



Michigan Food & Farming Systems-MIFFS

Bringing Farmers & Communities Together

MIFFS MEMO

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Save the Date: Michigan Family Farms Conference on January 17, 2009

By: Emily Beutel

Communications Specialist

Get out your red ink pens now and save the date for the sixth annual Michigan Family Farms Conference on Saturday, January 17, 2009 at Lakeview High School in Battle Creek, Michigan!

This year's theme, "New Opportunities, Sustaining Local Agriculture for the Future", focuses on issues facing limited resource farmers and opportunities to make family farms more sustainable and viable for the future.

In addition to learning sustainable production practices, like growing certified organic, using soils and cover crops and managing a healthy (and profitable) woodlot, this year's educational sessions will explore everything from beekeeping to alternative energy and savings to insurance products, loans and more. And if you missed recent Farm to School or Farm Bill opportunities meetings and workshops, this conference features several breakouts on how to tap into these great opportunities for Michigan farmers and local food. Several of these sessions, as well as the keynote address, will also feature Spanish translations using listening equipment.

Wayne Keith, the Alabama farmer, innovator and energy guru whose wood-burning



Wayne Keith, this year's keynote speaker, runs his farm "off the grid." His famous wood-burning pickup truck gets about 8 miles per pound of biomass.

pickup truck sheds new light on the future of biofuels, will be back this year as our keynote speaker to share his knowledge and experience on saving energy and farming off the grid. His session presentation last year drew quite a crowd so we're excited to have him come back north for this year's conference to share his energy expertise and know-how with every participant.

"The history, success and diversity of this conference are truly something to celebrate," said Elaine Brown, MIFFS Executive Director. "So many communities, ideas and experiences all coming together to learn and network like this is a testament to the good work all of the partners are doing to make this possible."

Partners and sponsors to date



include the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA), the Farm Research Cooperative, Michigan Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS), USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), USDA Rural Development (RD), Potawatomi Resource Conservation & Development Council (RC&D),

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Join MIFFS to become a Member and receive the full issue of the MIFFS Memo by mail!



MIFFS COUNCIL MEMBERS

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Director's Report: Fall 2008

The Harvest Season

By: Elaine Brown
Executive Director

The leaves are crunching under foot, sunny days and frosty nights are becoming the norm as darkness settles in earlier each night, all sure signs of fall, that time of planting bulbs with visions of spring flowers and getting fields, gardens and equipment ready for the cold weather to come.

A big thank you to all who attended, sponsored and in any way contributed to the success of our 10th Anniversary Benefit Celebration! Thanks to your generosity, MIFFS now has several thousand more dollars to continue its important work serving Michigan farmers and growing local food systems. The MIFFS Council and Staff have agreed to make it an even better event next year for our members, partners, sponsors and supporters.

Additionally, we received a USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program grant that will run for 15 months to help provide more access to fresh fruits and vegetables by assisting more farmers markets in getting electronic benefit transfer (EBT). Dru Montri will be leading that project on behalf of the Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) and MIFFS.

We are excited about collaborating with Michigan State University Extension, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and sponsors of the Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Expo (Expo) to present a program

on December 9 that will highlight state efforts to get more local food into the retail and wholesale market. This session will be begin with an overview presentation by Dr. Mike Hamm and continue with a panel discussion of different aspects of the local food value chain as well as the lessons learned about linking grower and buyers.

We will host a second "Meet the Buyers" event that day as well. We also worked with a group to bring a session on good handling and harvesting practices and third party certification to the Expo on Dec. 11. These programs will help us link with more farmers who are interested in new markets and certification at day long workshops planned for early 2009. Contact us for more details or see page 8.

Plans are nearly complete for the 2009 Michigan Family Farms Conference at Lakeview High School in Battle Creek on Saturday, January 17, 2009. Be sure to mark your calendar for this great day of learning and networking with farmers, friends, exhibitors and agricultural agency representatives. Read more about it on page 1.

The MIFFS Council Nominating Committee is seeking members interested in serving on the MIFFS Council. If you are interested in learning more, please contact Joe Colyn, Nominating Committee Chair, at joe.colyn@juno.com or myself for more information. We have a great Council, and we are always



looking for new folks to serve on it or committees, such as Ag Stewardship or Event Planning. We seek broad knowledge and experience from farmers through consumers who have a passion for local food systems.

