

## Huge Energy Savings Helps Farm Stay Afloat *Energy Bill Helps During Tough Times*

It was the early 1930s and Roy Sanborn faced a 'fork in the road' moment that would change the fate of his family's future. He was offered to buy the then 160-acre, 25 cow dairy farm he had been working on in Hubbardston — about 40 miles northwest of Lansing.

After mulling it over, he took the leap and the farm is now in its third stage of the Sanborn legacy.

Gary Sanborn, Roy's grandson, now runs the farm and his 84-year old father Harry, who took over the farm from Roy, arrives every day at 5 a.m. sharp. They are constantly looking for ways to save money and energy to keep the farm, which has grown to 1,400 acres and 680 cows, afloat.

### Seen It All

"We have seen it all on this farm — droughts, floods, storms and now a pandemic," said Gary Sanborn, who hopes his sons take over the farm one day. "But the farm has stood the test of time and I'm sure we will continue to have new adventures to share."

Part of the family lore on the farm that stands out was before Gary Sanborn was even born. His father, Harry, was on leave from the military and saw a tornado approaching the farm. He grabbed his father, Roy, just before the tornado crashed into the barn, severely damaging the building. Miraculously, nobody was hurt — including the horses and animals in the barn.

"Sometimes you need to get lucky," Gary said. "That was one of those times."

### Better Days Ahead

Sanborn said the pandemic and fluctuating milk prices has created some tough times for the farm, which produces about 55,000 pounds of milk a day.

"It's been really difficult, but Consumers Energy has been a silver lining in helping us," said Gary. "I have been tickled pink about the service we have received from

CONTINUED INSIDE

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## Are You on the Right Plan?

Take time to make sure you are on the right energy plan that fits your personal and business needs.

### ELECTRIC

If you are a small or medium business, you're likely taking service between 120 to 600 volts, and if you are a big business you are taking service at 2,400 volts or greater. Time of use rates may also be a better choice for you.

### NATURAL GAS:

- GS-1** Best for annual use up to 1,000 Mcf
- GS-2** Best for annual use from 1,000 Mcf to 10,000 Mcf
- G2-3** Best for annual use greater than 10,000 Mcf



Choosing the right rate can lead to savings for your farm.

**TIPS:** Confirm you are on the correct residential or business rate by comparing the rate code on your bill with its rate description.

Learn more about electric and natural gas rates at [ConsumersEnergy.com/ratesbiz](https://ConsumersEnergy.com/ratesbiz).

If you're still not sure if you are on the best rate, contact our Business Center at 800-805-0490

# Working Together for the AG Community

Over the years, Consumers Energy and the Michigan Farm Bureau have forged a strong partnership that has led to better service for the state's agricultural community.

Its foundation has been built upon open communication and constant dialogue.

Kim Kerr, a representative from the Michigan Farm Bureau, shares insight about how farmers can prosper alongside the growing field of renewables. Michigan farmers can prosper and the growing field of renewables.

"Whether it's a regulatory issue or problem that has occurred out in the field, being able to pick up the phone and have a conversation has gone a long way to finding a solution," Kerr said. "It's served us both well over the years and will continue to do so."

## How has partnership with Michigan Farm Bureau and Consumers Energy grown over the years?

The relationship goes beyond just energy issues. The partnership carries over into the community as well. As a Regional Manager for Michigan Farm Bureau, I see first-hand the commitment Consumers Energy has in our area and have I've had the opportunity to work with their team on several fronts.

This includes their Ag Department staff with state and local Farm Bureau activities, such as volunteering to help with "Rural Educa-

tion Day" and judging our Young Farmer discussion meets. Many times, they attend local Farm Bureau board meetings to update directors on field serves, rebates and take questions about specific problems.

## How have farmers been doing during the pandemic?

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has presented new challenges for many industries throughout the state, and agriculture is no different. Despite these challenges, farmers kept farming.

