

Southwest Michigan Field Crops Update February 3, 2026

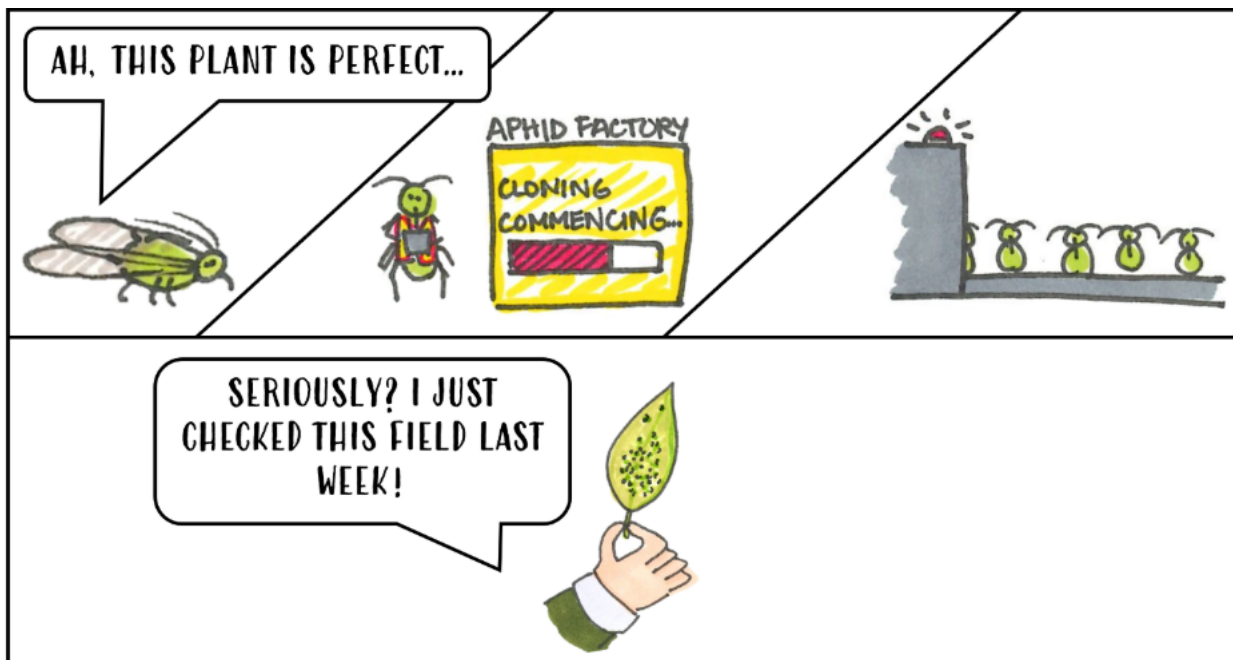
Here are updates from the MSU Extension Field Crops team in Southwest Michigan. If you have any items you would like me to include in future email updates - whether events you want others to know about or topics you would like to have addressed - please send an email or call the St. Joseph County Extension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

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- Announcements
- PALM (Pesticide App for Label Mitigation)
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“Farming Funnies”

We can all use an occasional laugh to make it through the long nights and short days of winter. If you have a funny story or picture to share, feel free to send it my way!



How do aphids reproduce so quickly? Aphids fly into fields looking for suitable plant hosts. They taste each plant to decide if it's suitable or not. If the aphid is carrying a virus, each taste can transmit the virus. Once winged aphids find a suitable host, they produce wingless aphids, which are all female and reproduce asexually (essentially clones). This is how aphid populations can build so rapidly. Usually, aphids are not an economic pest in corn, soybeans, or wheat, but it can be scary to see the population increase so quickly. Check out these articles on [soybean aphid](#) and [aphids in winter wheat](#). For potatoes, refer to [Managing colonizing aphids in ware potatoes](#).

Upcoming On-Farm Research Opportunities for 2026

What kind of local on-farm research is happening in SW MI in 2026? If you're interested in learning more about or collaborating on any of these projects, please reach out to me (text/call 269-858-8739 or email ritchi67@msu.edu).

