

# Minnesota Agriculture

*Voice of Rural Minnesota*



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November 2023

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**The annual enrollment period for Medicare is Oct. 15 - Dec. 7.**

Call Farmers Union Agency at **(800) 229-1064** or go online: **agents.fuinsurance.com** to learn how we can help make your plan selection easy.



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## Confused by Medicare? We can help.

*By Sandy Shapiro*

Laura was frustrated when she arrived at the Farmers Union Agency office. It was the annual enrollment period for Medicare, and she had been bombarded with mail from all the insurance carriers each saying why they had the best Medicare plan. The television commercials doing the same were driving her crazy. Her friends were also telling her which plan to select. But everyone had different plans. No wonder she was frustrated. She came to the right place.



*Sandy Shapiro*

We spent some time getting to know each other. She showed me the short questionnaire our agency asked her to fill out prior to her visit to save time for both of us.

The first thing I asked her for was her Medicare card. I wanted to make sure her card showed that she had Part A for Hospital and Part B for Medical. After reviewing the card, we turned back to the questionnaire.

We reviewed her list of medications and shared a laugh as we take two of the same prescriptions. I was pleased to see that three of her medications were low-cost generics that were sure to save her money no matter what plan we chose. During that visit, we were able to use an online tool to look up her prescriptions and see what her out of pocket costs would be using different Medicare plans.

We turned back to her questionnaire and reviewed where she received her medical

care. It was important to her to continue to see her doctor. It took just a minute to see which plans had her doctor in their provider network.

Laura asked about dental coverage, vision care and even gym memberships because our questionnaire asked if this was important to her. In a matter of minutes this led us down the path of the best fit for her unique situation.

Although there are many, many plans Laura could choose, three plans made the most sense based on all the factors we discussed and her budget. She was surprised that the plan she felt made the most sense for her was so affordable and had more benefits than she expected.

Less than 15 minutes later she was enrolled in a Medicare plan. We discussed what would happen next and I asked her to write down three items to make sure all her questions were answered and that the process was clear.

As she got ready to leave, Laura said she was relieved and surprised by how easy everything turned out to be. She gave me a hug as she headed for the door.

Laura came to the right place to find answers to her Medicare questions. Can we do the same for you? Contact Farmers Union Agency today to find an experienced FUA agent near you.

*Shapiro is Director of Sales Health & Life at Farmers Union Agency.*

## Minnesota Agriculture

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# President's message

**GARY WERTISH, PRESIDENT**

[gary@mfu.org](mailto:gary@mfu.org)

When this issue of Minnesota Agriculture arrives in your mailbox, we will be less than a month away from our 82nd annual Minnesota Farmers Union State Convention.

The convention begins on Friday afternoon, Nov. 17, with four panel discussions. The panel topics include access to rural health care, think like a banker, climate-smart markets and health and life insurance solutions for your farm.

On Saturday, Nov. 18, Princess Kay of the Milky Way Emma Kuball will join us for lunch and the state FFA officers will join our evening banquet. National Farmers Union President Rob Larew will join us for convention and we will also honor members. The awards will be presented on Saturday.

On Sunday, Nov. 19, we'll have the election of president and vice president as well as delegates to national convention. The national convention is March 10-12 in Scottsdale, Ariz. Convention delegates determine national policy. If you're interested in farm policy, this may be the perfect fit for you. Last year's delegates were John Beaton, St. Louis County; Karen Benitt, Marshall County; Hannah Bernhardt, Pine County; Erik Hatlestad, Kandiyohi County; Larry Jacobson, Clay County; Danny Lundell, Goodhue County; Tessa Parks, Rice County; Paul Sobocinski, Redwood County; John Thormodson, Blue Earth County, and Harmon Wilts, Swift County. Melany Thomas of Clay County chaired the national policy committee. I'm sure these members would welcome questions on what it's like to be a national policy delegate.

We will also have the drawing for the Happy Camper on Sunday after the policy debate concludes. Tickets for the pull-behind Scamp Camper are still available and can be purchased from a staff member or at the convention.

As convention convenes, I will be returning from a trade mission to Australia with the Walz-Flanagan administration. It will be my



*The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) led a business development mission to Japan from Sept. 8-15. State lawmakers and representatives from Minnesota agricultural organizations joined the trip. The group took part in a tea ceremony lesson on Sept. 10 at the Happo-en Gardens and Culture Center in Tokyo.*

second trade mission this fall. In September, I traveled with the administration to Japan.

## Japanese trade mission

The trip was Sept. 8 through 15 and it included state lawmakers, state agriculture department employees and representatives from Minnesota's agricultural organizations. The goal of the mission was to celebrate the rich history of trade and investment between Minnesota and Japan and identify new opportunities for growth for Minnesota agricultural products.

The U.S. is the largest foreign supplier of food and agricultural products to Japan, with Minnesota being the 11th largest U.S. state exporter to the country. Japan is Minnesota's fourth largest export market, representing 8 percent of Minnesota's food and agricultural exports in 2021, equal to \$752 million. Minnesota's top export products to Japan include pork, animal feed, soybeans, processed vegetables, dairy products and ingredients, pet foods and corn.

Japan is the third largest economic power in the world and inflation is a hot topic there. Inflation is running at 2 percent to 3

percent in the country after 20 to 30 years of nearly zero inflation and relatively stable prices. They import two thirds of their food.

The country imports 10 percent of all U.S. exports and last year U.S. exports to Japan were down 20 percent due to the strong dollar.

The visit started in Tokyo, population 38 million, where our delegation toured several food retail businesses and met with United States Department of Agriculture Trade Office and Foreign Ag Service personnel at the U.S. Embassy.

We learned that 80 percent of Japanese farmers are older than 65 and 11 percent are younger than 40. The average Japanese farmer is 68 years old. In Minnesota, the average farmer was 58 in 2017. More than a third – 38 percent – of the Japanese population is older than 65. By contrast, nearly 17 percent of the United States population is older than 65.

The number of farmers is also declining in Japan. In 1970, there were 7 million farmers in the country. That dropped to 5 million by 2000 and to 2 million by 2023. Similarly, there were about 2 million

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# Farmers Union is awesome – from the farm fields of western Minnesota to the halls of Congress

## ANNE SCHWAGERL, VICE PRESIDENT

anne@mfu.org

As I sat at my desk this evening, with a case of writer's block setting in, I asked my pajama-clad 10-year-old daughter Nora what she thought I should write about this month for the magazine. She responded with an enthusiastic "You should write about how Farmers Union is awesome, Mama!" It put a needed smile on my face because she's correct. Farmers Union is awesome – and Nora doesn't know half of the work we do.

As I write this in early October, as the combines are cruising across fields, I hope that harvest season on your farms is going safely. I appreciate the rush of harvest season on our operation, as it brings a change of pace for me – I am home helping harvest our row crops and rip out my garden in preparation for the winter. It comes on the heels of a very travel-heavy September this year. Following another successful state fair, September kicked off with an extended trip to Washington, D.C. where I represented MFU at the National Farmers Union board meeting while President Wertish represented Minnesota on a trade mission to Japan with the Walz administration. I then had the privilege of leading our Minnesota delegation at NFU's annual fly-in. As a delegation, we met with our congressional representatives and representatives from the executive branch.

Following our big day of meetings on Capitol Hill, I was at dinner with a group of members and our conversation turned to our takeaways from fly-in. One of my dinner companions, a first timer at fly-in, noted the political power of Farmers Union. She observed the level of access to the federal government that we had – meetings with officials in 15 different agencies - from the EPA to FTC, along with



*MFU Vice President Anne Schwagerl asks a question during the Farmers Union meeting with USDA officials held during the National Farmers Union Fly in. The meeting was held in the Jefferson Auditorium at USDA.*

extensive briefings from USDA and members of the Agriculture Committee staff. Our members met with senior officials at the White House to discuss Farmers Union's legislative priorities. Family farmers from across the country were able to talk about how policies made in Washington, D.C. are impacting our livelihoods. Farmers Union members gave powerful, boots on the ground accounts of how corporate consolidation and extreme weather events driven by climate change affect their operations. Our members also shared stories of how strong, resilient local food systems directly benefit rural communities and the importance of including a strong nutrition title in the Farm Bill.

If I had to speculate, the thing my daughter Nora senses isn't our political power – even if it is awesome. I think Nora senses the power of community that we get from being involved in MFU. Since mid-July I have been working with the other state staff, crisscrossing the state to attend many of the more than 60 county conventions that have been held. My kids attended

our home convention in late September, where they played with other farm kids while their parents and other members shared a meal, heard updates from our talented staff, drafted and debated resolutions, and made plans to attend the State Convention this month. I attended several county conventions this late summer and fall where I loved watching young kids, who otherwise wouldn't know each other, become fast friends in a wood-chip pile or blowing bubbles while their parents talked about ways to advocate to make their lives and ability to earn a living on the landscape better.

Before I was involved in a leadership position at Farmers Union, the fellowship and camaraderie that I found within MFU became my extended family as a transplant, beginning farmer and young parent in western Minnesota. MFU has been an awesome presence in my life and the lives of many of our members. Nora is a perceptive kid; thanks for helping me break my writers' block, buddy.



# County leaders lead the way in building Farmers Union community

**CLAUDINE ARNDT,  
MEMBERSHIP AND  
MINNESOTA COOKS  
DIRECTOR**

[claudine@mfu.org](mailto:claudine@mfu.org)

It's hard to believe we're heading into the final weeks of 2023. As I begin to reflect on the year, I'm struck by the renewed energy I witnessed in many MFU county organizations. If I thought 2022 was active and busy, little did I realize then that we were still emerging from the pandemic.

During Monday morning staff check-ins and at our monthly staff meetings, the team reviews upcoming events together to make sure we all know what's going on within the organization and to ensure we have a staff member attending each event whenever possible. My goodness there was a lot happening.

Not only that, but every week new membership forms were showing up in the office or being submitted online. When I think of all the new people I met this year, my mind starts spinning.

I am wildly grateful to our county leaders who believe in Farmers Union and volunteer their valuable time. Many of our leaders made a point to organize membership events throughout 2023. Sometimes these events were formal in presentation, sometimes they were casual social hours, but each one helped build our MFU community.

Since joining the membership team, I've emphasized the value of the NFU Leadership Achievement Award with county leaders. To be honest, initially I pointed to the award criteria because I didn't know what else to do (and Linda Larson, veteran award-winner, told me that asking county leaders to go for the award would be a good place to start). Since then, I've come to understand what an ideal roadmap for membership engagement it is.

To earn the NFU Leadership Achievement Award, county units must:

- Hold at least four membership meetings a year (the county convention counts as a membership meeting).
- Have your organization represented at a minimum of two state and/or national meetings (this could include Lobby Day, Women's Programming events, the FUEL program, NLA, Membership Education Committee meetings, National Women's Conference, National Fly-in, etc.).
- Participate in or conduct at least two community activities or programs (Hosting a booth or attending a county fair, making a donation/scholarship in the name of your chapter, participating in a fundraiser or parade, etc. Abby Perdue from NFU says, "Get creative - if it involves the community and provides a positive impact, it counts!").

