



Michigan Agri-Business Association

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Harley Sietsema awarded 2017 Michigan Agri-Business Association ‘Leaders and Legends’ Award

Family farmer sparked innovation and expansion throughout Michigan’s turkey, pork industries

LANSING – The **Michigan Agri-Business Association (MABA)** honored Allendale pork and poultry farmer Harley Sietsema with its 2017 Leaders and Legends award at the association’s recent Outlook Conference on Mackinac Island.

“Harley Sietsema’s leadership throughout his years serving Michigan agriculture has shaped our industry in truly defining ways, from the creation of Michigan Turkey nearly two decades ago, to the return of pork processing to our state just two weeks ago,” said **Jim Byrum**, president of **MABA**.

Sietsema grew up on his family’s farm, where he and his siblings tended to 500 acres of farmland and 120 dairy cows. After high school Sietsema attended Grand Valley State University, and started a career with the U.S. Department of Treasury while working evenings and weekends on the family farm.

In 1978, Sietsema left the Treasury Department to start his own farming operation, a turkey farm consisting of 55,000 birds. Since then, Harley has grown and expanded Sietsema Farms to include more than 1.6 million turkeys, 41,000 sows and an annual market of 800,000 hogs. They also farm 2,000 acres and operate two feed mills in Howard City and Ravenna. All three of Harley’s children and two grandchildren are employed on the family farm.

In 1998, Sietsema led a group of farmers in forming Michigan Turkey Producers. He is also credited with a key leadership role in bringing pork processing back to Michigan, joining a group of farmers who partnered with Clemens Food Group on its newly-opened pork processing plant in Coldwater.

“Harley has helped drive growth in Michigan agriculture, and has served his family, state, industry, and friends with hard work and pride while achieving admirable success over the years,” said **Byrum**. “Harley’s innovation and leadership on behalf of Michigan’s agriculture industry has set an admirable example for us all, and our association is proud to recognize him with our Leaders and Legends award.”

MABA presented its first [Leaders and Legends Award](#) in January 2013. The program honors individuals who have provided the entrepreneurial spark and taken risks to lead the growth of Michigan’s agricultural industry.

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