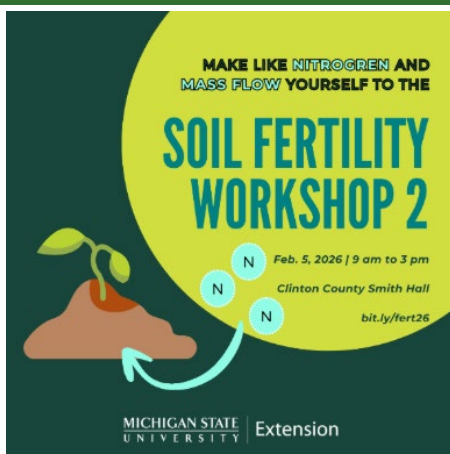
- **Seedcorn Maggot trapping in soybeans** (We will place traps and check them regularly for seedcorn maggot to validate the accuracy of degree day flight models. What I need from you: a soybean field. Bonus points if planted early or has had SCM in the past)
- **Wildlife Observation Cages in soybeans** (I will create a ~4'x4' with step-in posts and plastic netting to exclude wildlife, and then I'll hand-harvest the soybeans inside the cage to compare yield differences. What I need from you: space in a field that deer generally browse and an average field yield at the end of the season)
- **Soybean scouting project** (I will scout your soybean field every other week throughout the season to test out a scouting app. What I need from you: a soybean field to scout, yield monitor data and a survey on your management practices at the end of the season)
- **Black Cutworm, True Armyworm, and Western Bean Cutworm Trapping** (I will place traps at field edges to monitor BCW, TAW, and WBC populations. What I need from you: a field with an easily accessible edge to place the trap.)
- The **Soybean On-Farm Research Program** will continue this year with opportunities for on-farm trialing of various products and management practices. More details to come.

NEW Insect Pest Management Guides



Hot off the press! The St. Joseph County office has a few free printed copies of the updated MSU & OSU Insect Management Guides for Field Crops. Stop in anytime the office is open, or contact me directly (text/call 269-858-8739 or email ritchi67@msu.edu) to get a copy. If you are not in St. Joseph County but are in southwest Michigan, contact me directly, and I'll get a copy out to your county for you. The guide is also **free to access online** and is downloadable at https://www.canr.msu.edu/field_crops/insect-guides.

Last chance: Soil Fertility Workshop 2 on Feb 5 in St. Johns



This workshop goes more in depth on soil fertility and nutrient management. It is intended for those who already understand the basics. Key topics include nitrogen, nutrient interactions, micronutrients, sulfur, economics of nitrogen, and a Q&A. Read more about it in [this article](#), or [register online here](#).

Hay you! Do you grow or buy hay or graze? Please take this survey!



The MSU Extension Forage Team is surveying Michigan forage producers / grazers and professionals to assess industry needs. This feedback helps improve existing programs and create new ones. All responses remain confidential. bit.ly/forageneeds

Hay Production 101 will also be happening again in 2026. This is an online short course for beginner hay growers. Learn more and register at <https://events.anr.msu.edu/2026HayProduction101/>

Field Crops Webinar Series Will Return for February and March



Join us via Zoom on Monday nights in February and March from 7-8 pm. [Register here.](#)

Incorporating Native Plants in Michigan Farms Workshop Feb 18 in Ann Arbor

Explore practical ways to incorporate native plants into your farming operation - enhancing soil and water health, creating new income opportunities, and accessing technical guidance and funding options. Learn directly from MSU Extension educators, conservation professionals, and an experienced native seed producer as they share insights from the field. This workshop is open to row/cash crop farmers in Michigan at no cost. Lunch is provided, and 1 RUP credit has been requested. Register here: <https://events.anr.msu.edu/NativePlantsRowCrops/>

MI Ag Ideas to Grow With Virtual Field Crops Innovation Sessions Feb 23 8:00 am to 1:30 pm

Creative solutions are a means of survival in the current agricultural market. This free field crops track will cover innovative tools, crops and basics to get the ideas flowing. There will also be a bonus crossover session about growing hay between solar arrays. Three RUP credits and 5 CCA credits have been requested. Read more and register here: [Ready, set, innovate! At the virtual MI Ag Ideas to Grow With field crops sessions.](#)

