

Southwest Michigan Field Crops Update September 18, 2025

Here are updates from the MSU Extension Field Crops team in Southwest Michigan. If you have any items you would like me to include in future email updates - whether events you want others to know about or topics you would like to have addressed - please send an email or call the St. Joseph County Extension office.

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Kalamazoo Conservation District Seeking New Associate Board Members

They are seeking passionate, specifically people with a heart for conservation and strong financial acumen. If you, or someone you know, might be an ideal fit, please join us at our next Board Meeting to learn more. It's a great, no-obligation way to see how you can get involved.

Details:

- Meeting: September 19th, 2025
- Location: 5950 Portage Rd, Ste. B, Portage 49002
- RSVP: [HERE](#)

Immigration Essentials for Farm Employees Webinar Series

Farm owners, managers, and ag professionals are invited to attend the Immigration Essentials for Farm Employers webinar series this September. This free three-part event is designed to help agricultural employers confidently navigate immigration enforcement and workforce documentation. Sessions include:

- **Sept. 11 at 10am – ICE Insight:** Learn proactive strategies to reduce the risk of immigration audits or raids and how to respond if officials arrive.
- **Sept. 18 at 10am – I-9 Compliance:** Discover how to conduct self-audits, fix common errors, and prepare for inspections to strengthen your I-9 practices.
- **Sept. 25 at 10am – Immigration Policy:** Explore the history and future of U.S. immigration policy and its impact on agricultural labor.

Registration is free

at <https://events.anr.msu.edu/ImmigrationEssentials/>. For questions, contact Corey Clark at (517) 420-2042. Don't miss this essential series to prepare your farm for addressing any immigration-related issues.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY | Extension

Immigration Essentials for Farm Employers

WEBINAR SERIES

SEPTEMBER 11 | 10AM
ICE Insight
Josh Vlau | Partner, Fisher & Phillips LLP

SEPTEMBER 18 | 10AM
I-9 Compliance
Shawn Packer | Principal Member, JPH Law Firm

SEPTEMBER 25 | 10AM
Immigration Policy
Rich Stup | Cornell Agricultural Workforce Development

For more information, call Corey Clark at clarkcr@msu.edu or 517-420-2042

Register Here 



Avoid Contact and Irrigation in the Paw Paw River Sept. 23- Oct. 2

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) sea lamprey control program will be treating the Paw Paw River with lampricide between September 23, 2025 and October 2, 2025. With this treatment, notice has been given to suspend irrigation and limit contact with the Paw Paw River for 24 hours during and following treatment. For additional information, reach the Ludington Biological Station at 231-843-7000.

Cover Crop Innovations Field Day Oct 1

This short, free field day will be held at the Kellogg Biological Station in Hickory Corners from 9 am to 11:30 am on October 1. Pre-register here: <https://forms.gle/QRHYcbGg9JXCX3b47>



Join us for a field day featuring cutting edge cover crop research and resources:

- National variety trials
- Grazing cover crops
- On-farm research results
- New cover crop breeding material



RUP/CCA credits available.

Attendance is FREE. Light refreshments will be served. Walk-ins welcome, but if possible, please RSVP by Sept. 25 at <https://forms.gle/QRHYcbGg9JXCX3b47>. Questions? Contact etiennesutton@missouri.edu



MSU Labor Conference Nov 5

Attend the 3rd annual MSU Farm Labor Conference at the MSU University Club in Lansing on November 5th. The conference will feature speakers from academia, industry, and government to provide insights into challenges farmworkers and farm employers are facing and discuss potential solutions. The event is free, and lunch is included. Please pre-register: <https://events.anr.msu.edu/FarmLabor>

‘Tis the Season for Cover Crop Seed and/or Custom Application



Check out the Cover Crop Service Provider Directory to find cover crop providers in your region: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/resources/cover-crop-provider-directory>

If you provide cover crop services but don't see yourself in the directory, fill this form out to be added: https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0BZXQgFalcOMunI

Save the Date! Beyond the Bin Grain Marketing Workshop Dec 4

More details to come!



Topics covered

- Cost of production
- Marketing
- Marketing decision process
- Contracts
- Return on investment of crop protection products

1 RUP credit has been requested

December 4

9:00 am - 2:00 pm,
lunch provided

LOCATION

Van Buren MSUE Office
57418 CR 681, Suite A,
Hartford, MI 49057

Contact us: Nicolle Ritchie
Jon LaPorte

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269-858-8739
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Field Crops Update

Soybeans are mostly at R7, which is where one pod anywhere on the plant has reached mature pod color, or R8 (full maturity). At R8, harvest will begin once the soybeans have dried down sufficiently.