- Have your organization represented at one local and/or state cooperative organization function.
- Grow membership in your county.

Earning the award shouldn't fall solely on the County President. It shouldn't even fall solely on the County Leadership Team. Ideally, it involves multiple members working together with MFU staff to push the county over the finish line.

Last year three MFU counties earned this award: Dakota, Olmsted and Rice. Those of us at the National Farmers Union Convention in San Francisco were beaming as they accepted their awards. What a joy to cheer obnoxiously and celebrate their accomplishments as they took the stage.

This year there are even more counties poised to earn the NFU Leadership Achievement Award. Whether or not they are able to close the loop in the final weeks of 2023 almost feels irrelevant. I already find myself beaming and feeling deeply grateful for their efforts. They've all done so much to enrich and expand our MFU community and the positive impact we can make in the world, and that's reason enough to start celebrating.



## ATTENTION MEMBERS!

Do we have your most recent email address?

If not, email [claudine@mfu.org](mailto:claudine@mfu.org) with your new address.

## New MFU members

Welcome to the new members who joined MFU in September. We look forward to getting to know you and thank you for your membership. We encourage experienced members to invite new members to events in your area. Working together we make a stronger Farmers Union.

- Mehgan and Bob Blair, St. Louis County
- Erik Brenna, Ramsey County
- Jennifer and Aaron Bye, Washington County
- Jeff and Kate Diamond, Hennepin County
- Wade and Cindi Gronau, Redwood County
- Madeline and Jesse Hartel, Chisago County
- Jessica and Tony Heiden, Winona County
- T Hoverson, Roseau County

- Kristin and John Nosbusch, Big Stone County
- Mike Patterson, Goodhue County
- Sam Ricker-Kiazolu and Fasia Kiazolu, Hennepin County
- Lynette Schwagerl, Traverse County
- Kirsten VanDerPol, Chippewa County
- Christopher and Hailey Wilke, Otter Tail County



# Co-ops for Climate supports cooperatives who are responding to climate-related opportunities

## ARIEL KAGAN CLIMATE AND WORKING LANDS DIRECTOR

ariel@mfu.org

Supporting farmer cooperatives has long been a central part of Farmers Union’s mission and that has continued throughout the decades, adapting to the changing needs and challenges faced by Minnesota farm families. As climate change continues to impact agriculture across the state, there’s opportunity for cooperatives to meet the need for meaningful, farmer-centered solutions.

We’re excited to announce a new pilot grant program, “Co-ops for Climate,” that will fund farmer cooperatives in developing solutions for climate resilience. These grants will support Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) members who have, or are in the process of, organizing themselves into cooperatives that respond to climate-related challenges and opportunities.

Often, solutions to climate change focus on individual entrepreneurship – think tech start-ups in Silicon Valley – or on public policy solutions. While both are important pieces of building meaningful and scalable climate action, cooperatives offer additional social and community benefits that are critical for ensuring a sustainable and resilient

future. Farmer-owned cooperatives reduce costs of production, maintain a reliable source of inputs, effectively market and process farm products, improve livelihoods and help strengthen rural communities.

This pilot program is intended to identify and respond to the needs of farmers in creating cooperative climate change solutions. Co-ops for Climate empowers farmer-led cooperatives to build capacity for organizing a business that leads to climate action through:

- developing and building support for farmer-informed solutions that will position agriculture to play a greater role in mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change.
- supporting scalable, community-driven solutions that promote economic vitality in agricultural communities.
- championing inclusivity of rural communities and farmers and facilitating the opportunity for participation in climate resiliency through practical and grounded action.

The grants provide support for technical assistance and business development services. This support encompasses a wide range of services, including feasibility study, business plans, market assessments, establishing governance documents, as well as carbon and greenhouse gas inventory or

assessment. Selection criteria includes climate impact, results, support for emerging farmers, work plan and budget. A committee of MFU members reviewed applications and made recommendations following discussion of each application holistically.

### 2023 “Cooperatives for Climate” Grant Recipients:

**Headwaters Beef Cooperative, Pine River**  
Award amount: \$25,000

Headwaters Beef Cooperative aims to aggregate and process cull beef into branded ground beef products that would add value and stabilize cull cow prices. The cooperative will bring conservation to the marketplace and a healthy affordable protein to consumers, while protecting water quality, improving wildlife habitat and addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation. Technical service projects will include leadership development, cooperative incorporation and a market sector analysis of on-farm standard of production.

**Farm and Forest Growers Cooperative, Northeast Minnesota**  
Award amount: \$15,000

Incorporated in March, F&FG Cooperative consists of a network of small farms and nurseries growing climate-adaptive tree seedlings, which are sold to reforestation

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Ben Penner, Perennial Promise Growers Cooperative vice president, speaking at a Kernza Field Day in St. Peter this summer.



**JUSTIN STOFFERAHN,**  
**ANTIMONOPOLY DIRECTOR**  
justin@mfu.org

In April 1938 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) gave a message to Congress on curbing monopolies in which he declared, "Among us today a concentration of private power without equal in history is growing." The speech marked a turning point for FDR's administration as it embraced antimonopoly as a key component of fighting the Great Depression.

Increased enforcement was a key part of that strategy. The antitrust division quickly grew from 15 lawyers to nearly 600 and brought more antitrust cases than had been filed in the previous 50 years. The concerted attack against big business helped tame inflation as the simple act of launching an investigation brought prices in the target industry down by 18 percent to 33 percent. The Biden administration seems to be taking inspiration from this approach and September was a culmination of that effort.

In early September the Google antitrust trial began, the most significant antitrust trial since Microsoft in the late 1990s. Not to be outdone by the Department of Justice (DOJ) suit against Google, the Federal Trade Commission took aim at another big tech giant in September, filing a long-awaited antitrust suit against Amazon. Tech was not the only industry the Biden administration had in its sights as September ended with the DOJ filing a lawsuit in Minnesota against Agri Stats. Collectively, these cases could have important ramifications for rural Minnesota.

The Google lawsuit centers around the company's monopoly over online search, which is a key component of its advertising monopoly. In 2022 nearly 80 percent of the revenue generated by Google's parent company, Alphabet, was advertising. Of that \$225 billion, \$30 billion was from

# Biden administration embraces antitrust efforts, takes aim at Google, Amazon and Agri Stats

the sale of ad space on news publishers' websites; six times the digital advertising revenue of all U.S. news publications. With Google cutting off newspapers from this growing revenue source, they have been left to die. In Minnesota, we have lost over a fifth of our newspapers since 2004 and 80 percent of local reporting jobs, the fourth highest drop in the country.

Newspapers are not the only local businesses rural Minnesota is losing. A 2021 report from the Center for Rural Policy and Development found that the number of retailers in rural communities declined by more than 20 percent since 2004. Amazon has aided this demise by driving business from brick-and-mortar retailers onto its e-commerce platform. The FTC alleges Amazon has used this platform to generate monopoly profits that have raised costs on consumers as well as the third-party sellers that are responsible for 60 percent of the sales on Amazon. Those businesses are now paying a nearly 50 percent tax to Amazon on each transaction.

Higher consumer prices are at the heart of the DOJ's action against Agri Stats, a data and analytics firm for meat processors. The suit alleges that Agri Stats used its data collection to enable price-fixing among major meat processors, raising prices for grocery stores and consumers. The processors accused of participating in the scheme account for more than 90 percent of broiler chicken sales, 80 percent of pork sales and 90 percent of turkey sales in the United States.

What lies in store for these lawsuits remains to be seen, but effective enforcement starts with bringing cases. The Biden administration is doing that and it is having an impact. The average size of completed mergers is now at the lowest level in 20 years, according to CNBC.

Digging out from four decades of increasing consolidation will require more than one president; it must be a concerted effort by policymakers at all levels.



## Membership application

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

County: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Home phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of farm: *Check all that apply*

- Crops
- Beef
- Dairy
- Hogs
- Horses
- Other please list: \_\_\_\_\_
- Organic
- Poultry
- Sheep
- Vegetable or fruit

Membership: *Fee includes family unless student is checked.*

- New member
- Renewing member
- Student - \$20
- 1 year - \$75
- 3 years - \$200

**JOIN TODAY!**

Mail this card to:  
**Minnesota Farmers Union**  
305 Roselawn Ave. E. #200  
St. Paul, MN 55117



**STU LOUREY**  
**GOVERNMENT RELATIONS**  
**DIRECTOR**

stu@mfu.org

September was a busy month for Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), starting with our annual National Farmers Union (NFU) Fall Fly-in to Washington, D.C. and ending with a narrowly averted federal government shutdown that would have closed Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices across the state during harvest.

On Sept. 10 a delegation of nearly 30 MFU members and staff traveled to Washington, D.C. to take part in NFU's annual Fall Fly-in to Washington, D.C. just weeks before the 2018 Farm Bill was set to expire. Unsurprisingly, shaping this landmark piece of farm and nutrition policy was top of the agenda for the 300 NFU members who joined from across the country. The group lobbied congressional representatives for a reauthorization that included a dedicated title on competition, a strengthened farm safety-net, expanded programs related to climate change and a unified nutrition title.

The group met with Sens. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., and Tina Smith, D-Minn., Reps. Betty McCollum, D-4th District, Angie Craig, D-2nd District, Pete Stauber, R-8th District, and Brad Finstad, R-1st District. They also met with the staff of Reps. Tom Emmer, R-6th District, Dean Phillips, D-3rd District, and Michelle Fischbach, R-7th District. Outside of Minnesota's congressional delegation, the group met with Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and other leaders at the Department of Justice, Federal Trade Commission, Environmental Protection Agency and the White House.

"I extend my gratitude to the MFU members who took time away from their farms and businesses to attend this important event and speak up for the issues important to them," said MFU Vice President Anne Schwagerl, who led the delegation

# Fall Fly-in, Farm Bill expiration and state convention prep



*Nick Lunneborg, chief of staff for Rep. Michelle Fischbach, discussed Fischbach's farm bill priorities with the MFU group, including Taran Skwira, Mariah Peterson and Kirsten VanDerPol. Fischbach's priorities include protecting the sugar program, investing in animal disease prevention and protecting the farm bill safety net.*

to D.C. this year. "I know it's tough to leave the farm this time of year, but it's vitally important that congressional leaders hear directly from those impacted by the policies they put into place. It is democracy in action."

A new and too often overlooked focus for visits with legislators and members of the administration was the need to attract and retain qualified frontline service staff at FSA and other offices across the nation. Salaries have not kept pace with inflation and that's resulted in consolidated offices and larger caseloads. Of course, this also has implications for farmers—and particularly new farmers—working to access USDA programs.

Following our visit, Sen. Smith submitted a bipartisan amendment calling on Secretary Vilsack to "submit to Congress a report describing a plan for improving staffing" at FSA and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices. This is one example of how the stories members bring to D.C. during fly-in can shape federal policy.

## Farm bill expires

Of course, despite the efforts of Farmers Union and others, the 2018 Farm Bill expired at midnight on Sept. 30 with neither the House nor the Senate having

released a draft version of the bill. While this was certainly disappointing, it was far from surprising. Both chairs shared their intention to move legislation later in the calendar year and Vilsack assured farmers that current funding will allow programs to function for the coming months. Not only that, but there is good precedent for farm bills getting pushed past their expiration.

