



**MICHIGAN ASPARAGUS ADVISORY BOARD**

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MAAB Update  
August 25, 2021

**2021 Crop Recap**

The 2021 asparagus season was another defined by weather. Frost early in the season and extreme heat in June led to what looks to be the smallest crop in a decade. Michigan processors purchased 8 million pounds this year, an increase of about 800,000 pounds over last year. USDA reports sales of 8.2 million pounds for the fresh market, down more than 4 million pounds from last year.

**Assessments**

As reported in the spring newsletter, the Asparagus Advisory Board voted to lower the annual assessment rate for the 2021 crop year. The rate this year is 1.5 cents per pound, down ¼ cent from previous years.

By law, every producer in Michigan that produces and sells more than \$800 of asparagus per year is required to pay assessments. If you deliver your crop to a processor or packer that receives product from multiple growers, they will deduct and send us your payment. If you sell your product direct (your own market, other roadside markets, supermarkets, farmers markets or another entity) then you are responsible for reporting and paying the assessment. An assessment summary form is attached for those who need it. Please give us a call if you have any questions or need assistance filling out the form.

**MAAB Marketing Grant Has Positive First Year**

MAAB was awarded a two-year Specialty Crop Block Grant in November 2020 to promote Michigan asparagus. FullTilt Marketing is our promotion agency. They are a boutique marketing firm with expertise in fresh produce, specialty foods and agriculture.

Our effort focused on two promotion areas – Retail promotion and consumer education. We worked with two Midwest retailers to promote our product for two weeks after Memorial Day to help move product during this typical sales glut period. The effort showcased the benefits and seasonality of Michigan grown asparagus. We also worked with social media influencers to develop ten new asparagus recipes that they then shared across their social media channels to their more than 950,000 followers. These recipes are available at [michiganasparagus.org](http://michiganasparagus.org). We also placed a short newspaper feature story on the benefits of Michigan grown asparagus along with a recipe that had a total program ad equivalency 27 times our placement investment and more than 40 million impressions. Finally, we began work on a retail dietitian kit that can be used by produce managers for customer outreach next season.

We will implement the second year of the grant in crop year 2022 building on this year's efforts. We will continue to reinforce our Michigan messaging – Thicker spears have great texture and more flavor; Asparagus is healthy and easy to prepare; Buy fresh and local; Buy now, save for later.

### MAAB to Participate in Produce Marketing Association Trade Show

MAAB will be part of the Michigan section at this year's PMA Fresh Summit in New Orleans on October 29-30. Traditionally, of the more than 23,500 attendees, more than 1000 attendees are associated with supermarkets and other retail outlets. One of the primary reasons they attend the show is to meet grower-shippers and processors of fresh produce and floral.

Our goal is to increase the visibility for Michigan asparagus among retail buyers and secure interested buyer leads that can be shared with our packers and brokers. It will also be an opportunity to showcase the qualities of Michigan asparagus and its appeal to American consumers – highlighting the value proposition for retail buyers to purchase Michigan asparagus first.

### MAAB to Launch Grower Webpage

MAAB will launch a grower page as part of [michiganasparagus.org](http://michiganasparagus.org) in late September. The page will provide asparagus growers with news and program updates, MAAB minutes and our meeting schedule, asparagus production and import data, and event information. It will also serve as a one-stop location for asparagus research and production information. We want to make sure you have the information you need when you need it. Keep an eye out for a postcard next month announcing that the page is live.

### MAAB Board Openings

MAAB board members are selected by Michigan's governor and are subject to the advice and consent of the Michigan Senate. We have two board terms that expire in November this year. Potential board members must submit an on-line questionnaire to the Governor's Appointments Office for review and consideration. Some incumbents may choose to re-apply for the open seats, but we are always looking for new individuals that may want to serve the industry. If you are interested in learning more about the process or applying for a seat, please contact us and we can explain the procedure.

### Oceana Research Tour

MSU Extension is hosting a research tour in the Hart area on Thursday, September 9 beginning at 1:00 pm. We will hear from MSU researchers on the status of their research on asparagus and carrots. The tour ends at the Michigan Asparagus Research Farm. For more information on the schedule and tour stops, contact the Oceana County extension office at 231.873.2129.

### MAAB Executive Director

As most of you are aware, John Bakker retired from MAAB on June 30. The Board hired Jamie Clover Adams as our new executive director. Jamie brings more than 25 years of state and federal food and agriculture leadership and policy experience to Michigan's asparagus industry. Most recently, she served America's farmers and ranchers as Farm Production and Conservation Chief of Staff at USDA.

Prior to that, she served for nearly six years as the Director of the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development -- the first woman appointed as department director. She has worked in various roles throughout her career, including the Michigan Senate, and as Secretary of the Kansas Department of Agriculture from 1999-2003. She is a farm girl from the small town of Saranac in Michigan's Ionia County.

"Starting as your Executive Director in early May was a great opportunity to witness harvest, packing and processing firsthand," she said. "It gave me invaluable information as I began my work on behalf of the industry. I look forward to meeting more growers in the coming months."

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