

Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development
Heather Throne, Grant Administrator
PO Box 30017
Lansing, MI 48909

Re: Letter of Support for Great Lakes Hop SCBG Proposal

2/22/2022

Dear Grant Selection Committee:

I am writing in full support of the proposal being submitted by Great Lakes Hops (GLH) entitled: "Great Lakes Hops Collaborative Grow Group Initiative". The proposal seeks to: implement a regional-focused marketing plan that shifts market share toward local hop farmers; release new cultivars from the GLH breeding program to Midwest hop farms to meet brewer demand; and create regional growing hubs and farm networks to increase hop quality and consistency.



MSU EXTENSION

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This proposal is timely and necessary for several reasons. First, like other perennial crops, hops are very expensive to establish. Initial start-up costs often exceed \$15,000/acre, not including land, buildings, and the equipment required for harvest, processing, and storage. Moreover, in the Midwest, farmers generally do not harvest baby hops in the first year, and often do not realize full yields *or returns* until the third year of production. Second, to compete in an increasingly competitive craft brewing industry, brewers are very interested in new aromatic hop cultivars, most of which are proprietary cultivars bred solely for Pacific Northwest growers and Pacific Northwest growing conditions. Finally, there is an opportunity for Michigan and other Midwest farmers to improve marketing and branding efforts to increase brewer awareness of Midwest grown hops.

If funded, this proposal will address the challenges faced by small scale hop growers by encouraging grower collaboration, developing new hop cultivars, and increasing the awareness and purchase of local hops. In sum, it has the potential to increase the sustainability of Midwest hop farmers.

On behalf of MSU Extension, I offer my full support for this proposal. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Sirrine".

Rob Sirrine, Ph.D.
Senior Educator, Community Food and Environment Institute
Michigan State University Extension