It is a busy time of year, and we ask you to please take a minute to consider a donation to support MIFFS' good works and renew your membership to keep up with our food system activities. 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 or call the office at (517) 432-0712 any time to participate in this important work.

As we approach the holiday season, MIFFS Council and Staff wish you and your family a blessed Thanksgiving, joyful time with family and friends and a prosperous and Happy New Year! Please remember those whose families are far away in this special time of year and share what you can with those most in need. May 2009 be a year of many blessing for all!



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 Benefit Celebration a Success!

By: Lucy Hartlove
MIFFS Council Member

MIFFS celebrated 10 years of supporting local food systems, family farms and sustainable agriculture with a benefit reception at the Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing. It was held on September 18, 2008 in conjunction with the very successful 4th annual "Buy Fresh, Buy Local – Select Michigan Day".

Heavy hors d'oeuvres made from Michigan-grown and produced foods were served by Morton's Fine Catering. Pared with these delicious foods were local beer from the Michigan Brewing Company in Webberville and wine from Black Star Farms in Suttons Bay. Background music was provided by local musician, Chris Dorman.

Guests had a wonderful time sampling the food and drink while wandering through the several floors of exhibits of the museum, which was a perfect venue for the event as it embodies our state's rich history and gave everyone a chance to visit and network as they explored. Docents dressed in period costume were available to answer questions and display their "wares".

Two long-time friends of MIFFS were on hand to present and talk about the foundation of MIFFS and its history of good work. Oran Hesterman, President and Chief Executive Officer of Fair Food Foundation in Ann



Lucinda and Oran Hesterman, Elaine Brown and Ruth Fisk pause for a snapshot.

Arbor and John Fisk, Executive Director of the Wallace Center at Winrock International, spoke on MIFFS roles in the past, present and future for sustainable agriculture and food systems in Michigan.

From its start as a W.K. Kellogg Foundation Integrated Farming Systems project grant in the early 1990's to its foundation as an organization in 1998 to its present day, MIFFS has grown and thrived into one of the most recognized organizations in the state for sustainable agriculture and local food systems.

Howard Straub, MIFFS Council President,



Thanks to our sponsors and Morton's Fine Catering, Black Star Farms and the Michigan Brewing Company for great food and beverages!

and Elaine Brown, MIFFS Executive Director, reviewed the efforts and accomplishments of MIFFS, as well as recognizing those who have helped MIFFS through the years, like the minds behind its creation and its original and current council members and staff.

Our sincerest thanks to our sponsors for this event: Meijer, GreenStone Farm Credit Services, Morse Marketing Connections, LLC, the Michigan State University (MSU) Product Center for Agriculture and Natural Resources, the Wallace Center at Winrock International, the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee, Morton's Fine Catering, Black Star Farms, the Michigan Brewing Company, the Michigan Department of Agriculture, Chris Dorman, Doug Buhler of the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station, Tom Coon of MSU Extension, and Frank Fear.

Proceeds from the benefit will help build MIFFS' programs and future sustainability. If you were unable to attend, you missed a great time! But stay tuned for details on future events and activities!

Also, please consider making a donation to MIFFS to help us continue our good work for the future. Visit www.miffs.org/join.asp, where you can donate using your debit or credit card, or contact MIFFS at (517) 432-0712 for more information.

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Supporting Agricultural Stewardship

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- Michigan Fresh Unprocessed Whole Milk Workgroup Launches Web site

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Getting to Know MIFFS

Dr. LeRoy Ray, Founder and Executive Director of the Farm Research Cooperative in Bloomingdale, has been involved with MIFFS over the years as a member, Council member and partner. His knowledge and work with limited resource farmers in southwest Michigan and all across the state have made him a very important figure in Michigan agriculture and a great partner to MIFFS.

Tell us a little bit about the Farm Research Cooperative and what you do there.

