberry field at the Anderson Blueberry Farms, hosted by Doc J. Anderson and his son, Richard Anderson.

A stop at Arellanos Farm Market and tour of LaRancheria Mexican store/deli were the last stops on the bus trip, which was provided by Covert Public Schools (a special thanks to driver Jerome O'Bryant). As the group separated, the farm tours continued at FRC/SARE Civic Center Senior Project in Covert, Alcazar Farms and Lee Arboreal Eater's Guild in Bangor.

The enthusiasm level was high, and the day will be long remembered. Many thanks go to Elaine Brown and the staff of MIFFS, Dr. LeRoy Ray, Jr. of FRC and staff, Sandra Penn, USDA NRCS and State Conservationist, Garry Lee, all other USDA Agencies and everyone one who participated, helped and attended to make this day possible and a big success!

Thank You  
Barbara Norman

## 2008 Michigan Family Farms Conference



Dr. Leroy Ray, FRC, and Elaine Brown, MIFFS, welcome participants to the 2007 MFFC.

Mark your calendars now for the 2008 Michigan Family Farms Conference (MFFC) in mid-January! The planning committee is still finalizing a date and will distribute information as soon as it is available, so keep checking your email and mailbox!

The conference, now in its fifth year, will be held again at Lakeview High School in Battle Creek.

The Farm Research Cooperative (FRC) in partnership with the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) is reaching out to small-scale and limited resource farmers in even more ways this year. Topics this year include farm management, conservation

planning, alternative energy, marketing and Spanish-speaking tracks, as well as day-long sessions on community-supported agriculture and hoophouse production.

Last year's conference was a great success, attracting more than 200 participants. The MFFC Planning Committee is working hard to make the 2008 conference even more informative and successful.

Sponsors and supporters this year to date include FRC, USDA RMA, MIFFS, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Potawatomi Resource, Conservation and Development Council.

Visit the MIFFS Web site at [www.miffs.org](http://www.miffs.org) for more information on the conference.

## Select Michigan Day Events (continued)

*Continued from page 1*

Buying locally delivers a fresher and tastier product to consumers and connects them to their local farmers. These local purchases help strengthen local growers, communities and the economy. In fact, if every Michigan household spent just \$10 per week on Michigan-produced food, it would generate nearly \$40 million each and every week.

"Michigan has more than 160 community farmers' markets across the state, and these markets are a great source of fresh, local food and agriculture products," said MIFFS Executive Director, Elaine Brown. "Thanks to community farmers' markets, more than 220 on-farm markets and the easy access to fresh local foods they provide, more and more people are realizing the taste, health and economic benefits of buying local. If you enjoyed today's market, make sure to visit your local farmers' market to purchase more great

Michigan products."

The Michigan Farmers Market Association offers a comprehensive list of farmers markets around the state at [www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu](http://www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu). Visit today to find local markets in your community or to get more information about how to sell and buy at farmers markets. The Michigan Department of Agriculture also lists community farmers' markets, local on-farm markets and u-pick establishments at [www.michigan.gov/mda-upick](http://www.michigan.gov/mda-upick).

This event is the first of four special farmers' markets planned for this year promoting the benefits of local food. Special markets will also be held August 22 at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit; August 22-September 3, during the 13 days of the Michigan State Fair at the fairgrounds in Detroit; and September 13, "Buy Fresh, Buy Local - Select Michigan Day" at the State Capitol in Lansing. MDA is also working to have September 9-15, 2007 declared



Some of the products for sale included sweet corn, cucumbers, squash, greens, raspberries, cherries, honey, sauces, preserves and baked goods. Wool products, fresh-cut flowers and potted plants were also available.

"Select Michigan Week."

For more information about the upcoming events, visit [www.miffs.org](http://www.miffs.org).

If you are a vendor and would like to sell your Michigan

products at one of the special markets listed above, contact Jeanne Lipe, MDA, at [lipej@michigan.gov](mailto:lipej@michigan.gov) or (517) 373-9790. We'd love to see you there!

# Calendar of Events

## **August 22, 2007:**

“Select Michigan Farmers’ Market,” Henry Ford Hospital, Grand Blvd Campus, Detroit, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Read more on page 1 or at [www.miffs.org](http://www.miffs.org).

## **August 22 - September 3, 2007:**

“Michigan State Fair Blue Ribbon Farmers’ Market,” Michigan State Fairgrounds, Detroit, MI. 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Read more on page 1 or at [www.miffs.org](http://www.miffs.org).

## **August 25, 2007:**

“Soil Quality and Composting to Enhance Soil Quality Workshop,” 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Alcaraz Farm, Bangor, MI. Visit [www.miffs.org/events.asp](http://www.miffs.org/events.asp) to read more or view the flyer.

## **August 29, 2007:**

“Marketing Locally Grown Food” tour, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.. Tour begins at MSU Livestock Pavilion, East Lansing, MI with farm tours throughout Ingham County. Contact Ingham County MSU Extension at 517-676-7207 for more information.

## **August 29-30, 2007:**

“Soil Building Workshop,” hosted by MSU and Morgan Composting, Sears, MI.

## **August 30, 2007:**

“Encouraging Managed Grazing in Michigan – Grazing Tour,” W.K. Kellogg Biological Station (KBS) Dairy Center, Hickory Corners, MI.

## **September 13, 2007:**

3rd annual “Buy Fresh, Buy Local - Select Michigan Day”, Capitol lawn, Lansing, MI. Read more on page 1 or at [www.miffs.org](http://www.miffs.org).

## **November 2, 2007:**

“MSU Product Center Annual Conference: Growing Your Business,” 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Kellogg Center, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI. Visit [www.productcenter.msu.edu](http://www.productcenter.msu.edu) to learn more.

## **December 4-6, 2007:**

“Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Expo,” DeVos Place Convention Center, Grand Rapids, MI. Visit [www.glexpo.com](http://www.glexpo.com) to learn more.

## **December 7-8 and Januar 11-12, 2007:**

“Farm it Forward Workshop,” for farmers looking to transition the family farm to the next generation of children or partners, located in Birch Run, MI. For more information, call Dennis Stein at (989) 672-3570.

## **Mid-January, 2008:**

5th Annual Michigan Family Farms Conference, Lakeview High School, Battle Creek, MI. Stay tuned to [www.miffs.org](http://www.miffs.org) for more details.

## **January 26, 2008:**

Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference, Grayling, MI.

**Visit [www.miffs.org](http://www.miffs.org) for an continuously updated list of events  
or submit ideas to [miffs@msu.edu](mailto:miffs@msu.edu).**