



WEST MICHIGAN  
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## **Agriculture in West Michigan – Critical to a Vibrant Economy**

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The MSU/Land Policy Institute in partnership with the West Michigan Strategic Alliance/Green Infrastructure Initiative (WMSA/GI) has completed the first phase of a comprehensive analysis of the *Agricultural Economy* in the 8 counties WMSA serves. The results, to be published in late September 2009, illustrate the critical role agriculture plays in the West Michigan economy and the impact on the growing agricultural economy in Michigan.

The findings from this report demonstrate that *Farmland Preservation* is more than our “local farms”, or about shopping at our local farmers markets. The results reinforce the need to develop a long-range “*Agricultural Economic Strategy*” to preserve what appears to be Michigan’s largest industry. One of the messages for West Michigan is that we need to think of our thriving agriculture sector as being one of the key factors in our long-range Economic Development strategies.

Additionally, the report clearly shows that West Michigan should dedicate considerable resources to strengthening our agricultural economy. Below are some highlights from the report:

- \* Agriculture in West Michigan represents approximately 28% of the \$74 billion Michigan Agricultural Economy
- \* The agricultural sector employs over 26,200 people in 8 counties
- \* For the West Michigan region, the state and local government tax impact is over \$103 million
- \* An increase of 5% in agriculture-related sectors could result in an estimated increase of state and local tax revenue of nearly \$5.2 million.

WMSA/GI has spent much time trying to advance farmland preservation in West Michigan. “We are excited that through this research we have new “tools” to help us achieve our objective through a growing and profitable agricultural sector.” said Ken Freestone, Green Infrastructure Project Manager. Ultimately improving our understanding and support for expanding our agricultural sector can help our region accomplish multiple objectives to include:

- \* Increased local production
- \* Create additional jobs and protecting existing jobs
- \* Enable farmland preservation
- \* Ensure the economic viability of this increasingly critical sector of our economy

WMSA/GI believes the findings from this report along with results from surveying farmers this fall, and from the results of listening sessions later this year, will help provide a foundation for the development of sound strategies for a thriving and critical industry. We are excited about the results of this report and for the new opportunities for collaboration, partnerships and shared resources for strengthening our economic viability.

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