Nevertheless, the clock is ticking for Congress to act on this critical legislation and Farmers Union is working hard to shape it.

One big reason the farm bill was tabled is that funding for the federal government also expired at the end of September. With FSA offices, national parks and other government services set to close, service men and women facing not getting paid and other consequences on the line, a narrow band of conservative House Republicans threatened to shut down the government if they didn't get steep spending cuts to federal agencies—including an \$8.3 billion cut to USDA programs, slashing the agency's budget by about one third.

## Speaker McCarthy ousted

In the end, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., introduced a last-minute continuing resolution to fund the government at

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# Application for New Leader Academy Class Four opens Nov. 17

## WINONA ANDERSON EDUCATION DIRECTOR

winona@mfu.org

“The future of American agriculture and rural communities lies in the hands of those involved.” This has been the tagline for Minnesota Farmers Union’s New Leader Academy since its first class was introduced at the 2018 State Convention. Most members have probably heard of this group, or seen mentions of the NLA, as it’s casually referred to, but what is this program? Why was it created, what do NLA participants do, and how successful has it been? This month, we are taking a deep dive into MFU’s New Leader Academy.

### History

Though NLA got its start in 2018, it is not the first leadership program MFU offered. From 2011 to 2017, members ages 18 to 25 who were interested in Minnesota Farmers Union, agriculture, agricultural policy and rural life were part of a group called Next Step, which occurred at the state convention every year. Seventy-three participants were involved in that program, which was a condensed version of NLA. After six years, we decided to offer a more involved program that allowed for more opportunities, and New Leader Academy was born.

### Past programming

NLA sessions provide members the chance to talk with pretty cool people, with past NFU President Roger Johnson, Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen, FSA State Executive Director Whitney Place and Minnesota Deputy Agriculture Commissioner Andrea Vaubel featured on NLA agendas over the years. Participants have also visited several community experts – from staff at Central Lakes College and



Members of the first NLA class enjoy a social outing as part of the summer session in 2019. The NLA Was introduced in 2018 at the annual state convention.



Members of New Leader Academy Class Two toured the Duluth Seaway Port Authority. The program is making an impact on the organization. Nearly 90 percent of NLA members renewed their membership after they finished the program, and 33 percent have served as county officers.

Lake Superior College, to the team at Sprout MN, to the director of government and environmental affairs at the Duluth Seaway Port Authority. Each speaker and tour provided an opportunity to hear a different perspective on issues in agriculture, rural life and MFU’s involvement across the state. We’ve even seen past program participants come back as guest speakers.

While these speakers and tours were always a blast, the sessions weren’t just filled with learning opportunities – we believe in emphasizing the importance of networking

and community building as well. What better way to do that than to spend an evening out on the town with a nice dinner and a social outing? From outdoor teambuilding exercises and escape rooms to relaxing evening boat cruises, each session provides time for class members to get to know each other.

### Program impact

In September, NLA Class Three finished their year of programming with the annual NFU Fly-in – one of the perks of being an NLA participant. After only three years of programming, the impact that we’ve seen on our organization has been incredible.

Nearly 90 percent of NLA members renewed their membership after they finished the program, and a third have or are serving as county officers in their home communities.

It has been incredible to see these participants grow and find their place in our organization, and to hear from them about the personal impact of the NLA.

When members join the program, they have a lot of personal goals they are hoping to accomplish. Rachel Sannerud said her hope was “to build a strong voice and a comprehensive understanding of the issues facing farmers across the state and across the country so I can be a voice at the legislature and to advocate for positive change for family farmers and rural communities.” Melany Thomas also had ideas about what she would get out of the program and said, “gaining knowledge and insight from others would be one of my primary goals as well as sharing my experiences with others to encourage their growth.” And when it came time to think about what she got out of her participation, Fallon Ryan had this to

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# Minnesota Farmers Union 82nd Annual Convention

The 82nd annual Minnesota Farmers Union convention is Nov. 17-19 at Delta Hotels by Marriott Minneapolis Northeast, 1330 Industrial Blvd. NE, Minneapolis. Here's some handy information.

## Food

MFU will again be sourcing food from members. Daily lunch is \$20 per person and the banquet ticket is \$35 per person. The full meal package is \$65. Please reserve your meals by Nov. 6 so the state office can give an accurate count to the hotel.

## Hotel

To reserve a room, contact Delta Hotels by Marriott Minneapolis Northeast at 612-455-6322, or go to [bit.ly/82hotel](https://bit.ly/82hotel) (case sensitive), by Nov. 7 to guarantee a special rate of \$124 plus taxes and fees. Please ask for the "Minnesota Farmers Union Annual Convention" room block. A credit card is required to book your reservation. The hotel is located at 1330 Industrial Blvd. NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413. Check-in begins at 3 p.m. and check out is at noon. For more information, contact Operations Director Glen Schmidt at (651) 288-4066 or [glen@mfu.org](mailto:glen@mfu.org).

## Childcare

Childcare at the convention is open to all members. Children must be 4 years of age or older to attend. You must register by Nov. 10. To register, go to <https://bit.ly/ConventionChildCare23>.

If you have any questions, contact Education Director Winona Anderson at (651) 288-4096 or [winona@mfu.org](mailto:winona@mfu.org).

## PAC Reception

The MFU PAC will hold a reception on Nov. 18 starting at 4:30 p.m. in the St. Paul Ballroom. All are encouraged to attend. Suggested donation is \$25. For more information, contact Stu Lourey at (320) 232-3047 or [stu.lourey@gmail.com](mailto:stu.lourey@gmail.com).

## Happy Camper

Enter to win the "Happy Camper" – a Minnesota-made 2023 Scamp Pull-Behind Camper. Only 500 tickets sold. Your \$100 tax-deductible ticket contribution will support the work of the MFU Foundation. The drawing is on Sunday, Nov. 19. Need not be present to win. To purchase a ticket, contact Operations Coordinator Jeff Diamond at (651) 288-4060 or [operations@mfu.org](mailto:operations@mfu.org).



## AGENDA

### FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 17

- 12:45 p.m. Childcare opens (childcare closes at 6:30 p.m.)
- 12:45 p.m. Auction item check-in begins (Lake Mille Lacs)
- 1 p.m. Panel discussion: **Rural Access to Care. From emergency transportation to nursing, how can we ensure access to care in rural Minnesota? What are alternatives to more consolidation?** (Minneapolis Ballroom Salons C & D)
- 2:15 p.m. Panel discussion: **Think like a Banker. What questions do you need answered to get your project financed and go from dream to reality?** (Minneapolis Ballroom Salons C & D)
- 3 p.m. Credentials & Elections Committee meeting with Attorney Dave Velde (Stillwater Room)
- 3:30 p.m. Registration opens (Foyer)
- 3:30 p.m. Panel discussion: **Selling more than Farm Products. What are 'climate-smart' markets, their challenges, opportunities and what does USDA's focus on these markets mean for farmers?** (Minneapolis Ballroom Salons C & D)
- 4 p.m. Rules & Bylaws Meeting with Attorney Dave Velde (Stillwater Room)
- 4:45 p.m. Panel discussion: **Health and Life Insurance Solutions for you and your Farm** (Minneapolis Ballroom Salons C & D)
- 5:45 p.m. Auction item check-in closes. (Lake Mille Lacs)
- 6:30 p.m. Registration closes
- 6:30 p.m. Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) & Farmers Union Agency (FUA) Joint Reception (TBD)
- 8 p.m. Young Member Social, Minneapolis Cider Company, 701 SE 9th St., Minneapolis

### SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18

- 6:30 a.m. Free farm-fresh breakfast for MFU members (ends 8 a.m.) (St. Paul Room)
- 7 a.m. Registration opens (Foyer)
- 7:30 a.m. Membership Engagement Committee meeting (Duluth Executive Boardroom)
- 8 a.m. Childcare opens (childcare closes when election starts)

8 a.m.	Auction item check-in resumes (Lake Mille Lacs)	2:45 p.m.	Credentials report – Credentials Committee Chair LeeAnn Hanson-VanDerPol	8:15 a.m.	Door prizes (Minneapolis Ballroom)
8:30 a.m.	Door prizes (Minneapolis Ballroom)		Election of President and Vice President		Call to order
	Convention convenes (Minneapolis Ballroom)		Policy discussion		Farmers Union Industries (FUI) report – Dale Bednarek, FUI CEO
	Welcome – Gary Wertish, MFU President	<b>3:30 p.m. Delegate registration closes, re-opens Sunday at 8 a.m., closes at 9:30 a.m. (time certain)</b>			Green View report – Mike McShane, Green View Executive Director
	Prayer	3:30 p.m.	NFU Convention delegate election caucusing ( <b>time certain</b> ) (Minneapolis Ballroom)		Education Report – Winona Anderson, MFU Education Director
	Pledge of Allegiance	4:00 p.m.	Credentials Committee Meeting to draft ballots (Stillwater Room)		National Youth Advisory Committee report – Mariah Peterson and Jackie Zaviska
	Present & adopt convention rules – Tim Velde, Rules & Bylaws Committee Chair	4:30 p.m.	MFUPAC reception (St. Paul Ballroom)		Membership Engagement Committee report
	Present & adopt minutes of 2022 convention – Missy Bakker Roach, MFU State Secretary	6 p.m.	Doors open for banquet (Minneapolis Ballroom)		Membership report – Claudine Arndt, Membership and Minnesota Cooks Director
	Greeting & Report – Carol Anderson, MFU Executive Committee Chair	6:15 p.m.	Banquet	9:30 a.m.	Policy discussion
	Communications update – Janet Kubat, MFU Communications Director; Kyle Hoffman, MFU Communications & Marketing Coordinator		Year in review video	<b>9:30 a.m. Delegate registration closes – time certain, deadline for alternates to upgrade to delegates if needed</b>	
	Insurance update – Josh Vickerman, FUA President & General Manager		Prayer	9:45 a.m.	Credentials report – Credentials Committee Chair (final count of registered delegates)
	Remarks – Anne Schwagerl, MFU Vice President		FFA State Officers comments (Katie Ketchum, President; Tyler Ratka, Vice President; Alison Murrell, Secretary; Mason Grams, Treasurer; Miriana Eiden, Reporter; Mackenzie Kuschel, Sentinel)	10:00 a.m.	Speakers
	New Leader Academy, Farmers Union Enterprises Leadership update – Winona Anderson, MFU Education Director		Torchbearer recognition – Winona Anderson, MFU Education Director	10:30 a.m.	Policy discussion
	Farmers Union Enterprises Leadership program report – Russ Derickson and Jeremiah Hasnedl		Legislator Awards	11:15 a.m.	Introduction of NFU convention delegate nominees
	Legislative update – Stu Lourey, MFU Government Relations Director; Ariel Kagan, MFU Climate and Working Lands Program Director; Justin Stofferahn, MFU Antimonopoly Director		President's address – Gary Wertish	11:45 a.m.	Election of delegates to NFU convention ( <b>time certain</b> ) (Minneapolis Ballroom)
10:30 a.m.	Guest speakers		NFU President Rob Larew	12 p.m.	Lunch (Buffet in Foyer, eat in Minneapolis Ballroom)
	Policy discussion		Keynote speaker	12:30 p.m.	Speakers
11:30 a.m.	Lunch (foyer, eat in Minneapolis Ballroom)		Silent auction closes 10 minutes after end of banquet (Lake Mille Lacs)		2022 audit and financial report – Carlson SV
12 p.m.	Door prizes and Remarks – Princess Kay of the Milky Way (Minneapolis Ballroom)	8:30 p.m.	MFU fundraiser live auction (Minneapolis Ballroom)	12:45 p.m.	Policy discussion
12:15 p.m.	Awards program				Special orders
12:15 p.m.	Auction item check-in closes.				Old business
12:45 p.m.	Introduction to National Convention - Gary Wertish, MFU President				New business
1 p.m.	Policy discussion				Announcements
1:50 p.m.	Speakers				Election results (if/when available)
					Grand door prize drawing
					Happy Camper drawing
					Adjournment
					<i>Most agenda times are subject to change</i>

### SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 20

- 6:30 a.m. Free omelet breakfast for MFU members (ends 8 a.m.) (St. Paul Ballroom)
- 7 a.m. FUMPA meeting (Duluth Executive Room)
- 8 a.m. Childcare (closes after policy discussion ends)
- 8 a.m. Registration re-opens (Foyer)

## Get your auction items ready for state convention

The silent and live auctions at the MFU state convention raise funds for the MFU Foundation, which supports several programs including Minnesota Cooks, Climate and Working Lands, meat processing, an antitrust fellowship and youth camps.