Great Lakes Field Crops Irrigation Meeting at the Blue Gate on Feb 25

GREAT LAKES FIELD CROPS IRRIGATION MEETING

February 25, 2026

Register at events.qnr.msu.edu/GLFCIM26

\$40 registration fee includes lunch (\$50 after Feb.18)

Wednesday, Feb. 25
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Blue Gate Restaurant
195 N Van Buren St.
Shipshewana, IN 46565

For more information or if reasonable accommodations are needed to participate, please call 260-499-6554

New name, same great insights. The Great Lakes Field Crops Irrigation returns February 25 with tools to increase irrigation decision-making and crop management. Attendees can earn Michigan RUP, CCA and Indiana PARP/CCH credits. \$40/person if registered by Feb 18; \$50/person if after Feb 18. Learn more here: [Michigan State and Purdue Extension to host Great Lakes Field Crops Irrigation Meeting](#).

Follow SW MI Field Crops on Facebook

NEW: We have a Facebook page for all things corn, soybeans, wheat/small grains, hay, and commercial potato in southwest Michigan. Please follow and have your ag friends/family follow, too. [Visit Facebook](#)

Farming for the Future March 11

The Van Buren Conservation District will host Farming for the Future on March 11, 2026, at VanBurenCD.org/FFF-2026. Learn more information at VanBurenCD.org/FFF-2026.



How does irrigation affect yield under drought conditions?

This year, Michigan has seen wide variability in precipitation; some areas had enough rain, while others have struggled with drought. To better understand how irrigation affects yield under these conditions, the [Michigan State University Extension irrigation team](#) is looking for cooperators willing to share yield data from irrigated fields and non-irrigated areas.

Participants will need to provide:

- Yield data for both irrigated and non-irrigated areas, such as dry corners.
- Estimates of rainfall amounts and irrigation applied.

This information will be used strictly for research purposes. If you'd like to participate or get more information, please fill out this [form](#) or contact [Angie Gradiz](#).

Midwest Mechanical Weed Control Field Day coming to SW MI!

Save the date! [Learn more here](#).



9th Annual Midwest Mechanical Weed Control FIELD DAY
THE PLACE TO CONNECT

Wednesday, Sept. 16, 2026
Michigan State University's Southwest Michigan Research and Extension Center
Benton Harbor, MI

Weeding Machines for Vegetables & Row Crops

- See quality field demos of many weeding tools in corn and vegetables and learn from company reps
- See before you buy, and learn how to adjust tools in the field from experts
- See cultivators of all scales - modern hand tools, two-wheel tractors, cultivating tractors, and all manner of cultivators for small grains and row-crops
- Meet farmers from all over the country
- Connect with tool companies and other ag suppliers at the trade show
- Hear from national experts on weeding tools and techniques, cover crops, and soil health at the education sessions, connect with your MSU extension specialist and latest research

Register online to get your ticket or over the phone by calling Crystal at 217-840-2128 x 730. Scan the QR code to register or visit <https://www.thelandconnection.org/event/2026-mmwd/>



PALM (Pesticide App for Label Mitigation)

The app that's not an app... If a pesticide label directs you to the EPA Pesticide Mitigation menu, you must check PALM before applying. Here's what you need to do before applying pesticides:

1. **Check the product label.** It will direct you to the EPA Pesticide Mitigation menu, or PALM. Right now, Liberty Ultra is the only product I know of that has this label language. Also **check [EPA Bulletins Live Two](#)**. The bulletin may direct you to use the EPA Pesticide Mitigation menu, or PALM. Currently, cyantraniliprole (Exirel), methoxyfenozide (Intrepid), and dicamba in Michigan have bulletins with restrictions in Michigan. However, they do not currently direct you to PALM.
2. **If the label or bulletin directs you, go to the [Pesticide App for Label Mitigation \(PALM\)](#).** It is not an actual app, but a website. You do need internet access for this.
3. **From there, select the runoff/erosion calculator or the spray drift calculator.** (Again, the label will direct you on which calculator you need.)
4. **Answer the questions in the tool.** Some of these are tricky. If you don't understand what a question is asking, you are always welcome to reach out to me.
5. **Print the summary and keep it with your records.** If the summary says you have met the required points, you are good to go!

