



# U.P. Ag Connections Newsletter

January 2019

*Agricultural News from MSU Extension and AgBioResearch*

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## Welcome to the first edition of your UP Ag Connections newsletter for 2019!

With every new year comes fresh opportunities in life and in agriculture, but this January everything is new for me. My name is James DeDecker, and I'm starting as the new Director at the Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center (UPREC) this month. Many thanks to my predecessor, Ashley McFarland, for her service in this role, and to the UPREC staff for their professionalism during this transition. After a season of considering and preparing for this new responsibility, I am excited to finally be here and look forward to working with you all to cultivate a bright future for agriculture in the U.P.

I grew up near Appleton, WI in dairy country, although my family doesn't farm. My first exposure to agriculture was in my father's vegetable garden, and I enjoy weekends in the garden still today. My wife Lucy and I met at Appleton West High School and attended UW Oshkosh together, where I graduated in 2009 with degrees in environmental studies and anthropology. After college, I attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (U. of IL.) as a master's student in the Department of Crop Sciences. My work there focused on weed management in Midwest organic systems. Interacting with farmers while doing surveys and interviews for my master's project introduced me to extension. So upon graduation in 2012, I joined MSU Extension as a Field Crops Educator in Presque Isle County (the tip of your pointer finger, as the mitt goes).

Over the last six years as an extension educator, I have emphasized answering farmer's questions about conventional field crops systems in Northern Michigan through on-farm research and outreach. This has included pursuing a Ph.D. in crop sciences through U. of IL. focused on tillage in soybean systems, which I will be finishing in this new year. It has been humbling to learn along the way from producers what it means to farm Up-North; where a short growing season handicaps yield potential; where soils are marginal; where service providers and markets are few; where technology is less accessible/appropriate, where special risks like wildlife damage persist. There are a lot of things that make farming in Northern Michigan difficult. Yet, life is all about perspective, and it's only January.

I am excited to be at UPREC in 2019 because of the opportunity I see for our historic "State Farm" to continue as the heart of U.P. agriculture, and because I view the limitations of farming in the U.P. as assets, or at least exciting challenges. One strong asset that agriculture in the U.P. retains is diversity in crop and livestock systems. Enhancing that diversity to sustain farm ecosystems has been, and will continue to be, part of the mission at UPREC. We accomplish that through the testing of new practices like silvopasture and new crops like industrial hemp. The U.P. is also unique in its social identity and strong sense of community. Tapping into that identity to cultivate local markets and economies for agriculture is another part of our mission, with outputs ranging from apprentice famers and organic produce at the North Farm to malting barley research supporting the craft brewing sector.

While thinking about the demanding year ahead (Ph.D. graduation, my first year at UPREC, U.S. Ag. economy in a slump...), settling into our new home near Lake Superior is reminding me that it's important to also consider the long view. The Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center has been doing the same work since 1899, meeting the unique needs of U.P. agriculture with MSU research and extension in your communities. Change is constant, be it new faces, new economic realities or a shifting climate. Resilience on the farm comes from how we approach change with good information and optimism. We at UPREC want to be your partner in resilient farming this year, and for another 119 years. Wishing you and yours a happy and prosperous 2019, and I look forward to meeting you in person soon.

Michigan State University

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## Silvopasture Program in Chatham on January 24

Michigan State University Extension will host a Silvopasture Train the Trainer Introductory Workshop on Thursday January 24 from 9 am until 4 PM at the Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center, E3774 University Dr. Chatham, MI 49816.

The goal of this event is to provide agricultural, forestry and natural resource professionals in the state of Michigan with the opportunity to receive professional development opportunities related to agroforestry. Agroforestry rotations such as Silvopasture and alley cropping have not been explored, to our knowledge, in Michigan. We want to provide professionals in the agriculture and forestry sectors the opportunity to learn about agroforestry rotations.