“We Grow Scientists.” That’s our motto. The Farm Research Cooperative (FRC) covers 24 acres, which we use to conduct science camps and teach young children how to grow vegetable crops, make compost and care for horses. We sell kids a garden plot on a land contract. At the end of the year, we buy back the land, and they make a profit. Students harvest what they have produced, make oral reports without notes, turn in their written findings, hold the shovel (part of the ceremony) and graduate from FRC University. We invite friends and family to a big dinner feast, serving the food produced by our young student scientists.

FRC grew from more than a half century (55 years!) of testing hands-on science instructional modules designed to increase the number of African Americans with careers in science.

The mission of FRC is to create a culture with children that encourages, teaches and promotes the serious study of biology, chemistry, math and related sciences; hence our motto. In addition to intensive research studies and growing scientists, we encourage the protection of our earth’s resources.

How did you first get connected with MIFFS as a member and partner?

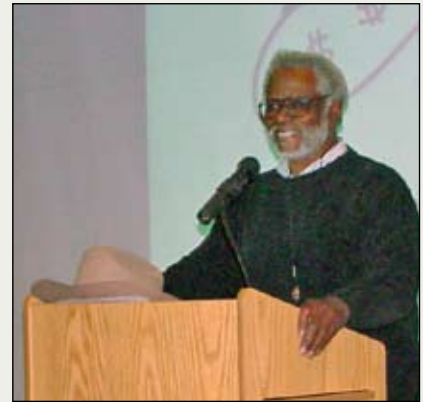
I met Tom Guthrie on a bus going to an agriculture conference. Tom and I spent a week together at the Glynwood Center in Cold Springs, NY. We discussed the challenges and problems of small farmers. Tom invited me to a MIFFS meeting, and we joined in a venture to promote events that eventually led to the Michigan Family Farms Conference.

During our early years especially, there were many difficulties to overcome. Tom understood the historical evidence that minorities had experienced in farming and keeping their land and knew that a group of African American farmers had filed suit against USDA for discrimination practices aimed at them. Some five years later, Mike Alston of the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) said he would support this annual conference for limited resource farmers, and that’s how we got to putting together the first annual Michigan Family Farms Conference.

The Michigan Family Farms Conference has grown significantly in the past few years. What makes it such a great and successful conference?

For FRC and MIFFS to build a culture of correction, we realized that a group would have more positive impact to improve conditions and reduce the negative institutionalized practices that prevent equal assistance and services for limited resource farmers. My work with MIFFS forms a partnership with agencies and government people who have the information and experience to correct these concerns and take this information to the small minority farmers, thus providing the instruction and assistance these farmers needed to succeed.

We have succeeded in this effort because of the collective commitment to get these small farmers the information and resources they need, all in this one place at this great conference.



Assisting Family Farmers

Sharing the Wealth: Farmer Mentoring

By: Morse Brown
*Multicultural Farmers
Program Manager*

On one of my busy days visiting farms, I noticed something special. It is the kind of thing that I have noticed among farmers during my many years of providing my limited expertise to farmers. I have been privileged to work with many farmers on many farms as a conservationist and as an agricultural Extension educator over my 40 plus years in this business. It was watching these farmers share their experiences in the business of farming this summer that caught my attention.

I really became aware of it on one of my visits to the Larry Logwood farm in Milan, Michigan. Larry grew up on the farm with his dad and family and now farms 80 acres in Milan, where he is returning to farming after a number of years being away where he worked for Federal Mogul Mather Seal in Milan and served as Pastor of Goodwill Church of God In Christ in Monroe. He had been planning to return to farming for some time on a part time basis and finally did when he had to leave the job at Federal Mogul due to a disability.



Willie and Joan Manning of Manning Farm Group and Leslie Huffman of Vandalia Gardens Farm share experiences at the Vandalia Garden Farm in Detroit.

On the day I visited his farm, I noticed the way he was sharing his knowledge of farming with his son and nephew. He was showing them how to harvest sweet potatoes. This was a very interesting demonstration watching young men who had no experience in farming learn from a father who grew up on the farm but who had been away. The whole family is now passionate about getting back into the farming business.

