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**Michigan Apple Committee beefs up efforts on social media**

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By

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[The Michigan Apple Committee](#) works 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.

“Our main focus area is working to increase Michigan apple consumption amongst consumers,” said Diane Smith, executive director of the Michigan Apple Committee. “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.”

Social media is the committee’s primary tactic for reaching and engaging with its target audience. Over the past several years it has developed social media messaging that resonates with the audience on targeted platforms to raise brand awareness and educate consumers.

The committee considers itself fortunate to have received Specialty Crop Block Grant funds to implement social media and other campaigns to raise brand awareness and increase consumption of Michigan apples. For the 2023 crop year, the committee will be launching a redesigned website.

This website is consumer-facing with health information, recipes and information on where consumers can find Michigan apples.

Michigan apples are hand-harvested which requires farm worker hand labor. Production is labor-intensive, with 60 percent of production costs going to labor. That has created some challenges for the industry overall.

Recent changes by the Department of Labor to the H2-A wage rate is the latest challenge for growers. Michigan’s Adverse Effect Wage Rate increase is the highest in the country, at 12.8 percent.

“More broadly, increased administrative burdens and increased production costs continue to be a challenge for growers,” Smith said. “Our national organization, the US Apple Association, has been helpful in bringing the concerns of the growers to decision makers at the federal level.”

The Michigan Apple Committee believes that continuing to work toward its mission will help growers be successful.

“We represent all apple growers in the state of Michigan, aiming to increase consumption of apples, strengthen Michigan’s presence in the retail marketplace, and fund important research on a wide variety of production and marketing challenges face by the industry,” Smith said.

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For instance, continuing its strong presence on social media, the committee has recently added TikTok to its online offerings, with the goal of reaching its target audience to raise brand awareness and educate consumers even further.

The committee sees several ways that retailers can do their part to increase sales of Michigan-grown apples.

“Use of point of purchase materials to educate the consumer on the flavor and usage of each variety is one way,” Smith said. “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. Shoppers want to know where their food comes from.”

However, starting with the 2023 crop year, the Michigan Apple Committee will no longer be engaging in retail marketing efforts. Marketing programs will still be available through the fresh apple sales organizations with which retailers work.

“Times and trends continue to change in the retail marketplace, and the Michigan Apple Committee board of directors felt that our best contribution to the current retail climate is to focus on education and communications aimed at driving consumer demand,” Smith said. “In this way, we can support retailers’ marketing efforts while avoiding duplication of efforts.”

Even so, the Michigan Apple Committee will continue to be the voice of the Michigan Apple industry, and a resource for information for retailers and trade publications.

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