Honor where your food comes from this Ag Day, Week

To the Editor:

To help commemorate National Agriculture Week (March 16-22 this year; Ag Day is the 18th), here’s a look behind the curtain of one of Michigan’s most powerful and consistent economic engines. Ranking right up there with manufacturing and tourism, agriculture might actually be one of our state’s best-kept secrets.

And for consumers curious about where their food comes from, there’s never been a better time to get acquainted with the industry that puts food on our table — and in cupboards around the world — every day. Michigan farms have never been as numerous, nearby and open to hosting visitors unfamiliar with food production. Thousands of them across both peninsulas have incorporated components of “agritourism” to both diversify their revenue and help demystify how everyday fruits, vegetables, grains, meat and other commodities are raised.

A host of factors contribute to Michigan farms producing more different commodities (hundreds of them!) than any other state outside California. Variables like soil types and microclimates mean some commodities are concentrated in only certain areas, while others (dairy, for instance) can be found in almost all 83 counties.

Macomb County alone is home to more than 450 individual farms (and as is true statewide, the vast majority of them are family owned and operated.) Commodities produced locally include regional staples like corn and soybeans, edible dry beans, dairy, beef cattle, and poultry and eggs. We’re in the top five of all Michigan counties in nursery, greenhouse, floriculture and sod production.

Within a short drive there are dozens of opportunities to get a closer look at how and where some of your food comes from, not to mention the good people who produce it. Well-known operations like Westview Orchards in Romeo, and Blake’s Cider Mill near Armada prosper on customers visiting in person.

For a broader perspective, spend some time at the Wolcott Mill Metropark Farm Center or just explore some back roads anywhere north of 26 Mile. If it’s summer or fall, be prepared to stop and fill your basket with locally grown edibles from any number of roadside stands and farm markets.

Summer also means fair time in Armada; visit Aug. 11-17 to admire the work of 4-H exhibitors putting their livestock animals on display — and remember some of those youngsters are tomorrow’s farmers, who’ll someday be feeding your own future generations.

The Macomb County Farm Bureau is a non-profit organization that for more than 100 years has worked to support local farmers and others involved in this vital industry. We offer leadership development programming for younger members; promote local farmers and the products they raise; and strive to inform everyday consumers like you about where food really comes from, well before it hits grocery store shelves.

Farm Bureau also advocates for our members’ interests in Lansing and D.C., preserving the way of life they’ve often passed down through multiple generations; upholding rigorous standards of environmental stewardship; and helping ensure their hard work remains safe and profitable.

Obviously every day is Ag Day if you’re a farmer, and every week is Ag Week for our members. But if you’re part of the other 98% of Americans who maybe don’t know a soybean from a navy bean, or a Holstein from a Jersey, there are plenty of local opportunities to get better acquainted with the how’s, why’s and who’s of where your food comes from.

We’d love to show you!

Sincerely,

Your Name Here

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ County Farm Bureau President

Your mobile phone #

Your email address