



The Michigan FFA
Creed

March/April 2009

**Will California's new agricultural
policies be coming to the
Great Lakes state?
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The Michigan FFA Creed



Issue 4 Volume 7

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The Michigan FFA will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, age, gender, marital status, weight, sexual orientation or disability. Any student requiring an accommodation as a result of a disability should contact the chapter advisor to arrange such accommodation.

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I believe in...

dreams.

Throughout time, history has been altered and millions of lives changed by the dreams and goals set by average men and women just like you.

Dr. King envisioned a more perfect union for all races and 45 years later, our country elected its first African-American president.

A group of women met in Seneca Falls, New York in 1848, drafting their own declaration of independence. 72 years later, their granddaughters got the vote.

Sometimes, our dreams can seem a little out of reach or impractical. Thomas Edison's dreams seemed silly to some. The Wright Brothers were deemed crazy by their own

hometown.

Too often, when someone tells us to stop dreaming or let go of our hopes, we listen. "Don't go too far, too fast," the critics will say.

And too often, we listen to these detractors. They may be our parents, teachers or friends – and they mean well for the most part – but maybe they don't remember a time when they used to dream, eyes shifted towards the sky.

If you read religious scripture, you'll find that the Creator bestowed three gifts onto mankind: faith, hope and love. If you believe this, then you realize we were born to dream and reach for bigger and better things.

We encourage you to dream, Michigan FFA. Dream big.

Dates to Remember...

March

11-13 81st Michigan FFA State Convention

April

3 Marketing Plan Papers Due
3 Ag Skills Contest Registration Due
17 Meats Contest
17 State Ag Skills Contests
18 Horse Judging

CALIFORNIA'S PROPOSAL 2:

*... is Michigan
next?*

By: **Aaron Balowski**
MSU Physics & Chemistry Major

The story of American agriculture is a remarkably different one than that belonging to the greatest generation.

Today, it is one of an ever-changing environment and industry. One dependent not only on the changes in methodology to make agriculture more profitable but also as a result of the changes imposed by non-agriculturalists.

A prime example of this was voted into law November 2008 in California under the name of Proposition 2, or "Standards for Confining Farm Animals."

To understand the consequences (both negative and positive) of the act, the act itself must first be understood. The official description of the policy, as presented on the ballot reads: Proposal 2 "requires that certain farm animals be allowed, for the majority of every day, to fully extend

their limbs or wings, lie down, stand up, and turn around. Limited exceptions may apply."

When put to a public vote, Proposal 2 passed with 63.5% of the popular vote, forever altering agriculture in the state of California and causing agriculturalists across the nation to evaluate the industry in each of their home states.

This proposal brings up three fundamental questions which are being addressed in the minds of farmers, policy makers and consumers everywhere. What prompted such a change to agriculture in California? How will this affect agriculture and the consumers in California, the country and even the world? What can agriculturalists learn from this?

California is the nation's most agriculturally diverse state, raising everything from grain to livestock, apples to



vegetables and even citrus. Focusing on the livestock production side of California's agriculture, there are around 40 million animals raised in the state for commercial purposes, including milk, meat and egg production. It is this large number of animals, and because of the ease of finding information on the internet that in recent years, animal agriculture in California has experienced an upswing in the number of people who are interested in knowing how animals are treated. From this increase in exposure a



Crates such as these are no longer permissible in California

certain area of livestock production was targeted; the caging and/or the confinement of animals.

Organizations such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, Sierra Club California and the Humane Society of the United States* spearheaded campaigns to improve the living condition of farm animals, focusing on livestock confinement.

Already in place in California were laws prohibiting the cruelty of animals. Agriculturalists also began developing guidelines to address how to best raise livestock in a safe and ethical manner with specific industries developing specific guidelines that expand on GAAMPs, or Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices, in order to not only improve public opinion, but also better the conditions of livestock environments from the eyes of the consumer and farmer.

Furthermore, some industries began the phasing out of certain production practices that were questioned. For example, the swine industry in California had begun phasing out the usage of gestation crates, or crates used to hold pregnant sows. By the time the election took place a transfer was almost complete.

There was a fundamental breakdown of understanding between the consumers of agricultural practices and the agriculturalists.

