



MICHIGAN SOYBEAN
PROMOTION COMMITTEE

a new release



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MICHIGAN'S MARY LOU SMITH SEES ENTHUSIASM FOR SOY PROTEIN IN AFRICA

Michigan soybean leader Mary Lou Smith saw firsthand in Africa what has sparked the interest of businesses and governments around the world. Africa's 900 million consumers represent an important long-term marketplace for many products, including Michigan soy. She also saw how women can play a major role in achieving business growth as well as improved diets in Africa.

Smith, who farms near Petersburg and serves as a director of the United Soybean Board, was part of a U.S. soybean leader delegation to southern Africa in August. "Going there has given me a new perspective on the possibilities and the need for protein in African diets," Smith says. "Women there could play a big role in offering the proper nutrition to correct their protein deficiency."

She also sees education about soy protein and its benefits is an important step in working in Africa. The Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee has already helped support soy educational programs in Africa and other developing countries through its support of the World Initiative for Soy in Human Health (WISHH) program. WISHH has worked in 23 countries to create sustainable solutions for the protein demands of people in developing countries through the introduction and use of U.S. soy products.

The U.S. Soy Export Council supported the delegation's trip with checkoff funds. The soybean leaders met with entrepreneurs, such as a flour miller who is introducing high-protein soy foods to bakers as well as participated in a soyfoods seminar that attracted many food industry representatives. The delegation also visited a WISHH project in cooperation with International Relief and Development that provides U.S. textured soy protein to women who have created sales marketing teams to offer foods and other products to rural villages.

According to the U.S. Agency for International Development, more than 800 million women are economically active worldwide, undertaking critical roles in commerce. Similarly, the World Bank has coined the phrase, "gender as smart economics".

Smith also met with a South African soyfoods processor who is an example of an entrepreneur who is tapping into consumer demand for more protein as well as strengthening his own workforce. This businessman provides soyfoods to employees with HIV/AIDS who may need up to 50 percent more protein. Better diets with increased protein can help people living with HIV/AIDS to have the strength to stay on the job and/or continue to care for their families.



Caption: Michigan soybean grower Mary Lou Smith (far left) and other U.S. soybean growers met with many in Africa who are eager to include high protein soy, such as this textured soy protein, to improve diets and create new business opportunities.