Seed corn harvest appears to have made great progress over the past week. Commercial corn is finishing up R5 (dent) and at or approaching R6 (black layer). At R6, a black layer forms on the tip of the kernel where it attaches to the cob. Scrape the tip, and if a hard, black layer is visible, corn has reached physiological maturity. Once it has dried down enough, harvest will begin.

Planting preparations for winter wheat are underway. The Hessian fly-free date for southwest Michigan is September 20. With the recent dry weather and little projected rainfall, germination and emergence are likely to be delayed on early plantings.



Warm temperatures over the past week slowed down storage potato harvest. Harvesting when air and pulp temperatures are too high increases the risk of potatoes rotting in storage.

Many alfalfa and forages were baled this past week. At this point in the season and through dormancy, regrowth above and belowground is the priority. This growth can be fueled by timely phosphorous and especially potassium fertilizer application(s).

Irrigation and Crop Water Use

Dry and warm temperatures this week increased crop water use. With little rain in the forecast, many of you may be wondering if fields still need a shot of water and whether it's time for the last irrigation of the season. For more information, check out ["Is It Time for the Last Irrigation?"](#).

If you've inter-seeded cover crops into corn or soybeans, a dry spell may hold back germination until we get rain. That delay can limit fall growth and reduce some of the cover crop benefits. If it's dry enough to stall cover crops, chances are your corn and soybeans could still benefit from another irrigation. It could help beans fill out or add test weight to corn. See ["Irrigate Cover Crops for Better Establishment"](#) for details.

Currently, **corn** at the dent stage is using about 0.14 inches of water per day. By black layer, that drops to about 0.09 inches. After black layer, extra irrigation won't add yield. At R7 (beginning maturity), **soybeans** are using about 0.14 inches per day (just under 1 inch per week). Water use falls off quickly after this stage, dropping to around 0.20 inches per week at full maturity. A newly published MSU Extension bulletin provides guidance on [soybean irrigation management](#).

[Irrigation Scheduling Tools](#) can help estimate crop water needs and decide timing and application.

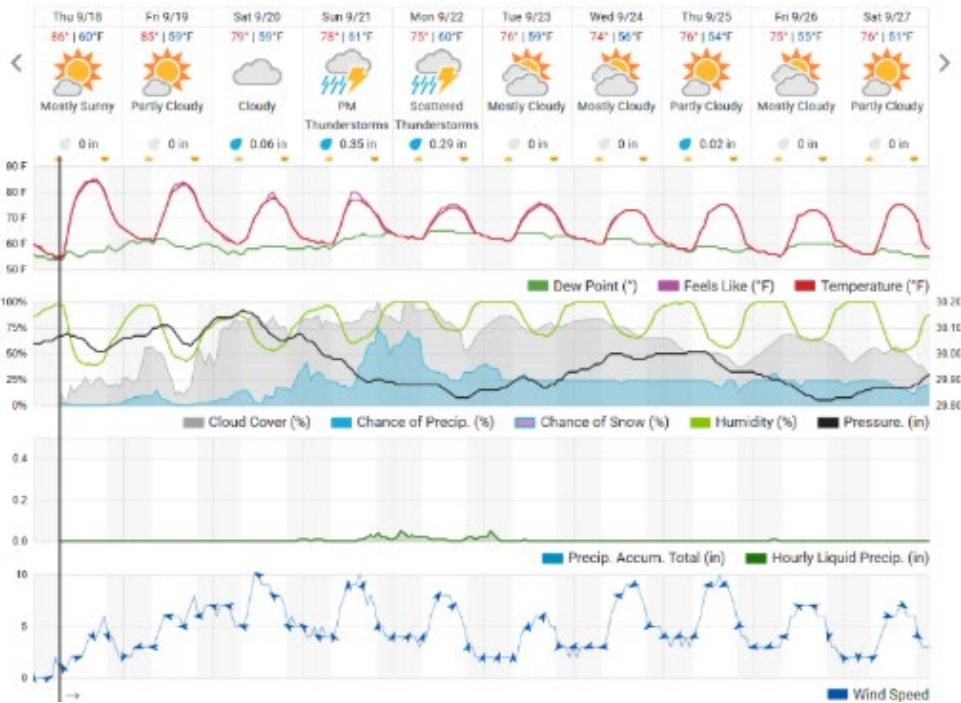
Estimated weekly crop water use for field crops in Michigan (in/week)				
Week of September 15 - 21				
Crop	Growth stage	Constantine	Entrican	Hart
	Reference ET	1.05	0.99	0.94
Corn	VT, Silk , Blister , Dough , Begin Dent	1.16	1.09	1.03
	Full Dent	1.05	0.99	0.94
	Black Layer	0.69	0.65	0.62
Soybeans	R5 Begin seed / R6 Full seed	1.16	1.09	1.03
	R7 Begin Mature	1.05	0.99	0.94
	R8 95% Pods Mature	0.21	0.20	0.19
	Mature	0.11	0.10	0.09