How this will policy affect agriculture and consumers in California and beyond? As previously mentioned, little

impact will be made to the California swine industry as vast steps have already been put into place, either in anticipation of such an event, or simply as a way to try to bridge the gap between practices and perceptions. Nevertheless vast changes are to be expected to arise from this legislation.

California egg production is an example pointed to by many. In commercial egg production, many producers use battery-cages as a way to house birds to provide efficient egg production and collection. In this system hens are housed in cages in which they live their lives with the goal of producing as many eggs as possible for as little money as possible and, as is claimed by agriculturalists, in an ethical, humane way.

But supporters of Proposal 2 have an inherently different view of what they consider to be ethical and humane.

California farmers are expecting four main things to result from Proposal 2 with possible consequences arising from each. The first is a loss in efficiency due to difficulties being able to identify problems in specific birds, more direct bird to bird contact increases the rate of disease spreading and difficulties in monitoring individual feed consumption.

The second problem is a loss in profitability, and therefore a loss in number of producers.

The third concern is loss in production, due to three main components: lower efficiencies resulting in fewer eggs

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***California's Proposal 2:
...is Michigan next?
(con't from page E)***

per bird, less producers and therefore fewer birds and changing of space requirements resulting in not only upfront cost, but also a lower capacity per given areas.

The final expected outcome from the farmer's side is a decrease in food safety. In the past ten years there has not been a single case of Salmonella traced back to California eggs or egg products. Farmers credit this to early regulations and the ease of keeping the eggs themselves sanitary and removed from anything that the chickens may have passed on through further direct contact. The consequences that are predicted to result from these issues are wide and varied and include everything to increased likelihood of avian flu being introduced to the United States as more birds are housed outside, to increased food production and increased health risks due to food coming from markets with less regulations like Mexico, and even economic upheaval as an estimated \$500 million will be required by state egg producers to go through the switch.

But what do supporters of the policy expect to happen because of this legislation? One result that may come of this

is one that goes very strongly against what the farmers say. Supporters, however, argue that instead of hurting farmers it might encourage family farmers with small flocks as it will level the playing field between them and the "factory farms." Additionally, supporters say that it will increase the safety of our food, not hurt it.

Proponents cite the Chino slaughter plant investigation in which cattle were witnessed being the victims of extreme abuse that led to the recall of beef from schools and stores all across the country. They say that by putting this law into effect, animals will be healthier due to lower levels of stress, actually making them more productive.

What can agriculturists learn from California?

This is not the first time something like this has happened nor will it be the last. Before California passed this law four other states had passed similar ones. Does that mean that agriculture must simply bend to the will of the public?

The answer is no. What it means is that American agriculture must look at ways to be more responsive to public concerns.

From this battle, we must take away methods in which agriculture can communicate with non-agriculturalists, and work to effectively close the gap between farm and the plate. The agricultural industry is being thrust into the spotlight as a focal point for everything from low cost fuel to the possible saviors of a global energy crisis. In order to prevent future breakdowns in understanding we must use this spotlight so that we can bring everyone a little closer to the farm.

Agriculture is not an ever changing environment all to itself then, as was mentioned at the beginning. Rather agriculture is a mirror of an ever changing world, connected in some way to every person, acre, crisis, and beyond. Mirrors are extraordinary because when they are looked at from the same viewpoint everything looks identical, but move one way or the other and quickly other things begin to come into the picture. But there are ways to make it so that everyone, regardless of their position can begin to see more of the same things, you bend or alter the mirror so that what is reflected back is something that everyone can see. Agriculture will always be like a mirror, showing what the concerns of the people of the world are, but it is a mirror that we can change the shape of. Whether we alter the mirror by altering ourselves, or working to alter the viewpoints of others remains to be seen, and it is likely that the best option may be a combination of the two to try to bring everything a little bit closer together. If we are to ensure the future of agriculture the gap between consumer and producer must somehow be closed.



YOUR JOURNEY STARTS AT MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY!



Get where you're going with one of the two new majors from the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources CARRS (Community, Agriculture, Recreation and Resource Studies) Department!

In the Fall of 2008, two new majors will be revealed within the CARRS Department: Environmental Studies and Agriscience & Park Recreation and Tourism Resources.

