

Minnesota Agriculture

Voice of Rural Minnesota



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February 2025

Standing for Agriculture, Working for Farmers. www.mfu.org



February fresh start: Insurance tips for 2025

By Jim Hickey

Now is the perfect time to review and optimize your insurance coverage. Whether focused on securing your family's future, protecting your assets or saving money, these tips will help ensure you're ready for whatever 2025 has in store.

Review your current policies

Life changes quickly, and your insurance should keep up. Make it a habit to review your policies annually:

Home Insurance: Update coverage for renovations, new appliances or valuables purchased during the holidays. Insurance carriers have made many changes to coverage over the last several years to account for climate-related losses, particularly involving reductions in coverage for roofs and siding. A full review with your agent to understand the impacts of these changes on your insurance program and how these may affect loss payouts is imperative.

Auto Insurance: Report changes such as a new car, reduced mileage or a new driver in your household.

Life Insurance: Ensure your policy reflects any significant life changes, like a new child, marriage or retirement.

Reassess your deductibles

Adjusting your deductibles can help lower premiums, ensuring sufficient savings to cover the deductible in case of a claim.

Prepare for weather-related risks

With extreme weather events on the rise, ensure your coverage protects against risks specific to your area:

Flood Insurance: Home insurance doesn't typically cover floods, so consider adding a separate policy.

Storm Coverage: Check if these events are included or need additional coverage.



Jim Hickey
Director of Sales -
Farm and Personal Lines
for Farmers Union Agency

Maximize your health coverage

Make the most of your health plan by:

- Scheduling annual check-ups and preventive screenings.
- Reviewing prescription coverage and costs.
- Utilizing wellness benefits, such as gym discounts or virtual health-care services.

Plan for major life milestones

Big life changes often require updates to your insurance:

Buying a Home: Ensure your homeowners' insurance aligns with your mortgage requirements and adequately covers rebuilding costs.

Growing Your Family: Update life and health insurance policies to include new dependents.

Retirement Planning: Consider long-term care insurance to protect against future healthcare expenses.

Don't forget liability coverage
Make sure you have sufficient liability coverage, especially if you:

Don't forget liability coverage

Make sure you have sufficient liability coverage, especially if you:

- Own a home or rental property.
- Drive a vehicle frequently.
- Host events or gatherings.

An umbrella policy can provide extra protection for unexpected incidents.

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Minnesota Farmers Union Executive Committee

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President's message

GARY WERTISH, PRESIDENT

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The 94th Minnesota legislative session convened on Jan. 14 with a closely divided Legislature, which means legislators will need to work across the aisle to pass legislation in this budget year.

Minnesota Farmers Union will be working on several priorities established by members at the state convention as the session moves forward.

These priorities include:

- Supporting a robust budget for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. While agriculture drives up to a fifth of the state's economy, the budget for the agriculture department, Board of Animal Health and Agricultural Utilization Research Institute combined make up less than a half percent of the state's budget.
- Funding for the Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation program at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. This program supports the state's work on biofuels infrastructure, meat processing, urban agriculture, livestock investment, county fairs and more.
- Passing Right to Repair legislation for agricultural equipment. Minnesota legislators passed Right to Repair legislation in 2023, but it exempted agricultural equipment. Farmers and rural communities need Right to Repair. Right to Repair will make the farm equipment repair business like the vehicle repair business. Vehicle owners can choose where to have their vehicle serviced and where to have repairs completed. Without Right to Repair, farmers don't have options.
- Strengthening access to healthcare, childcare, emergency care, mental health care and long-term care are priorities. We support increased funding for rural care providers, including pharmacies and Emergency Medical Services. We also support funding for rural childcare providers and rural nursing homes.



Members of the National Farmers Union Executive Committee met with Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., the ranking member of the Senate Agriculture Committee on Jan. 14.

In Congress

At the federal level, we are now in the 119th Congress. We have two strong Minnesota leaders in the Farm Bill negotiations: Sen. Amy Klobuchar and Rep. Angie Craig. Farm bills have traditionally been more regional than partisan and it's beneficial to have Midwestern leadership on the agriculture committees to bring more balance to the discussions.

Klobuchar, Minnesota's senior senator, is the ranking member on the Senate Agriculture Committee. Craig, who represents Minnesota's 2nd Congressional District, is the ranking member on the House Agriculture Committee.

Klobuchar is known for showing up, listening and delivering results. She's a hardworking lawmaker who visits all 87 Minnesota counties each year. She always meets with the Minnesota delegation during the National Farmers Union Fall Fly-in and she is a leader on so many issues, including antitrust enforcement and consumer protection. Klobuchar brings experience working on three Farm Bills to her new role.

Craig has a proven track record of bringing people together around bipartisan solutions. She has been steadfast in her support of family farmers since she arrived in Washington in 2019. Craig also takes

time to meet with the Minnesota delegation while they are in Washington, D.C, for the Fly-in. The closing grain bids from an elevator in her district are always posted in her office, a sign of her daily commitment to the farmers of the 2nd District, and with her new role, the entire Midwest.

Sen. John Boozman, R-Ark., is the chairman of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. He served as ranking member in the 117th and 118th Congress. Boozman met with farmers, ranchers and agriculture stakeholders in more than 20 states to get their input for the next Farm Bill.

Klobuchar and Boozman have a strong working relationship, which I witnessed when Boozman visited Minnesota with Klobuchar in 2023. During that visit, I met with the senators at Farmers Kitchen + Bar for an hour, discussing the Farm Bill and other agricultural issues.

Rep. G.T. Thompson, R-Penn., who chairs the House Agriculture Committee, visited the MFU hoop barn at Farmfest in 2023 after hosting a Farm Bill Listening Session there. He was elected to the U.S. House in 2008. Thompson served as ranking member of the committee during the 117th Congress and as vice chairman during the 116th Congress.

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A look at the rhythms of the year for the membership team

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People often ask me if there is a slow season at Minnesota Farmers Union. My best answer is that there are distinct rhythms that change and flow with the seasons, just as it goes with farming. The desire to tackle “winter projects” and put the wheels in motion for a successful year tends to counterbalance any real sense of slowing down one might expect this time of year. Following is a high-level overview of what the rhythms at MFU look like for me and the membership team.

January

As we return to work in January, we hustle to update memberships and renewals that arrived over our break (with significant assistance from Operations Coordinator Jeff Diamond). We work with county leaders who had their sights set on earning National Farmers Union’s Leadership Achievement Award to complete and submit that paperwork to NFU on time. Finalizing membership numbers for the previous year is a priority because we need to certify membership with NFU for the previous year, preferably by January’s end. Lobby Day is usually right around the corner, so we focus a lot of time and energy on contacting members to help drive attendance to that important event. Finally, conference season, which unofficially kicks off the preceding November, is in full swing by January. In 2024 we represented MFU at 37 different conferences/trade shows/expos throughout the year (with help from the entire MFU staff), but the winter months are especially full of conferences. We tend to put on quite a few miles in January, if the weather cooperates.

February, March, April

Lobby Day! MFU Full Board meeting! County Officer Training! More conferences! (We will represent MFU at five conferences alone in February.) National Farmers Union Convention in March! While it seems like these would be sleepy months for the organization, the winter/early spring months are dynamic and full. Believe it or not, February rivals the pace of August. During this time, we’re also focused on connecting with county leaders who have expressed an interest in planning events and energizing membership in their counties to map out the year and the action items needed to make MFU dreams come true. It is not too early to be thinking about county convention dates and agendas, a point I emphasize to our county leaders at the full board meeting in February.

May, June

If there is a quieter season for the membership team, this is it. Farmers are extremely busy farming, which means we receive fewer emails and phone calls. During this time, Jeff and I work together to revise and update our county convention paperwork (paperwork needed for county-level annual business meetings) and get those packets shipped out the door. We’ve learned that smooth planning for our state convention depends on getting this important packet out the door on time. In June I look forward to the professional development Farmers Union staff receive at a training called State-to-State, which will be held in Wisconsin this year. May and June are perfect months for creative projects, whether that be writing, event planning, refreshing old materials or developing new membership materials for the organization.