Text/call (269-858-8739) or email me (ritchi67@msu.edu) anytime to set up an in-person visit or Zoom to walk through PALM or EPA Bulletins Live Two.

Pesticide App for Label Mitigations

EPA released the Pesticide App for Label Mitigations (PALM), a mobile-friendly tool to serve as a one-stop shop that helps farmers and applicators use EPA's [mitigation menu](#) to reduce pesticide exposure to nontarget species from agricultural crop uses. PALM combines the functionality of the [spray drift and runoff calculators](#) in a mobile-friendly and easy-to-use web interface. This application also provides a useful summary to show how users calculated their runoff and erosion mitigation points or ecological spray drift buffer reductions and what field characteristics or application parameters are applicable to their individual applications.

These calculators are tools for informational purposes to assist pesticide users in determining whether the necessary level of mitigation has been met before applying a pesticide product. Pesticide users remain responsible for ensuring that all pesticide labeling requirements are met. Not all labels permit use of runoff/erosion mitigation measures or spray drift reduction.

This tool will not retain any of the information entered here.

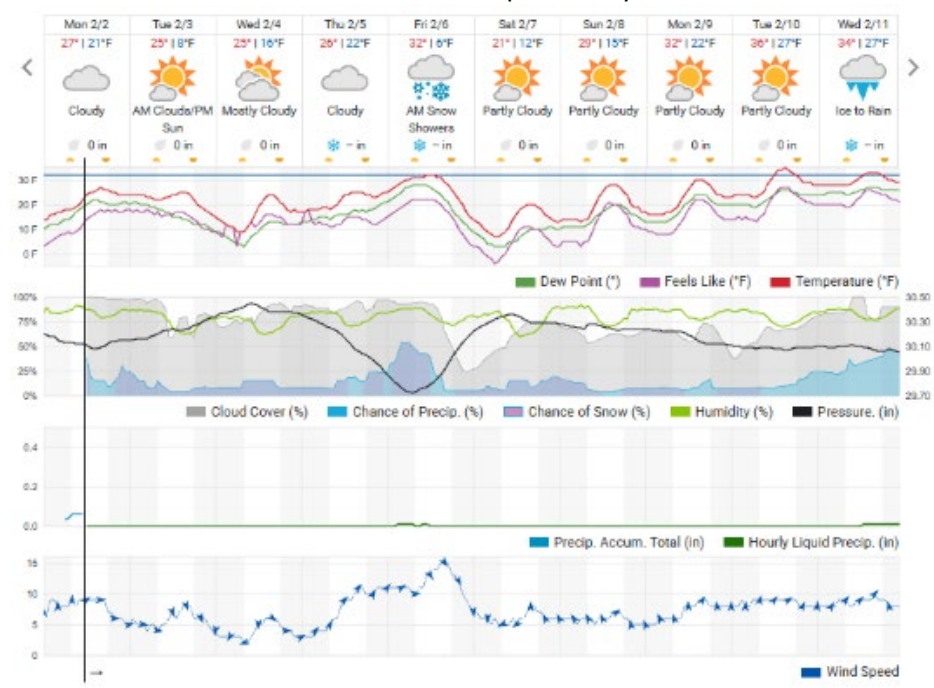
[Contact Us](#) to ask about questions related to PALM.

[Runoff/Erosion calculator](#)

