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**Michigan Apple Committee enhances reputation of Michigan apples**

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By

Keith Loria

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The Michigan Apple Committee engages in marketing, research, education and communications for the benefit of Michigan's apple growers.

"Our mission is to enhance the reputation of Michigan Apples, improve their share of sales in target markets and aid the profitability and sustainability of Michigan's apple industry," said Diane Smith, executive director of the Michigan Apple Committee. "We work in the areas of consumer education, research, market development, and communications with the primary goal to help Michigan Apple growers be successful in their businesses."

The committee's main focus area is working to increase Michigan Apple consumption amongst consumers.

"Social media is our primary tactic for reaching and engaging with our target audience," Smith said. "Over the past several years we have developed social media messaging that resonates with our audience, on targeted platforms to raise brand awareness and educate consumers. We have been fortunate to receive Specialty Crop Block Grant funds to implement social media and other campaigns to raise brand awareness and increase consumption of Michigan Apples."

Continuing its strong presence on social media, the committee have recently added TikTok to its online offerings, with the goal of reaching its target audience to raise brand awareness and educate consumers.

For the 2023 crop year, the committee will be launching a redesigned website—consumer-facing with health information, recipes and information on where consumers can find Michigan Apples.

Hundreds of apple varieties are grown in Michigan, but some of the most popular varieties are Gala, Fuji, Honeycrisp, Red Delicious and McIntosh. Additionally, there are many managed varieties grown in the state, including EverCrisp, SweeTango, Smitten, Kiku and more.

"Our average crop size is just under 25 million bushels per year, but that number will raise with an increase in high-density plantings as well as adoption of new growing technologies and innovative methods that assist growers in producing fruit," Smith said. "We had a nice bloom with good weather for pollination. We won't have an official crop size estimate for 2023 until Aug. 18 at the U.S. Apple Outlook Conference in Chicago."

The Michigan Apple Committee works with retailers to customize marketing programs to fit their marketing strategies. Custom signage, digital marketing, and social media support are just a few of the ways it can help individual retailers to best meet their needs.

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One-way retailers can sell more Michigan apples, Smith noted, is by using point of purchase materials to educate the consumer on the flavor and usage of each variety.

“Also, point of purchase is a great chance to let the consumer know about locally grown and to connect their food to a local grower,” Smith said. “Shoppers want to know where their food comes from.”

Additionally, managed varieties have grown in popularity year over year. Keeping these varieties stocked for longer periods of time and not just for a sale or a “limited time” will keep the consumer coming back to purchase their new favorite apple variety.

Dedicated growers, ideal climate and geography and nutrient-rich soil are a few of the ways Michigan-grown apples are set apart from others.

“With 775 family-run farms, some in their fifth and sixth generations, growing apples is a way of life,” Smith said. “Our proximity to the Great Lakes allows for plenty of moisture; the topography of the apple growing regions equal hilly landscapes and nutrient rich soil; and good weather conditions in each season help to enhance both color and flavor of the fruit. Added to that, partnerships with Michigan State University and other institutions of excellence mean Michigan growers have access to research and innovative technology that allows them to confidently face any production challenges they may encounter.”

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## About Keith Loria |

A graduate of the University of Miami, Keith Loria is a D.C.-based award-winning journalist who has been writing for major publications for close to 20 years on topics as diverse as real estate, food and sports. He started his career with the Associated Press and has held high editorial positions at magazines aimed at healthcare, sports and technology. When not busy writing, he can be found enjoying time with his wife, Patricia, and two daughters, Jordan and Cassidy.

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