

# Minnesota Agriculture

Voice of Rural Minnesota



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Standing for Agriculture, Working for Farmers. [www.mfu.org](http://www.mfu.org)



# Mobile harvest trailer arrives in Staples



An exterior view of the mobile harvest unit.

By Dave Endicott

The process to build a USDA-certified meat processing facility in Staples continues to move forward. One of the first pieces for the facility was delivered to Staples in January. The mobile harvest trailer built by Friesla in Everson, Wash., is one of four units being built by the company for this facility. A carcass cooling and aging module, cut and wrap module and a freezer module are the other units in production with delivery expected in late spring or early summer.

Funding for these modules came from a U.S. Economic Development Administration grant that was awarded to Farmers

Union Foundation. These funds also purchased the training modules that are being used at Central Lakes College for their Meat Cutting and Butchery Program.

Plans are underway for a spring ground-breaking in Staples, with a planned late fall facility opening. This plant will be able to process up to 15 cattle a day and up to 30 hogs. It fills a void for USDA processing in the region and will also be available for custom-exempt processing.

Advertising for bids for facility construction will be going out soon. A USDA grant will help fund construction costs.



Left, the processing room in the mobile harvest unit and on the right, the harvest room of the unit.



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# President's message

**GARY WERTISH, PRESIDENT**

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As of Feb. 10, President Donald Trump has imposed an additional 10 percent tariff on imports from China and has proposed additional 25 percent tariffs on imports from Canada and Mexico, with a lower 10 percent tariff on energy resources from Canada. The tariffs on Canada and Mexico are paused to March 1.

On Feb. 9, Trump announced a 25 percent tariff increase on all steel and aluminum imports with a further set of broader reciprocal tariffs expected to be announced later in the week. The reciprocal tariffs are to match those charged by companies importing U.S. goods.

Tariffs are a tax levied on imports. The company that imports the product pays the tariff to the federal government. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency collects the tariff. The tariffs are often passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices. An analysis by the Tax Foundation found that the tariffs will increase costs for U.S. households by more than \$800 in 2025. An analysis by The Peterson Institute for International Economics found that the tariffs would cost the typical U.S. household more than \$1,200 per year.

Trump defends the tariffs, saying that if companies made their products in the United States there would be no tariffs. Farmers Union has long called for fair trade that respects the rights of everyone involved in the supply chain.

Giant international corporations have moved their factories to countries with cheaper labor and grown their profits at the expense of workers. John Deere, for example, laid off more than 600 employees at three production plants in Iowa and Illinois last summer while announcing plans to invest \$55 million in building a manufacturing plant in Mexico.

Tariffs and trade may seem like obscure topics, but they matter because they impact jobs and how people make a living and support their families. They also impact how farmers market their products.



*MFU President Gary Wertish spoke against across-the-board tariffs during a press conference hosted by Sen. Amy Klobuchar. They were joined by Minnesota State Building and Construction Trades Council President Dan McConnell.*

Trump's latest tariffs will impact farmers. A report by the American Soybean Association (ASA) and National Corn Growers Association said that the 2018 trade war created concerns about the reliability of the U.S. soybean supply, creating incentives for China to invest in alternative supply chains. These investments encouraged production area expansions in nations that compete with the United States in the global soybean market. The trade relationships with China that were developed over decades fractured almost overnight. There's not enough demand from other nations to offset the major loss of soybean exports to China, which has consumed one of every three rows of soybeans grown in the U.S. for decades, according to the ASA.

After the Chinese tariffs went into effect in early February, China announced retaliatory tariffs on a total of 80 different products that the U.S. exports there. China placed 15 percent tariffs on energy exports, including coal, natural gas and petroleum, and 10 percent tariffs on 72 manufactured products or parts, including agricultural machinery, according to the Brookings Institution.

