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‘2016 Year of Michigan Beans’ recognized by Michigan Legislature

*Lansing events showcase economic benefits of Michigan’s
dry bean sector, need for infrastructure to fuel growth*

LANSING – Leaders representing Michigan’s bean farmers and shippers joined members of the Michigan House Wednesday to recognize the International Year of Pulses and the ‘Year of Michigan Beans’ – noting the benefits dry bean production pumps into Michigan’s rural economy in testimony to the **Michigan House Agriculture Committee**.

“Michigan’s dry bean sector is a shining example of the economic growth created statewide by our agriculture sector,” said **State Rep. Dan Lauwers**, House Agriculture Committee Chairman, who also recognized the International Year of Beans on the House floor. “This year, we have an opportunity to recognize the innovative work of Michigan’s dry bean farmers, and all those who work hard to get Michigan beans from the farm field to plates across the globe.”

Michigan is the nation’s second largest producer of dry beans, and ranks at or near the top of state rankings in production of black beans, kidney beans, navy beans, cranberry beans and others. The state’s dry bean sector is responsible for \$270 million in annual economic benefits, said **Joe Cramer**, executive director of the **Michigan Bean Commission (MBC)** in testimony to the Committee.

“Michigan continues to lead the way in dry bean production, thanks in large part to our growers’ focus on innovation and sustainability that leads to a high-quality product,” said **Cramer**. “The economic benefits of dry bean production start with more than 1,100 farm families in Michigan’s Thumb and Saginaw Valley, but extend across the region and the state thanks to the thousands of jobs supported in handling, packaging, and moving beans.”

Leaders of the **MBC** and **Michigan Bean Shippers** also emphasized that a commitment to rural infrastructure will be critical to maintain Michigan's place as a leading dry bean exporter.

"We depend on logistics to ship dry beans around the world quickly and efficiently, and transportation infrastructure is the foundation of that success," said **Jim Byrum**, president of the **Michigan Bean Shippers**. "Modern roads, rail, and other infrastructure to deliver products reliably will continue to be critical in the coming years."

Michigan-produced dry beans are also growing in interest among institutional buyers and families looking for healthy, cost-effective protein sources, said **Kelsey Patterson**, a registered dietician and Manager of Nutrition Services at **Western Michigan University**.

"Dry beans have long been recognized as a low-fat, high-protein, high-nutrient food, which makes them an excellent choice for anyone who needs to design healthy menus for large groups," said **Patterson**. "As folks learn more about the many ways you can easily prepare dry bean dishes, I expect to see an even bigger role for the dry bean on our plates in the years to come."

The recognition by the Michigan Legislature coincides with the **2016 International Year of Pulses**, designated by the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization to recognize dry beans are related crops throughout the year. The [U.N. resolution designating the Year of Pulses notes](#) that beans are an important and low-cost protein source for families worldwide, and play a critical role in the global food supply.

More information about the 2016 International Year of Beans is available at www.facebook.com/MichiganBeans2016

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