The table above presents estimated crop water use for various field crops across three locations in Michigan. This data helps irrigation management decisions by showcasing potential crop evapotranspiration, calculated based on reference evapotranspiration and crop coefficients for each crop growth stage. It is crucial to note that crop water use values vary across regions due to differences in weather conditions, growth stages, agronomic practices, and soil properties.

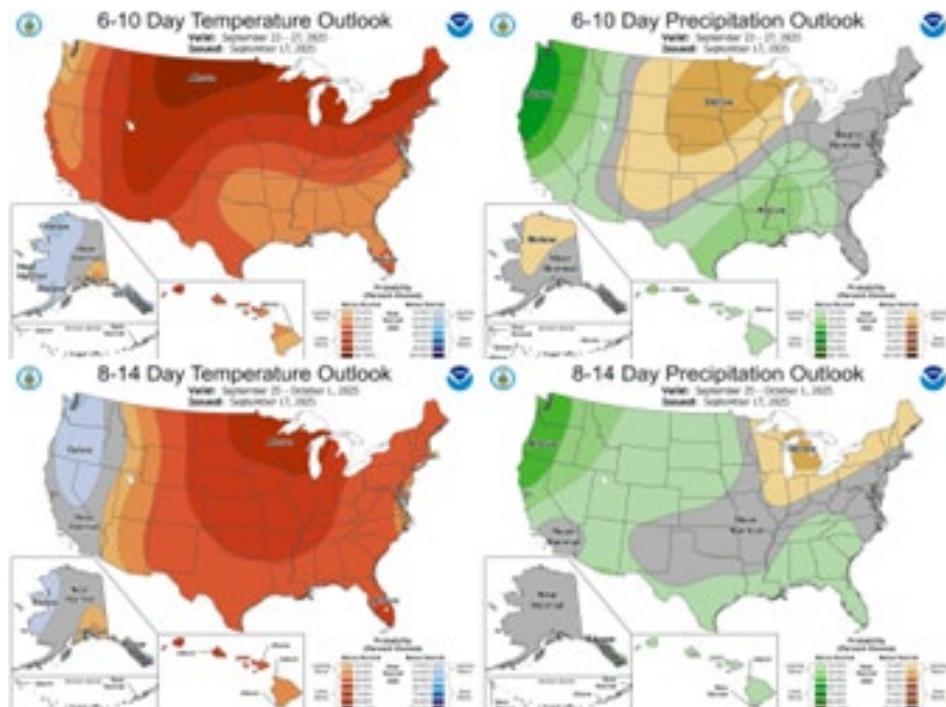
When using these values for irrigation scheduling, be mindful that they assume all applied irrigation water will be utilized by the plants without any loss. Additionally, these values do not account for any precipitation that may occur during the week of calculation. Reference evapotranspiration data was obtained from Enviroweather, which also offers a model for determining potential crop evapotranspiration. To access this tool, visit [Enviroweather](#), click on "Crops," select your crop and use the potential evapotranspiration tool by choosing your nearest weather station, the latest date of interest, and other crop information.

Weather Update

The past week was hot and mostly dry, with small pop-up showers over parts of southwest Michigan over the weekend. They provided mostly negligible moisture. High temperatures are expected to continue over the next few days, with the potential for about 0.25" of rain over the weekend and into early next week. The rain will bring slightly cooler temperatures.



Ten-day weather forecast for Kalamazoo according to [wunderground.com](https://www.wunderground.com).



The 6-10 day (Sept 23-27, top) and 8-14 day (Sept 25-Oct 1, bottom) outlooks for temperature (left) and precipitation (right).

Calendar

[Note: Titles are clickable links to online content when highlighted and underlined.]

Sept 25 [**Immigration Essentials for Farm Employers Webinar - Session 3: Immigration Policy.**](#) 10 am. Learn about current immigration enforcement trends and future reform proposals that could impact agricultural employers and their workforce.