July, August, September

Though county leaders are welcome to schedule their county conventions (annual business meetings) before summer

rolls around, county convention season begins in earnest in July and runs nonstop until Sept. 30. Last year we had 47 county conventions during this three-month window. County conventions are on repeat during this stretch, intermingled with other MFU events of every shape and size including pizza nights, brewery socials and legislative tours. Let’s not forget there’s also FarmFest, Garlic Fest, the August Full Board meeting, Minnesota State Fair, and our DC Fly-In in September. Summer is an extroverted extravaganza, and none of us gets bored.

October, November, December

The last quarter brings a sweet and satisfying culmination to the year’s work. The county convention paperwork is due by Oct. 1, an important line in the sand that ensures we have what we need to plan MFU’s state convention. Resolutions are aggregated for the policy committee, convention invites are sent to delegates, and pretty much everything we do until late November involves fast and furious preparation for the state convention. It’s demanding but fun, as everyone loves the anticipation of bringing our members together for the state convention. Conferences start again in November and go strong into December. We draft and send an end-of-year membership renewal letter and follow up with engaged county leaders about possibly earning the Leadership Achievement Award. In addition to tying bows on holiday gifts, we love tying bows on projects.

Every day is different at Minnesota Farmers Union; every season is distinct. As the saying goes, “Variety is the spice of life,” and here at MFU, we certainly favor flavor over bland.

ATTENTION MEMBERS!

Is your contact info up to date?

Email changes to claudine@mfu.org.





STU LOUREY
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Noon on Tuesday, Jan. 14, marked the start of the 2025 legislative session. Though the start in the House was marked by consternation, controversy and court challenges, the end will require unity. Lawmakers will need to come together around a bipartisan two-year budget agreement that provides renewed funding for government functions from meat inspections to road construction. On the first and through until the end, MFU's legislative team was at the Capitol meeting with lawmakers about MFU's grassroots policy priorities and making the case for a final package that benefits family farmers and rural communities.

You can find our 2025 Legislative Priorities one-pager at www.mfu.org/legislation. This builds on newly approved policy and Special Orders of Business passed at MFU's annual convention.

"As a grassroots organization, we'll be focused on priorities established by members at our state convention in November," said MFU President Gary Wertish in a news release leading into session. "At a basic level, lawmakers are going to have to come together to pass a new two-year budget for our state. And we want to help make sure that it works well for farm families and others in rural Minnesota—continuing strong investments in agriculture programs, ensuring farm families have access to care and helping young people build lives in agriculture."

The session is set to end on May 19 and the budget must be finalized by June 30 to avert a state government shutdown.

State legislative session begins with closely divided state Legislature



Members of the Government Relations team took a selfie at the Capitol on the first day of session 2025. From left, Government Relations Director Stu Lourey, Policy Intern Amber Findlay, Legislative Coordinator Lisa Holm and Antimonopoly Director Justin Stofferahn.

How did the session start?

There were two very different stories on either side of the Capitol rotunda.

The Senate, which is tied 33-33 after Sen. Kari Dziedzic, DFL-Minneapolis, passed away in late December, reached a power sharing agreement that allowed the DFL and Republican caucuses to convene and start their work right away. In addition to serving as majority leader, Sen. Dziedzic was also a good friend to MFU, serving as the ranking member of the agriculture committee and more recently helping craft a reauthorization of the Beginning Farmer Tax Credit. Her door was always open to MFU.

The Senate agreement, which mirrors the previous power sharing agreement negotiated by the House caucuses, was passed by the full Senate and stipulates that:

- Each caucus leader will appoint a co-presiding officer; caucus leaders will agree who will convene each day.

- Each committee has joint chairs, with gavel sharing determined by the chairs.
- Equal representation of DFL and GOP members on committees.
- No changes to Senate rules through 2025.

The agreement will be in place until the special election in Senate District 60 is held and one caucus—likely the DFL in the heavily Democratic district—wins 34 votes to break the tie. Until then, Sen. Aric Putnam, DFL-St. Cloud, will be joined by Sen. Torrey Westrom, R-Elbow Lake, in chairing the Senate Agriculture Committee.

In the House on the other hand, Republicans walked away from the power sharing agreement they negotiated with DFLers after a district court ruled that the winning DFL candidate in a Roseville seat didn't live in his district. This gave Republicans a temporary one seat margin (67-66) that they announced they would use to elect a speaker, organize committees, and even oust Rep. Brad Tabke, DFL-Shakopee, —moves that would last through the 2025-26 biennium.

After many hours of negotiation and after a court ruled that Tabke won his seat, House DFLers were unable to secure a new commitment from Republicans that would ensure Tabke would be seated and that they would return to a power sharing agreement when the body returned to a 67-67 tie. As a result of this, House DFLers chose not to show up to the Capitol, denying Republicans the quorum necessary to convene the session.

As expected, and upon taking the role of members present, Secretary of State Steve Simon ruled that there was no quorum and that the House would be unable to conduct business. He promptly adjourned the session until noon Wednesday.

However, once Secretary Simon left, Rep. Paul Anderson, R-Starbuck, took the dais, contended that Secretary Simon was mistaken, and claimed Republicans had a

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Ferguson appointed to top post at FTC; Slater named DOJ antitrust leader

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With the change in the presidency placing a renewed focus on the states, I was honored to have an opportunity to represent MFU in December at the State Innovation Exchange (SiX) annual conference. SiX collaborates with state legislators across the country and helps provide capacity for a wide variety of policy initiatives.

I spoke on a panel titled “Building an Economy for the Many, not the Few: Busting Corporate Monopolies and Empowering Workers” that explored the historical roots of our monopoly crisis and how states can lead in addressing it. The panel generated strong interest from attendees as we ran out of space in the room it was held in. Joining me in the discussion was law professor Zephyr Teachout along with legislators from Arizona and Florida.

My participation reflected MFU’s leadership role in the antimonopoly movement nationally, particularly as a model for state-level organizing and advocacy. The conference itself also provided an opportunity to connect with Minnesota legislators and national and state-level advocacy organizations.

During the conference the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) announced a landmark lawsuit against Southern Glazer’s Wine and Spirits - the nation’s largest wine and spirits distributor - for providing preferential pricing to large retailers at the expense of smaller ones. It marks the first enforcement action under the Robinson-Patman Act in more than 20 years. The Robinson-Patman Act was passed in 1936 and prohibits price discrimination. The suit was one of the last major actions by former FTC Chair Lina Khan after President Donald Trump nominated Andrew Ferguson to the post.

Ferguson had previously been appointed to the FTC by President Biden last year as one of the two Republican members required on the commission and is expected to take a more hands off approach than Khan. For example, in a document that was circulated touting Ferguson’s vision for the FTC he promised to end “Lina Khan’s war on mergers.” During his tenure Ferguson also voted against the FTC’s proposed rule banning noncompete clauses, which make it harder for workers to switch jobs.

Taking Ferguson’s spot on the FTC is Mark Meador, who recently served as an adviser to Utah Republican Senator Mike Lee, who has been a leading antimonopoly advocate among Senate Republicans. Meador will likely be a tougher enforcer than Ferguson and has specifically written

about the need to revive Robinson-Patman enforcement.

The final major antitrust appointment made by President Trump was naming Gail Slater to head the Antitrust Division at the Department of Justice (DOJ). She will replace Jonathan Kanter as Assistant Attorney General for Antitrust. Slater was most recently an adviser to Vice President JD Vance and is expected to be aggressive on Big Tech issues, something Trump reiterated in his announcement of Slater saying “Big Tech has run wild for years.”