**There is no cost to attend, however, registration is required to attend this event. Please register by January 17, 2019 by going to: <https://events.anr.msu.edu/SilvopastureTraining/>**

This workshop is designed to be “train the trainer” opportunity. If you are a member of the following audiences, then this training is for you:

Agriculture and Forestry Educators

Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resource agency personnel

Invested farmers including research cooperators and/or farmers with agroforestry rotations

Private Service Forestry Professionals

Guest Speakers for this event include:

Joe Orefice, PhD, is the Director of Forest & Agricultural Operations for the Yale University School of Forestry and Environmental Studies; Steve Gabriel is an agroforestry specialist with the Cornell Small Farms Program; and Brett Chedzoy, MF, is a regional extension forester with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Schuyler County, and the Forest Manager of Cornell's Arnot Teaching and Research Forest.

Questions? Monica Jean at [atkinmon@msu.edu](mailto:atkinmon@msu.edu) or 906-786-3032 ext. 106.

## Am I up to the physical labor of starting a new farming business?

*Many farms are equipped with up-to-date, labor saving machines and equipment...but many tasks on smaller, start-up farms require a great deal of physical effort.*

Jim Isleib, Extension Educator

Over the past several decades, American agriculture has been transformed by the introduction of great improvements to production efficiency. Among these are labor-saving machines and equipment which allow farmers to produce more food and farm products per person-hour than ever before. Regardless of all the amazing machines, tools and gadgets, farming is still a very physically demanding occupation. Even those operating large, highly mechanized farms occasionally must resort to hand tools – shovels, pry bars, chain saws, mechanic tools, etc – for any number of essential farm tasks. The operation of high-tech machinery also requires a lot of effort over long hours. Loss of attention or concentration due to fatigue can result in mistakes or accidents involving, at best, loss of time and money, or, at worst, serious injury or death.

The growth of the small, direct-marketing local farm sector includes many people of all ages new to agriculture. Situations can emerge early in the new business that challenge the physical abilities of the new farmer. “Can I really do this by myself?” “How can this task be accomplished without so much physical strain?” In many cases, older people, or people with disabilities want to start new, small-scale farm operations and could benefit greatly from advice or assistance from knowledgeable sources to cope with their limitations.

[Michigan AgrAbility](http://michiganagrability.org/) is an excellent resource for farmers with physical limitations. In partnership with Easter Seals of Michigan and Michigan State University, Michigan AgrAbility provides help to farmers with chronic health conditions such as back pain or strength issues, hearing or vision loss, amputations and paralysis, stroke, head injury or PTSD, fatigue and other disabling medical conditions. Their goal is to help the farmer to keep farming and to be able to generate an adequate income to provide for his or her family. For more information, contact Michigan AgrAbility at 800-956-4106 or <http://michiganagrability.org/> (Ned Stoller).

To help new and potential farmers gain insights into what physical challenges they may face, Michigan State University Extension is offering a webinar on January 16, 2019 entitled “Getting started with the physical labor of farming” as part of the [MSU Extension 2019 Beginning Farmer Webinar Series](#). Ned Stoller, agricultural engineer with the Easterseals Michigan AgrAbility Program, will discuss the physical workload of starting a farm...hours per day, days per year, lifting, bending, crawling, carrying, digging, reaching, etc. Ned will give a realistic look at the effort people will face for various farm enterprises and tools to help them work more efficiently, especially if they are not in perfect health condition. There is a small registration fee for the webinar, and a discount if all twelve webinars are selected. If the registration fee is an obstacle to participation, scholarship opportunities may be available by contacting Jim Isleib, MSU Extension Educator at [isleibj@msu.edu](mailto:isleibj@msu.edu). To register, or for more information, visit [MSU Extension 2019 Beginning Farmer Webinar Series](#).

## Planning for the upcoming growing season with FSMA in mind

As the winter holiday season comes to an end and many Yoopers settle in to ride (or ski) out the remainder of winter, now is the time many farmers get serious about planning for next season. For produce farmers, this likely takes form by pouring over seed catalogs, setting financial budgets and goals, tweaking the farm's business plan, exploring new markets, and carefully developing planting charts and schedules. Before we know it, it will be time to fire up the greenhouses or turn on the grow lights and welcome back that scent of fresh potting soil as the season's first seeds are started.

If a produce farmer needs to be concerned with the Food Safety Modernization Act's (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule, there are a few recordkeeping requirements that should be kept in mind. If a produce farmer is covered by the Produce Safety Rule, but is eligible for a qualified exemption, documentation proving the exemption status must be kept.

