



MFGC UPDATE

For members of the Michigan Floriculture Growers Council

April 2015

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Calendar of Events

MSU Grower Day
July 11-14, 2015
MSU

Annual Meeting
Tuesday, Dec 8, 2015
Devos Place
Grand Rapids

2015 Board of Directors

President
Bill Tuinier

Vice-President
Dennis Crum

Secretary/Treasurer
Donny Marvaso

Members
Dick Derks
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Tammy Ruhlig

WMGA Appointee
Scott Stiles

Policy Chair
Ken Tuinier

Membership Chair
Susie Raker-Zimmerman

Hello Member,

Happy Spring!

We thought you might enjoy reading about Michigan floriculture in this year's Michigan Agriculture Magazine. Check out "Going Green" on page 24!



[Michigan Agriculture Magazine](#)

Sales Tax on floriculture/vegetable plants/products

We have had several inquiries on sales tax charged to greenhouse products. We spoke to Michigan Treasury to clarify when and what sales tax should be applied.

Flowers and plants sold to retail customers require sales tax be collected at the 6% rate and forwarded to the State. The exception is that if the plant is a vegetable or food producing, no sales tax is charged. The same for products sold under the Bridge Card Program for food products.

MAEAP Certified Members

Kalamazoo Specialty
Plants, LLC
Kalamazoo

Great Lakes
Greenhouses
Kalamazoo

GreenDorr Greenhouse
Dorr

Joe Theisen Farm
St. Clair

Westrate Greenhouses,
Inc
Kalamazoo



Michigan Floriculture Growers,

Did you know if more than 50 percent of your income is from farming, you may be eligible for a grant/loan or both from USDA Rural Development to help reduce energy consumption on your farm?

Applications are taken year round. Visit this link to get started:
<http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/rural-energy-america-program-renewable-energy-systems-energy-efficiency>



USDA Seeks Input Via Virtual Public Comment Meeting

USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service sent this bulletin at 04/09/2015 11:27 AM EDT

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has posted a list of questions it seeks input on during upcoming virtual public comment meetings on biotechnology regulation.

The meetings are scheduled for May 6 from 6-9 pm; May 12 from 5-8 pm, and May 20 from 4-7 pm. All times are Eastern Daylight Time.

The questions (see below) as well as background information on the regulation of biotechnology are available at our website devoted to the subject. Stakeholders are encouraged to bookmark this site and return regularly for updates.

APHIS seeks input on the following questions:

1. Should APHIS regulate based on the characteristics of biotechnology products and the potential risks they may pose, or by the process by which they were created? In either case, what criteria should be used to determine what APHIS regulates? Are there products and processes APHIS should not regulate?
2. The Plant Protection Act gives APHIS the authority to protect plant health through regulatory programs. APHIS has implemented the plant pest authority as part of their biotechnology regulations. Should APHIS add noxious weed provisions to their to

biotechnology regulations and if so, how? What protection goals should APHIS consider?

3. Are there legal authorities given to USDA outside the Plant Protection Act that APHIS should examine to regulate or oversee the products of biotechnology? What are they, and how would they be used?
4. What non-regulatory solutions or policy alternatives could or should be considered to complement APHIS's regulatory program?

APHIS has also posted to the [website](#) information on how to register for the virtual public comment meetings.

Nature-Fresh-Farms to Build 175 Acre Greenhouse Facility in Northwest Ohio

Posted By: Laura Drotleff |

April 29, 2015

Growing fresh vegetables in the Midwest is about to take a major turn in a new direction as Nature Fresh Farms has announced a large-scale investment in northwest Ohio. The company broke ground on April 10 to begin construction on a 175-acre greenhouse facility in Delta, Ohio.

"This is an exciting time for Nature Fresh Farms as we expand our operations to include a U.S. growing facility," said Nature Fresh Farms President Peter Quiring in a press release. "This development will allow us to better serve our Ohio customers with locally grown produce, year-round and continue to grow our U.S. operations."

