

WELLBEING ON BEEF FARMS IN MICHIGAN

Are you a raising beef cattle on grass in Michigan (at any point in their lives, cow-calf through to finishing)? Are you curious about where your farm is successful and how to improve? Are you interested in learning more about or transitioning to sustainable/regenerative grazing?

MSU is starting a new project that will study the economic, social, and ecological wellbeing outcomes of 45 beef producers using a range of grazing management strategies. This study will help producers understand how to improve the quality of their land, their profitability, and their happiness simultaneously.

The project lasts for three years with three main activities for you to participate in.

- First, in Spring 2022 we will ask some questions in an interview about how you graze your cattle and the history of your farm. We will also send you a survey with questions about your wellbeing – we understand wellbeing broadly, so the questions will ask about your physical wellness, satisfaction with the farm and your life, sense of community, perceptions of financial security, comfort levels with financial records, and personal goals for the farm. This survey will be repeated in 2023 and 2024 to allow us to track any change over time.
- In 2022 we will also invite you to an online financial record keeping training run by team members from MSU Extension. Afterwards, we will work together to improve your farm records and help you benchmark against other Michigan farms, as identifying your weak and strong areas can help you plan for the future. Additionally, we will invite you to follow up trainings every year.
- In Summer 2022 we will invite you to a training in ecological health monitoring. We will work with you after the training to monitor your land - later in the summer one our team will visit your farm to do the monitoring with you, including the Cornell Comprehensive Assessment of Soil Health analysis. Afterwards, we will support you as you repeat the ecological health monitoring in 2023 and 2024 and upload your records to a project website.

For those interested, in Summer 2022 we will also invite you to a three-day training on Holistic Planned Grazing. The training will be run by MSU at Lake City Research Center, an internationally renowned strategy of sustainable grazing. We will cover the costs of the training but you will be responsible for your own travel costs. Afterwards, you will be able to apply for a \$2,500 micro-grant to help you implement things you learn during the course at your farm, with the support of our team through this process.

This study will benefit both your farm and Michigan agriculture. The above activities will allow us to collect social, economic, and ecological wellbeing data for your farm, so we can work together to assess where your farm is thriving and where improvements could be made. You will have the full support of the MSU team throughout the project and be part of a cohort of producers that will have an online space for discussions and the chance to meet and share best practices throughout the project lifetime. Data from across the 45 participating farms will be combined to allow us to look at patterns of wellbeing outcomes with grazing management. The findings will be critical for creating a sustainable grazing sector in Michigan that supports socio-economic wellbeing as well as ecological wellbeing.

We welcome your participation! Please express your interest using https://msu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8e2T1UY0JDLK8kK.

Completing these questions does not guarantee participation in the project but will allow us to select a group that covers a range of grazing strategies and locations in Michigan.

Alternatively, please phone or email Dr. Jenny Hodbod for further information via 480 278 1790 or jhodbod@msu.edu.