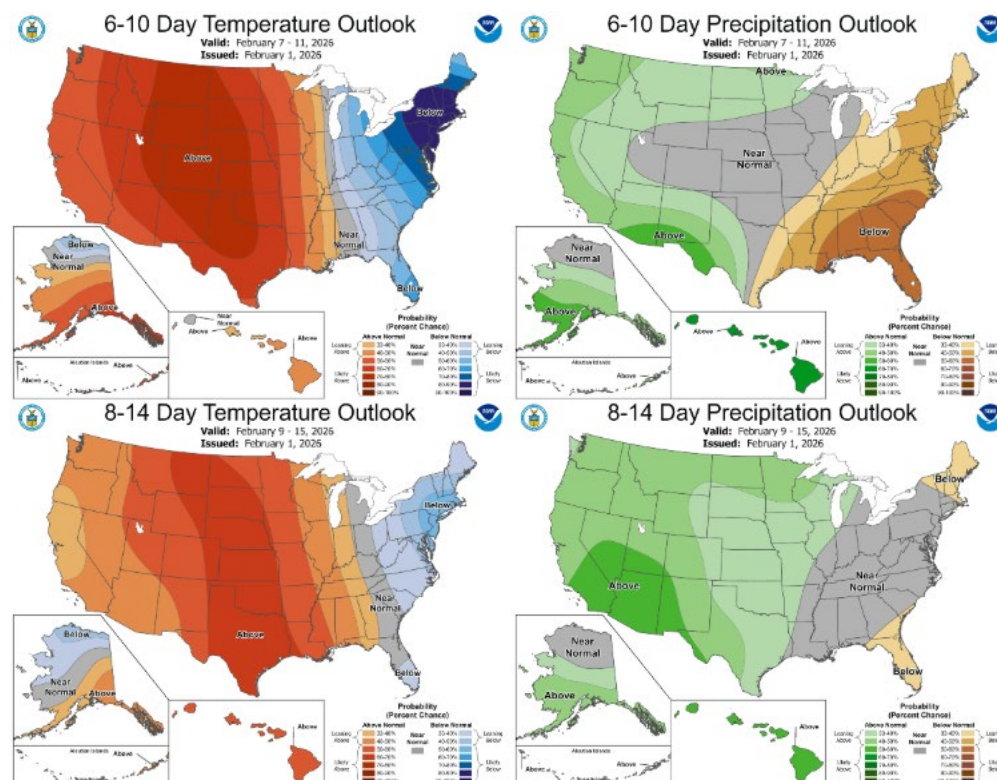
[Spray drift calculator](#)

Weather Update

It's been cold and snowy this winter. January saw significant cold snaps and snowfall throughout the Midwest. We will see some warmer weather this week and potentially the sun.



Ten-day weather forecast for Kalamazoo according to wunderground.com.



The 6-10 day (Feb 7-11, top) and 8-14 day (Feb 9-15, bottom) outlooks for temperature (left) and precipitation (right).

Calendar

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

- Feb 2, 4** [**Pesticide Safety Webinar Series: The RUP/CCA CEU Credit Clinic.**](#) 10 am-12 pm; 12 pm-2 pm. Online via Zoom. MSU's Pesticide Safety Education Program offers virtual training series for applicators and ag professionals, covering pesticide safety, Endangered Species Act compliance, environmental protection and best practices in application and equipment use. **2-4 RUP**. \$17 for AM or PM session, \$30 for both **if requesting credits**.
- Feb 4** [**2026 Winter Wheat-tastic Wheat Wisdom Wednesday Webinars.**](#) 7-8 pm. Zoom. Free. This three-part series will focus on economics, marketing and the value of growing wheat. The Feb. 4 webinar topic is "Planting wheat makes cents for growers in crop rotation."
- Feb 5** [**Soil Fertility and Nutrient Management Training 2.**](#) 9 am-3 pm. Clinton County Smith Hall, St. Johns or online. Intermediate soil fertility and nutrient management workshop. \$50/person. **5 CCA**
- Feb 5** [**Pesticide Applicator Core Review and MDARD Core Testing-- Adrian.**](#) 8:30 am-3 pm. Lenawee County MSU Extension Office. MSU Extension, MSU Pesticide Safety Education Program, and MDARD PPPMD are offering an in-person Core Manual review class followed by Core pesticide applicator certification testing. \$25/person. **RUP**
- Feb 5** [**USDA Value-Added Producer Grant Workshop.**](#) 6-8 pm. Zoom. This webinar will provide an overview of the USDA Value-Added Producer Grant program, which was released on Jan. 15, 2026.
- Feb 7** [**Holland Area Beekeepers Association Bee School.**](#) 8:30 am-5 pm. Central Wesleyan Church, 446 W 40th Street, Holland, MI 49423. Learn from seasoned beekeepers in the West Michigan area!
- Feb 9** [**Field Crops Webinar Series - Planter Set Up.**](#) 7-8 pm. Zoom. Join the MSU Extension Field Crops Team with agriculture experts in this series of eight webinars. \$20/person. **1 RUP**.
- Feb 10** [**2026 Regenerative Agriculture Winter Webinar.**](#) 6 pm. Michigan State University Extension invites farmers, landowners, conservationists, and agricultural professionals to a dynamic winter webinar series focused on Regenerative Agriculture. **RUP**
- Feb 10** [**Farm Policy and Risk Management Series-Farm Bill Commodity Programs.**](#) 6:30-7:30 pm. Online via Zoom. Farm Policy and Risk Management Series will be hosting a FREE series of educational webinars online on USDA insurance programs.
- Feb 16** [**Pesticide Applicator Core Review and MDARD Core Testing-- Coldwater.**](#) 8:30 am-3 pm. Branch Area Career Center. MSU Extension, MSU Pesticide Safety Education Program, and MDARD PPPMD are offering an in-person Core Manual review class followed by Core pesticide applicator certification testing. \$25/person. **4 RUP**
- Feb 16** [**Branch County Farmers Day Educational Sessions.**](#) 8am-12 pm. Branch Area Career Center. Join us for educational sessions. Free. **3 RUP, 5 CCA**
- Feb 16** [**Field Crops Webinar Series - Interseeding Cover Crops.**](#) 7-8 pm. Zoom. Join the MSU Extension Field Crops Team with agriculture experts in this series of eight webinars. \$20/person.
- Feb 17** [**2026 Regenerative Agriculture Winter Webinar.**](#) 6 pm. Michigan State University Extension invites farmers, landowners, conservationists, and agricultural professionals to a dynamic winter webinar series focused on Regenerative Agriculture.