In the Environmental Studies and Agriscience major, options will include: Communication, Community Engagement and Education, Science and Policy, as well as Agriscience and Natural Resources Teacher Education.

In the Park Recreation and Tourism Resources major, options will include: Community Engagement and Education, Commercial Recreation and Tourism, Community Recreation and Zoo and Aquarium Sciences.

For more information please contact: Dr. Randy Showerman (showerma@msu.edu), Dr. David Krueger (kruege20@msu.edu) or Dr. Jenó Rivera (jeno@msu.edu).

Do you or someone you know have an impressive SAE? If so, please email pettyd@anr.msu.edu and let us highlight the student!!!

Member



Region I Torri Nighbert, Olivet

Senior Torri Nighbert of Olivet has been the reporter and treasurer of her chapter in addition to serving as the Region I Reporter. As a member, she has attended the Washington Leadership Conference and competed at Ag Skills Contests in the areas of Ag Sales, Dairy Judging and Dairy Showmanship.

Her SAEs include Diversified Livestock (raising rabbits, swine, dairy and beef) and Beef Production.

Nighbert plans to attend Michigan State University and will enroll in the Agriculture Industries program.



Region II J.W. Hart, North Adams-Jerome

J.W. Hart has been a member of the North Adams-Jerome FFA since middle school but has a passion for agriculture that goes back even earlier, growing up on a small dairy farm. Currently, he serves as the Region II President and his chapter's president. Last year, he was selected as his chapter's star farmer.

He has competed in Dairy Cattle Judging, as well.

In his free time, Hart enjoys playing basketball, working on machinery and riding his motorcycle. He is considering a future in the navy or playing basketball at the college level.



Region III Jake Shephard, Sanilac

A freshman at Michigan State University, Jake Shephard of Sanilac, is enrolled in the Ag Industries program.

In high school, he served as chapter president and reporter and was also involved in Teen Club and 4-H. Currently, he is working with his dad to develop a modified pulling tractor by building an alcohol-powered HEMI engine.

This love of tractors started at a very young age when his dad taught him how to fix them, furthering this knowledge by making his own parts for his tractors.

Highlights



Region IV Laura Krhovsky, Corunna

A junior at Corunna, Laura Krhovsky is a busy young lady. In addition to FFA, she has been involved with the National Honor Society, student council, Youth Advisory Council of Shiawassee County and the varsity dance team.

In the FFA, she is currently serving as her chapter and regional president and has competed at the state level in Creed Speaking, Extemporaneous Public Speaking and the Forestry and Agriculture Communications CDEs.

After high school, Krhovsky plans to attend either the University of Michigan or Michigan State University to major in pre-medicine.



Region V Sarah Hruby, Fremont

Sarah Hruby, senior, has been a rising star in the FFA since she was named Fremont's Star Greenhand. Since then, she has served as chapter historian, treasurer and vice president in addition to competing in Greenhand Public Speaking, Prepared Public Speaking and Job Interview leadership contests.

Her SAEs of Diversified Livestock Production and Dairy Placement have earned her silver awards in both categories at two state conventions.

After graduating high school, Hruby will attend either Central Michigan University or Michigan State University.



Region VI Clorissa Sumerix, Alpena

With quite the chapter resume, senior Clorissa Sumerix has served as Alpena's president, secretary and parliamentarian. Her skills in parliamentary procedure helped her team make it to state finals two times in a row, competing in demonstration twice, as well.

Sumerix works on her family farm and owns cattle and horses of her own. She participates in Beef Production and Equine SAEs.

Outside of the FFA, Sumerix participates in high school track and a member of the 4-H. She enjoys showing chickens, beef and horses at the Alpena County Fair.

Chronic Wasting Disease



By: Jason Koning
MSU Agriscience Education Major

Hunters and farmers in Michigan have something else to add to their growing list of concerns.

The new problem is chronic wasting disease, which has been found to largely affect cervids, or members of the deer family.

Though the disease was first discovered more than 40 years ago in northern Colorado, the Michigan Departments of Agriculture (MDA) and Natural Resources (DNR) announced the first white-tail with the disease in Michigan was discovered in August of 2008. It is still unknown exactly how the deer contracted the disease.