Contingent upon acceptable levels of incentives from the State of Ohio and other government authorities, as well as utility rates agreeable to Nature Fresh, the company would be poised to ship its first case of vegetables in December 2015. The greenhouse project will be completed in several phases over the next seven years with a total investment approaching \$200 million by the year 2022.

"Nature Fresh Farms' intention to open its first U.S. production facility in Delta is great news for northwest Ohio," said Aaron Pitts, managing director of Jobs-Ohio. "We look forward to working closely with the Nature Fresh Farms team and our local partners as the company establishes operations in the United States."

Nature Fresh Farms has partnered with Jobs-Ohio, the Regional Growth Partnership, the Fulton County Economic Development Corporation, York Township and the Village of Delta after an extensive search for the optimal site for this expansion project. The Delta, Ohio, site was selected due to its easy access to current and future customers, as well as proximity to the company's headquarters.

Nature Fresh Farms is also exploring a partnership with Northstar/Bluescope Steel to utilize carbon dioxide and waste heat from its operations. This innovative and environmentally beneficial partnership will be one of the first of its kind anywhere in the United States.

"The proposed investment by Nature Fresh Farms is an exciting project for the York Township, the Village of Delta and surrounding communities," said Matt Gilroy, executive director of the Fulton County Economic Development Corporation. "The company plans to employ more than 300 people by the last phase of the project and its payroll at the Fulton County location will be nearly \$12 million annually. We welcome Nature Fresh Farms to Fulton County and will work diligently to meet the company's needs and complete the project successfully."

Learn more about the company at the [Nature Fresh Farms website](#).

Lowe's Announces Commitment To Phase Out Neonicotinoids By 2019

By: Laura Drotleff | April 11, 2015

Home improvement retailer Lowe's companies announced April 9 that it has committed to eliminate neonicotinoid pesticides from its stores in a gradual phase-out over the next 48 months.

In the release of its 2014 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Report, providing an expanded and enhanced view of the company's sustainability objectives and progress over the past year, Lowe's stated one of its commitments for 2015 includes phasing out neonicotinoids.

"Lowe's is committed to regularly reviewing the products and information it offers customers," the CSR states. "Following studies that say many factors, including neonicotinoid pesticides, could potentially damage the health of pollinators, Lowe's has committed to take several steps to support pollinator health. Lowe's will phase out the sale of products that contain neonic pesticides within 48 months as suitable alternatives become commercially available. Lowe's will include greater organic and non-neonic product selections, work with growers to eliminate the use of neonic pesticides on bee-attractive plants it sells and educate customers and employees through in-store and online resources."

This announcement comes just two weeks after the USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) showed evidence that honey production increased by 19 percent and honey bee populations increased 4 percent since 2013. Lowe's announcement also follows one week after the horticulture industry's Bee & Pollinator Stewardship Initiative released a video, "Protecting Bees & Pollinators: What Horticulture Needs To Know," which narrates the current state of pollinator health, provides information on factors that impact pollinators and the environment and highlights the beneficial role horticulture plays in providing healthy and nurturing environments. The video also presented facts and data from several experts that show neonics have not been soundly proven to be the cause of bee decline.

Industry Reacts To Lowe's Announcement

Upon learning of the Lowe's announcement, AmericanHort, the Society of American Florists (SAF), the Horticultural Research Initiative (HRI) and the American Floral Endowment (AFE) - the organizations that launched the horticulture industry's collaborative Bee & Pollinator Stewardship Initiative - released the following statement:

"As professional horticulturists, we grow trees, plants and flowers, and healthy trees, plants and flowers are critically important to healthy bees and healthy bee habitats. Pollinator health is a highly complex issue, and we recognize that there are many factors that can affect bee health. Although the improper use of pesticides can harm bees, a growing number of credible, independent studies indicate that neonicotinoids, when used as directed, are not the cause of widespread bee health issues.