For all other produce growers covered by the Produce Safety Rule, here is a comprehensive list of required records:

- Worker training record, including the date of training, topics covered, and names of persons trained.
- Inspection records of the agricultural water system (e.g. well monitoring, irrigation pond inspections, etc.) and any corrective actions performed.
- Records of any water testing performed on the farm, usually obtained from a water lab.
- Water treatment monitoring (e.g. adding sanitizer to wash water).
- Scientific data used to support the microbial die-off rate in agricultural water and any corrective actions performed.
- If a farm uses municipal water for agriculture, annual records from the public water system must be kept.
- Annual documents proving that biological soil amendments of animal origin (BSAAO's) were treated using a scientifically valid process. Records may be obtained from the supplier if BSAAO's are not treated on the farm.
- Records proving treated BSAAO's have been handled, conveyed, and stored in a manner that minimize risk of contamination by untreated BSAAO's.
- A record of the date and method of cleaning and sanitizing equipment used in the harvesting, packing, and holding activities of produce covered under the Produce Safety Rule.

Records may be kept offsite, if records can be retrieved within 24 hours of official request. Electronic records are acceptable if they can be accessed on the farm. All records must be kept as original records for at least 2 years past the date the record was created. Templates for these records can be obtained online through the Produce Safety Alliance webpage, or through your local Produce Safety Technician. To find out whether your farm is covered under the Produce Safety Rule, and the steps your farm needs to take to gain compliance with the rule, please contact the UP's Produce Safety Technician, Landen Tetil, at (906) 226-8871 x105 or [Landen.mqtcondist@gmail.com](mailto:Landen.mqtcondist@gmail.com)

## Field Crops Webinar Series starts February 2019

The Field Crops Webinar Series will help growers and agribusiness professionals prepare for the 2019 growing season.

Field crop producers and agribusiness professionals who are unable to attend [Michigan State University Extension](#)'s traditional winter programs will once again be able to access the expertise of MSU specialists and educators from the comfort of their home or office. The [2019 Field Crops Webinar Series](#) will include a selection of topics that will be presented at both the [Field Crops Pest Management Update](#) and the [Field Crop Production Update](#) series.

The live webinars will run on Monday evenings from 7 to 8 p.m. EST beginning Feb. 18 through April 1, 2019.

Topics will include:

Feb. 18: Drainage Management for Nutrient Retention – Eshan Ghane, MSU

Feb. 25: Tillage in Michigan Soybean Systems – James DeDecker, MSU

March 4: Herbicide Efficacy Under Weather Stress – Erin Burns, MSU

March 11: Cover Crop Profitability – Kim Cassida, MSU

March 18: Improving Crop Production Income – Mike Staton, MSU

March 25: Tar Spot in Corn & Other Emerging Diseases – Martin Chilvers, MSU

April 1: Crop Marketing Outlook & Strategies – Jim Hilker, MSU

Participants can register for the entire series at \$20 per person or for individual sessions at \$5 per person per session. Those attending the live webinars will be eligible to earn one MDARD Pesticide Recertification (RUP) credit per session for application to one of the following categories: Private Core, Commercial Core or Field Crops. Each webinar will also be recorded and archived, and participants may choose to view the recordings at a later date.

To register for one or more webinar programs in the series, visit the [Field Crops Webinar Series event page](#). Prior to each webinar, registrants will receive an email containing a link to connect to the webinars. The webinars may be accessed on a computer or mobile device with a stable internet connection—no other equipment is necessary.

For additional information or assistance, contact Eric Anderson at 269-467-5511 or [eander32@msu.edu](mailto:eander32@msu.edu). Call by Feb. 4 to request accommodations for persons with disabilities. Requests received after this date will be fulfilled when possible.

## A look at Ag Statistics in the Upper Peninsula

A check-in with the Michigan field office of the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) shows a relatively small, but important farming sector across the region.