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- Feb 18** **Incorporating Native Plants in Michigan Farms.** 10 am-2 pm. Washtenaw County Conservation District, 705 N Zeeb Rd #201, Ann Arbor, MI 48103. Explore practical ways to incorporate native plants into your farming operation - enhancing soil and water health, creating new income opportunities, and accessing technical guidance and funding options. **1 RUP**
- Feb 19** **2026 Regenerative Agriculture Winter Webinar.** 6 pm. Michigan State University Extension invites farmers, landowners, conservationists, and agricultural professionals to a dynamic winter webinar series focused on Regenerative Agriculture.
- Feb 23** **MI Ag Ideas to Grow With Field Crops Track.** 8am-1:30 pm. Online via Zoom. Learn about innovative field crops, tools, and more! Free. **3 RUP, 5 CCA**
- Feb 23** **Field Crops Webinar Series - Insect Control**<https://www.canr.msu.edu/events/field-crops-webinar-series-interseeding-cover-crops>. 7-8 pm. Zoom. Join the MSU Extension Field Crops Team with agriculture experts in this series of eight webinars. \$20/person.
- Feb 24** **Hay Production 101.** 7pm-8:30 pm. Online via Zoom. Join our team of MSU Extension specialists and educators online in February and March 2026 to learn the ins and outs of growing, harvesting and marketing your hay crop. The Feb. 24 topic is "Hay Industry Overview; Matching Hay Species to Farm Goals." \$85/person.
- Feb 24** **Exploring a Beginning Farmer Curriculum to Guide Group Learning.** 12-1 pm. Learn to work with other farmers to gain knowledge to help improve your farming & business practices in areas of land access, produce food safety, soil health, farm finances, building new markets, IPM, urban agriculture and policy.
- Feb 24** **2026 Regenerative Agriculture Winter Webinar.** 6 pm. Michigan State University Extension invites farmers, landowners, conservationists, and agricultural professionals to a dynamic winter webinar series focused on Regenerative Agriculture.
- Feb 25** **Great Lakes Field Crops Irrigation Meeting 2026.** 9 am-4 pm. Blue Gate Theatre, Shipshewana, IN. Michigan State University Extension and Purdue Extension invite agricultural producers from Indiana and Michigan to attend an educational program that addresses issues related to producing corn and soybeans under irrigation. \$40/person if registered by Feb. 18. **3 RUP, 5 CCA**
- Feb 26** **Crop Insurance 101 for Field Crops.** 12-1 pm. Online via Zoom. Prices for many farm inputs remain high compared to commodity prices. This session will review the basics of insurance and how to optimize strategies for corn, soybeans, and wheat growers. Free.
- Feb 26** **2026 Regenerative Agriculture Winter Webinar.** 6 pm. Michigan State University Extension invites farmers, landowners, conservationists, and agricultural professionals to a dynamic winter webinar series focused on Regenerative Agriculture.
- Feb 26** **Hay Production 101.** 7pm-8:30 pm. Online via Zoom. Join our team of MSU Extension specialists and educators online in February and March 2026 to learn the ins and outs of growing, harvesting and marketing your hay crop. The Feb. 26 topic is "Field Establishment & Renovation." \$85/person.
- Mar 2, 4** **Pesticide Safety Webinar Series: The RUP/CCA CEU Credit Clinic.** 10 am-12 pm; 12 pm-2 pm. Online via Zoom. MSU's Pesticide Safety Education Program offers virtual training series for applicators and ag professionals, covering pesticide safety, Endangered Species Act compliance, environmental protection and best practices in application and equipment use. **2-4 RUP**. \$17 for AM or PM session, \$30 for both **if requesting credits**.