As I wrote in December, it was to be expected that Trump’s appointments would be tough on Big Tech, but it seems less likely that they will continue the broader revival of antitrust that Khan and Kanter were spearheading.

However, while leadership at these agencies has changed, MFU’s impact will endure. Kanter stepped down in December and gave a farewell speech to antitrust staff at the DOJ, many of which are career staff that could remain under the Trump administration. He opened those remarks by reflecting on his visit to Minnesota in October 2023. Kanter said the conversations he had while meeting with farmers, small business owners and workers in Minnesota provided clarity for their mission. “Our work is not just about the economy but about our way of life as a nation.”



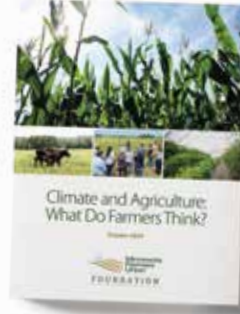
From left, Fordham University law professor Zephyr Teachout, Arizona State Sen. Analise Ortiz, MFU Antimonopoly Director Justin Stofferahn and Florida State Rep. Anna V. Eskamani spoke on a panel titled “Building an Economy for the Many, not the Few: Busting Corporate Monopolies and Empowering Workers” at the SiX annual conference. Photo credit C Brown Photo



New report highlights member perspectives on climate and agriculture

ARIEL KAGAN
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LANDS DIRECTOR

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Read the full report online at <https://bit.ly/ClimateAgReport> or request a physical copy by emailing operations@mfu.org.

For questions and comments on the report, contact Ariel Kagan, Climate and Working Lands Director, at ariel@mfu.org



For years, MFU members have been at the forefront of climate initiatives, advocating for meaningful state and federal action to equip farmers with the information, tools and resources necessary to pursue on-farm climate action. As businesses, policymakers and the public increasingly turn to agriculture for climate solutions, our priority is to ensure that family farmers are protected and represented.

In 2023, the Climate and Working Lands team worked with MFU county leaders to host "Farmers Union Conversations about Climate & Agriculture" across the state. During these meetings, members discussed their views on agriculture and climate change as well as recent investments from state, federal and private sectors in climate-smart agriculture, soil health and renewable energy.

These discussions are reflected in the report published in October 2024: *Climate and Agriculture: What Do Farmers Think?*

In the report you'll find information on the current state of climate and agriculture in Minnesota and some recent public and private climate initiatives impacting farmers. The main section of the report looks at themes from listening sessions and farmer interviews. The third and final section looks at strategies MFU's Climate and Working Lands Program is working on to bring a farmer voice to policy discussions and address climate through a farmer-centered lens.

Climate and ag themes

There were many recurring themes at listening sessions regarding the climate and agriculture nexus. These include:

• **Fair markets for climate-smart agriculture** - The emergence of many new markets that value climate and environmental co-benefits was identified as a top issue for producers. These markets offer flexibility, with some not requiring new practices. However, navigating these evolving opportunities can be challenging. Producers emphasized the need for accessible programs that reward early adopters and provide payments that fully cover, or even exceed, the costs of transitioning to new practices.

"We had to look at it long-term and profit-per-acre. That's what changed our farm." - Redwood County farmer

• **More farmers and advisers** - Participants frequently raised concerns over who will be implementing climate-smart management practices. Both farmers and other rural community members expressed the need to have more farmers and advisers to build strong, resilient rural agricultural economies.

"For rural communities, climate investments offer enormous economic development and job opportunities and the chance to solve a lot of longstanding issues." - Kandiyohi County farmer

• **Access to equipment and machinery** - Financial barriers to acquiring equipment for climate-smart practices were a recurring theme. Some producers expressed reluctance to take on additional debt given tight margins, while

others were skeptical of the cost-effectiveness of such investments.

"Equipment costs and updates are the biggest barrier to the adoption of conservation practices." - Goodhue County farmer

• **Farmland availability and prices** - Access and ownership of farmland is connected to a farmer's ability to securely invest in climate-smart production methods and ensure the long-term viability of family farming.

"In order to utilize the regenerative practices we want, we need the flexibility that comes with being primary tenants." - Rice County farmer

• **Building resilience. Abnormal is the new normal** - Producers expressed interest in addressing the stress of unpredictable weather patterns and volatile markets at a local and regional level, through diversification and community planning. *"I'm concerned about not being able to adapt fast enough."* - Scott County farmer

Thank you to the following counties for hosting listening sessions:

- Hennepin/Ramsey
- Fillmore
- Pennington/Red Lake
- St. Louis
- Rice/Scott/Dakota
- Otter Tail
- Redwood Falls

Your contributions were invaluable in shaping the conversation around climate and agriculture.



Agricultural education teachers encouraged to apply for MFU's Climate Cohort

WINONA ANDERSON EDUCATION DIRECTOR

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Did you know that the majority of today's emerging adults would list climate change as the challenge of their generation? In her theses, Queen's University graduate student Breanna McCreary says that "young people's climate concern has translated to unprecedented collective climate action, such as the youth climate strikes of 2019."

With that level of concern and interest, there is a critical need for climate education for youth that focuses not just on the "what" of climate change, but also centers on real, tangible action. Analysis of current literature on climate education shows that it's not enough to teach about the science or theory behind climate change – approaching climate education in this way does not promote changes in attitudes or behaviors in our youth. Rather, we should be teaching students that there are irrefutable ways that agriculture can impact our

climate for the better, and that the agriculture industry can lead the charge towards a resilient future.

Minnesota Farmers Union sees this need, and with support from the Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council (MAELC) we are excited to announce the launch of our new Climate Cohort for Minnesota agricultural education teachers. This year-long program offers an opportunity for up to 14 teachers to participate in a learning cohort that provides participants with connections to Minnesota farmers who are implementing climate-smart agriculture practices. In addition to two online sessions, there will be a special three-day event in June 2025 that will include farm tours, collaboration and networking for cohort members. This program is available at no cost for teachers thanks to the generous support of MAELC and the MFU Foundation.

To be eligible to participate in the program, applicants must be current Minnesota agricultural education teachers or pre-service teachers with a signed contract for

the 2025-26 school year. An online form is available for submission at <https://bit.ly/ClimateCohortApp>. The application requires responses to basic demographic questions and an explanation of the applicant's interest in being part of the Climate Cohort. Teaching about climate in the classroom is not a requirement; however, applicants should have an interest in incorporating climate topics into their curriculum.

Applications are being accepted through Feb. 28, and cohort members will be notified of their acceptance by March 15. The first online session will take place in April, with the date to be determined based on participant availability. The final online session will be held in the fall of 2025. Admitted cohort members are expected to attend all three events. Teachers who complete the program will earn a stipend to incorporate climate-smart agriculture into their curriculum.

For additional information, contact Winona Anderson at winona@mfu.org.

Camp registration is now open Learn more at mfu.org/camp

Summer Youth Leadership Camps

Northern Camp for ages 9 to 13

Monday, June 23 to Friday, June 27

MFU Lake Sarah Campground, 20049 Campground Rd SE, Erskine

Southern Elementary Camp for ages 8 to 11

Tuesday, July 8 to Friday, July 11

Sibley State Park, 800 Sibley Park Road NE, New London

Southern Junior Camp for ages 11 to 14

Monday, July 14 to Friday, July 18

Sibley State Park, 800 Sibley Park Road NE, New London

Senior High Camp for ages 14 to 18

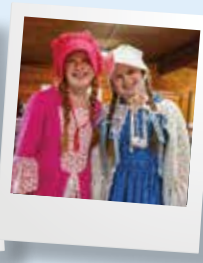
Sunday, July 20 to Friday, July 25

Sibley State Park, 800 Sibley Park Road NE, New London

Day camps for ages 6 to 10

Held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily.

