

Mediation Now Available to Help Resolve Lease, Farm Transition, Neighbor Disputes



Michigan farmers can now mediate a wide range of disputes at no cost through the Michigan Agricultural Mediation Program (MAMP) thanks to the 2018 Farm Bill. The bill enables the MAMP to mediate agricultural issues involving leases, farm transitions, organic certification, next-door neighbors and more.

The MAMP helps the farm community resolve disagreements without resorting to costly adversarial hearings and court proceedings. Launched in 1997, it is part of the USDA's State Certified Mediation Program, which Congress established in 1987 to help farmers and lenders face stressful economic conditions.

Before passage of the farm bill last December, the MAMP could only mediate cases involving USDA programs or loans. The MAMP still mediates those issues but now can mediate more.

For example, families passing the farm to the next generation may find mediation helpful if disagreements arise among family members. A tiff with a neighbor may best be mediated to keep the peace. Lease transactions can be mediated to keep payments manageable or the lease in force.

Farmers in Michigan and across the country face declining incomes, late plantings, and increased stress. Unresolved conflicts can end up in court and cause farmers to miss critical planting or harvest windows, lose farm property or be denied operating loans.

“It’s important to address these issues early before parties set hard and fast positions,” says MAMP Director David Gruber. “Mediation provides a confidential forum in which they can explore options that sometimes can save the farm.”

Mediation enables participants to talk informally and openly about the issues. A trained, impartial mediator helps the participants build trust, focus on the issues, and generate options. The participants, not the mediator, decide the case. If they

find a solution that they both can accept and complies with the law, they sign a written binding agreement.

In recent years, 85 percent of MAMP cases have reached agreement. Even when formal agreements are not possible, participants often gain a better understanding of the issues and their options going forward.

To request free mediation or for more information, call (800) 616-7863 or go online at www.agmediation.org. All calls are confidential.

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