MSU Extension Digest Briefs

Learn more about the USDA Value-Added Producer Grant program at this upcoming webinar

Published on January 28, 2026

See if this grant opportunity is a fit for your value-added farm business.

Are we interpreting corn hybrid maturity ratings correctly?

Published on January 27, 2026

Corn hybrid maturity ratings shouldn't be confused with calendar days to maturity.

Virtual MI Ag Ideas to Grow With conference returns for sixth year with focus on food and livestock production

Published on January 27, 2026

A virtual experience offering nearly 35 educational sessions with knowledge and resources for farmers, landowners and those interested in food and agricultural production.

New bulletin available on farm income taxes: Am I a farm business?

Published on January 26, 2026

New resource from Michigan State University Extension's DEMaND Series.

Unravel regenerative principles in this upcoming webinar series

Published on January 26, 2026

This webinar series offers practical insights and science-based strategies to navigate different aspects of regenerative principles.

Boost your farm or food business: Online grant writing course now available

Published on January 26, 2026

This free course is self-paced and available online to provide food and farm business owners with a better understanding of the grant writing process.

Register now: Turn your wheat data into higher yields with the Great Lakes YEN

Published on January 26, 2026

Learn how to grow better wheat — field by field.

Beginning farmers have plenty to gain from MI Ag Ideas to Grow With

Published on January 21, 2026

Join hundreds of fellow farmers February 23 through March 5 during MI Ag Ideas to Growth With virtual conference.

MSU Extension Field Crop Webinar Series returns February 2026

Published on January 21, 2026

The Field Crops Webinar Series is offered for eight weeks to help prepare for the 2026 growing season.

Roller Crimping to Terminate Cereal Rye Cover Crop in Michigan

Published on January 16, 2026

Successful roller crimping termination and maximum weed suppression require a consistent cover crop stand with adequate aboveground biomass. Here are some tips for maximizing cereal rye biomass to increase chances of success.

Manure timing matters: How to reduce phosphorus loss

Published on January 16, 2026

Applying manure in winter can considerably increase phosphorus loss through tile drainage. Apply after harvest and incorporate or inject to protect water quality.

Michigan to host national conference on disability in agriculture

Published on January 15, 2026

The AgrAbility project's annual National Training Workshop is coming to Traverse City, Michigan, March 16-19, 2026.

Ready, set, innovate! At the virtual MI Ag Ideas to Grow With field crops sessions

Published on January 14, 2026

Creative solutions are a means of survival in the current agricultural market. This free field crops track will cover innovative tools, crops and basics to get the ideas flowing. Three RUP credits and 4 CCA credits have been requested.

MSU Extension postpones Farm Bill Commodity Program Sessions

Published on January 13, 2026

Webinar series will resume once the USDA announces new sign-up date for PLC and ARC programs.

PFAS in Biosolids

Published on January 7, 2026

Understanding the benefits, drawbacks and management considerations of biosolid land application



Nicolle Ritchie

Michigan State University Extension

Field Crops Educator - St. Joseph County

612 E. Main St., Centreville, MI 49032

(269) 858-8739 (Cell)

(269) 467-5510 (Extension Office)

ritchi67@msu.edu

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