- Twin Cities, June 10-12, St. Paul
- Southern Day Camp, Aug. 5-7, Albert Lea



Carlton County member leads Wrenshall Fire Department

By Emily Breth

WRENSHALL, Minn. — It is not uncommon to see farm equipment parked outside the Wrenshall fire hall when fire chief Peter Laveau gets a call while in the field.

“I’ve made many trips to the fire hall with the tractor,” Laveau said. “I give the guys grief because one time I was the first person there and I was in a tractor.”

Laveau owns a dairy farm a little more than a mile from the fire hall. He milks 100 cows in an L-shaped tiestall barn. Between rented and owned land, Laveau farms 650 acres. Some of the land is just a half mile from the hall. This explains why a plow, discbine and chopper have all been parked outside the fire hall.

For 38 years, Laveau has had strong commitments to his farm and the fire department where he has been chief for six years. Through this, Laveau said having a support system is huge.

“You have to have a family that supports you,” Laveau said. “There was more than once when the (pager went) off in the middle of chores or milking and they know I’m going. They just have to step up and get it done.”

His wife, Kim, daughter, Samantha, a grandchild and a great-nephew have helped to operate the farm and get him to the hall when a call came in.

Whether he uses traditional transportation or farm equipment depends on his location in the field.

“I keep my head on straight,” Laveau said. “I have my faith and I have good people around me. That is the main thing.”

Often, when a late-night call is made, Laveau finds himself working through the night finishing up details from a call at the station before heading home. This includes fueling trucks, washing hoses,

replacing parts, cleaning all the equipment used, and ensuring everything is full and ready for the next call. As chief, he also files paperwork and debriefs his team.

“There have been lots of tough calls where I’m out all night and get home just in time to start milking,” Laveau said. “And then some days I work all day. So, you have to be dedicated and have to like it.”

Just as his transportation varies, so do fire calls. As chief, Laveau is in charge of many tasks, like gathering information, deciding on a plan, getting crews in place and assigning tasks to officers.

Before he became an officer, Laveau was one of the main firefighters. He was among



The Laveau family — Tyler (front, from left), Elizabeth and Geri; (back, from left) Kim, Peter and Samantha — gather Oct. 5 on their farm near Wrenshall. Peter has been on the Wrenshall Fire Department for 38 years.

the first to go into the building during an emergency. On occasion, he will still enter buildings. If they are out on a mutual aid call, he gears up to go inside every time, Laveau said.

After serving in the department for a couple of years Laveau was determined to become an officer after an experience in a mutual aid call. The fire was not well assessed, and the house was lost.

Following this experience Laveau spoke with his chief about becoming an officer and was made a lieutenant. Over the years he worked up the ranks from captain to



Peter Laveau holds his helmet Oct. 5 at the Wrenshall Fire Department in Wrenshall. Laveau has been the chief for the past six years.

second assistant and then to first assistant, where he stayed for many years before being nominated for chief.

“I’ve heard lots of people say, ‘When Peter gets on scene things are going to get done,’” Laveau said. “That’s just the way I’ve always been. I think it is part instinct, part guidance. God helps me and I just know what to do.”

The idea of applying to be a firefighter came to Laveau when he was dating his wife. Her father was in the department and Laveau always saw him driving past when there was a call. At the age of 18, he applied and was accepted.

For the first six months, Laveau was on probation. He also had to complete two courses — firefighter one and two — which added up to about 120 hours of training within his first year on the department.

The Wrenshall fire department has 20 members now. When Laveau first started there were 32 men and more who wanted to join but could not because there was no room. In hopes of expanding the team, the department will occasionally hold recruitment days.

“A lot of these guys want to try and tell me they are too busy,” Laveau said. “There isn’t anyone busier than me and I find time.”

Note: This article originally appeared in the Oct. 12, 2024, issue of Dairy Star. Story and photos courtesy Emily Breth and Dairy Star.

Kelley Rajala carries on her grandparents' legacy in Aitkin County

By Kyle Hoffman

AITKIN, Minn. - Kelley Rajala had a unique pathway to farming in Minnesota.

"My launch point was the acknowledgment of planetary overshoot and over-consumption," she said of her background in environmental sustainability and economic localization.

Rajala earned a degree in environmental studies from the University of California in Santa Barbara and began her career in sustainability managing urban planning projects for Santa Barbara County's Planning Department. But working as a civil servant did not fully suit her personality.

"I'm entrepreneurial," Rajala said. "I'm a natural thinking systems person, so I like to see the big picture and how things work together."

After a few years working in marketing for her family business, Rajala Rehab Products, Rajala returned to her environmental roots by co-founding The Livability Project, which helped businesses and communities "map out where they were with sustainability and where they wanted to be."

In addition to building more resilient communities, Rajala also ran a yoga studio, helped launch a community garden project at a local school, opened a retail store that sold all locally made products, and started growing food in her backyard.

"We specialized in edible flowers and started selling to the little restaurant down the street from us," Rajala said. "We got involved with our local food hub, which reached San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, San Jose...all the fancy restaurants in Napa."

Thus began Rajala's foray into farming and the dream of taking over her family's farm in Aitkin County, Minnesota.

Established in 1970 by Rajala's grandparents, Ed and Iris Slettom, North Glen Farm

"He worked his way from absolutely nothing," Rajala said. "He grew up on a dairy farm that didn't have electricity. He became a farm agent, he went to the University of Minnesota, he started 4-H clubs, he was the state president of the Minnesota FFA when he was around 18... So there's this long legacy here."

Ed Slettom also served as deputy commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture under three governors in the 1950s. He was appointed executive director of the Minnesota Association of Cooperatives, a position he held for more than 30 years. In 2009, he was inducted into the Cooperative Hall of Fame.

Rajala and her husband/farming partner, Eric Robinson, moved to Minnesota in July 2020 to carry on her grandparents' legacy and make a business out of the family farm.

Located on 146 acres in Glen Township near Aitkin, the couple grows vegetables, fruits, herbs, flowers and mushrooms at their Clear Lake Gardens farm. They sell direct to consumers at their onsite farm stand and the Aitkin Farmers Market, work directly with a few local restaurants and retailers, and participate in the Minnesota Farmers Market Association's food hub program.

Rajala credits Robinson's background as a general contractor for getting the farm up and running quickly.

"It's his plethora of super-skills that has made our farm possible," Rajala said. "He does design, building, engineering, plumbing, electrical, welding, cement



Kelley Rajala and her husband, Eric Robinson, began farming in Minnesota in 2020 near Aitkin.

was the setting for many fond, lifelong memories. Ed – whom Rajala lovingly referred to as "Mr. Cooperative" – spent his life in service to agriculture and cooperative development.



Clear Lake Gardens grows vegetables, fruits, herbs, flowers and mushrooms. They sell direct to consumers at their onsite farm stand and the Aitkin Farmers Market, work directly with local restaurants and retailers, and participate in the Minnesota Farmers Market Association's food hub program.

work, engine repair... Plus, the growing and farming too."

For the past two years, Rajala and Robinson have also been involved with the "Come & Get It" agritourism project designed by Renewing the Countryside in partnership with the Sustainable Farming Association and the Minnesota Farmers Union. The project has helped them market the farm and access more local sales channels. The project also led them to become Farmers Union members and participate in the Minnesota Cooks program.

"Farmers Union has such a long history... and you guys are keeping it so relevant," Rajala said. "You're hitting the key issues: climate change, cooperative business development, education. It's exactly what the world needs right now."

Rajala's family history mirrors MFU's history. In many ways, Ed Slettom's career was the human embodiment of MFU's triangle of priorities: legislation, cooperation and education. And Rajala's early commitment to sustainability and localization presaged MFU's more recent climate resilience and antimonopoly work.

Rajala said she tends to "think into the future based on the past." The future of Clear Lake Gardens looks bright, and it is her family's legacy that serves as the guiding light.

"I'm proud of what we've been able to accomplish in four short years," Rajala said. "It's just such an honor to be in this community and be part of something that my grandparents started so long ago."