As I said during a Feb. 7 press conference with Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., tariffs

create uncertainty. Farmers don't need more uncertainty. We've got enough uncertainty with our extreme weather, lack of repair options and consolidated marketplace. We need to trade. U.S. farmers grow more than we can use. Everyone likes to buy American-made products, but there are so many products and crops that aren't produced in America. And it will take time to ramp up manufacturing in the U.S.

The commodity checkoffs have invested millions of farmers' dollars in building international markets and trade actions like these evaporate those markets almost overnight. We operate in a global economy, growing more corn and soybeans than we can consume in the U.S. Livestock producers, too, have worked to expand overseas markets. For example, in 2023, nearly 3 million metric tons of U.S. pork was exported. Mexico was the top destination for U.S. pork. China and Canada were in the top five.

I've heard many farmers say that Trump made us whole the last time he started a trade war with checks from the Commodity Credit Corporation. There is no guarantee Market Facilitation Program payments will be issued this time and we're

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# Women’s Conference focuses on community, leadership and personal well-being

**ANNE SCHWAGERL,  
VICE PRESIDENT**

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A few weeks ago, over a blustery couple days in Mankato, a group of Minnesota Farmers Union women met for our annual Women’s Conference. The conference was focused on creating a gathering space for women to discuss community and leadership, personal well-being and how women can uplift each other. The team of staffers who planned the conference balanced the schedule to include time for education, networking and community building. We knew with the variety and breadth of commitments our members have, getting off the farm for a couple days is always a heavy lift, so it was important to use members’ time in a valuable way.

The conference kicked off with an interactive and engaging session led by MFU member Laura Frederickson-Gosewisch, a farmer and licensed massage therapist, on the importance of protecting our most-important asset as farmers: our own physical bodies. She shared her journey as a producer and wellness professional and tools that women farmers can use to continue their own wellness journey. Laura said, “As women, it can be a challenge to find the time for taking good care of ourselves . . . and as women who farm, it can feel near impossible. Spaces where we can come together to learn and support each other

are so crucial for us to build our resilience and increase our ability to keep showing up for the challenges of life.”

Laura was generous not only with her knowledge and experience but also her tools. She brought along and demonstrated different self-care tools to help treat and prevent the wear and tear of our bodies that comes with working in agriculture. Some of these were massage tools, balance and strengthening tools and stretching tools.

Following an evening of supper and fellowship, the group reconvened the next morning for our keynote address given by Theresa McCormick and Nikki Warner of The Good Acre on creating community and connection through storytelling, food and wellness. Nikki, the Hennepin-Ramsey County Farmers Union President, shared that women’s programming was important to her because, “it builds the connections and trust that fuel real change. . . . These spaces give us the chance to gather, share and find strength in one another. They remind us that we are not alone and that coming together is the only way to create the change our communities need.” Participants were reminded of the leadership strengths they bring to the table and how a diversity of strengths and voices are necessary to bring about positive change.

As Chisago County President Kelsey Zaavedra shared, “[the Women’s Conference] creates space for us to share our

experiences and challenge the status quo. It centers women’s voices in shaping policies that impact our communities. Women in leadership aren’t just filling seats—we’re transforming farming and communities, breaking down gender norms and inspiring future generations. It shows that women belong at the table, leading and innovating in agriculture’s evolution.”

After a Zoom meeting with U.S. House Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Angie Craig, D-2nd District, the conference wrapped with a session on practical coping strategies for mood and stress with Meg Moynihan from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Cynthia Christenson, a licensed therapist and psychiatric nurse. The two gave practical tools and skills for participants to recognize stressful situations and coping strategies to bring our rational selves back into focus.

Women’s programming has consistently been a priority for MFU leadership. As State Secretary Missy Bakker Roach so aptly shared, “The importance of the Women’s Conference bringing us together for women to support and hold space for other women cannot be overstated.”

Looking ahead, Minnesota Farmers Union is helping to plan the 2nd annual Women in Ag Day at the Capitol on March 24. Keep an eye on the MFU website and social media pages for more information on that event, held in partnership with other ag organizations as well as UMN Extension.