On another farm visit, I witnessed more sharing of knowledge from one farmer to another. I visited the Vandalia

Gardens Farm in Detroit run by Leslie Huffman and Cornelius Williams. Before I made my visit, I happened to be having a phone conversation with Joanne Manning who, along with her husband Willie, own 10 acres in Belleville and are just getting into farming.

I mentioned to Joanne that I was about to make a visit to Vandalia Gardens Farm in Detroit, and she wondered if Cornelius and Leslie would mind if she and her husband Willie came along. I checked with Cornelius and shortly thereafter, the four of us were at the corner of



Larry Cranford, Elder Larry Logwood and nephew Bobby Logwood harvest sweet potatoes at the Logwood farm.

McClellan and Chapin in Detroit where Cornelius and Leslie's farm is located. Cornelius was able to show Joanne and Willie his "raised bed" concept of urban farming and talked about the advantages of using this system.

It was a wonderful experience for me to watch these farmers learn from each other. Those of us who have worked in agriculture have know for a long time that farmers sharing their knowledge with each other is one of the best ways to learn how to be a successful in this business. This kind of mentoring makes for a great network of experience and information.

To get involved and connected in this program, visit the MIFFS Web site at www.miffs.org or contact Morse Brown at (269) 208-1443 or brownmo@msu.edu.

Michigan Family Farms Conference (continued)

Continued from page 1

Michigan State University Extension, and the Calhoun and Kalamazoo Conservation Districts.

Session speakers offer unique perspectives and experience on each topic. Each session is led by an experienced individual or panel, representing farms, agencies and organizations from all across the state. These individuals are the "experts" in the field and have information, connections and

resources to share. Speakers are also accompanied by a farmer who knows the ins and outs of each topic, who is working and living it. This combination offers a unique and comprehensive mix of technical, practical and hands-on experience and information.

To integrate the whole family into this conference, youth sessions will feature fun and educational activities on agriculture and natural resources, as well as an afternoon trip to Binder Park Zoo to visit with the animals in their

winter environments.

Full conference brochures and online registration will be available soon at www.miffs.org/mffc where you can also read more about the conference and successes of past years.

For more information, contact the MIFFS Office at (517) 432-0712 or miffs@msu.edu or Barbara Norman at (269) 208-4588 or Morse Brown at (269) 208-1443. Save the date, and don't miss out on this great conference!



Wayne Keith's truck runs on scrap wood from his saw mill in Alabama.

Growing Marketing Opportunities

MIFMA Receives USDA Grant for Farmers Markets EBT Work

By: Dru Montri
MIFMA Manager

Even more Michigan residents will have access to fresh, local food at farmers markets, thanks to the Michigan Farmers Market Association (MIFMA) who just received a USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program grant to continue its work with accepting Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) at farmers markets.

The USDA recently announced 85 grants totaling more than \$3.4 million directed by the new farm bill to spread the use of farmers markets, and 18 of the 85 grants promote EBT to help low-income consumers buy locally-grown fresh fruits and vegetables. Michigan Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS), the host organization for MIFMA operations, received \$44,725 to improve low-income consumers' access to and utilization of

farmers markets and to expand the customer base and enhance sales volume of Michigan farmers who sell at markets.

"Our vision is to place farmers markets at the forefront of the local food movement and ensure all residents have access to healthy, locally grown food," said Dru Montri, MIFMA Project Manager. "This grant will help us get more fresh fruits and vegetables to the residents and families who need it most by helping more farmers markets and local vendors accept food stamps and offer EBT at their markets."

This project, which will run from October 2008 to December 2009, will address the critical issue of market access for low-income households, children and seniors through a statewide working group partnership and will develop consumer education strategies for nutrition, food preparation and new products

at the Michigan farmers markets that currently accept food stamps.

In 2006, only three of Michigan's 150 farmers markets were authorized and equipped to accept Bridge Cards, but through MIFMA's work in 2007, 11 markets got on board with EBT. This summer, 18 of the Michigan's 185 farmers markets were accepting Bridge Cards, and with this project, that number will only go up.

Because of this work and dedication to Michigan farmers, markets and families, MIFMA and its partnering organizations

were awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by the USDA in February 2008 to recognize these efforts to increase the number of farmers markets serving Michigan Bridge Card clients.