MFU members Cindy VanDerPol, Jeanne Wertish and Stacy Ripka volunteer to lead the auction committee and offer several ideas for members who bring donations for the auctions.

- Auction intake opens at 12:45 p.m. Friday, Nov. 17 and closes at 5:45 p.m. It reopens at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 18 and closes at 12:15 p.m. Please contact Stacy at **320-412-6362** or Cindy at **320-220-1852** if you need to make alternative arrangements for

dropping off your donation. Donations can also be left at the state office prior to convention. Contact Jeff Diamond at **651-288-4060** or **operations@mfu.org** to make arrangements for dropping off.

- Please include a note with your donation including your name, contact information and value of all donated items.
- Please allow the committee to determine if your donation should go on the live or silent auction.
- Several county units donate items for the auction, examples include products created or grown by members in those counties. Individuals may also donate items. Call Stacy, Cindy or Jeanne if you have a question about what to donate.

- Items that sell well include toy implements, liquor, themed baskets, anything Christmas related, baked goods, meat bundles and new or vintage items from cooperatives or Farmers Union. Theme baskets that have been donated in the past include movie night, pampering and Minnesota Grown.
- To create more excitement about the auction, the committee asks that you share a photo of your donation with **kyle@mfu.org** to share on social media in advance of the convention.

The silent auction closes 10 minutes after the end of the evening banquet on Saturday, Nov. 18. The live auction begins after the banquet on Saturday, Nov. 18.



**Gary Wertish**

**Presidential candidate**

## Candidate Q&A

**Anne Schwagerl**

**Vice presidential candidate**



**Family:** spouse, Jeanne, children, Laura, Dan, Tom and Katie and four grandchildren.

**Town:** Renville, MN.

**When did you become involved in Farmers Union?**

In the mid-1970s.

**What message do you share with others when asking them to join Farmers Union?**

I tell them Farmers Union gives them a voice in the legislative process and that Farmers Union is a strong voice representing all types of family farmers.

**What skills or abilities do you bring to the role?**

From my service on various boards and in various government roles, I have learned the importance of bringing people together and working together to accomplish goals.

**What three goals do you have for your term?**

- 1) Continue to advocate for family farmers on state and national level.
- 2) Continue the work we have started to increase access to meat processing in Minnesota.
- 3) Continue to be a voice for increasing competition in the agricultural marketplace.

**Family:** spouse, Peter, children, Nora and Ben.

**Town:** Browns Valley, MN.

**When did you become involved in Farmers Union?**

The first year we returned home to start farming – 2013.

**What message do you share with others when asking them to join Farmers Union?**

Farmers Union is a big-tent grass-roots organization made up of family farmers, governed by family farmers, and for the benefit of family farmers. We advocate for policies that benefit farmers and rural communities through direct state and federal action. We also work to connect farmers with resources – to ensure not just the survival of family farms but also to ensure that rural communities continue to thrive into the future.

**What skills or abilities do you bring to the role?**

Managing both internal and external relationships with legislative, funding, community partners and members of the extended Farmers Union family. Successfully representing our diverse membership's priorities to policy makers and members of the press.

**What three goals do you have for your term?**

- 1) Continue to develop local leaders across the state to carry on the mission of MFU to the next generation of producers.
- 2) Engage with our membership across the state for how we can best work together to support family farmers.
- 3) Successfully advocate for the members' legislative priorities at the state and national levels.

## National convention in Arizona in March

The National Farmers Union's 122nd Anniversary Convention is March 10-12, 2024, at the Scottsdale Plaza Resort, Scottsdale, Ariz.

Topics to be covered include fair and competitive markets, cooperatives, engaging the next generation and

biofuels. You will have the opportunity to network with fellow Farmers Union members from across the country and Farmers Union leadership. There will also be debate and adoption of NFU's 2024 grassroots policy.

Learn more at [nfu.org/convention/](https://nfu.org/convention/)



MFU Executive Committee members Carol Anderson and Linda Larson at the 2023 NFU Convention.

## Caucus Procedure

### District Caucuses for Delegates to the National Farmers Union (NFU) Convention

1. The pre-assigned convener calls the meeting to order.
2. The convener calls for a secretary to record nominations and report the delegation's vote.
3. The convener shall announce that any delegate may be nominated as a delegate to the National Farmers Union convention, except for members who served as delegates in 2022. These members include:
  - John Beaton, St. Louis County
  - Karen Benitt, Marshall County
  - Hannah Bernhardt, Pine County
  - Erik Hatlestad, Kandiyohi County
  - Larry Jacobson, Clay County
  - Danny Lundell, Goodhue County
  - Tessa Parks, Rice County
  - Paul Sobocinski, Redwood County
  - John Thormodson, Blue Earth County
  - Harmon Wilts, Swift County

Nominations shall be made orally until such time as that caucus, by majority vote, shall determine that nominations be closed.

4. The 2024 national convention will be held in Scottsdale, Ariz., on March 10-12, 2024.
5. Delegates will receive a round-trip transportation allowance, hotel accommodation and a \$200 stipend.

6. The convener calls for nominations for the NFU convention delegates. Delegates may nominate themselves.
7. The caucus may propose any number of nominees for delegates to the NFU convention.
8. Once all nominations have been entered, the caucus secretary will write the nominees names on the national caucusing reporting form.
9. Once all nominations have been entered, the nominees will have a chance to introduce themselves and give a short speech about why they wish to be nominated to the NFU convention.
10. If there is no contest for the two delegate or two alternate slots, there is no need to conduct a vote.
11. If there is a contest, the caucus will vote for two delegate choices using the small white ballot forms in the folder.
12. Return your folded vote to the folder.
13. The caucus secretary shall complete the nomination form in this packet and deliver it to the podium at the front of the room. In the case of no contest, the caucus secretary shall note that on the nomination form.
14. The credentials committee will count all districts ballots and produce the national delegate ballot form for elections on Sunday.
15. If there is a tie for any position on the election ballot, the election ballot shall carry the names of those who receive a tie vote.
16. Each nominee will have up to two minutes

to speak before the full convention Sunday before the final vote on national convention delegates.

17. Per national policy, each delegate and alternate selected shall be a member in good standing and shall have been or be now actively engaged in farming or ranching, as defined by USDA. While there are many dimensions to this USDA definition, the NFU delegates' intent was to rely upon a definition of farmers as those who produce and recognize more than \$1,000 of receipts from the sale of agricultural products within a year (or normally would do so). Furthermore, the "actively engaged in farming, as defined by USDA," may include a significant contribution of one or more of the following:
  - Land
  - Capital
  - Equipment
  - Or combination thereof
  - And a significant contribution of one or more of the following:
    - Active Personal Labor
    - Active Personal Management
    - Or combination thereof

Further Consideration:

Adult children of an eligible Farmers Union farm family, who receive value in exchange for their engagement in the farm operation, but lack a capital position in the assets of the farm, are nonetheless eligible to be NFU delegates.

*NOTE: In 2023, each district is eligible to elect up to two delegates and two alternates.*

# Secretary Vilsack offers alternative to 'get big or get out'



Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack used a whiteboard to illustrate the many ways the Biden administration is working to strengthen the rural economy during a presentation before Farmers Union members gathered in Washington, D.C., for the NFU Fall Legislative Fly-in.

By Janet Kubat Willette

More than 30 Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) members from seven of the state's Congressional districts joined more than 300 other Farmers Union members from across the nation for a legislative fly-in to Washington, D.C. from Sept. 10-13.

Collectively, Farmers Union members attended hundreds of Congressional meetings, heard from Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small, USDA Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation Robert Bonnie and Deputy Assistant Attorney General Michael Kades among other leaders.

In addition to attending federal agency and White House briefings, members of the Minnesota delegation met with Sen. Amy Klobuchar, Sen. Tina Smith, Rep. Angie Craig, Rep. Brad Finstad, Rep. Betty McCollum, Rep. Pete Stauber and staff members for Rep. Tom Emmer, Rep. Dean Phillips and Rep. Michelle Fischbach.

"Fly-in is one of my favorite Farmers Union activities because it brings farmers from across the nation together to advocate for policies important to them and to renew relationships with one another," said MFU Vice President Anne Schwagerl, who led the delegation. "We focused on our farm bill priorities, including maintaining a strong farm safety net, building a competition title to support fair, open and competitive markets and giving farmers the tools they need to farm in a changing climate."

## USDA briefing

Farmers Union members started their fly-in with a meeting in USDA's Jefferson Auditorium. Several USDA officials talked about what the agency is doing to strengthen rural America.

Vilsack took the stage to a standing ovation, which he quickly moved to quell,

saying "we've got a lot to do here." His urgency came through as he moved to his white board and started sketching out the Biden administration's plan to create an alternative to the notion of "get big or get out," which was the suggestion of Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue, who served between Vilsack's terms.

The United States lost 16,700 farms between when he left USDA in January 2017 and when he came back in February 2021, Vilsack said, asking the Farmers Union members if they were OK with that. Shouts of "no" erupted from the audience.

Vilsack agreed, saying, "you ought not be."

He said Emergency Relief Program payments would be out in 30 to 60 days from the Sept. 11 meeting and that USDA is hiring new people – 1,800 people in the last two years – but it takes a long time to bring people on staff. The other challenge is money. Jobs at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) used to pay top wages in small towns, but that is no longer the case, and it will only get worse if the House proposal to cut the agency's budget by a third is adopted, Vilsack said.

He said climate-smart agriculture is an emerging opportunity for farmers, giving them an opportunity to earn a premium on what they are raising and growing. USDA has funded more than 141 projects and is focused on developing ways to monitor, measure and verify the ecosystem services farmers provide.