"Consumers want plants that are healthy, beautiful and pest-free, and neonicotinoids have proven to be among the most effective pest management tools available. Neonicotinoids also are among the safest products we have for both our employees and the environment.

"Lowe's position is surprising, considering the most recent and positive reports on the state of honeybee health (NASS honey report) and recent peer reviewed research. This is an issue for which sound science must take priority.

"Plant growers are experts on how to produce healthy plants. We embrace the challenge of protecting bee and pollinator health and the opportunity to be part of the solution. We will continue to fund important research on the health of bees, and guide horticulture on safe and responsible pest management. Horticulture will look to the best science to guide our efforts."

The Bee & Pollinator Stewardship Initiative will fund several research efforts over the next two to five years through the Horticulture Research Initiative and the American Floral Endowment that will provide sound science about neonicotinoids and pollinator health.

The Bee & Pollinator Stewardship Initiative was established in 2014 by AmericanHort, HRI, SAF and AFE. Since the Initiative was established, these groups have developed close working relationships with other specialty crop groups, the Pollinator Partnership and two national organizations for beekeepers, the American Honey Producers Association and the American Beekeeping Federation.

An anonymous grower said Lowe's has worked with its grower council on its position statement over the past year.

"The growers support Lowe's position to allow the science and facts to keep driving the decisions. By taking a phased-in approach, it allows time for the research to be done adequately and properly on all levels, while giving growers adequate time and options to find the right tools to deliver the best quality plants for the stores and the best experience for the consumer at home."

Lowe's Commitment Include Phase Out Of Neonics, Increased IPM

In a Friends Of The Earth press release, the environmental organization listed Lowe's commitments as such:

A time-bound phase out of neonicotinoid ("neonics") containing products in shelf products and plants, to be completed by the Spring of 2019, as suitable alternatives become available. For nurseries, Lowe's will phase-out neonics for bee-attractive plants, and plants where regulatory requirements do not require the application of neonics (certain states require the application of neonics on certain plants and nursery material). Lowe's plans to implement this phase-out as soon as is practicable.

Redoubling pesticide management efforts and the addition of an application reduction plan with plant suppliers, including the collection and sharing of growers' best practices around use of biological controls and integrated pest management ("IPM") practices, and research into best alternatives. Nurseries will be required to disclose to Lowe's the amount of pesticides used per acre, or a similar metric.

Increased focus on consumer education initiatives including in-store distribution of EPA and Pollinator Partnership pesticide brochures and product tags which will highlight the health of bees and other pollinators.

Funding of pollinator gardens through the company's philanthropic and volunteer programs.

Disclosure of these efforts in its 2014 Corporate Social Responsibility Report.

Continued dialogue with Domini, Trillium and Friends of the Earth focused on implementation and public reporting of these commitments.

The Friends Of The Earth release went on to say:

"Lowe's announcement comes eight months after a meta-analysis of 1,121 peer-reviewed studies by the Task Force on Systemic Pesticides concluded neonicotinoids are a leading factor of bee declines and are harming birds, earthworms, butterflies and other wildlife. The Task Force called for immediate regulatory action.

"In October, 2014, the Council on Environmental Quality issued guidance for federal facilities and federal lands which included acquiring seeds and plants from nurseries that do not treat these items with systemic insecticides.

"On April 2, the EPA announced a moratorium on new or expanded uses of neonicotinoids while it evaluates the risks posed to pollinators. Last month, more than four million Americans signed petitions calling on the Obama administration to put forth strong protections for bees and other pollinators. The Pollinator Health Task Force, established by the White House this past June, is charged with improving pollinator health, and assessing the impacts of pesticides, including neonicotinoids, on pollinators."

Read the full Friends Of The Earth release and the Lowe's press release that went out on PR Newswire. For more information, read Lowe's complete Social Responsibility Report, in particular, the Improving Supplier Standards section. Stay tuned for continuing coverage on this developing story on GreenhouseGrower.com.

[Forward this email](#)

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