Crops were planted and harvested, livestock were cared for, dairy cows were milked, and our fruit and vegetable industry continued to operate every day, supplying an abundance of Michigan products to our consumers.

With that said, supply chain disruptions and labor shortages impacted our farmers every day. We experienced limited opportunities, fewer processing opportunities, and labor shortages. Through it all, they never let up, staying true to their job, responsibilities and convictions.

Our farmer are concerned, but remain optimistic about their role in feeding the world while enhancing business in their local communities and protecting their farms and the environment. Through it all, they never let up, staying true to their job, responsibilities and convictions.

## What steps need to be taken to ensure Michigan farmers can prosper?

Controlling inputs is a vital part of any successful farm operation. Energy is one of those inputs, whether it is being used as fuel or electricity to operate machinery and equipment, to heat and cool buildings or lighting around the farm.

For agriculture to continue to prosper, farmers need to have consistent, reliable and affordable energy. Consumers Energy plays a major role in ensuring those needs are met, not only for today's farms but for the ag industry of the future.

## What would you tell farmers out there right now about working with MFB and Consumers Energy?

Michigan Farm Bureau advocates on behalf of their agricultural members and has a lot of great resources that can assist farmers with their day-to-day operations.

In addition, interested farmers should get involved with their local County Farm Bureau to help address any issues that may arise and stay connected with their local farming community.

On the energy side, farmers should contact Consumers Energy's Agricultural Service Team if they have billing issues, are planning an expansion or are looking for ways to



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increase energy efficiency. If planning a project, make sure to reach out to Consumers Energy well in advance so that the staff can familiarize themselves with your farm needs and timeline.

## What's your take on the ever-growing field of renewable energy, which includes solar and wind projects?

Agriculture in Michigan is always changing and so is the landscape for energy. Renewables, which may include solar, wind, or natural gas are making up more of Michigan's energy portfolio. This focus on renewables has the potential to create new opportunities for farmers who are looking for diversification.

Each farmer will have to make their own determination as to whether these opportu-

nities are right for their individual operation or not. As with all agreements, we highly recommend all contracts be reviewed by a knowledgeable attorney.

However, with this new interest, we also have a shared responsibility in protecting our valuable farmland.

Therefore, as an organization we support incentivizing the use of nonagricultural use areas that may be idle such as brownfield sites, public property and other marginal lands to protect prime farmland.

## Are there specific services Consumers Energy provides that stand out?

As any farmer can tell you, agriculture is a unique industry with lots of diversity. No two farms are the same and neither are their needs, especially when it comes to energy.

Knowing this and based on feedback from the farming community, including Farm Bureau, Consumers Energy took the initiative to create a specialized Agricultural Service Team.

This service team is made up of energy experts who are solely focused on serving their agricultural customers. This was a huge asset when working through tough issues such as stray voltage.

In addition, having technicians who are familiar with agriculture can be extremely beneficial when trying to work through billing issues, installation costs for expansions or energy efficiency savings.

## Huge Energy Savings FROM FRONT PAGE

them in helping us save on energy and money."

Since 2016, the farm has received a total of more than \$30,000 in efficiency rebates through Consumers Energy on four separate projects, including switching to LED lighting and most recently a new variable speed milk pump and a larger capacity, correctly sized milk plate cooler — which cools the milk down by about 30 degrees before it's shipped away.

The four projects have already helped reduce electricity usage on the farm by about 225,000 kilowatt hours/year. This equates to saving over \$27,000 in annual electricity costs for the life of the new equipment.

The milk pump and plate cooler (also called a milk plate heat exchanger) alone helped the farm realize a 30,000 KWh reduction from July 1 through the end of September.

Gary Sanborn believes that helped the farm save more than \$4,000, in energy costs. Gary Sanborn also said he saved an additional \$8,000 annually by switching his farm account to a better rate through Jessica Martin, an Energy Solutions Manager.

## Savings Helps Bottom Line

The 48 agricultural-related energy efficiency measures and corresponding rebates available through Consumers Energy's energy efficiency programs make the financial burden of operating a large business more tolerable for farmers like the Sanborn & Sons LLC dairy by lowering their fixed costs.