USDA is also supporting farmers who want to transition to organic production through the Organic Transition Initiative, a \$300 million multi-agency effort.

USDA is investing in processing to build local infrastructure, targeting up to \$75 million in grants to fund projects designed to build resilience in the meat and poultry supply chain and give producers more local processing options.

USDA is also part of a government-wide challenge that proposes to meet 100 percent of U.S. aviation fuel demand with sustainable aviation fuel by 2050. This industry doesn't exist now and has the potential to bring up to 1 million jobs to rural America. There are unlimited opportunities in the biobased economy, Vilsack said.

Expanding the local and regional food system is another opportunity. USDA selected 12 finalists to serve as Regional Food Business Center earlier this year and gave them \$400 million to drive economic opportunities across their regions.

There's also potential to produce green fertilizers in the United States, which USDA is supporting through the Fertilizer Production Expansion Program.

"These are choices," Vilsack said. "All of this is supported and needs support from the IRA, the budget, the CCC and the farm bill."

However, the future of that funding depends on the American people. "It's up to you, it's not up to me, it's up to you," Vilsack said, alluding to the farm bill debate and the upcoming election.

The House and Senate agriculture committee chairs are working hard to craft a farm bill, but they have a challenge, he said. If, for example, they adjust reference prices it will cost an estimated \$2 billion a year and that money must come from somewhere else. Farmers need to give their congress-people permission to be creative and to think outside the box, Vilsack said.



*MFU members pose for a group photo with Sen. Amy Klobuchar following their meeting with the senator who is in line to chair the Senate Agriculture Committee if Democrats keep the Senate in the next election.*



*Rep. Betty McCollum greets MFU Executive Committee Vice Chair Ted Winter of Nobles County. McCollum and Winter served in the Minnesota House of Representatives together.*

## MFU members advocate for new farm bill at NFU Fly-in



*MFU members Gene Paul, left, and Randy Sorg, right, listen as Rep. Brad Finstad talked about his farm bill priorities, including a strong risk management program, and protecting the nation from foreign animal diseases. Paul asked Finstad to remember the dairy industry.*



*Jessica Larsen, legislative aide to Rep. Dean Phillips, met with MFU members Justin Goetz, Cindy VanDerPol, Melany Thomas, Brenda Rudolph, Kirsten VanDerPol, Paul Benson, Mary Metelak, Taran Skwira, Aaron Chervestad, Jackie Zaviska, Mariah Peterson, Josh Vickerman, Glen Schmidt, Josh VanDerPol and Kyle Thomas.*



*Sen. Tina Smith took a selfie with members of Minnesota Farmers Union. She thanked the members for being in the nation's capital as citizen lobbyists and spoke of her work to address concentration and consolidation issues in the marketplace.*



*Matt Kruger, Molly Byron, Mike Peterson, Gene Paul, Rod Peterson and Randy Sorg listen as Angie Cragin talks. Cragin said anti-trust should be a bipartisan issue as foreign ownership and consolidation of food processing is a national security risk.*



*Clockwise from top left: MFU State Secretary Missy Bakker Roach and Executive Committee members Ted Winter and Linda Larson smile while waiting to hear from Sen. Tina Smith. MFU members Steve and Carol Anderson, Whitney Terrill, Kyle Thomas, Ariel Kagan, Kelsey Love Zaavedra and Missy Bakker Roach met with a member of Rep. Tom Emmer's staff. MFU Executive Committee Chair Carol Anderson of Benton County asks a question during the meeting with USDA officials. Rep. Brad Finstad invited a constituent from the 1st Congressional District to sit behind his desk during his meeting with MFU members. Molly Byron, from Waseca County, was the first to raise her hand and participated in the meeting from behind Finstad's desk. Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small spoke of the USDA's work to serve people living in rural areas. She said USDA is investing in people to build the nation's economy from the middle out and the bottom up.*



## President's Message

*continued from page 3*

farms in the United States in 2021, according to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service. That was down 6,950 from the previous year.

The average farm size in the United States was 445 acres in 2021 and in Minnesota there were 14,000 farms with 49 acres or less in 2017. In Japan, the average farm size is 4 acres and there are many parcels that are smaller. Transferring farmland is a huge issue as is farmland abandonment. The country has strong laws to protect against corporate ownership of farmland.

The demographics of the country may be one factor driving the popularity of prepared foods, the fastest-growing food segment in the country. The 7-Eleven convenience stores are restocked with prepared foods three to four times a day because the stores are very small, and the individual stores don't have storage space. The 7-Elevens were located on nearly every block in the areas we visited.

Increasingly, residents are replacing seafood in their diets with chicken, pork and beef. Two things are driving that, the warming of the oceans are moving the fish further north and they are less available and Japanese consumers are gravitating toward a more western style diet. Japan

is the No. 1 market for U.S. beef and pork combined.

We also attended the Food Style Japan food service trade show to tour the U.S. Meat Export Federation pavilion, which showcased more than 10 companies selling U.S. beef and pork products for the Japanese market. We then traveled to Osaka, population 20 million, for more retail tours, including a food ingredient manufacturer called Sanwa Starch that buys U.S. corn for their product.

We learned that Japan is the third largest market for U.S. ethanol, and they are very interested in sustainable aviation fuel, an emerging product for Minnesota's crop producers. State legislators passed incentives for the industry and Walz signed a sustainable aviation fuel tax credit. The new refundable tax credit provides \$1.50 per gallon of sustainable aviation fuel produced or blended in Minnesota and sold for use in planes departing Minnesota airports.

We also toured a green ammonia plant. Japan has gained attention lately for its breakthrough technology, from the Tokyo Institute of Technology, that paves the way for synthesizing ammonia at low temperatures and pressure. This technology will facilitate the production of green ammonia from hydrogen produced by renewable energy sources, like the work that is underway at the University of



*Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz visits with MFU President Gary Wertish and Michael Landuyt from the Minnesota State Cattlemen's Association during a trade mission to Japan in September.*

Minnesota's West Central Research and Outreach Center in Morris.

Gov. Tim Walz and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan, who were in Japan for the 2023 Midwest U.S.-Japan Conference, hosted us for a reception in Tokyo as well as a luncheon in Osaka.

It's important to participate in these trade missions to build relationships with other countries as export markets are important. It's also important to visit other countries to learn about their challenges and opportunities so we can use that information to make Minnesota better.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the state convention at the Delta Hotels by Marriott Minneapolis Northeast.



## Leftover Turkey Hash

By Katie Workman, *The Mom 100*. Source: National Turkey Federation

This Turkey Hash recipe takes advantage of leftover turkey. It's so flexible that you can also work some of those other holiday leftovers into the mix. If you happen to have leftover roasted potatoes (sweet or white), use those instead of cooking the potatoes in the pot at the beginning of the recipe. If you have leftover roasted vegetables, then you can add those and skip the sautéing of the onion, celery, peppers and garlic.

### Ingredients

- 2 cups diced potatoes
- 3 tablespoons olive or vegetable oil
- ½ cup chopped onion
- ½ cup diced celery
- ¼ cup chopped bell pepper
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 3 cups diced cooked turkey
- ¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley, plus more for sprinkling
- 3 tablespoons heavy cream (optional)
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- Hot sauce to serve

### Directions

Preheat the oven to 450°F.

Bring a medium pot of salted water to a boil. Add the potatoes and cook for about 8 to 10 minutes, until the potatoes are just tender. Drain and let cool in the colander.

Heat the oil in a large skillet, over medium heat. Add the onions, celery, bell peppers and garlic. Season with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring occasionally for 8 minutes until the vegetables start to lightly brown. Add turkey, parsley, cream (if using) and Worcestershire sauce. Stir until everything is well blended. Let cook, without stirring for about 4 minutes until the bottom is starting to brown up



nicely. Transfer the pan, uncovered, to the oven and bake for 7 to 9 minutes until the top is crispy. If the top isn't getting as browned as you like, slide the pan under the broiler for a minute or two to crisp up even more.

Sprinkle with a bit more chopped parsley, and serve hot from the pan, with a fried egg or two and some hot sauce if you like.



Email your favorite recipe to [janet@mfu.org](mailto:janet@mfu.org) for publication in a future issue of *Minnesota Agriculture*.

## The value of working with a Farmers Union Agency Agent for your health and life insurance needs.



**Joel Harmoning** believes in being more than just insurance. He believes in providing clients with peace of mind. The mission at the Harmoning Agency is to ensure clients understand what they are buying for insurance. Specializing in farms and the businesses that support agriculture, these rural communities have been the foundation of the Harmoning agency since 2000.

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CLIMATE RESILIENCE ON THE FARM

## Little Falls farmer: 'It is our responsibility to take care of the resources we have'

By Sabrina Portner

Brenda and Nate Rudolph purchased his family's farm in 2011. By 2019, the couple knew they needed to shift away from milking cows to keep farming.

They talked with Chef Tomas at the A.T. Black and White restaurant in Little Falls and began developing relationships with others in their community through a local food hub, Sprout, and the Little Falls Farmers Market.

They transitioned from dairy farming to direct marketing and now sell pork, beef, lamb and chicken direct to consumers. They supply outdoor-raised heritage breed pork to the A.T. Black and White restaurant and have built a loyal customer base for their meat.

Brenda and Nate, along with their children, Everett and Vivian, also custom raise dairy steers and grow corn, rye, oats and alfalfa on the farm, which has been in Nate's family for 130 years.

Brenda keeps her community involved on the farm through her blog, Raising a Farmer. Raising a Farmer has also grown into a non-profit organization that strives to connect rural and urban communities through food, art, farming and community.

### Q. How has your farm structure changed in recent years and how are you planning for the future?

**A. Brenda:** We are beginning to talk about the future now and we know we don't want to guilt our children into taking over the farm. We want our farm to be in a position where the kids could continue farming if they want to. Our two kids already have specific roles on the farm, but we also want them to have off-farm



*Brenda and Nate Rudolph and their children, Everett and Vivian, farm near Little Falls in central Minnesota. They direct market pork, beef, lamb and chicken and also custom raise dairy steers and grow corn, rye, oats and alfalfa.*

experience which will be valuable if they do come back.

**Nate:** Our farm has shifted and changed drastically since dairy farming. The farm has always been a dairy farm. Dairy farming was part of our identity. That experience has taught us to be okay with change if our kids want to farm differently than us. We want it to be sustainable for them.

**Brenda:** In reference to our identity, this year I have finally felt that we can consider ourselves a direct-market farm. Our kids have a strong voice in the operation. We are a democracy. We shifted to what is sustainable and what fits our farm.

### Q. Has climate change informed your plans for the future of your farm?

**A. Nate:** We need to do what we can to conserve the land. We need to take care of what we have because there isn't any new land being created. We treat each field differently based on its

conditions, the needs of the animals and the needs of the farm. We give our pigs space and avoid overcrowding. It is our responsibility to take care of the resources we have.