"Today, more than \$1.3 billion in federal food assistance benefits are spent annually," said Montri. This growth represents both a need and an opportunity, she said. Michigan farmers markets need to increase their accessibility to low-income individuals through the acceptance of alternative purchasing methods. This increased access is also an opportunity to enhance sales volume for Michigan farmers while providing access to fresh fruits and vegetables to low-income households.

For more information about MIFFS or MIFMA, visit www.miffs.org or www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu.



Informing and Influencing Public Policy

Michigan Fresh Unprocessed Whole Milk Workgroup Web Site

The Michigan Fresh Unprocessed Whole (FUW) Milk Workgroup has launched its new Web site as a public display of the group's progress in addressing the question, "Where do we want to be in 3 to 5 years on access to fresh unprocessed whole milk?"

The Michigan FUW Milk Workgroup was established in January 2007 and represents an array of perspectives relative to the issues at hand and the group's purpose. Members include consumers who seek to ensure access to raw milk, producers who want to provide a healthy source of raw milk, a "Grade A" milk industry representative, and food safety regulators who are looking to balance access and choice issues with protection of the food supply. Michigan Food & Farming Systems (MIFFS) and Michigan State University (MSU) serve as facilitators and resource providers to guide the dialogue and deliberations of the Workgroup.

Since its inception, the Workgroup has met monthly to discuss topics and questions and

share resources and expertise. Although the product is generally referred to as "raw milk," the Workgroup established that the product they would be discussing would be called "fresh unprocessed whole milk." The goal of the Michigan FUW Milk Workgroup is to establish clear direction with clear public policy regarding access to fresh unprocessed whole milk and adjusting the law accordingly, if needed.

To address the FUW milk issue, the Workgroup developed a set of topics and questions to allow for an orderly and thorough discussion. The list includes: History of FUW Milk; Benefits and Values; Risks; Risk and Benefit Management; Liability; Benefit and Risk Choices; Current Government Roles; Government Policy Options; and Consumer Choice Options.

Under each topic, a set of questions was developed to organize the process. As the Workgroup addresses each topic, consensus summaries will be added to the Web site.

Following discussions of these topics and questions, the Workgroup will address other considerations. It is expected that work will continue over the next 12 to 18 months and, because it is a work in progress, the Workgroup agrees that some of the topics and questions may be modified. Read about the Michigan FUW Milk Workgroup and see their discussion summaries at www.miffs.org/Mifuwilk.

"Now folks who are interested in fresh unprocessed whole milk can follow the Workgroup's progress and provide feedback," said Elaine Brown, MIFFS Executive Director, who serves as the Workgroup facilitator.

The Workgroup welcomes feedback via e-mail regarding the topics and questions, process, and other resources and expertise that will aid the discussion. Feedback will be sent to the Workgroup for consideration. If you believe there are topics missing from this Workgroup task, please suggest them by sending feedback to fuwilk@gmail.com

Thank you MIFFS Donors and Sponsors

Thank you to the many people who generously donate their time and talents to support our programs and activities. MIFFS could not achieve our mission without your support.

MIFFS Funders and Partners for 2008:

USDA Risk Management Agency	Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA)	Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service	Michigan State University (MSU) Extension	Americana Foundation
USDA Farm Service Agency	MSU College of Agriculture and Natural Resources	W.K. Kellogg Foundation
USDA Rural Development	MSU Department of Community,	Wallace Center at Winrock International
USDA Farmers Market Promotion Program		Farm Research Cooperative
		West Michigan Strategic Alliance

MIFFS Activities Sponsors since November 2007:

Meijer	Fluid	Black Star Farms
GreenStone Farm Credit Services	Originz, LLC	Michigan Brewing Company
Wallace Center at Winrock International	MDA Select Michigan Program	Morton's Fine Catering
C.S. Mott Chair of Sustainable Agriculture at MSU	National Agricultural Statistics Service (Michigan)	Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee
Whole Foods Market	Potawatomi RC&D	Doug Buhler, Michigan Ag Experiment Station
Nowlin Chair for Consumer Responsive Agriculture - MSU	Cornerstone Ag, LLC	Tom Coon, MSU Extension
Michigan Farm Bureau	Eastern Market Corporation	Chris Dorman
Morse Marketing Connections, LLC	Michigan State University Student Organic Farm	Frank Fear

