

# Robert Geers

Merchandising Manager

## Michigan Agricultural Commodities

Lansing, MI • 517-627-0200

**Years with company:** 13

**Years in industry:** 13

**Born:** 1983, Lansing, MI

**Family:** Wife, Olivia, of 8 years. Sons, Jacob and Lucas.

**Education:** Bachelor of Science degree in business from Calvin College in 2005, Grand Rapids, MI.

**Career:** 2005-2008: corporate hedger, Michigan Agricultural Commodities (MAC). 2008-2016: corn trader, MAC.



2016-present: merchandising manager, MAC.

### What are some of your best marketing strategies for working with farmer customers?

Know your cost of production, keep your marketing program simple, sell something when profits are available, focus on what you do best, and have a good partner in the areas you don't do well.

### What are some of your biggest merchandising challenges?

Trade. The American farmer does an amazing job of overproducing, so that they are able to feed other parts of the world, but this means we heavily rely on trade, and those trade relationships seem threatened lately. The industry needs stability in this area.

### What are some of the trends in grain merchandising?

The biggest trend in the area I cover is a significant switch toward truck shipments of grain over the traditional method of rail shipment. Michigan traditionally relied heavily on shipping grain out of the state to the Southeast United States or export terminals by rail. With increased rail rates, rail service issues, and new truck demand in the state, we have made a significant change in our mode of transportation, as we are now primarily ship grain by truck.

### What are the attributes of a good merchandiser? What is the essential element in your role?

The ability to build good relationships with customers is the most critical attribute of any merchandiser. Once you have built that relationship, then always have an offer or a bid for customers, and be able to execute on any trade as agreed. Also, it's important to be able to recognize that each year is different and offers different opportunities to market grain. What worked one year may not work the following year, and – depending on quality and crop size – grain will flow to different areas.

**Who most influenced your career?:** My dad, Dave, by far has been the most influential person in my career. I am one of the fortunate few to be introduced to agriculture and trained in merchandising by my father, who was someone that really built a business from nothing during his career. There are very few people in this business now that were given that kind of opportunity, and feel I can use my dad's decades of experience and wisdom gained from building a successful grain company.

**Hobbies:** Snowmobiling, home projects, spending time with family.

**If I wasn't in the grain industry, I would:** Be a custom homebuilder. ■



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