### Q. Are you facing challenges in relation to climate change management? Drought?

**A. Nate:** Weather patterns are very different now compared to when I was a kid. As a kid we would cut the first cutting of hay around Memorial Day, and it seemed like the whole state would get rain. That rain doesn't happen anymore. We plant drought tolerant corn for which the genetics have greatly improved. Where there are washout places in fields,

we have planted them to grass ways. We try to keep corn stubble on the fields and minimize tillage in the sandy fields or plant cover crops to minimize erosion.

**Brenda:** The weather is more volatile. The average is made of extremes.

### Q. What barriers do you see to the adoption of conservation practices?

**A. Nate:** We would like to convert our pond that has been overrun by cattails back to a pond again. A hundred years ago, it was a swimming hole and now we can't even kayak through most of it. We haven't been able to find any programs that will help us in that habitat rehabilitation.

### Q. How has your farm operation remained resilient?

**A. Brenda:** Our resilience was dependent on a mindset shift. We had to be willing to make a drastic change from milking

cows to being direct market farmers in order to continue farming. Our mindset had to be how can we provide the best product to our customers. It is a very personal transaction when someone buys a cut of our meat. We get to learn about people, and they get to learn about us. Our ability to pivot when something is not working even in the middle of the season is what keeps us resilient. We are determined to stick to our mission as a family farm and discuss opportunities with each other.

**Nate:** Resilience requires asking questions and being able to think outside of the box. We can't limit ourselves to "this is the way it's always been done."

**Q. What do you think people are missing in the conversation around climate?**

**A. Brenda:** Everyone's sustainability looks different. What's required for the sustainability of our family of four's farm is different than a larger farm with multiple partners. You need to focus on your own farm. If a multi-generational farm has a generation that doesn't want to farm, that's okay. They can't be guilted into it. That's not sustainable. Yet there is pressure on the older generation that they don't want to be the "end" of the family farm. Sustainability means if your children don't want to farm can you pivot and mentor someone else who does? At the same time, we are humbled by the fact that we are a generational farm, knowing how many different generations of kids walked down the driveway to the school bus through the years.

**Nate:** Regarding climate change, everyone must do their part. The world can't stop turning. Farmers are a driving force as the caretakers of the land, but we are all a part of this.

**Q. If you could tell Congress to do one (or two) things that would help you continue to farm in the next generation, what would it be?**

**A. Brenda:** We need to relook at what is required to be a beginning farmer. I was looking at services as a beginning female farmer but couldn't access them because I am partners on the farm with my husband who isn't a beginning farmer.

## MFU member Harold Wolle is NCGA president

Madelia farmer and MFU member Harold Wolle is president of the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA).

Wolle, who raises corn and soybeans with his son, Matt, is the second Minnesotan to serve as NCGA president in as many years. He has farmed for 47 years, all in Madelia.

Read on for more about Wolle and his new job.

**Q. Was farming something you always wanted to do?**

**A.** Pretty much. I had another job right out of college. I have a need to be productive, and in that job, I couldn't see the results of my efforts. On the farm, if you work hard, you can see the results of that. If you don't get your work done, you see the results of that too.

**Q. What do you enjoy about farming?**

**A.** It's enjoyable to see those little plants come up in the spring, but fall is my favorite time of year. At that point, we're eagerly anticipating what's out there. Is it going to be a pretty good crop, or are there going to be some disappoints?

**Q. What inspired you to get involved with the National Corn Growers Association?**

**A.** My experiences on the Minnesota Corn Growers Association Board and serving as president of MCGA. (Editor's note: Wolle joined the MCGA board in 2012 and served as its president in 2016-17.) That level of being involved just piqued my interest. I was asked to run for the NCGA board and decided that it would be a good opportunity and have thoroughly enjoyed serving on that board as well.

**Q. What are you hoping to work on at the national level?**



**A.** The farm bill expired Sept. 30, and that creates a sense of urgency that raises it into the number one priority at this time. Number two are issues surrounding demand for corn: Ethanol, livestock production and trade. On the ethanol front, there's probably three issues that rise to the top. First off is year-round E15. We need to get that authorized. The way it was working this summer, I don't think it's sustainable where the president is giving a waiver every 20 days. We also need to get the Next Generation Fuels Act passed, which would pave the way for higher blends of ethanol in our gasoline. As we add cosponsors, it's going to be more difficult to ignore the fact that there's a number of legislators that want this to go forward. The third thing is sustainable aviation fuel. I think we're going to hear a lot more about ethanol-to-jet as we move forward. There are some opportunities with corn—with its lower intensity scores—to be used as SAF in the near future. Airlines know they have to reduce the amount of carbon they're emitting, and this is the most practical way for that to be accomplished.

**Q. Anything you're most looking forward to in this role?**

**A.** Policy issues are what I most enjoy. This spring, I was able to testify in front of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Commodities, Risk Management and Trade, and thoroughly enjoyed that opportunity. I'd love to be on stage when the president signs the Farm Bill.

*This article was reprinted with permission from the Minnesota Corn Growers Association.*

# Green View employees go the extra mile to make Anchor Lake Rest Area a top stop

By Janet Kubat Willette

Gary Bielejeski takes pride in keeping the Anchor Lake Rest Area looking like a city park.



Gary Bielejeski

Bielejeski, 76, is the crew leader at the rest area located near mile marker 50 on U.S. Route 53. He works with his staff to maintain the building; clean the bathrooms, toilets and mirrors; mow the lawn and remove the snow; schedule workers and order supplies; fill the bird feeders and paint the benches and picnic tables.

"I always want to give 110 percent to everything I do," said Bielejeski, adding that he believes in setting high standards by example. He has worked for Green View since February 2011.

Bielejeski applied to work at Green View as he retired from a decades-long career in retail that had taken him to several states and across the globe. He was looking for a job with fewer hours when he applied to Mark Hoff, a former regional field supervisor for Green View. Bielejeski was hired as an alternate and 30 days later became the crew leader.

He works 20 hours a week as the crew leader at the Anchor Lake Rest Area and in addition maintains two buildings at an area Department of Natural Resources office. He also does lawn care and snow removal at the DNR site.

The best part of the job is working with people, Bielejeski said. His fellow Green View employees are dedicated workers

who respect one another and rest stop visitors. They follow the Golden Rule of treating others as they want to be treated, he said. They seldom call in sick. All are age 70 and older; the oldest is 81 years old.

"The people that I have underneath me are so dedicated," Bielejeski said.

All his team members have unique skills and expertise, and he leverages those skills to the betterment of the rest area. One employee takes special care of the faucets, another tends the feeders. He tends the flowers and puts up window clings in celebration of holidays, including Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

**If you, or anybody you know, is interested in working for Green View, call Mike McShane at (651) 639-1913.**

Rest stop visitors notice the extra touches. They pause to take pictures of the birds, squirrels, chipmunks and gophers at the feeders. For some, it's their first time seeing a Minnesota golden gopher, Bielejeski said.

Visitors talk with the Green View staff, commenting on the fantastic rest area and saying they've never seen a rest stop like it. Some say it's worth a trip.

This summer, Bielejeski said he talked to many people from down south who traveled north to escape the heat. A lot of people drove motorhomes and campers from Texas and Arizona. They planned to visit Lake Kabetogama, go fishing and do sightseeing in the area.

He has 12 plaques on the wall - one for each year he's been there - recognizing the Anchor Lake Rest Stop for being one of the top three rest stops in the state.

"That says a lot for my people that work for me," Bielejeski said. "It's a team effort."

He credits the entire team at Green View for making it a great place to work. Green View Executive Director Mike McShane and Regional Field Representative Nancy Matis acknowledge and appreciate the work that they do, he said.

After high school, Bielejeski served four years in the Navy, where he was sent to aviation storekeeper's school and managed an officer's club. He mailed an engagement ring to his girlfriend in the United States while he was stationed in Japan.

She said yes and they have been married for 53 years. They moved around the Midwest with his retail career that began in 1965 and included stints at F.W. Woolworth Co., Woolco, Pamida, Wal-Mart, Slumberland Furniture and Ace Hardware. As a corporate buyer for Pamida, he traveled internationally and was in Japan when they developed motion lights for Christmas trees.

He and his wife, Euphie, have lived in the Hibbing and Eveleth area for 35 years and he's owned a convenience store in Iron for 30 years.

When not working, Bielejeski enjoys fishing, hunting, gardening and spending time with his family. He and Euphie have three sons and four grandsons.



## On the cover, members and staff of Minnesota Farmers Union traveled to Washington, D.C., Sept. 10-13 for the NFU Fall Legislative Fly-in.

Participants included: Anne Schwagerl, Linda Larson, Ted Winter, Carol and Steve Anderson, Josh and Cindy VanDerPol, Melissa Bakker Roach, Matthew Kruger, Whitney Terrill, Rozalyn Maney, Justin Goetz, Kelsey Love Zaavedra, Taran Skwira, Molly Byron, Aaron Chervestad, Josh Vickerman, Rod Peterson, Danny Lundell, Brenda Rudolph, Mike Peterson, Randy Sorg, Melany Thomas, Paul Benson, Mary Metelak, Kyle Thomas, Kirsten VanDerPol, Jackie Zaviska, Mariah Peterson, Stu Lourey, Ariel Kagan, Glen Schmidt, Janet Kubat, Claudine Arndt and Lisa Holm.

# Artisan Naan Bakery sources local ingredients, including Kernza, to craft traditional breads

By Sabrina Portner

Tahir Sandhu searched in vain for fresh traditional eastern breads, reminiscent of his home in Pakistan. Unsatisfied with frozen naan, he and his partner, Gwen Williams, began baking naan in their home kitchen. Artisan Naan Bakery was born.

After receiving positive responses from customers at the St. Joseph Farmers' Market, the couple opened a small bakery space in St. Joseph in 2014.

At first, they thought people would come directly to them at the bakery like they did at the farmers' market, but they soon learned that the average consumer buys their bread weekly in grocery stores.

They switched their marketing to grocery stores and wholesale outlets. Within a year of opening the bakery, the couple switched to focus primarily on wholesale markets.



Their naan fits perfectly into a toaster, allowing consumers to recreate the experience of freshly baked naan at home. Their customers were so pleased with their naan that they asked for a traditional handmade pita bread too. Sandhu and Williams, who rely on their enjoyment of cooking and baking to craft their bread, added pita bread to their product lineup.

The two breads have proven so successful with consumers that Artisan Naan Bakery moved out of their 400-square-foot bakery in St. Joseph and into a space four times larger in St. Cloud three years ago.

Artisan Naan Bakery stands out for their hand-crafted breads, and for their sourcing of local ingredients. The couple incorporate sunflower oil from Smude's family farm in Pierz and dairy products from Stony Creek Dairy in Melrose into their breads. Most of their flour is from wheat grown in North Dakota. They have worked

with Baker's Field Flour and Bread from Minneapolis and Askegaard Organic Farm in Moorhead.

"You have added value when you are sourcing locally, otherwise you are just shouting into the wilderness of all the products out there," Sandhu said.

For some products, "there is a tremendous opportunity to source locally, however there is a long way to go in creating reliable, logistically feasible local supply chains," Williams added.

Sandhu and Williams continue to experiment with local ingredients.