MIFFS Donors since November 2007:

Jon and Elaine Bartholic, Laingsburg	Michael DiRamio, Ann Arbor	Jim Krenek, Grand Ledge	Dr. LeRoy Ray, Farm Research Cooperative, Bloomingdale
Chad and Emily Beutel, Kalamazoo	Larry Dyer, Brimley	John Malcomson, Davison	Scott Reynolds, Vermontville
Jim Bingen, Lansing	Jason Fligger, Detroit	Adam and Dru Montri, Bath	Estella Rodriguez, South Haven
Morse and Arma Brown, Livonia	June Grabemeyer, Lansing	Ivan Morely, Standish	George Shetler, Kalkaska
Victoria Campbell-Arvai, Lansing	Nancy Guthrie, Sunshine Prairie Farms, Delton	Jana Nicol, Lansing	Susan Smalley, Lansing
Scott and Jill Corrin, Grand Ledge	Lucy Hartlove, Lansing	Terri Novak, Flushing	Ron Steiner, Hart
Keith Creagh, Williamston	Oran Hesterman, Ann Arbor	Lori and Floyd Phalen, Hastings	Howard Straub, St. Johns
	Don Iott, Nottawa Fruit Farm, Sturgis	Bob and Susan Pigg, Okemos	Wendy Wieland, Boyne City
	Thomas Kalchik, East Lansing	Celeste Reed, Williamston	

MIFFS Members who have joined or renewed since August 2008:

Dwight Bennett, Whittaker	Catherine Ferguson Academy, Detroit	Marty Gerencer, Morse Marketing Connections, North Muskegon	Barbara Norman, Covert
Kevin Berman, Clarkston	Dorothy Coleman, Detroit	Phillip and Tia Gipson, Watervliet	Terri Novak, Flushing
Bill Bierman, Riga	Sarah Crane, Chelsea	Bruce Green, Vandalia	Phillip Seitz, Hale
Gayle Branch, BMP Farms, Inc., Bangor	Farmers Egg Cooperative, Charlotte	Carol Ingall, Haslett	Art Smith, Bloomingdale
Jane Bush, Appleschram Orchards, Charlotte	John and Liam Fisk, Okemos	Christine Lietzau, Lansing	Howard Straub, St. Johns
			George Wright, H & W Farms, LLC, Belding

Calendar of Events

November 13, 2008:

2nd Annual MSU Product Center's "Making It In Michigan Conference", Lansing Center, Lansing. Learn more at www.makingitinmichigan.msu.edu.

December 9-11, 2008:

Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Expo, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Visit www.glexpo.com to learn more.

December 9, 2008:

"Meet the Buyers" Event at the Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Expo, Grand Rapids, Michigan

December 10, 2008:

Farmers Market Program at the Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market Expo. Visit www.glexpo.com to see the program.

December 10-12, 2008:

Michigan Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) Annual Meeting, Soaring Eagle Casino and Resort, Mount Pleasant, MI. Learn more at www.macd.org.

January 17, 2009:

6th Annual Michigan Family Farms Conference, Lakeview High School, Battle Creek, MI. Read more on page 1 or visit www.miffs.org/mffc.asp

January 28, 2009:

Agriculture's Conference on the Environment (ACE Conference), Lansing Center, Lansing, MI. Learn more on page 12 or visit www.maeap.org.

January 31, 2009:

Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference, Grayling High School, Grayling, MI. Learn more on page 11 or visit www.msue.msu.edu/antrim

January 28, 2009:

Agriculture's Conference on the Environment (ACE Conference), Lansing Center, Lansing, MI. Learn more on page 12 or visit www.maeap.org.

March 6-14, 2009:

Agriculture and Natural Resources Week at Michigan State University. Visit www.canr.msu.edu/anrweek for more information.

March 10, 2009:

Farmers Market Boot Camp. Stay tuned to www.farmersmarkets.msu.edu for more information.

Visit www.miffs.org for a continuously updated list of events or submit ideas to miffs@msu.edu.