Oct 1 [**Cover Crops Innovation Day.**](#) 9 am. Kellogg Biological Station. Join us on October 1st for a field day featuring cutting-edge cover crop research and resources.

Oct 9 [**Farm Policy and Risk Management Series-Pasture, Rangeland and Forage Insurance.**](#) 12 pm. Farm Policy and Risk Management Series will be hosting a FREE series of educational webinars online on USDA insurance programs.

Oct 21 [**2025 Michigan Agricultural Credit Conference.**](#) 8 am. Molecular Plant Sciences Building, MSU Campus. The conference provides agricultural lenders, agribusinesses, policymakers, and other interested parties with updates on the economy and agricultural industries in Michigan. Hear from experts about agricultural policy, commodity outlooks, and much more.

Nov 5 [**Farm Labor and Michigan Agriculture Conference.**](#) 9 am. MSU University Club. The conference seeks to investigate labor challenges that domestic agricultural employers and employees are facing, discuss potential solutions, and provide agricultural stakeholders with information and resources to help address these challenges. While there is no charge for attending, pre-registration is required.

Dec 4 [**Beyond the Bin Grain Marketing Workshop.**](#) 9 am-2 pm. Van Buren County MSU Extension Office. This in-person workshop will provide hands-on education on grain marketing. More details to come. [RUP/CCA](#)

MSU Extension Digest Briefs

[**Grazing corn residue: What the research says about soil health**](#)

Published on September 16, 2025

Grazing corn residue is safe for the soil and doesn't hurt crop performance.

[**Exploring winter wheat canopy architecture for variety-specific management strategies**](#)

Published on September 16, 2025

Michigan State University is evaluating if winter wheat varieties differ in their canopy type and if farmers can take advantage of this trait in managing wheat.

[**Respiratory Protection Requirements in Agriculture – Guidance & Resources**](#)

Published on September 12, 2025

A practical guide for agricultural producers on complying with EPA, MDARD, MIOSHA and OSHA standards to ensure safe respirator use and worker protection. An accessible format for visually impaired users is also available.

[**Thinking about collecting yield data with your combine?**](#)

Published on September 11, 2025

Farmers wanting to collect and manage yield data during harvest this fall should prepare early to get equipment ready and pathways cleared for data transfer and storage. This article will walk through important considerations for this process.

[**Update on U.S. Farm Income and Exports**](#)

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Published on September 11, 2025

This document provides an update on U.S. farm income and exports based on the Outlook for Agricultural Trade and Farm Sector Income Forecast released by the USDA's Economic Research Service.

Indigenous farmers needed for soil health testing

Published on September 11, 2025

Michigan State University Extension is working to collaborate with Indigenous farms on quantifying what is living below ground.

Stop irrigating soybeans like corn and see the difference

Published on September 11, 2025

A new Extension bulletin highlights how soybeans respond differently to water than corn and offers irrigation strategies to maximize yields.

Southwest Michigan field crops update – September 11, 2025

Published on September 11, 2025

Seed corn harvest continues, and storage potato harvest started. Commercial corn started to hit black layer.

Soybean Irrigation Management

Published on September 10, 2025

This bulletin provides guidance on soybean irrigation management, covering growth stage water needs, scheduling methods, soil moisture monitoring, disease risk reduction, and agronomy practices for maximizing yield under irrigation.

Field crop fall weed control covered in final Virtual Breakfast session of 2025

Published on September 9, 2025

Is fall the perfect time to implement late-season weed control? Join the MSU Extension Field Crops Virtual Breakfast Series as we wrap up the final session of the year with a discussion of the benefits, challenges and considerations of fall weed control.

Elevate your market prices with Grain Gains

Published on September 9, 2025

Grain Gains: An Introduction to Grain Marketing is a new online course from MSU Extension.

Is it time for the last irrigation?

Published on September 8, 2025

Crop stage, soil moisture and weather: the three pillars of your last irrigation decision.

Fall harvest safety tips

Published on September 5, 2025

Some common sense tips can help prevent injuries on the farm during harvest season.

Download free curricula for beginning farmers

Published on September 5, 2025

Teach practical farming skills through hands-on activities and participatory learning methods.

Saturated buffers: Proven practice with new surprises

Published on September 4, 2025

Saturated buffers have long been promoted as a way to reduce nitrate loss from tile-drained farmland, but just how effective are they?

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Michigan State University Extension seeks input from pesticide applicators and agribusiness on new EPA regulations

Published on September 4, 2025

Please complete this brief survey to assist MSU Extension in identifying needs related to pesticide label changes, Bulletins Live! Two and the Endangered Species Act.



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