Artisan Naan Bakery sells naan made with flour from a perennial intermediate wheatgrass known as Kernza. They began working with Kernza as a part of a project with the Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Agricultural

Utilization Research Institute exploring Kernza's ability to improve water quality.

Through the bakery's involvement with Kernza, they heard Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) Vice President Anne Schwagerl talking about her experience growing Kernza. Williams looked up MFU and was fascinated by the Minnesota Foodshed program. Consequently, they signed up to get the MFU e-news and realized that the agricultural world is operating in tandem with the bakery's world.

Williams sees the importance of MFU's local foods work. She uses the Minnesota Cooks calendar as a resource for finding local ingredients. The couple are excited to be featured in the 2024 calendar alongside Smude's family farm. Extrapolating their interest in local foods, Sandhu dreams of a day when businesses like the bakery and the mill are located on the farm itself, a bakery at its source.



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online order**

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Offer expires March 1, 2024.

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## Legislative update

continued from page 8

current levels for 45 days—or until Nov. 17. All members of the Minnesota delegation voted to fund the government.

Then, in a historically unprecedented move, a small group of conservative lawmakers moved to oust McCarthy as Speaker of the House, resulting in a 216-210 vote to vacate the speaker. At the time of writing this, the House has not elected a permanent speaker and it's unclear who could unite a factional majority caucus. While this may seem far removed, this turmoil could have consequences for the farm bill, which needs to be passed in the coming months to avoid funding lapses and election-year politics.

### State convention

County convention paperwork—and new policy resolutions—were due Oct. 1 and will be reviewed by the Policy Committee

appointed by President Gary Wertish. Committee members serve for two years, with half the committee cycling off each year, and perform the largely administrative task of providing recommendations for how resolutions are incorporated into MFU's existing policy. Importantly—and with rare exception—their job is not to evaluate resolutions on merit.

This year's Policy Committee:

- Lisa Phillips, Blue Earth County
- Barb Heen, Hennepin County
- Luke Sanders, Kandiyohi County
- Paul Benson, Mahnomon County
- Matt Kruger, Olmsted County
- Tessa Parks, Rice County
- Tom Schulz, Wadena County
- Kristine Hendrickson, Wadena County

The Policy Committee will meet at the end of October and their recommendations

will be mailed to delegates for review ahead of the convention. If you have questions about MFU's policy development process, contact me at [stu@mfu.org](mailto:stu@mfu.org) or (320) 232-3047.

Finally, this fall students returned to schools across the state and didn't have to pay for breakfast or lunch. MFU was proud to support this bill which went into effect in July.

"Our family farmer members care about providing nutritious food to children because they believe in investing in the success and well-being of the students in their communities," Wertish said in written remarks to lawmakers last session prior to passage. "Particularly in a state with such an abundant agricultural economy, it is unacceptable that any kid goes to school hungry."

We wish everyone a safe harvest and look forward to seeing many of you at the convention.

## Ed Terry receives Lifetime Achievement award

Dakota County Farmers Union member Ed Terry was honored at the University of Minnesota Borealis Night of Excellence. The event recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) and its greater community.



Terry received the Lifetime Achievement award. He taught agricultural education classes and advised the Randolph FFA for 45 years. Terry also farms in Dakota County. This award recognizes CFANS graduates who have retired from their

profession and have made outstanding contributions to CFANS and/or to the food, agriculture and/or natural resources industries over the course of their lifetime. They are recognized by their peers as a leader

in the CFANS community and beyond. In total, Terry taught agricultural education classes for 51 years.

FFA advisers Joe Ramstad, an adviser at Rockford High School, and Megan Brown, an adviser at Fillmore Central, also received awards. FFA advisers receive free membership in Minnesota Farmers Union.

Ramstad received the Rising Star award, which is given to someone who graduated from CFANS within the last 10 years and has excelled as a leader in their community, career and/or public service.

Brown received the Cultivating Future Leaders Award, which goes to a high school instructor of a CFANS undergraduate student. The honoree is nominated by a CFANS undergraduate student enrolled in the current academic year who nominates the teacher for the positive impact they had on the student through their enthusiasm for teaching.

Learn more about the Borealis Night of Excellence Awards at [cfans.umn.edu/news/2023-borealis-night-excellence](https://cfans.umn.edu/news/2023-borealis-night-excellence).



Brian Buhr, dean of the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, presents Joe Ramstad, FFA adviser at Rockford High School, the Rising Star award. Above, Buhr presents the Cultivating Future Leaders Award to Fillmore Central FFA adviser Megan Brown.

## Education update

*continued from page 9*

say: “The New Leader Academy has been a great opportunity to build community and capacity for individual empowerment. This opportunity has enabled me to gain more insight into different forms of agriculture and the broad landscape of farmers that are doing great work; facilitated and encouraged me to become more comfortable interacting with our democratic institutions; and allowed for an intentional time to think about how to work together to build a more robust and resilient food system.”

### What’s next for the NLA?

We are excited about some changes that have been made to the program after feedback from past participants. The biggest shift has been to the program schedule – instead of attending the MFU State Convention as their first program session, they will instead be invited as the last event of their participation with the NLA. This way, participants will have the opportunity to get to know the organization throughout the

year and will be better able to appreciate the work that happens at our state convention.

### How to be a part of Class 4 of the New Leader Academy

The NLA application process launches Nov. 17 at state convention and stays open until Dec. 29. A selection committee will review the applications and select a group of up to 14 participants who will be notified of their acceptance to the program after Jan. 1, 2024. Prospective class members should review the following information before applying:

1. A three-year Minnesota Farmers Union Membership is required to participate. Financial aid may be available and will be discussed on a case-by-case basis.
2. Participants will attend the following events in 2024:\*

  - a. MFU Lobby Day (Date to be determined)
  - b. Spring Session: April 7-9, Twin Cities
  - c. Summer Session: July 11-13, Southeast Minnesota

- d. Participant’s home county convention
  - e. NFU Fly-in, Washington D.C. – early to mid-September (four-day event starting on a Sunday and ending on a Wednesday)
  - f. MFU State Convention – Nov. 22-24, Minneapolis
  - g. Two to three optional online webinars will be available throughout the year.
3. Event participation will be tracked using a weighted point system; the NLA member who participates in the most events throughout the year will receive a \$1,000 scholarship that can be used toward any MFU or NFU event of their choosing, valid for two years after receipt.

\* Attendance at the spring and summer session is required to participate in the NFU Fly-in. Participants will be given the option to make up attendance for the Lobby Day and county convention, per discussion with the Education Director.

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## Will Teachout joins MFU as education assistant

I’m super excited to be joining the team at Minnesota Farmers Union as the education assistant. My background is in agricultural education, communications and marketing with an emphasis on precision agriculture, sustainability and natural resource management.



*Will Teachout*

Agriculture and education have always been a big part of my life. As a child I regularly spent time out on my family’s cattle ranch in South Dakota. Even though I grew up in the Twin Cities, I was able to

experience and learn about agricultural practices through my family. When I got to high school, I joined our FFA program and our chapter officer team where I rose through the ranks to become the vice president of our chapter. I regularly participated in regional and state events, science fair and attended the National FFA Convention every year.

I attended the University of Minnesota College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) where I graduated with degrees in agricultural communications and marketing as well as computer science. It was at CFANS where I became passionate about precision agriculture, climate policy, sustainability and

reinforcing the need for agricultural education. I am beyond pumped to be back in the world of agriculture here in Minnesota! I look forward to diving into the education programs here at MFU and continuing all the work that has already been done to make them even better for everyone.

Outside of MFU, you’ll find me biking around the Twin Cities, paddleboarding, skiing both in Minnesota and Colorado, bartending and being an avid member of the underground rock scene in the Twin Cities.

I look forward to getting to know everyone in the MFU community. If you ever want to chat, feel free to reach out at [will@mfu.org](mailto:will@mfu.org).

## Get social with Minnesota Farmers Union!

Follow Minnesota Farmers Union on social media to find out about events, policy happenings, photos and more.

Facebook: Minnesota Farmers Union  
Twitter: @mnfarmerunion  
Instagram: mnfarmersunion  
YouTube: MN Farmers Union

FROM THE

# Farmers Union



ARCHIVES



The 37th annual convention's resolutions committee met to hammer out resolutions changes in MFU's policy statement. Committee members, from left: Bill Wennerberg, Kerkhoven; Dick Lemke, co-chair, Lake City; Agnes Engelbrecht, co-chair, Alexandria; Bob Rumpza, assistant to the president of MFU; Twyla Fore, Oklee, and Elmer Deutschmann, Windom. Not shown are Gary Gregerson, Badger, and Harold Johnson, Elbow Lake.

## NOVEMBER 1933

The corn-hog adjustment plan, which will mean benefit payments of approximately \$350,000,000 to American farmers for reducing corn acreage by at least 20 percent and hog farrowing by at least 25 percent in 1934 has been announced by the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. The benefit payments will be in addition to the benefits coming from increased prices which the program is designed to bring about.

President Roosevelt made available 400 million dollars of public works funds to give employment by December 16 to four million men not out of work. The funds will be used by a newly created civil works administration headed by Harry L. Hopkins, the emergency relief administrator.

There are two Farmers Union organizations in Minnesota, one the original organization chartered by national, and a new organization chartered by the state of Minnesota. The new organization is nearly one year old. The new organization held its convention in Montevideo and the old organization held its convention at Granite Falls. Robert Miller of Underwood is president of the group that met in Montevideo.

## NOVEMBER 1978

The bylaws committee met and proposed adoption of amendments. Committee members included Norris Pederson, Harvey Bjerke, Herbert Botz, Elaine Radniecki and chairman Sheldon Haaland.

Nearly 1,000 Minnesota Farmers Union delegates are expected to convene at the 37th annual MFU state convention. Featured speakers include Sen. John Melcher, D-Mont., Minnesota Gov. Rudy Perpich, Sarah Weddington, special assistant to President Jimmy Carter, MFU President Cy Carpenter and Jay Naman, NFU vice chairman and Texas Farmers Union president.

## NOVEMBER 2003

The U.S. Senate voted strongly in support of mandatory Country of Origin Labeling. The vote was 58 to 36 with Minnesota Sen. Mark Dayton voting in favor of COOL and Sen. Norm Coleman voting against.

Dennis Fjeld began his career with Farmers Union Insurance in 1989. Dennis is a consistent producer qualifying for several company honors and awards. His office is in Moorhead.

The USDA designated 62 counties in Minnesota as primary agricultural disaster areas due to losses caused by drought that occurred from July 1, 2003, and continuing.



Members of the 2003 Policy Committee met to review county resolutions. From left, Pat Irrthum of Wanamingo, Norma Hanson of Goodridge, Judy Anderson of Benson, Carol Schmidt of Little Falls, Kristi Schlosser of St. Paul (committee staff), Henry Kalis of Walters (chairman), Leonard Stone of Taunton, Jon Hedman of Mankato, John Grimsbo of Palisade and MFU lobbyist Thom Petersen.

## Member photos

Goodhue County Farmers Union President Danny Lundell shared this image of harvest. He said his corn yields are doing ok.

Send your images to [janet@mfu.org](mailto:janet@mfu.org) for publication in a future issue of *Minnesota Agriculture*.