For those who prefer to be technical, chronic wasting disease or CWD is a transmissible spongiform encephalopathy caused by an infectious agent called a prion. Prions are abnormal forms of proteins which are commonly found in the central nervous system. Prions are capable of spreading throughout the peripheral nervous system, meaning that it can affect the meat although no evidence has been found to suggest that CWD can actually occur in meat. Most of the cases throughout the U.S. and Canada were found in adults. Infected animals include white-tailed deer, mule deer, black-tailed deer, elk (wapiti), and moose.

There are several clinical symptoms of the disease but the most obvious are weight loss and behavioral changes. The long list of other symptoms include stumbling, tremors, lack of coordination, blank facial expressions, excessive salivation, loss of appetite, excessive thirst, excessive urination, listlessness, teeth grinding, abnormal head posture, and drooping ears.

Unlike the recent pseudorabies outbreak in swine, this has been discovered just as much in deer that are in captivity as well as those in the wild. Animals in captivity have been found with the disease in Alberta and Saskatchewan, Canada

as well as the U.S. states of Colorado, Nebraska, Minnesota, South Dakota, Montana, Oklahoma, Kansas, Wisconsin, New York, and now Michigan. Deer and elk farmers need to be enrolled in state CWD surveillance and control programs to help control the disease. Free-ranging cervids have been found positive in Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, South Dakota, Illinois, New Mexico, Utah, Wisconsin, New York, West Virginia, Kansas, and Saskatchewan, Canada. Hunters should know the symptoms of CWD and report any suspected cases to the DNR immediately.

One reason that makes this disease potentially difficult to control is the incubation period, which is the time between infection and the clinical symptoms. The disease has a minimum of 18 months from when the animal is contaminated with the disease to when the disease starts to actually affect the animal. Incubation periods have been observed to be as long as 36 months in elk. During early infection, many cases result in a false negative status due to the long incubation period.

Unfortunately, there is no form of treatment for CWD. It is a very progressive disease and is always fatal. However, transmission can be controlled by limiting the contact made between non-infected and infected animals.

CWD is highly contagious upon contact through many different forms. Deer can contract the disease through direct contact with an infected animal, feces, urine, an infected facility or area (such as from trees), maternally (though this is rare), and most importantly, saliva contamination of water and feed sources – including bait piles. So what does this mean? Basically, concentrated deer in captivity and baiting or feeding deer can drastically increase the chance of contamination.

Many hunters and farmers have asked if there is a way to destroy the infectious agent before it infects deer. Applying disinfectants to bait piles or facilities would help contain the

disease. Unfortunately, one of the characteristics of CWD's type of agent is its ability to resist conventional forms of disinfectants, high temperatures, and enzymes that normally break down proteins. Disinfectants are still being developed so for now, this remains a non-option.

Due to its highly contagious nature, CWD caused the State of Michigan to immediately quarantine all privately owned cervid (POC) facilities. This includes prohibiting the movement of all privately-owned deer, elk, and moose, whether dead or alive. The MDA and DNR trained 27 MDA employees to audit these POC facilities. Within less than two weeks in 2008, 112 POC facilities were contacted and visited with 77 facilities being found to be in compliance. These audits resulted in the release of 50 quarantines. Since this, more than 172 facilities have been released from quarantine. More than 2,300 POC's were tested and every test was negative except for the Kent County case.

The Michigan DNR's active approach to containing this disease is also apparent with free-ranging deer. Baiting was banned a few years ago in the Lower Peninsula for all purposes, including hunting and recreational viewing. In 2008, baiting violation citations increased more than three times from the previous year. Fines for baiting range anywhere from \$50 to \$500 and up to 90 days in jail. Report All Poaching (RAP) hotline calls were up more than 50% since last year as well. The DNR tested more than 8,000 wild deer in 2008 and all came back negative for the disease. Fortunately, they have recognized just how serious this disease can be.

Currently there is only one recognized standard method of testing for CWD by the USDA. The brain and lymphoid tissues (lymph nodes and tonsils) are examined from a dead animal. The standard method of testing used by the USDA is immunohistochemical (IHC) staining. Different accumulations of color are used to diagnose the disease microscopically.

