

CREATING A BRIGHTER FUTURE

FOR GENERATIONS OF FARMERS
AND CONSUMERS ALIKE



*Great Lakes EXPO sessions
to look at how to effectively
plan greenhouse, farm
succession and the benefits
of Farm to School.*

BY MADI JONES

As the business of farming continues to change, growers are faced with a number of challenges, such as succession planning and product sales. During the 2022 Great Lakes Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Market EXPO, growers will get a chance to learn more about these issues in two different presentations.

Founder and president of AgriStrategies LLC, Steve Kluemper, helps people communicate their company's vision, manage their business and finances, and facilitate discussions with customers, vendors, lenders, and investors.

During Kluemper's presentation at the Great Lakes EXPO, "Transitioning your Business," attendees will gain insight and direction to help make positive business changes. He discusses business goals, key stakeholders, commitments and how to measure success.

Kluemper's expertise includes vast knowledge of farm succession. In order to have successful farm succession planning, businesses must map out their plan from start to finish and be proactive.

"Successful farm succession plans start with a successful business. Successful businesses have short, medium and long-range business plans, robust decision-making processes and data that is used to make decisions and monitor results," Kluemper said.

He has seen many challenges within farm succession such as rushing plans, not understanding the needs and desires of stakeholders, and not having a sufficient plan to balance competing interests.

Kluemper's tips for farmers who are in the process of succession planning are to be transparent and clearly define all expectations. He also advises to "use third-party advisers to help address items such as the viability of the business, fair versus equal distributions, personality conflicts and more."

Kluemper's session take place on Thursday, Dec. 8.

FARM TO SCHOOL

Colleen Matts, director of Farm to Institution Programs and coordinator for Michigan Farm to Institution Network, helps institutions such as schools, hospitals and universities with more Michigan-grown foods and foods that fit people's values. She also helps farmers and other food vendors connect with institutional food buyers.

Additionally, Matts works for the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems, working to engage not only Michigan — but also the



Steve Kluemper

entire United States and the world — through applied research, education and outreach to develop regionally integrated, sustainable food systems.

Matts will be working at the 2022 Great Lakes Expo alongside teammates from Michigan Farm to School, the 10 Cents Program and the Michigan Farm to Institution Network, delivering training to producers about how to access and sell to school markets.

Using a curriculum developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Bringing the Farm to the School, Matts and her team will use their Michigan experience to deliver an interactive and helpful experience.

Learning from practitioners and various programs in Michigan, Matts and her team successfully make local food purchasing work for both buyers and sellers while taking advantage of the diverse agricultural products Michigan has to offer.

Matts offers some advice and best practices to growers looking to get involved with selling produce to local school districts.

"If growers are new to school sales, starting small is a good idea," she said. "Start the conversation with a few products that you could sell in decent volume, ideally products you enjoy growing, that might work well in school meals. You could also start by working with a smaller school district or even an early childhood site before you grow into larger school districts that will require greater quantities of products."

Programs like Farm to School are important for local economies — more local food procurement by school districts means more money funded toward local communities and the Michigan economy.

Matts mentions the 10 Cents program and how it provides extra funding for schools to purchase Michigan-grown foods from local farmers and food vendors.

"The Michigan Legislature has been steadily increasing funding for [the 10 Cents Program], which started out as a pilot in just a couple of regions of the state but is now statewide, because of the impact it can have on kids and their healthy eating habits and on local agriculture and the related food business economy," she said.

These programs are helpful for not only farmers but also children. While schools may not be able to pay a high price for some food products, they can offer farmers a stable, steady market, according to Matts.

When farmers supply schools with local foods, it can influence the tastes of school children and introduce them to new foods.

The Farm to School session will take place on Thursday, Dec. 8.

Learn more about these sessions and others at www.glexpo.com. The 2022 Great Lakes EXPO will be held Dec. 6-8 at DeVos Place in Grand Rapids, Michigan. [gpn](#)



Colleen Matts

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