Interested in Joining Farmers Union Agency? Discover Exciting Career Opportunities Today!



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Applications being accepted for Stanley Moore, Seymour scholarships



After multiple twists and turns and versions of legislation, the House of Representatives passed the American Relief Act 2025 on Dec. 20. This continuing resolution funds the government through March 14. In a win for family farmers and ranchers, the bill includes \$10 billion in economic assistance for farmers and nearly \$21 billion in agriculture disaster assistance. The bill also extends the 2018 Farm Bill at current funding levels through the end of the 2025 fiscal year.

We thank you, our members, for being instrumental in sharing your concerns with your elected representatives. Farmers Union fought hard for these provisions, and we greatly appreciate all the work you did to secure this much-needed assistance.

College Conference on Cooperatives

Registration is open for NFU's College Conference on Cooperatives (CCOC), set for Feb. 13-16 in Minneapolis. CCOC brings together students and young adults from across the country for cooperative education sessions and co-op tours around the Twin Cities. Interactive workshops allow participants to collaboratively work through problems that co-op boards often face, and Twin Cities co-op tours offer real-world examples of the unique realities of co-ops.

Registration is \$85. This cost includes shared lodging, most meals and tour activities. Register at eventcreate.com/e/ccoc.

Scholarships available

Applications for NFU scholarships are being accepted through April 1.

The Stanley Moore Scholarship is given in memory of Moore, who was born into two prominent Farmers Union families,

the Moores and the Talbotts. As a young boy, he traveled with his grandfather, C.C. Talbott, a principal organizer and the first President of the North Dakota Farmers Union. Moore served as North Dakota Farmers Union President from 1975 to 1987. He was vice president of National Farmers Union from 1980 to 1987.

High school seniors, college students or non-traditional students seeking funding to attend a two or four-year accredited college or university or technical school for any area of study may apply. Applicants must be a Farmers Union member.

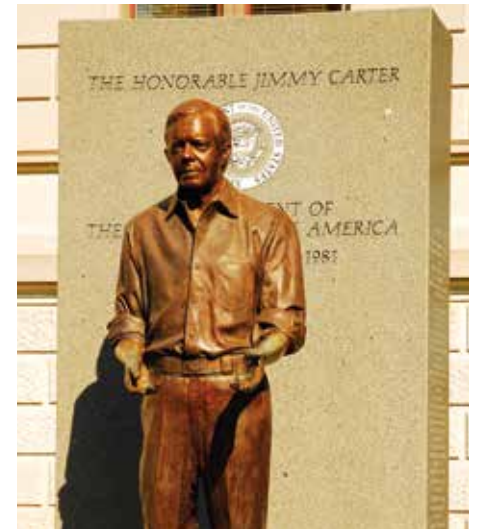
Scholarship recipients will be selected based on academic records, social and community activities and typed essay describing personal and professional goals, and involvement with Farmers Union. The essay topic: How do you plan to advocate for farmers and their communities in your future endeavors?

Three \$1,500 Stanley Moore Scholarships will be awarded.

The Hubert K. and JoAnn Seymour Scholarship is open to all graduating high school seniors who are continuing their education in either a two-year or four-year accredited college or university or technical school for any area of study. The applicant must be a Farmers Union member.

One \$2,000 scholarship will be awarded. The recipient will be selected based on academic records, social and community activities and typed essay describing personal and professional goals, and involvement with Farmers Union. The essay topic: How do you plan to advocate for farmers and their communities in your future endeavors?

Learn more about the scholarships at mfu.org/education/scholarships.



Remembering President Carter

National Farmers Union (NFU) expressed condolences to the Carter family on the passing of the 39th President of the United States, Jimmy Carter, on Dec. 29, 2024.

Carter, the most recent farmer to occupy the White House, was a strong supporter of family farms and appointed Farmers Union member and Minnesota native Bob Bergland Secretary of Agriculture.

"President Carter's agricultural roots prepared him to serve this country with grace and compassion through a difficult time and continue his humanitarian efforts for the remainder of his life," said NFU President Rob Larew. "The fact that a humble peanut farmer from Georgia can hold the highest office in this country is a testament to the strength and value of the voice of family farmers and ranchers everywhere. We send our condolences to the Carter family and join the rest of the nation in remembering this great man."

In 1992, NFU presented Carter with the Meritorious Service Award to Humanity, the highest honor given by Farmers Union.

Get social with Minnesota Farmers Union!

Find out about events, policy happenings, photos and more.



Minnesota Farmers Union



@mnfarmerunion



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MN Farmers Union

New members for November and December

Welcome to the new members who joined MFU in November and December. 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.

New London Food Cooperative,
Kandiyohi County

Brennin Aguirre, Lakeview Public Schools,
Lyon County

Mollie Allen, Kasson-Mantorville Public
Schools, Dodge County

Chris Balfany, Balfany Farms, Renville County

Jim and Konnie Bartels, KNUJ Radio,
Nicollet County

Kelsey Biel, Fillmore Central Schools,
Fillmore County

Kaari Binsfeld, Rockford High School,
Wright County

Leah Bueltel, Marshall High School,
Lyon County

Travis Bullerman, Luverne Senior High,
Rock County

Tyler Burgess, Litchfield High School,
Meeker County

Andi Christenson, BOLD High School,
Renville County

Jennifer Cleveland, Hendricks FFA,
Lincoln County

Patrick Daninger, Autumnwood Farm LLC,
Washington County

Deb Ellinghuysen, Hope Lutheran,
Winona County

Emma Fischer, Blue Earth Area FFA,
Faribault County

Katie Fitzgerald, Triton Senior High School,
Dodge County

Kate Frederickson, Swift County

Brenda Gotvald, Pierz Schools,
Morrison County

Elizabeth Guenther, Fertile-Beltrami School,
Polk County

Robert and Nancy Hanna, Renville County

Scott and Tina Hanna, Redwood County

Bryson Havumaki, Medford High School,
Steele County

Erika and Jordan Herges, Kanabec County

Debra Hogenson, Nobles County

Michele Huggins, Doughp Creations,
Yellow Medicine County

Devon and Avery Johnson, Morrison County

Josh Johnson, Adrian High School,
Nobles County

Alexander Johnson-Lindgren, Hennepin County

Andrew and Kayla Jossund, Norman County

Laura Keller, Norman County

Gerald and Colleen Kelm, Kelm Dairy, Rice County

Gabes Kieffer, Polk County

Karli Knopf, Belgrade-Brooten-Elrosa FFA,
Stearns County

Benjamin and Gretchen Krause,
Washington County

Jordan Kuehl, Cleveland High School,
LeSueur County

Ericka and Jack La Mar, Early Frost Farm,
St. Louis County

Tina and Kyle LeBrun, KTL Charolais,
Nicollet County

David Lind, Caledonia High School,
Houston County

Doug Lind, Braham High School, Isanti County

Chad Maddock, Redwood Valley High School,
Redwood County

Alyssa Mitchell, Becker County

Andrew Moeller, Fairmont High School,
Martin County

Laura Morken, Clay County

Emily Ratajczak, Wheaton High School,
Traverse County

Alexandra Rowe, Clay County

Dan Rowe, Todd County

Chris Rydberg, Itasca County

Karli Savaloja, Wadena County

Cole Schliep, Swift County

Veronica Schwartz, Cedar Mountain High
School, Redwood County

Jenna Shively, Highland Park High School,
Ramsey County

Kiernan Skelly, Minneapolis - Edison High
School, Hennepin County

Meira Smit, Smit Family Farm, Ramsey County

Lisa Start, Sofia Farms, Mower County

Lee Thao, Chisago County

Ronald Thorseth, Swift County

Alex Trunnell, Minnesota Corn Growers
Association, Hennepin County

Fraya Webster, Carlton County

Angela Wolpers, Hennepin County

Emilee Xayanourom, Mountain Lake High
School, Cottonwood County

Seth Yeboah Afriyie, Ellsworth Public Schools,
Nobles County



Membership application

Name: _____ Spouse's Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

County: _____ Zip code: _____

Email: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Type of farm: *Check all that apply*

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crops | <input type="checkbox"/> Organic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beef | <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dairy | <input type="checkbox"/> Sheep |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hogs | <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetable or fruit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Horses | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other please list: _____ | |

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

- | | |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New member | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 year - \$75 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Renewing member | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 years - \$200 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Student - \$20 |

JOIN TODAY!

