MSU'S CROP MANAGEMENT AND FIELD DIAGNOSTIC SCHOOL: 3-YEARS OF SUCCESS.

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The Michigan State University Crop Management and Field Diagnostic School (CM&FDS) is a one-day hands-on crop management school where ag professionals, county Extension Educators, farmers, and government personnel have the opportunity to hone their field decision making and problem solving skills by interacting with MSU Extension Specialists. This program has been conducted for 3 years and provides participants with university research-based information to sharpen their diagnostic skills and stay on top of the latest information in production agriculture. The CM&FDS has been held during the last week of July each year and is set up with four 1.5-hour in-depth field training sessions. Subjects covered in these sessions include topics in weed science, soil fertility, crop management, entomology, nematology, application technologies, and plant pathology. Each year subjects vary, depending on topics that are relevant for that growing season. Registration fees cover program expenses for field demonstrations, training materials, and participant lunches. Attendance for this program has been 66, 68, and 120 participants for the 2003, 2004, and 2005 programs, respectively. Based on surveys each year, over 80% of growers who have participated in the school said that they may change some of their farm practices based on knowledge gained during the School. Of all of the non-grower participants (ag professionals, county Extension Educators, farmers, and government personnel) that attended, over 95% said the knowledge they gained during the School will improve the quality of the services they offer their clientele. It has been expected that participants have used the knowledge gained at the CM&FDS to make scientifically based crop management decisions that improve farm profitability and reduce the environmental impacts of agriculture.

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