# Farm bill expires, but major impacts not expected until new year



On Sept. 30, Congress approved a 45-day continuing resolution (CR) that will fund the government through Nov. 17. The stopgap spending measure is mostly “clean,” meaning it maintains fiscal year 2023 funding levels and has no strings attached. The CR excludes the House GOP’s spending cuts and border policies, as well as Ukraine aid. A notable addition is approximately \$16 billion in natural disaster relief.

President Biden signed the measure into law late Sept. 30, averting a government shutdown in the eleventh hour (literally).

In the near term, this means USDA programs, and many other federal programs family farmers and our communities rely on, will remain funded. The CR also included an extension of Livestock Mandatory Reporting and ensures direct and guaranteed farm ownership loans can continue being made.

While Congress has bought itself more time to pass its fiscal year 2024 appropriations bills, it is unclear how the

House and Senate will overcome the deep chasm between their respective spending measures.

Amidst the government funding madness, and as expected, the 2018 Farm Bill expired Sept. 30. The good news is that major impacts of expiration will not be felt until early next year, due to the way many programs are designed, authorized and/or funded. The less good news is that the ongoing wrangling over government funding makes farm bill negotiations and reauthorization more challenging.

## Right to Repair

On Sept. 20, Rep. Marie Gluesenkamp Perez, D-Wash., along with Reps. Joe Neguse, D-Colo., Elissa Slotkin, D-Mich., and Abigail Spanberger, D-Va., introduced the Agricultural Right to Repair Act, a bill to establish a comprehensive framework for the right to repair of agricultural equipment.

National Farmers Union (NFU) President Rob Larew issued the following statement in support of the legislation: “The introduc-

tion of the Agricultural Right to Repair Act is an important step in our fight to ensure farmers across the country have fair and affordable access to the parts, tools and information they need to fix farm equipment. I want to thank Rep. Gluesenkamp Perez and her co-leads for introducing this bill to guarantee farmers the Right to Repair. NFU stands ready to push this bill forward.”

Right to Repair is a pillar of NFU’s Fairness for Farmers campaign to address the monopoly crisis in agriculture. Just three manufacturers control the majority of farm equipment production, sales and repairs, and use software locks to prevent farmers and independent mechanics from completing certain repairs.

A national agricultural Right to Repair law could save U.S. farmers \$4.2 billion per year when accounting for direct costs and equipment downtime.

## ENTER TO WIN THE HAPPY CAMPER!

*In celebration of the 80th anniversary of Farmers Union Youth Camps, we will be raffling off a Minnesota-made 2023 Scamp Pull-Behind Camper to support the MFU Foundation Camp Scholarship Fund.*



**Final drawing at the MFU State Convention on November 19, 2023.**

*Per Minnesota law, we cannot accept credit and tickets cannot be sold online. Need not be present to win.*

Every summer for 80 years, kids have attended MFU leadership camps. The Happy Camper Fundraiser will support the continued growth of MFU Foundation’s camp programs and make them accessible to even more Minnesota youth.

Your **\$100 tax-deductible ticket contribution** will support the work of our foundation and help educate kids about leadership and the value of cooperation.

To purchase a ticket, you can mail a check of \$100 to our office (305 Roselawn Ave E., Suite #200, St. Paul, MN 55117). The check must be made to Minnesota Farmers Union Foundation. Once we receive your check, we will fill out a ticket with your provided name, address, and phone number, and mail you back the ticket stub that you will hold on to.

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- Over \$25,000 value
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- Electric Tongue Jack
- LED Exterior Lights
- Screen Door

**QUESTIONS?** Contact Glen Schmidt, Operations Director at (651) 288-4066 or email [glen@mfu.org](mailto:glen@mfu.org)





**DAN MAHONEY**  
**EXECUTIVE OFFICER, MN FSA**  
daniel.mahoney@mn.usda.gov

After harvest is complete producers turn their attention to storage for the next year and inputs to produce the next crop. There are two loan programs that Farm Service Agency customers utilize to meet these needs. The Farm Storage Facility Loan program can provide low-interest loans for equipment. The Marketing Assistance Loan program or “commodity loans” can provide financing and marketing assistance for everything from honey to soybeans.

### Farm Storage Facility Loans

Farm Storage Facility Loans provide low-interest financing for eligible producers to build or upgrade facilities to store commodities. The FSFL program was created in May 2000. Historically, the program benefitted grain farmers, but a change in the 2008 Farm Bill extended the program to fruit and vegetable producers for cold storage. An additional change extended the program to washing and packing sheds. Since May 2000, FSA has made more than 40,000 loans for on-farm storage.

Eligible facility types include grain bins, hay barns, bulk tanks and facilities for cold storage. Drying and handling and storage equipment including storage and handling trucks are also eligible. Eligible facilities and equipment may be new or used, permanently affixed or portable.

Eligible commodities include corn, grain sorghum, rice, soybeans, oats, peanuts, wheat, barley, minor oilseeds harvested as whole grain, pulse crops (lentils, chickpeas and dry peas), hay, honey, renewable biomass, fruits, nuts and vegetables for cold storage facilities, floriculture, hops, maple sap, rye, milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, meat and poultry (unprocessed), eggs and aquaculture (excluding systems that maintain live animals through uptake and discharge of water). Qualified facilities include grain

# Marketing Assistance Loan program and Farm Storage Facility Loan program available to help producers

bins, hay barns and cold storage facilities for eligible commodities.

Loans up to \$100,000 can be secured by a promissory note/security agreement, and loans exceeding \$100,000 require additional security. Producers do not need to demonstrate the lack of commercial credit availability to apply. The loans are designed to assist a diverse range of farming operations, including small and mid-sized businesses, new farmers, operations supplying local food and farmers markets, non-traditional farm products and underserved producers.

### Marketing Assistance Loans

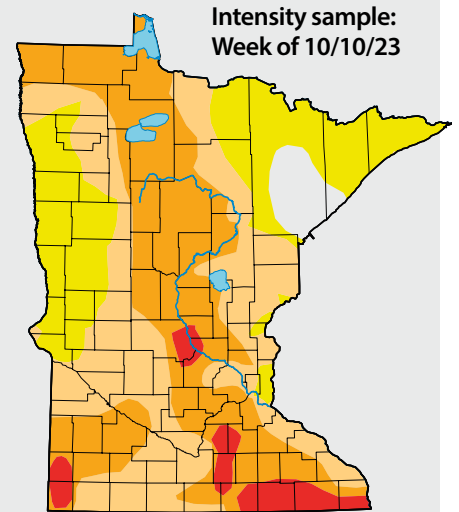
Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) and Loan Deficiency Payments (LDPs) provide financing and marketing assistance for wheat, feed grains, soybeans and other oilseeds, pulse crops, rice, peanuts, cotton, wool and honey. MALs provide producers with interim financing after harvest to help producers meet cash flow needs without having to sell commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows. A producer who is eligible to obtain a loan, but agrees to forgo the loan, may obtain an LDP if such a payment is available. Marketing loan provisions and LDPs are not available for sugar and extra-long staple cotton.

FSA is now accepting requests for 2023 MALs and LDPs for all eligible commodities after harvest. Requests for loans and LDPs shall be made on or before the final availability date for the respective commodities.

To be considered eligible for an LDP, applicants must have form CCC-633EZ, Page 1 on file at the local FSA Office before losing beneficial interest in the crop. Pages 2, 3 or 4 of the form must be submitted when payment is requested.

Marketing loan gains (MLGs) and loan deficiency payments (LDPs) are no longer subject to payment limitations, actively engaged in farming and cash-rent tenant rules.

## Minnesota drought monitor



Intensity sample:  
Week of 10/10/23

	None
Yellow	D0 (Abnormally Dry)
Light Orange	D1 (Moderate Drought)
Orange	D2 (Severe Drought)
Red-Orange	D3 (Extreme Drought)
Dark Red	D4 (Exceptional Drought)

Source: droughtmonitor.unl.edu

Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) provisions state that if the total applicable three-year average AGI exceeds \$900,000, then applicants are not eligible to receive an MLG or LDP. Participants must have a valid CCC-941 on file to earn a market gain of LDP. The AGI does not apply to MALs redeemed with commodity certificate exchange.

For more information on both Farm Storage Facility Loans and Marketing Assistance Loans and additional eligibility requirements, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://fsa.usda.gov).

NEW – Minnesota Farmers Union Store!

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## YOU MATTER. TALK TO US.



*No concern is too small*

Farmers and farm family members call to talk about: financial worries, substance use, relationships, anxiety, depressions, and more.

Call or text for free and confidential help if you or someone you know is struggling.

Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline

833-600-2670

Text **farmstress** to **898211**

## Calendar of events

- Nov. 1** Soil Management Conversation, 10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m., Redwood Falls
- Nov. 10** Thankful for Family Farmers: Growing our Future program for area farmers, 9 a.m. - 1 p.m., Melrose American Legion
- Nov. 12-14** National Farmers Union Women's Conference, Albuquerque, N.M.
- Nov. 17-19** 82nd annual Minnesota Farmers Union state convention, Minneapolis

Go to [mfu.org/events](http://mfu.org/events) for the latest MFU events.

## Climate update

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agencies and individuals with the goal of creating resilient forest resources. Working with University of Minnesota-Duluth, and University of Minnesota Northeast Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, F&FG Cooperative gathers tree seeds genetically adapted to the warmer regions of southern and central Minnesota for planting in Minnesota's northern forests. The cooperative is working on a fast moving and expanding project to build the farmer-based production "supply chain" of climate-adaptive tree seedlings. This grant will better position the cooperative with the tools, skills, information, products and business plan needed to build their organizational foundation.

### 40 Acre Cooperative, Sandstone

Award amount: \$20,000

40 Acre Cooperative is focused on creating access and opportunities for historically marginalized farmers in Minnesota and

the surrounding region. They build climate resilience through operational support for specialty crops. Grant funds will be used for a market assessment and specialty crop business planning.

### Perennial Promise Growers Cooperative, Madison

Award amount: \$30,000

PPGC was created in 2021 to commercialize crops resulting from the Forever Green program of the University of Minnesota, with an initial focus on Kernza. Forever Green focuses on Continuous Living Cover (CLC) crops that increase vegetative cover on the land, either through perennial crops or by growing annuals on lands that would otherwise be bare over certain times of the year. PPGC has 23 producer-members and is working to grow the market and impact of perennial crops.

MFU Foundation will announce a second round of funding for 2024 later this year. More information about this program and the work of Climate and Working Lands can be found on MFU's website.

## Chelsea Williams is MFU events intern

Chelsea Williams is a student at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities studying political science and horticulture. She grew up surrounded by farms and lakes in southeastern Wisconsin, which ultimately led to her interest in agricultural and environmental policy.



Chelsea Williams

Previously, she interned with Ramsey County 4-H, nature conservation groups and worked as a farmhand in western Montana. At Ramsey County, she focused on occupational development, cooking and how to grow food in small spaces.

In her free time, Chelsea enjoys planning road trips, summiting mountains and spending time in her local community garden.

At MFU, Chelsea supports and organizes various outreach events including the annual state convention.



# FUA

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