Jim Isleib, MSU Extension Educator

A recent article from [Michigan Farm Bureau's "Michigan Farm News"](#) indicates that the number of Michigan's permitted Grade-A dairy farms as of September 19, 2018 has dropped to 1,315, nearly a 10% decline during the past year. Of these current, permitted Grade-A dairy farms, 69 are located in the Upper Peninsula, reflecting at least a similar decline in dairy farming businesses. Quite a change from the approximately 250 dairy farms across the Upper Peninsula (U.P.) 30 years ago. This sobering statistic leads to the question – what is the current status of the rest of the farming sector in the U.P.?

Jim Collom, agricultural statistician with the [NASS Great Lakes Region office](#) in East Lansing, MI, provided the following ag-related numbers for the U.P.:

Commodity	U.P. acres (planted) or number of animals	MI acres (planted) or number of animals	U.P. as % of MI total
Corn	22,000	2,400,000	0.9%
Oats	9,000	55,000	16.4%
Soybeans	3,700	2,050,000	0.2%
Dry beans	1,300	230,000	0.6%
Barley	4,898	9,571	51.2%
Wheat	2,600	510,000	0.5%
Potatoes	1,852	46,662	4.0%
Hay	153,627	1,061,932	14.5%
All Cattle	45,600	1,160,000	3.9%
Milk Cows	12,300	428,000	2.9%
Sheep	3,640	86,503	4.2%
Goats	1,004	27,059	3.7%
Hogs	1,915	1,099,478	0.2%
Layers	14,943	12,676,021	0.1%
Broilers	3,143	1,125,601	0.3%

2018 NASS data: Corn, oats, soybeans, dry beans, all cattle, milk cows

2012 NASS data: Barley, potatoes, hay, sheep, goats, hogs, layers, broilers

These estimates do not include a figure for pasture land, a large percentage of U.P. farm land. A dependable estimate of Michigan and U.P. land in pasture is not available, but a figure similar to the hay acreage may be acceptable for the U.P., understanding that some hay and crop acreage may also be pastured during the same growing season.

It is evident that agriculture in the U.P. region is mostly animal-based, with the bulk of crop production focused on livestock feed for on-farm use. Feed crops including hay, pasture, corn, barley and oats make up the bulk of crop acreage with cash crops including potatoes, dry beans, soybeans and wheat on smaller acreage. Most livestock enterprises focus on ruminant species, including beef and dairy cattle, sheep and goats. This makes sense and allows for on-farm utilization of most U.P. crops produced. Of course, there are many small, specialized farms not included in these figures, such as diversified vegetable farms, U-pick farms, specialized crop farms, etc.

How does the U.P. agricultural sector measure up to the rest of the state? Depends how you look at it. If you compare ag production with total land mass, then the U.P. doesn't do so well, with 29% of the total Michigan land producing a much smaller percentage of these agricultural products (with the exception of barley at 51.2% of the states total 9,571 acres). However, if you compare regional population, the U.P. does better, with about 3% of the state's population in the U.P. region. The U.P. produces 3% or more of several of the listed commodities, including hay, cattle, sheep, potatoes, oats and barley. So, the U.P. holds its own in that regard.

Michigan State University Extension supports the Upper Peninsula agricultural sector with a small team of county-based educators and the staff of the MSU Upper Peninsula Research and Extension Center in Chatham, MI. Part of that support includes responding to inquiries from people interested in establishing new farm businesses in the region. Extension educators always try to be realistic and avoid creating any false impressions about U.P. farming. There are pros and cons. As in all regions of Michigan and the U.S., farming systems need to match the existing conditions, including soils, climate, ag infrastructure and marketing opportunities.

## HAPPY COWS LIVE IN MICHIGAN

**Overview:** This program is designed for dairy farm owners and managers to learn about the latest research and strategies to improve efficiency with animal welfare in mind. Topics include: importance of continual improvement in efficiency, heat stress and its implications, stocking density and the impact on feet and legs, strategies to maintain a stable rumen, and calf and heifer management for improved well-being and profit.