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## "The savings from working with Consumers Energy have been enormous."

Consumers Energy have been enormous," he said. "If it wasn't for the savings I had, I likely would've had to borrow money during these tough times to stay afloat. I would highly recommend their energy efficiency programs. I am thankful for Consumers Energy and will definitely work with them in the future — they have definitely helped our bottom line."

The rebates make the most efficient lights, controls and equipment equal to, or even lower than, entry-level options. than selecting less efficient, lower initial cost upgrades.

"The savings from working with



## Lightning, Ice, Covid-19: Ready to Respond

Our Consumers Energy team has extensive experience dealing with devastating storms and other utility-related emergencies.

But sometimes we're faced with a crisis that has never happened before — like COVID-19. Thanks to our commitment to emergency preparedness, we were ready and able to do what was necessary to protect our co-workers and customers while continuing operations.

Much like storm situations, our team continues to coordinate efforts with first responders and emergency officials to ensure we're prepared for whatever is thrown at us in the months ahead. We will mobilize our crews and dole out assignments; customer service representatives, forestry and others behind the scenes will be ready.

"We have established a culture where we are proactive in our efforts in getting ready for storms and other emergencies, including the recent pandemic," said Lisa Douglas, Director

of Emergency Management and Public Safety. "We are constantly pushing ourselves and working with our many allies to put into place the best possible practices to keep the public and our colleagues safe during an emergency while stabilizing the incident."

During an emergency we follow the nationally recognized Incident Command System (ICS), which is also used by emergency first responders. Using the same system during emergencies allows for a streamlined communication flow between many stakeholders.

## Answering the Call

Douglas said throughout the year, her team educates first responders in our service territory on how to safely respond to emergencies on our system and shares resources like our Natural Gas Pipeline Safety Information for Emergency Officials.

"The goal around the training is to help keep co-workers safe as well as the public," said Douglas. "In addition

## Lightning, Ice, Covid-19 FROM INSIDE

to working with our first responders in times of crisis, we also stay connected in our everyday work.”

Throughout the year we meet and coordinate with Michigan State Police, Emergency Management and Homeland Security Division, local and county emergency managers and central dispatch centers on potential emergencies.

Lt. Gabe Covey of the Michigan State Police said he and the more than 1,200 troopers are thankful for the great relationship they have with Consumers Energy.

“We are in constant communication,” he said. “We try to relay information that we have to them and they do the same for us. It’s important to keep the lines of communication open, especially during a storm or emergency.”

### ‘We Will Be Ready’

“In times of crisis, it’s important that all Michiganders have the necessary supplies and action plans,” Lt. Covey said. “Many families were reminded of this in the first days of the Stay Home, Stay Safe order.”

It’s important for families to not only have an emergency kit — with flashlights, bottled water, batteries, food, etc. — on hand, but also have an emergency plan in place, he added.

“And really it’s no different than us working with other emergency responders and Consumers Energy, everyone has to be on the same page,” said Lt. Covey. “Mom and dad shouldn’t just know the plan, every person in the house needs to know.”

Knowing roles and responsibilities is essential, Douglas added.



“We want to make sure everyone is aligned, so when that critical moment hits everyone is working together.”

“As the old saying goes, you dig the well before you need the water,” Lt. Covey said. “COVID-19 has proven, we never really know what

can come our way. That’s why we do extensive training and have alignment and partnership with Consumer Energy. Whether it’s a vicious storm that Mother Nature sends our way or something else — we are ready on the front lines.”

## A Cleaner Natural Gas Future

Renewable natural gas, or RNG, is clean energy produced from Michigan agriculture.

At Consumers Energy, we’re exploring how RNG can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect the planet. And we want to help our customers do the same.

If you’d like to know more about how your farm can help, please contact us at [agservices@cmsenergy.com](mailto:agservices@cmsenergy.com).

