

## Appendix A: Process

Between May and November of 2023, the Climate and Working Lands team worked with MFU county leaders to organize open “Farmers Union Conversations about Climate & Agriculture” around the state. The goal of these convenings was to hear about climate policies and investments that have real implications for farmers and farm businesses. This series of meetings provided a valuable starting point for the climate and working lands program to initiate dialogue and engage members. Through this series of meetings, the goal was to engage agricultural community members in robust discussions about the ways that climate and agriculture intersect – challenges, opportunities, and areas of concern. Some meetings were co-hosted with regional partners and all meetings were open to the public. Additionally, local government officials and agriculture professionals were invited to present insights on how climate resilience is happening in their region.

The meetings were generally structured to span a duration of two hours and were designed to be highly adaptive, with the priority being to provide attendees with value for their time and participation. A few meetings were tailored to address specific subtopics of interest for the county which ranged from biofuels and soil management to mental health and community development - topics that are often overlooked but go hand in hand with climate work.

The goal was to create a space where attendees felt comfortable and respected sharing their ideas, challenges, and questions related to climate action. Participants engaged in the meeting through one-on-one or small group conversations and facilitated full group conversations. Additionally, time was allotted for individual reflection, during which participants responded to discussion prompts on worksheets. This approach provided another way for attendees to convey their insights and experiences. There were several themes present in all the climate conversation meetings, including competitive and fair markets for climate-smart agriculture, the need for more people – and land - in agriculture, how to individually and collectively build resilience and plan for the future knowing that abnormal is the new normal.

While certain counties hosted and led the planning of meetings, MFU members in all surrounding counties received invitational postcards. Meeting information was also communicated via local newspaper ads, MFU’s weekly e-newsletter, social media posts and personal outreach. Members were also encouraged to invite neighbors and friends in their community.

The Climate and Working Lands team was also invited to annual county conventions during this time to share our work, give updates on climate and clean energy initiatives and facilitate discussions.

## Listening Session Objectives

- Hear from farmers and rural communities about ideas, challenges, and opportunities related to changing climate that will guide broader state and federal policy
- Build relationships through discussion
- Share resources and information about climate change, carbon markets, soil health, and renewable energy with attendees

## Discussion Prompts

- When thinking about climate and agriculture, what concerns you?
- When thinking about climate and agriculture, what is something you feel hopeful or optimistic about?
- Have you implemented conservation practices in relation to soil management? What impacts have you seen?
- What action areas should take priority in relation to climate and agriculture? For example, crop diversification, renewable energy production, regional climate planning, ag land preservation, etc.
- Prioritize: I'd like to see more policy development around climate and agriculture at the: City/Town/Township level, County level, State level, Federal level



**A CONVERSATION ABOUT CLIMATE & AGRICULTURE**

Hosted by: Scott, Dakota & Rice County Farmers Unions  
in partnership with Clean River Partners

*Businesses, policymakers, and the public are looking to agriculture for climate solutions. We want to hear from you about recent climate policies, programs, and investments!*

**September 21, 2023 • 11:00 AM - 2:00 PM**

THE TIMBERJAY

AT ISSUE

### Minnesota Farmers Union seeks local input on addressing climate change

COOK - The Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) is seeking input from local communities about how to best address the effects of global warming on our lands and agriculture practices. To hear area residents' ideas and concerns, the Farmers Union is sponsoring a "Conversation about Climate and Agriculture" on Tuesday, June 20, from 6:30-8 p.m. at the Cook Community Center.

The public is invited, including people engaged in agriculture, those interested in how land use affects our ability to adapt to climate change, and anyone who is concerned about how to move forward in a warming world. Light appetizers and refreshments will be offered at 6 p.m.

Melissa Bokker Roach of Bear River, President of the St. Louis County Farmers Union, which is co-sponsoring the session, said, "The Minnesota Farmers Union is the leading voice of agriculture in Minnesota, and we take climate change very seriously. That's why we are excited about this program to draw attention to northeastern Minnesota as well as the statewide impacts of climate change."