**Presenters:** MSU Extension Dairy Educators

**Dates and Locations:** **January 29**, 8:30- 11:30 a.m. Live Broadcast to Menominee County MSUE and 9:30-12:30 Upper Peninsula Research Extension Center

**Details:** Contact Monica Jean (906) 786-3032, [atkinmon@msu.edu](mailto:atkinmon@msu.edu) or Frank Wardynski (906) 884-4386, [wardynsk@msu.edu](mailto:wardynsk@msu.edu)

## MSU Extension is offering pre-exam study sessions for those seeking state pesticide applicator certification.

### Locations/Dates:

- **Marquette County Negaunee Service Center (downstairs meeting room)**, 184 US 41 East, Negaunee, MI 49866  
Wednesday, January 17, 2019, 9am-1pm ET  
State exam offered at 1:15pm ET
- **State Office Building**, 305 Ludington St, 2nd Floor Conference Room, Escanaba, MI 49829  
Tuesday, February 6, 2019, 9am-1pm ET  
State exam offered at 1:15 ET

## SAVE THE DATE -- AG for Tomorrow Conference

Michigan State University Extension is hosting the 13<sup>th</sup> annual Agriculture for Tomorrow conference on March 12, 2019 to help U.P. farmers stay informed and up-to-date.

Topics will include farm business management level I and II, farm business plan development, new clover varieties, crop nutrient management, U.P. 2018 crop research and demo highlights, cattle handling equipment, compliance with food safety requirements, local markets for UP farm products, measuring soil health and more. We are planning for a combination of industry reps, MSU staff and others to present break-out sessions. Participants can gain information on farming and management practices they are currently using, or explore new possibilities.

The day will have four themed tracks with concurrent sessions running throughout the day. This year the themed tracks will include Livestock, Crops, Farm Business Management and Diversified Local Foods.

Agriculture for Tomorrow will be held at Bay College, Heirman University Center, 2001 N. Lincoln road, Escanaba. The early registration cost is \$25 before March 1, 2019, or \$35 after that date, and includes lunch and materials. On-line registration will be available soon at [msue.anr.msu.edu/events](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/events). A paper program flyer and registration form will be included in the February issue of the U.P. Ag Connections newsletter.

Contact Jim Isleib at 906-387-2530 or [isleibj@msu.edu](mailto:isleibj@msu.edu) with any questions.

## Market Report

Choice Steers	\$98—\$108 per 100 lbs.		
Holstein Steers	\$86—\$92 per 100 lbs.		
Hogs	\$41—\$45 per 100 lbs.		
Lambs	\$120—\$145 per 100 lbs.		
Cull cows	\$38—\$42 per 100 lbs.		
Calves	\$5—\$75 per 100 lbs.		
Goats	\$200—\$250 per 100 lbs.		

### Breeding and Feeder Animals

Grade Holstein cows \$1000—\$1550/head

Grade Holstein bred heifers \$1000—\$1400/head

### Feed Prices across the U.P.

	Avg. \$/cwt	Avg. \$/ton	Price Range
Corn	\$9.85	\$196.95	\$146-256
Soymeal	\$19.59	\$391.75	\$370-450
Oats	\$12.00	\$240.00	\$200-300
Barley	\$9.78	\$195.50	\$160-240

Average price/100 wt. for 1 ton lots

## Classifieds

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### ***Calendar of Events***

**SWAC live-stream starting January 4** <https://www.southwestagconference.ca/program/livestream-options/>.  
**UP Crop Nutrient Management Meeting**—January 9 — Rudyard Township Hall, Rudyard, 6:30-8:00 pm  
**MSUE Beginning Farmer Webinar Series** —January 16, 23, 30 through April 3—online  
**Pesticide Applicator Training –Core manual review**—January 17—Negaunee Service Center, Negaunee, 9 am-1 pm  
**Silvopasture Train the Trainer Intro Workshop**—January 24—MSU UPREC, Chatham, 9:00-4:00  
**Dairy Education Program**—January 29—Menominee Co. MSUE Office, 8:30-11:30 am CT  
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**UP Crop Nutrient Management Meeting**—February 4—MSU UPREC, Chatham, 6:30-8:00 pm  
**Pesticide Applicator Training –Core manual review**—February 6—State Office Bldg., Escanaba, 9 am—1 pm  
**UP Crop Nutrient Management Meeting**—February 11 —Mass City Comm Center, Mass City, 6:30-8:00 pm  
**MSUE Field Crop Webinar Series**—February 18-April 1—online  
**Christmas Tree Grower Educational Workshop**—March 19—Delta Co. MSUE Office, 1-3 pm

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