



**MICHIGAN SOYBEAN  
PROMOTION COMMITTEE**

**a new release**



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 25, 2010**

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## **Farmers Learn about Spreading the Word on Farming**

Helping farmers get out into their communities and demonstrate they share the same values as their neighbors was the aim of a workshop in Lansing attended by some Michigan farmers. The Operation Hometown Outreach (OHO) program offers training in public speaking and presentation skills.

A group of around 20 crop, fruit and livestock farmers took part in a recent session in Lansing. In addition to speaking skills, they learned the importance of earning the trust of consumers and the community.

"The information really helped participants understand where consumers are coming from," said Gail Frahm, Executive Director of the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee and co-sponsor of the day's training session. "It was interesting to see how farmers are perceived by the general public in terms of trust and responsibility."

The program is intended to help farmers knock down communication barriers that might exist in their local communities. Following the workshop, some seminar materials will be developed then the participants can deliver their personalized presentation to a variety of audiences such as civic clubs and other community organizations.

"Consumers want to hear from people with working knowledge about how their food is produced," said Terry Fleck of the Center for Food Integrity, the organization that developed the program for the United Soybean Board. "When real farmers explain how they run their operations, they are working to earn the trust of consumers and the community."

Other topics covered during the session included changes that have taken place in agriculture, new technologies farmers use, and the positive impact agriculture has on local and state economies.

The January 12<sup>th</sup> workshop in Lansing was sponsored by the Michigan Soybean Promotion Committee and the United Soybean Board. These organizations work to invest soybean farmers' checkoff investment in research, education, and market development programs. Special assistance in securing interested farmers for the training was provided by Michigan Farm Bureau and the Michigan Ag Council.

Farmers participating in the OHO training included:

From the southwest side of the state Andrea Boughton, Marshall; Mark Wiley, Quincy; and Hank Choate, Cement City.

From the southeast, Roger Bezek, Maybee; and Bret Schapman, Bruce.

From west central Michigan, Scott Henry, Grant, and Kellie Fox, Shelby.

From the northwest, Jim Bardenhagen, Suttons Bay; Kelsey LaCross, Cedar; and Sonya Jones, Falmouth.

From the west, Annie Link, Alto; and Mike Timmer, Hopkins.

From the northeast, Joan Rexer, Harrison; and Karen Curry, Tawas City.

From the southwest, Ed Kretchman, St. Joseph; Dan Stutsman, Edwardsburg; and Larry Walton, Sturgis.

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From the Saginaw valley, Jerry Neyer, Shepherd; and Paul Knoerr, Saginaw.  
And from central Michigan, Louri Miller, Owosso; and Brett Roberts, Charlotte.

Groups having interest in seeking a presentation to be given by one of the farmer volunteers from their area may contact either the producer directly or call Amy Sprouse at the Center for Food Integrity, 573.424.2572.

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**Note to media:** If you would like the group photo or a specific individual's photo electronically, please e-mail your request to [gfrahm@michigansoybean.org](mailto:gfrahm@michigansoybean.org).