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

Or sign up online: <https://www.mfu.org/join-renew-membership>

President's message

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In a news release, Thompson said, "I hope to move quickly to enact a five-year farm bill that aligns the farm safety net with the needs of producers, among many other policies, to minimize the need for annual economic aid."

Congress was unable to pass a new Farm Bill during the lame duck session in 2024, but an extension through Sept. 30, 2025, was approved.

It will be challenging to get a Farm Bill done before summer because the Senate will be focused on confirmation hearings for incoming Trump administration appointees. It's also unknown if agriculture committee leaders will choose to conduct more field hearings before moving forward.

Congress has been working to pass a new Farm Bill for three years and there have been two extensions. For now, baseline funding remains in place, but that may

change if the Farm Bill is scored again by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), which conducts analyses of budget and economic issues for Congress. If the CBO rescores the bill and ends up cutting the baseline farm bill funding, it will be even more challenging to pass a new Farm Bill.

Last year, the House Agriculture Committee passed a Farm Bill, but it wasn't brought up on the House floor. The Senate Agriculture Committee released a framework, but it didn't advance.

Year of Cooperatives

The United Nations General Assembly declared 2025 as the International Year of Cooperatives with a theme of "Cooperatives Build a Better World."

Farmers Union founders believed in cooperatives, founding several cooperatives to give them more power in the marketplace and help them to build a better world for themselves and their families. The theme of this year's commemoration highlights the lasting global impact of cooperatives and emphasizes that the cooperative

model is a crucial solution for addressing various global challenges.

The U.N.'s objectives for the International Year of Cooperatives include:

1. Governments creating an enabling environment for cooperatives.
2. Cooperatives promoting public awareness, developing new leaders and leveraging cooperation.
3. Institutions and development agencies promoting cooperatives through education, strengthening capacities and facilitating international collaboration.

Cooperatives are businesses owned and controlled by the members that they serve. Their member-driven nature is one of the most clearly differentiating factors of cooperatives. Cooperatives take many forms and operate in all sectors of society. Most share a unique set of principles which keep them attuned with their member-driven charter.

Government relations

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quorum with 67 members given the unfilled seat in Roseville. House Republicans then held votes to elect Rep. Lisa Demuth, R-Cold Spring, as speaker and approve rules for the upcoming biennium.

House DFL leadership then slammed Republicans and hotly contested the constitutionality of these moves, promptly filing a complaint with the Minnesota Supreme Court who will serve as the final authority on the legitimacy of this convening. DFLers also confirmed that they'll continue negotiating but won't show up and provide quorum until an agreement on seating Rep. Tabke and sharing power in the event of a tied House are reached.

We don't know when or if they'll reach an agreement and we don't know how soon the courts could react to a challenge about quorum.

Implementing last budget

While the legislature is getting organized to pass a new budget, agencies are

implementing the last one. Big announcements from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture have come in recent weeks. They announced the availability of the Beginning Farmer Tax Credit, which provides a tax incentive to farmers who rent or sell ag assets to those in their first 10 years of farming. For sales, this can total up to \$50,000. Beginning farmers are also eligible for a tax credit to participate in the Farm Business Management (FBM) program.

In 2023—and as part of a widely supported move to expand eligibility and increase the value of individual credits—the legislature capped the total amount of state funding available to the credit at \$4 million. Unfortunately, this has meant that for the first time the program is turning farmers away due to lack of funds. MFU and other ag groups are working with lawmakers to build the case for removing the cap on this nation-leading credit so that every farmer who qualifies can benefit. But for now, the program is first-come, first-served—so be sure to get your application in quickly.

MDA also announced a \$9.5 million award through the USDA Agricultural Marketing

Service (AMS) through which the state will fund nine Regional Food System Infrastructure (RFSI) projects, including expanded local dairy processing, vegetable processing, oat and sunflower milling and a community kitchen. Congratulations to the MFU members who were a part of this award.

Finally, MDA also announced a new grant opportunity for farmers markets. The new Farmers' Market Nutrition Assistance Grant was supported by MFU last session and will provide markets support for implementing food assistance programs like Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Market Bucks. MDA has a total of \$150,000 for the program and plans to award grants of between \$1,500 and \$10,000 on a competitive basis. Applications are due on Feb. 20.

Federal happenings

MFU President Gary Wertish spent time in Washington both before and after the holidays. First, he was there just before Congress finally agreed to another one-year extension of the 2018 Farm Bill—through Sept. 30, 2025. The end-of-year

Find the climate-smart practice that best suits your farm at connector.ag

By Jada Csikos-Monroe

There are many options available for members seeking financial and technical assistance for implementing climate-smart practices on their farms. It can be dizzying to figure out what programs are available and which your operation is eligible to participate in. A great first step is to contact your county Soil and Water Conservation District, as programs vary by district. Since not all programs are administered through the SWCDs, the Conservation Technology Innovation Center created a new search tool, connector.ag, where users can search by location, commodity, incentive, practice, program type or provider to find what best fits their operation. Simply input your interests and scroll through the list of available programs.

One opportunity for producers looking for financial assistance to purchase equipment to improve their farm's soil health is the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Soil Health Financial



Assistance Grant Program. This grant will provide up to 50 percent of the cost of a proposed equipment purchase from a minimum grant of \$500 to a maximum of \$45,000. Equipment can be new or used. Money can also be used to retrofit existing equipment. This is a reimbursement grant, so purchases must be made after receiving grant approval. To qualify, you must be an owner or lessee of your farmland. The grant is competitive, but prioritization points will be given to those who have not previously been awarded the grant. Applications will reopen in August 2025. To learn more, visit <https://www.mda.state.mn.us/soil-health-grant>.

Farmers in select counties may apply to participate in the Alliance to Advance Climate-Smart Agriculture. This program is funded through USDA's Partnership

for Climate Smart Commodities and is administered by the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). Counties participating in this pilot program are East Otter Tail, Fillmore, Houston, Kandiyohi, Redwood, Renville, Stevens and Wadena.

The purpose of the program is to provide incentives to adopt practices detailed by NRCS's Climate-Smart Practices Standards, which include cover cropping, prescribed grazing and tillage management. Farmers will receive incentives in the form of a check, with 50 percent being sent upfront, 25 percent sent after the planning worksheet has been received, and the final 25 percent upon completion and verification of the program.

Applicants can enroll up to 160 acres or animal units per Farm Service Agency Farm number for a maximum of two farms in a one-year period. If you farm in one of the counties mentioned, reach out to your local SWCD to apply and learn more. Your SWCD office will provide technical and program assistance. The application period is open through Feb. 14. A third signup is anticipated for late spring 2025. The program ends Sept. 1, 2026.

These are just a couple of the soil health programs available for Minnesota farmers. I will continue to identify and create summaries of other programs and look forward to sharing more. In the meantime, reach out to me at jada@mfu.org.

spending package included economic and disaster assistance for farmers. Unlike previous versions of the deal, it did not provide funding for Farm Bill 'orphan' programs or provide for year-round sale of E15.

The \$31 billion in relief for farmers includes \$10 billion in economic assistance modeled after the Farmer Assistance and Revenue Mitigation Act of 2024 (FARM Act), including new payment limits and other adjustments. The \$21 million in disaster assistance mirrors the White House's request from November and appears to be similar to the Wildlife and Hurricane Indemnity Program-Plus (WHIP+) and the Emergency Relief Program (ERP), both of which leave significant discretion to the Secretary of Agriculture.