To test for CWD, the obex part of the brainstem must be included. Research has shown that the obex is the first part of the brain where CWD is detected. The disease will move throughout the brain as it progresses but normally starts in the obex. In some deer, lymphoid tissues have tested positive for the disease but the obex does not, so it is important to test the lymphoid tissues as well. The MSU Diagnostic Lab handles testing for CWD in Michigan.

A new method of testing live

animals has been developed by researchers in Colorado. The test involves collecting tonsil biopsies for microscopic examination. It has its limitations as it only shows promising results for mule deer. More research is needed before live animal examinations will become accepted by the USDA.

Perhaps the most important question being asked about CWD is whether humans can become contaminated with the disease. There has been little research on this question but so far the research has shown that humans are immune to the disease. Since the disease is protein-based, it is unlikely to affect humans. Proteins differ between species, especially between deer and humans. Researchers say that there is a "substantial barrier" that CWD would need to cross in order to contaminate a human being.

Research has been done on other ruminants such as cattle, sheep, and goats to see if the disease would contaminate them. Fortunately, there has been no evidence of transmission to other animals. Research and studies continue to explore whether or not CWD can be transmitted to other animals besides cervids or worse yet, to humans.

CWD is potentially a devastating disease to our state's deer population. It has the capability of becoming much more serious than people realize. Whether or not the disease can be properly controlled, a disinfectant can be created, or a vaccine made remains to be seen. Until then, the state's 725,000 hunters need to think before they put out bait to attract their next prize buck. Not only do they risk a bait citation from the DNR, but they risk the loss of \$500 million dollars to Michigan's struggling economy that is generated by deer hunting and the eradication of the deer population entirely.



Saving Our Wetlands: One Beetle at a Time



By: Marie Hruby
MSU Agriscience Education Major

One Michigan FFA chapter isn't letting a foreign invader get the best of them.

Lythrum salicaria, more commonly known as Purple loosestrife is a European plant species which is an aggressive invader of North American wetlands, lakes and rivers. Though the flower is very bright and colorful, dense stands of loosestrife impair recreational use of wetlands and rivers, hinder water flow in drainage ditches and invade right-of-ways, requiring costly management efforts.

Besides hindering recreational use and water flow in ditches, once this plant establishes itself, it often becomes the dominant plant, taking over vegetation and native plants, causing the elimination of food and shelter for wildlife and other species.

Purple loosestrife is a serious problem and is becoming more widespread affecting not only coastal and inland wetlands but also lakes and waterways throughout the Great Lakes. Currently in Lower Michigan, purple loosestrife is present and has recently started expanding into the Upper Peninsula.

To date, few solutions for managing this invasive weed have

been found. Control by conventional means (water level management, burning, herbicides, direct digging, cutting) has proven to be not only difficult but also impractical. One alternative solution to control purple loosestrife is by introducing its natural enemies from its native range.

This natural enemy is known as *Gallerucella*, or plant feeding beetles. These insects are Native to Europe, and were approved by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 1992, after thorough testing. Since then, these insects have been released in 27 states and all the Canadian provinces. The *Gallerucella* leaf beetles feed on bud, leaf and stem tissue causing defoliation and prevention of flowering/seed production. The defoliation leads to plant death. Recent results from Ontario, and Minnesota release sites indicate that the *Gallerucella* beetles can have a dramatic impact on purple loosestrife infestations in as little as three years.

In 1994 after seeing huge success of the beetle use in other states, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Wildlife Division, petitioned the Michigan Department of Agriculture for approval to release these insects on several infested state game areas in Michigan. Though the beetle could not totally eliminate purple loosestrife, many thought





that they could possibly eliminate the purple loosestrife population by 90% in its current range, which in turn will allow the native wetland vegetation to be reestablished. Today the current challenge is to establish populations of the enemies in Michigan watersheds. However, even though the process in releasing the enemy is simple it is very labor intense.

Although labor intense, the Vicksburg FFA Chapter has taken this matter into their own hands, forming a partnership between Pfizer, the City of Portage, Fort Custer, the Kalamazoo Nature Center and several lake associations. In April, volunteers from the partnership dig up approximately 300 plant crowns from local areas infested with Purple Loosestrife. The plants are transferred to the Vicksburg High School greenhouse and are grown by Vicksburg FFA members.