Panelist Ariel Kagan, Director



Above: St. Louis County Extension Educator, Troy Salzer, is one of the presenters at the June 20 "Conversation about Climate and Agriculture" event in Cook.



Right: Panelist Ariel Kagan, will talk about pilot grants available to farmer cooperatives.

## Appendix B: Listening Session Outline

Time	Topic and Key Messages	Logistical Notes
20	Welcome from Chapter president/leadership, MFU	<p>Chapter president/leadership to kick things off with welcomes and introductions.</p> <p>MFU overview of the Climate Resilience Special Order of Business from convention, C&amp;WL program, updates on relevant climate and clean energy investments.</p>
15	Climate status from local representative, co-host	<p>Topics could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Climate impacts on weather and storm frequency</li> <li>Soil health and climate-smart practices</li> <li>Building community resiliency</li> </ul>
10	Individual reflection: Write down some of the key ways your farm, family, or community are being impacted by a changing climate.	<p>Example prompts:</p> <p><i>Has climate change impacted your farm or community? How?</i></p> <p><i>Are there ways you've changed your approaches to mitigate or adapt to climate change?</i></p> <p><i>Have you found new opportunities related to climate change and agriculture?</i></p> <p><i>What's missing or what do people get wrong when it comes to climate &amp; ag?</i></p> <p><i>When thinking about climate and agriculture, what is something you feel hopeful or optimistic about?</i></p>
20	Share: Share reflections and identify themes	Depending on group size, break into smaller groups with an MFU notetaker in each, or stay together
30	Group: Deeper dive into concerns, areas of more attention, policies, opportunities?	<p>Example prompts facilitated by Ariel:</p> <p><i>What concerns do you have about policy and programs related to climate change and agriculture?</i></p> <p><i>What is working or not working within existing programs and initiatives?</i></p>

		<p><i>What do you want to see from decisionmakers in the years to come?</i></p> <p><i>Where is more investment needed?</i></p>
15	Summary, next steps, upcoming events from chapter leaders, co-hosts, MFU	Closing from chapter leadership, any additional action items, upcoming events.

## Appendix C: County Specific Listening Session Information

County hosts	Location	Co-hosts, guest speakers	Specific theme
Hennepin/Ramsey	St. Paul, MN	Stu Lourey, MFU	
Fillmore	Preston, MN	Chris Hanson, General Manager at POET Bioprocessing	Biofuels, tour of POET Bioprocessing
Pennington/Red Lake	Thief River Falls, MN	Anna Wasesca, West Central Initiative; Pennington County Rep.	Community planning
St. Louis	Saginaw, MN	Randel Hanson, UMD	
St. Louis	Cook, MN	Troy Salzer, UMN Extension	
Rice/Scott/Dakota	Dundas, MN	Al Kraus, Clean River Partners; Nate Watters, farmer and business owner	
Otter Tail	Fergus Falls, MN	West Central Initiative; Monica McConkey, Rural Mental Health Specialist; Mayor of Fergus Falls	Rural community resilience, mental health and well being
Redwood Falls	Redwood Falls, MN	MN Soil Health Coalition, Grant and Dawn Breitkreutz	Soil management, farm tour

## Appendix D: Worksheet Template

## A Farmers Union Conversation about Climate & Agriculture

Name:

Date:

Email:

County:

Are you a: Farmer

Landowner

Community member

Other:

---

When thinking about climate and agriculture, what **concerns** you?

When thinking about climate and agriculture, what is something you feel **hopeful or optimistic** about?

Have you implemented conservation practices in relation to soil management? What impacts have you seen?

What action areas should take priority in relation to climate and agriculture? *For example, crop diversification, renewable energy production, regional climate planning, ag land preservation, etc.*

Prioritize: I'd like to see more policy development around climate and agriculture at the:  
(1 being most important):

☐ City/Town/Township level

☐ County level

☐ State level

☐ Federal level