In other breaking agriculture news out of Washington before the holidays, third term Congresswoman, Angie Craig, D-2nd District, earned the support of her colleagues to replace Rep. David Scott, D-Ga., as ranking member on the House Agriculture Committee. She'll join Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., who is the Senate Agriculture Ranking Member. Minnesota continues to punch above our weight in Farm Bill discussions, with both Rep. Craig and Sen. Klobuchar demonstrating their ability to work across the aisle on common-sense solutions that help farmers.

"My focus will be on improving people's lives – not scoring political points. We can lower food and energy costs for consumers," said Rep. Craig in a statement following the vote from her colleagues. "We can

strengthen the farm safety net and open the doors of opportunity to new and beginning farmers. And we can ensure that nutrition assistance programs are available for the Americans who need them."

After the holidays, Wertish spent the first part of the week in Washington for board meetings and took the opportunity to meet with the four Agriculture Committee leaders for the new Congress.

The budget fight will continue in Washington as the latest continuing resolution passed in late December only runs through March 14.

As always, if you have questions, thoughts, or concerns about MFU's legislative work, reach out to Stu at (320) 232-3047 (C) or stu@mfu.org.



FEBRUARY 1985

Minnesota Farmers Union members are urged to join fellow farm and ranch people from across the nation at a National Crisis Action Rally to be held in Ames, Iowa. The rally, sponsored by nine farm and rural organizations, including the National Farmers Union, is planned to demonstrate the severity of economic conditions in rural America and to ask for immediate credit help before spring planting.

Winona County Farmers Union will hold its meeting at 8 p.m. Feb. 22 at the Wilson Town Hall. Kaj Gyr from the Minnesota Project will show slides and speak about our unique karst underground water system.

Tackling unchartered ground, Gov. Rudy Perpich is preparing to submit an application for federal aid for beleaguered farmers and unemployed workers due to an economic disaster in most Minnesota counties.

FEBRUARY 1945

Cooperatives planning stockholders' meetings or any gatherings this year involving more than 50 persons in attendance must secure permission from Washington to hold such sessions. All conventions, trade associations meetings and industrial exhibits, as well, must show that their failure to convene will impede the war effort.

"The Farmers Union and its cooperatives are inseparable. They are part of the same movement, and it would be hard to say which is more important – the educational organization or the co-ops," said M.W. Thatcher, general manager of Farmers Union, at a gathering of Farmers Union members at their January conference in Jamestown, N.D.

"The farm mortgage debt of the country is the lowest in 30 years and much of the reduction is due to repayments to the 12 federal land banks and to the Federal Farm Mortgage Corporation, which handles Commissioner loans," I.W. Duggan, governor of the Farm Credit Administration, says.

FEBRUARY 2005

President George W. Bush's 2006 budget proposal included a 10 percent cut for USDA with a 5 percent reduction in the budget for crop and dairy payments. In



Executive Board members from the state's five districts were elected at the MFU State Board meeting in St. Cloud on Jan. 22. Pictured, front row, from left, Vice President Dennis Sjodin, President Doug Peterson and Secretary Bessie Klose. Back row, Larry Jacobson, Clay County, District 1; Dave Johnson, Otter Tail County, District 2; Merlyn Hubin, Cottonwood County, District 3; Markell Vogt, Aitkin County, District 4, and Eunice Biel, Fillmore County, District 5.

addition, the budget also includes a sugar marketing assessment.

Valley View Angus Ranch of Henning was selling registered Black Angus bulls for \$1,150 to \$1,550 in the MFU Member Exchange.



Four new county presidents joined the MFU State Board during the January board meeting in St. Cloud. From left, Ed Jostock, Wabasha County; Norma Hanson, Marshall County; Tim Velde, Yellow Medicine County, and Dale Ritter, Stevens County. Three other new county presidents were not available for the picture. They are Stephanie Henriksen of Rice County, David Werk of Grant County, and Richard Swartz of Cass County.



Creamy Chicken and Wild Rice Soup

Recipe courtesy of Ericka La Mar, Early Frost Farms, Embarrass.

Ingredients:

- 2 large chicken breasts or 4 thighs
- 8 cups chicken broth
- 1 2/3 cups uncooked wild rice blend
- 1/4 cup plus 2 tablespoons flour
- 1/2 cup salted butter
- 3 large celery stalks, diced
- 4 large carrots, diced
- 1/2 yellow onion, diced
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon parsley
- 3/4 teaspoon thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon sage
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 cups heavy cream

Share your recipe with other readers of *Minnesota Agriculture*. Send it to janet@mfu.org.

FUA

continued from page 2

Check your coverage limits

Underinsured policies can leave you vulnerable. Confirm that your coverage limits reflect the current value of your assets, especially if you've experienced financial growth.

Understand policy exclusions

Every policy has exclusions, such as events or damages that are not covered. Review these and address any gaps with additional endorsements or riders.

Secure your business with comprehensive insurance

If you're a business owner, consider the following:

Property Insurance: Protects your office, equipment, and inventory.

Liability Insurance: Shields your business from legal claims.

Business Interruption Insurance: Covers income loss during unexpected shutdowns.

Keep a digital record of your policies

Store digital copies of all your insurance policies and important documents. This makes them easy to access during emergencies or when filing claims.

Schedule an annual review with your agent

Your insurance agent is your best resource for ensuring you're properly covered. Schedule a meeting to discuss changes in your life, coverage needs and potential savings opportunities.

Protecting what matters most is our priority.

Sweningson loves working at Dresbach Rest Area

By Janet Kubat Willette

MINNESOTA CITY, Minn. – For more than five years, Ron Sweningson has been keeping the Dresbach Rest Area on Interstate 90 West clean and tidy.



Ron Sweningson

Sweningson retired early from his factory job after his brother died of cancer at age 62 and his sister died of a brain aneurysm at age 58.

"I decided life's too short; you never know when you're going to go, hence I retired early," he said.

After Sweningson retired, he was browsing the Winona Post and saw an opening for a custodian at the rest area. He told his wife he was going to look into that.

"I'm really glad I did," Sweningson said. "I love my job. I love going to work."

He works about 20 hours a week at the rest area, part of a staff of five regulars and two alternates. Sweningson, 62, makes sure things are clean and sanitized inside and out. He keeps an eye on the trash cans to make sure they are emptied when needed and that the parking lot is clear of garbage. He spends a lot of time picking up cigarette butts. Sweningson joked that if he was paid for each cigarette butt he picked up, he'd be rich.

Mowing lawn is his favorite job duty. Green View staff mow the front, side and back of

the rest area building, the island in the parking lot and near the covered picnic tables.

"Mowing lawns, I'm in heaven," Sweningson said. "I love to mow."

His side hustle is doing yardwork for neighbors in the Minnesota City area. He rides his trusty Snapper with a smile on his face. His riding mower isn't the newest model, but it's well-built and will likely outlast newer machines, Sweningson said.

He enjoys helping people out, treating others how he wants to be treated.

"I like to make people happy," Sweningson said.

His job with Green View allows him to be inside and outside and not stuck in a cubicle behind a computer. He greets motorists, welcomes them to Minnesota and

assists them if they need help.

"I'm happy where I'm at," Sweningson said. "I'm retired and I like working at the rest area. It gets me out of the house, and I get to meet new people."

He'd recommend others consider working for Green View.

"Oh yeah, they're very friendly. I love going to work," Sweningson said. "I love my job, I really do. I can't complain about anything."

"To me it's like a perfect fit. I'll do it as long as my body will let me."

Green View employs people throughout the state of Minnesota. If you, or anybody you know, is interested in working for Green View, call Mike McShane at (651) 639-1913.

