



MICHIGAN SOYBEAN
PROMOTION COMMITTEE

a new release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Gail R. Frahm,
Executive Director
gfracm@michigansoybean.org
989.652.3294

MICHIGAN FARMERS ENGAGE WITH CONSUMERS

Twenty-nine Michigan farmers and industry leaders recently participated in Engage, a program designed to enhance the image of livestock farmers through positive, proactive communication at the local level with consumers. The program trained these spokespeople to speak to local audiences and opinion leaders, as well as engage with news media to deliver positive messages about how important today's agriculture is to our region.

The Engage training, offered by the Center for Food Integrity (CFI), captured the power of shared values and put them to work by training participants to engage in public speaking, media interviews, and social media interaction. The curriculum included: values-based communication training, media training, public speaking, skill development and practice, introduction to social media concepts and applications, speaker scheduling, and social media support via CFI's Social Media Help Desk.

Now that the training is complete, CFI will schedule these spokespeople to deliver presentations where they can engage with local media or assist them in becoming more involved in social media. Many of the participants at this year's training will be hosting or helping with the eight scheduled Breakfast on the Farm programs taking place across the state.

Comments captured from participants on an unsigned survey of their participation at Engage included:

- I feel you have given me added knowledge and protocol to better prepare for presentations to groups or individuals.
- As farmers, we need to build a relationship with media. Don't wait for them to come to you.
- We received printed material I can take home for future review and reference. The more prepared we are, the better.
- We need to keep working on our presentation skills.
- This session offered me the first real discussion I've been involved in on social media.
- Regarding the need to understand "shared values communication", it's not about facts and figures, it's about people!
- We need to come up with our personalized values statements so that when we work with media we know what we want to say and can say it smoothly and quickly.

Engage participants for the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee sponsored/Michigan Ag Council hosted training included:

Doug and Yvonne Benthem, Dairy producers from Mc Bain

Kelly Bristle-Ekovich, Director Member Relations and Promotion, NorthStar Cooperative

Aaron Classens, Senior Marketing Specialist, GreenStone Farm Credit Services

Jenny and Nate Elzinga, Dairy producers from Zeeland

Heather Feuerstein, Michigan Soybean Association Young Leader from Ionia

Gail Frahm, Executive Director, Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee

Staci Garcia, Director, Industry and Public Communications, United Dairy Industry of Michigan

M. Charles Gould, Extension Educator, MSU Extension

Kathleen Hawkins, Executive V.P., Michigan Beef Industry Commission

Lynette Henson, Isabella County Farm Bureau

Patty and Tony Jandernoa, Dairy producers from Fowler

Richard Janssens, Michigan Soybean Association Director from Monroe

Sara Long, Communications Manager, ANR Communications

Kathy Maurer, Financial and Creative Director, Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee

Cathy McCune, Isabella County Farm Bureau

Laura Moser, Manager of Communications, MMPA

Missy Prins, Dairy Producer from Lakeview

Herb Smith, Soybean Association Director from Temperance

Beth Stuever, Team Leader ANR Communications

Jeff and Patty Thelen, Dairy producers from St Johns

Ellen Vanderwal, Dairy producer from Lake City

Brenda VanHouten, Beef producer from Marion

Andy Welden, Michigan Soybean Association Director from Jonesville

Dave Williams, Michigan Soybean Association Director from Elsie

Laura Wilson, Ag Relations Director, Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee

For more information, visit: Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee at

www.michigansoybean.org, Michigan Ag Council at www.farmers-care.com and

www.miagcouncil.org, and Center for Food Integrity at www.foodintegrity.org.