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# Michigan Sugar announces final results from 2017-18 sugarbeet slicing campaign

*As first beets of the season are planted, local cooperative provides a review of past season*

BAY CITY – The first sugarbeets of the 2018 growing season were planted last week in Michigan, and **Michigan Sugar Company** today announced the final results of its 2017-2018 sugarbeet slicing campaign, an annual effort to extract sugar from sugarbeets that started Aug. 21, 2017, and concluded Feb. 28, 2018.

“The 2017-18 campaign was a mixture of extremes, from record heat in September to hard frosts in October and November, to weeks permanently below freezing through the winter,” said David Noble, Vice President of Operations for Michigan Sugar Company. “Throughout these extremes, beets were delivered and processed 24 hours a day by hundreds of local workers. We truly appreciate their dedication and endurance to make this year’s slicing campaign a success.”

Among the key results of the campaign:

## **Fewer sugarbeets were harvested by the company’s roughly 1,000 grower-owners.**

- This past year, 150,662 acres of sugarbeets were harvested, down about 7,000 acres from 2016. This is partially due to the fact that in 2017, growers were allowed to plant only 92 percent of their acres, down from 96 percent in 2016. Widely variable weather at the start of the 2017 growing season, including some areas that flooded post-planting, also was a contributing factor.
- 3.85 million tons of sugarbeets, or 25.56 tons per acre, were harvested. This was down from 4.88 million tons, or 31.03 tons per acre, in 2016.
- The grower-owners plan to plant an estimated 157,000 acres this year for harvesting in the fall. Several growers took advantage of favorable weather and ground conditions last week to begin planting, with the first seeds going into the ground on Monday, March 19.

“We saw a significant drop in 2017 in terms of the amount of sugarbeet production, partly due to excessive early season rainfall last spring followed by a very dry summer,” said Dr. Corey Guza, director of agronomy for Michigan Sugar Company. “At the same time, there was an improvement in sugarbeet quality, and we’re hoping to see better weather combine with this higher sugar content to result in a strong sugarbeet campaign in the year ahead.”

**Quality rebounded during the 2017-18 campaign with more typical sugar content and shrink less than half what it was during the 2016-17 campaign.**

- Sugar content was 18.3 percent, up from 15.85 percent in 2016. Addressing low sugar content during the 2016 season was a major focus for Michigan Sugar Company's agronomy and research efforts.
- Shrink – a decrease in the weight of beets over time due to crop respiration, weather and storage conditions – dropped to 5.28 percent from a 2016 level of 11.3 percent.

“While our tonnage was down this year, it was encouraging to see a rebound in our sugar content,” said Jim Ruhlman, Executive Vice President for Michigan Sugar Company. “The increase in quality coupled with a lower shrink allowed us to produce as much salable sugar this year as last year.”

**More than \$20 million in new upgrades were put to use for the first time this year.**

- Individual investment projects that played a role in the recently completed campaign ranged in size from \$85,000 to \$4.42 million and covered many needs – including building improvements, employee safety measures, environmental protection and technology upgrades to boost efficiency.
- \$12.5 million was dedicated to upgrading the Croswell factory capacity. This was the second year of a five-year plan to add 50 percent to the daily factory capacity and increase efficiency.

“Looking forward to the coming summer, a further \$17.1 million of new capital will be invested at the four factories,” said Noble. “Of that, \$12.2 million will represent the third year of Croswell's upgrade featuring new juice storage tanks, beet slicers and juice filtration equipment. The balance of the capital will be spent at the other locations on further infrastructure needs and process enhancements, ensuring the relationship with the Bay City, Caro, Croswell and Sebewaing communities continues strong into the future.”

Founded in 1906, Michigan Sugar Company has its corporate office in Bay City and growers in about 20 Michigan counties, as well as Ontario, Canada. The cooperative produces approximately 1.2 billion pounds of sugar each year that it sells under the Pioneer and Big Chief brands.

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