Instructions:

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Gently lower your chicken and cook for 15 minutes or until 165 in the center. Once done, let rest for a few minutes then shred or cut into bite sized pieces and add to a large pot with the broth. Bring to a boil, then stir in the rice. Add salt and pepper to taste then cover the pot and remove from heat.
2. Prepare the vegetables: Melt the butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Reduce heat to medium and add garlic, onion, celery, carrots and spices and cook until the vegetables start to soften, about 6 minutes. Stir in the flour, and cook, stirring, for 5 minutes. Slowly stir in the cream, and continue stirring until the mixture is smooth. Cook 3-4 minutes to thicken.
3. Finish the soup: stir this mixture into the big pot with the broth, rice, and chicken. Let simmer with the lid on over low heat until everything is warmed through and the rice is done, about 10-15 minutes. Taste and add more seasoning as desired.



DAN MAHONEY
DEPUTY STATE EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR, MN FSA
daniel.mahoney@mn.usda.gov

Farmers and ranchers rely on crop insurance to protect themselves from disasters and unforeseen events, but not all crops are insurable through the USDA's Risk Management Agency. The Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides producers another option to obtain coverage against disaster for these crops. NAP provides financial assistance to producers of non-insurable crops impacted by natural disasters that result in lower yields, crop losses or prevents planting.

Commercially produced crops and agricultural commodities for which crop insurance is not available are generally eligible for NAP. Eligible crops include those grown specifically for food, fiber, livestock consumption, biofuel or biobased products, or value loss crops such as aquaculture, Christmas trees or ornamental nursery. Contact your local FSA office to see which crops are eligible in your county.

Eligible causes of loss include drought, freeze, hail, excessive moisture, excessive wind or hurricane, earthquake and flood. These events must occur during the NAP policy coverage period, before or during

Is the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program right for you?

harvest, and the disaster must directly affect the eligible crop.

Interested producers apply for NAP coverage using FSA form CCC-471, "Application for Coverage," and pay the applicable service fee at the FSA office where their farm records are maintained. These must be filed by the application closing date, which varies by crop. Contact your local FSA office to verify application closing dates and ensure coverage for eligible NAP crops.

The deadlines for NAP coverage in Minnesota for the 2025 production season for spring-seeded annual crops and sage is March 17, 2025. The deadline for 2025 NAP coverage for ornamental and non-ornamental nursery crops is June 2.

NAP basic coverage is available at 55 percent of the average market price for crop losses that exceed 50 percent of expected production. Buy-up coverage is available in some cases. NAP offers higher levels of coverage, ranging from 50 percent to 65 percent of expected production in 5 percent increments, at 100 percent of the average market price. Producers of organic crops and crops marketed directly to consumers also may exercise the "buy-up" option to obtain NAP coverage of 100 percent of the average market price at coverage levels ranging between 50 percent and 65 percent of expected production. Buy-up coverage is not available for crops intended for grazing.

At the time of application, each producer acknowledges they have received the NAP Basic Provisions, which describes NAP requirements for coverage. NAP participants must report crop acreage shortly after planting and provide verifiable or reliable crop production records when required by FSA.

Producers are required to pay service fees which vary depending on the number of crops and number of counties your operation is located in. The NAP service fee is the lesser of \$325 per crop or \$825 per producer per administrative county, not to exceed a total of \$1,950 for a producer with farming interests in multiple counties. Premiums also apply when producers elect higher levels of coverage with a maximum premium of \$15,750 per person or legal entity.

A producer's certification on Form CCC-860 Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource, Beginning and Veteran Farmer or Rancher Certification may serve as an application for basic NAP coverage for all eligible crops beginning with crop year 2022. These producers will have all NAP-related service fees for basic coverage waived, in addition to a 50 percent premium reduction if higher levels of coverage are elected.

To learn more about NAP visit fsa.usda.gov/nap or contact your local USDA Service Center.

County officer training planned

Attention County Leaders: Ahead of the Full Board Reception on Feb. 21, we will be holding an optional (but encouraged) County Officer Training from 3-5:30 p.m. at the Delta Hotels Minneapolis Northeast, 1330 Industrial Blvd. NE, Minneapolis. This free training will include information on county

conventions (county annual business meetings), the roles of county officers and what county funds can be used for. There will be discussions about member engagement. The training will conclude with goal setting and strategic planning for county leaders. Email claudine@mfu.org for more information.

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New MFU employees

Danielle Isaacson joined MFU in January as the Climate and Working Lands Program Manager. She previously worked at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture as the Operations Coordinator for the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program.



Danielle Isaacson and son Otto

Isaacson grew up in the metro area and attended Denison University in Ohio. After college she returned to the Twin Cities, and recently moved from Minneapolis to Bloomington.

In her free time, she enjoys being outdoors in her new - and much bigger - backyard with her two young children, vegetable and flower gardening, and checking out the local music scene.

Jada Csikos-Monroe joined the MFU team in November as the Working Lands Climate Corps Member Engagement Coordinator.



Jada Csikos-Monroe

Csikos-Monroe is from St. Louis Park and graduated from the University of Minnesota in 2020 having studied Spanish and sustainability. She thoroughly enjoyed being a seasonal gardener for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board for three summers which led her to pursue farming. For two seasons she worked on organic farms in the Northeast before returning to farm another season in the Driftless area of Minnesota. She has experience in both organic livestock and vegetable production.

In her role at MFU, Csikos-Monroe will be continuing the Resiliency on the Farm series as well as sharing information about financial opportunities for climate-smart agriculture.

Calendar of events

| | | |
|-------------------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Feb. 1 | 6-9 p.m. | Frozen Farmer Mixer Stone Creek Farm, 20382 310th St., Shafer |
| Feb. 3 | 7 p.m. | Membership Engagement Committee via Zoom Email claudine@mfu.org for more info. |
| Feb. 4 | | MFU Lobby Day Register at bit.ly/MFULobby25 . Email stu@mfu.org for more information. |
| Feb. 13-16 | | College Conference on Cooperatives , Minneapolis |
| Feb. 16 | 1 p.m. | Kanabec County Social Sapsucker's Cidery, 2752 215th Ave., Mora |
| Feb. 17 | | President's Day . MFU state office closed. |
| Feb. 21 | | County officer training at the Delta hotel . Email claudine@mfu.org for more information. |
| Feb. 22 | | Full Board meeting at state office . Email operations@mfu.org for more information. |
| Mar. 9-11 | | National Farmers Union Convention , Oklahoma City |

See mfu.org/events for more information and the latest news on upcoming events

Come See Us!



Farmers Union

MFU will be exhibiting at several events in February. Stop by if you're in the area. Email claudine@mfu.org if you are available to help at an upcoming event.

- Feb. 8:** **Sustainable Farming Association Annual Conference**, College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph
- Feb. 15:** **Happy Dancing Turtle Back to Basics**, Pine River-Backus Schools, Pine River
- Feb. 17:** **Carver County Dairy and Beef Expo** at Central High School in Norwood Young America
- Feb. 20-22:** **Marbleseed**, LaCrosse Center, LaCrosse, Wis.
- Feb. 25-26:** **Central Minnesota Farm Show**, St. Cloud River's Edge Convention Center, St. Cloud

New policy intern

My name is Amber Findlay, and I am the new Legislative Intern.

I grew up in Herman, Minn., on a family farm where we raised corn, wheat and soybeans.

Knowing that I wanted to stay connected to agriculture, I pursued a degree at the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities in the College of Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resource Sciences. I graduated in December of 2024 with a major in applied economics and a minor in leadership. I will

start law school in August of 2025 and plan to pursue a career in agricultural law.

I joined Minnesota Farmers Union as the Legislative Intern to dive deeper into policy issues directly impacting farmers on a daily basis and to advocate for the agricultural community.

My hobbies include fishing, baking and spending time with family and friends.



Amber Findlay


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