

Michigan Cherry Committee

The Michigan Cherry Committee (MCC) is requesting research proposals for FY2026. The request for proposals is being coordinated by MSU AgBioResearch. Research priorities for the MCC are listed below. However, proposals on any important topic will be accepted.

Proposals should be no greater than three (3) pages in length, and they need to be submitted by **5:00 p.m. on Friday, February 6th, 2026**. If you were granted funds last year and wish to continue the project, you must reapply for FY'26 funding.

- **Researchers should submit their proposals electronically through MSU's KC system.**
- **A NEW proposal development document is required for each proposal being submitted, including continuing projects.**
- **Important FY26 information: There is a line item on the budget sheet for plot fees. Please provide an estimate for reimbursement from the Michigan Tree Fruit Commission. This number is required if applicable and should not be included in the requested budget.**

Funding decisions will be communicated in early March. If you have any questions, please contact **Sara Haller** at bolessar@msu.edu.

Download the complete MCC request for proposals, including cover sheet, budget form and research priorities in the EBS system.

Research priorities are set by the commodity groups; however, proposals on any important topic will be accepted.

Michigan Cherry Committee 2026 Cherry Industry Research Priorities

1. Current and Future Plant Protection Issues:

- **IPM strategies for Spotted Wing Drosophila (SWD):** Emphasis on non-chemical and reduced-risk management approaches.
- **Disease Management Strategies and Solutions:** In order of priority, **American brown rot, cherry leaf spot, bacterial canker, and powdery mildew**. Continue evaluating and mitigating pathogen resistance to fungicides, including **SDHI, SI**, and **QOI** materials.
- **Arthropod Management:** Advanced chemical and IPM-based management strategies and tactics, along with biological and genetic studies, targeting **plum curculio, mites, obliquebanded leafroller (OBLR), San Jose scale, trunk borers**, and **nematodes**.

- **Climate Resilience:** Enhance orchard adaptability to drought stress, winter injury, and variable bloom phenology associated with climate change.
- **Improving Fruit Firmness:** Investigate the roles of nutrient management, rootstock selection, plant growth regulators (PGRs), and photosynthetic efficiency in reducing soft fruit incidence.
- **Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) Compliance:** Address export market challenges related to pesticide residue tolerances.
- **Cherry Breeding Program:** Support breeding for resistance to cherry leaf spot and Armillaria root rot, with emphasis on molecular screening and field validation.
- **Orchard Replant and Soil Health Issues:** Evaluate soil-borne pathogens, nematode suppression, and strategies to restore soil health following orchard removal.
- **Abandoned Orchards:** Assess the impact of unmanaged orchards on pest and disease pressure at the regional scale.

2. Current and Future Marketing Priorities

- **New Product Development:** Expand research on innovative uses of **sweet and tart cherries**, including value-added and processed forms.
- **Pit Reduction Technologies:** Explore mechanical and processing innovations to minimize or eliminate pits in finished cherry products.
- **Global Production Trends:** Analyze worldwide **production trends by variety** to inform marketing and competitiveness strategies for **tart cherries**.
- **Varietal and Production Optimization:** Identify and enhance marketable fruit traits, including firmness, nutraceutical profile, size, sugar–acid ratio, color, and suitability for fresh markets. Include evaluation of high-density planting systems.
- **Sustainability and IPM Integration:** Continue developing production methods that align with sustainability standards and integrated pest management principles.
- **Market Research:** Conduct consumer and trade research to inform strategic positioning, brand awareness, and product innovation.
- **Pet Food Market Development:** Support studies demonstrating the nutritional and health benefits of cherries in pet food formulations.

3. Other Current Production Issues

- **Weather Monitoring Systems:** Modernize and expand the **computerized weather station network** to enhance precision agriculture and risk forecasting.
- **Wildlife Management:** Develop and assess strategies to **mitigate wildlife damage** in cherry orchards.
- **Fruit Quality and Growth Regulators:** Investigate the use of growth regulators to **optimize fruit size, brix, and uniformity**.
- **Irrigation Efficiency:** Advance precision irrigation technologies to improve water-use efficiency and support sustainable production.
- **Frost Protection and Delayed Bloom:** Evaluate techniques to mitigate frost and control bloom timing to reduce spring freeze damage.
- **De-fruiting Young Trees:** Study chemical and mechanical de-fruiting methods to optimize early tree development and canopy structure.