When the plants are about one foot tall, they are caged and netted. In May, approximately twenty-five hundred

beetles are introduced to the plants. It takes approximately two weeks for the beetles to decimate the plants and enter the larval stage. The larva then go through the process of metamorphosis in the soil. In mid-June, new beetles emerged from the soil. The plants, along with the increased beetle infestation, are re-introduced into the environment.

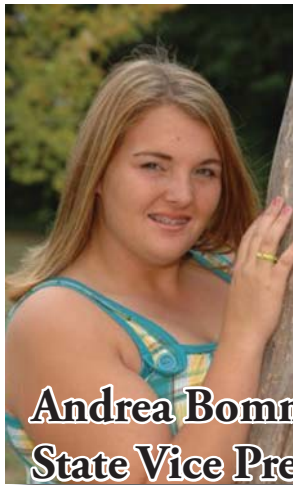
Although the beetles do not completely wipe out infestations, local areas where the beetles have been introduced have shown a significant decrease in Purple Loosestrife populations allowing for native plants to repopulate the areas.

Since 2007 the project has grown from introducing 80 plants into the environment to introducing 300 plants into the environment. The Vicksburg FFA charges for the beetle infested plants and profits approximately \$700 for the project.



March/April 2009

The Rest of the Story...



Andrea Bommarito
State Vice President

Chapter: Springport

SAE: Swine, Vegetable and Diversified Livestock Production

College: Michigan State University

Major: ESA Communications

High school activities: basketball, softball

Theme song: *Dream Big* by Ryan Shupe and the RubberBand

Favorite FFA activity: National FFA Convention

Favorite sport: basketball

Favorite thing to do with friends: dance

Favorite quote: "Faith is taking the first step, even when you don't see the whole staircase." - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Personal goal for the future: work for the Department of Agriculture and own a farm



Aaron Balowski
Region I State VP

Chapter: Bronson

SAE: Swine Production

College: Michigan State University

Major: Chemistry and Physics

High school activities: track, football, basketball, golf, Drama-Club, Youth in Government

Word to describe self: hardworking

Favorite movie: Forrest Gump

Personal hobby: bow hunting

Favorite FFA activity: his chapter's Fall Round-Up

Favorite homemade meal: pork chops

Message to the members: Never give up on your dreams, while they may often get deferred, they are never gone unless you give up on them.



Elizabeth Krhovsky
Region IV State VP

Chapter: Corunna

SAE: Diversified Livestock Production

College: Michigan State University

Major: ESA Communications

High school activities: cheerleading, Dance Team, Swim and Dive Team, class officer, Science Club, National Honor Society

Favorite FFA activity: state convention

Theme song: *Who I Am* by Jessica Andrews

Personal hobby: showing pigs and dancing

Favorite candy: Swedish fish

Who inspired you to join FFA: "My brother was in FFA so I followed in his footsteps. I never thought of joining anything BUT the FFA because it was such a family tradition."



Alumni in Action



Yes, you read the headline correctly!

By Wednesday, April 15, all affiliate membership rosters and dues should be submitted.

Why is this date so important?

The number of voting delegates that the Michigan alumni has at the National FFA Convention and the number of Washington Leadership Conference scholarships that our members are awarded all depend on that membership turned into the National FFA by April 15.

If you have any questions or concerns about the roster, feel free to contact alumni@michiganffa.com

Calling all Past State Officers!

The call is going out to all that have served as past state officers (PSOs) of the Michigan FFA Association. An energetic group of PSOs have taken it upon themselves to rebuild the PSO Alumni group.

In the past this group has supported the state officer team that is currently serving the association, purchasing them team apparel and other items, allowing them to increase professionalism and their ability to serve the members. Additionally, a PSO Scholarship is given each year at the state convention to support a member going to the Washington Leadership Conference.

If you are a PSO and interested in getting involved with this group, please contact their president-designate, Danielle Martinez at marti948@msu.edu.

Find your fit in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources!

You're already part of it!

From the food you eat to the home you live in; from the water you drink to the recreational activities you enjoy, professionals educated in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources make your life better every day.

The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Michigan State University offers Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, and Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degrees, certificate programs, and graduate programs leading to the master's degree and Ph.D.

We're more than you imagine....