*Women gathered at the Minnesota Soybean office in Mankato for the annual MFU Women’s Conference.*



# Seeking to engage or re-engage with MFU? Here's some ways to build your MFU community

## CLAUDINE ARNDT, MEMBERSHIP AND MINNESOTA COOKS DIRECTOR

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*"Our policy is shaped by those who show up."* This has become a mantra I repeat often and certainly every time I'm explaining who Minnesota Farmers Union is and what we do. I also emphasize how members are going to get the most value personally from the organization if they show up to events and connect with others. We know this can be challenging given demanding 21st century schedules, and we appreciate every single person who belongs to MFU even if their schedules prevent them from attending events. I remain convinced that the more people put into MFU, the more they will get out of it: Friendships and community, resources and support, influence over policy and much more.

Coming off another impactful and energizing Lobby Day, I'm dedicating this month's column to the many opportunities there are to get involved with Minnesota Farmers Union.

### MFU Lobby Day – February

Each year members gather for MFU's Lobby Day at the state Capitol. Members hear from legislators and have the opportunity to talk with them in small groups, tell their stories and ask for their support of MFU's legislative priorities. Information about MFU's Lobby Day is always published in the e-news, *Minnesota Agriculture* magazine, via mailed postcards and on the website: [mfu.org/events](http://mfu.org/events)

### County Conventions – July, August, September

In July, August and September, county conventions (annual business meetings



Missy Bakker Roach, Cynthia Christenson and Kelsey Love Zaavedra at the MFU Women's Conference.

organized by county leaders) take place all around the state. Please do everything you can to attend your county convention, as MFU's grassroots, democratic process begins at county conventions. Show up, bring resolutions, volunteer to be a delegate to the state convention, and consider stepping into a leadership position in your county. County conventions are posted on the MFU website ([mfu.org/events](http://mfu.org/events)) and members receive mailed postcards as reminders, too.

### County-level membership events – Year-round

Thanks to engaged county leaders, a potpourri of county-level events are planned across the state and virtually each year: climate conversations, anti-monopoly discussions, local food gatherings, Farmers Union happy hours, summer picnics, dinners-on-the-farm, farmer mixers and much more. Stay on top of these events by following MFU e-news or by visiting the event schedule at [mfu.org/events](http://mfu.org/events). If an event is happening in your county, you will also receive a mailed postcard. Do you have an idea for an event you'd like to help organize in your area? Don't be afraid to bring your own creativity to the table. MFU staff are available to help.

### MFU Legislative Calls – first and third Fridays at 10:30am

Join MFU's Legislative Calls from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. on the first and third Friday of each month to receive legislative and other updates and to participate in the

discussion. Calls are led by the Government Relations team and often feature updates from elected officials or staff from partner organizations. Calls are open to all members.

Here's call-in information, which stays the same each call:

Short link: [bit.ly/legislativecall](https://bit.ly/legislativecall)

Zoom link: [us02web.zoom.us/j/87946393050](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87946393050)

Call-in: (312) 626-6799

Meeting ID: 879 4639 3050

### MFU State Convention – Nov. 21-23, 2025

MFU's 84th State Convention will take place at the Delta Hotels by Marriot Minneapolis Northeast Nov. 21-23. (The state convention always takes place the weekend before Thanksgiving.) Delegates to the state convention (who are nominated at county conventions) will debate and pass resolutions and determine MFU's legislative priorities for the upcoming legislative session. The convention also features speakers, membership awards and the best local food meals you've ever eaten at a convention. The state convention is a wonderful opportunity to network with other members and feel more connected to your Minnesota Farmers Union community.

### MFU Women's Programming

Each year we offer several events dedicated solely to the women of MFU: Women's conferences, theater outings, hayrides, pizza parties and more. Stay on top of these events by following MFU's e-news or by visiting the event page of the website at [mfu.org/events](http://mfu.org/events). If an event is happening in your county, you will also receive a mailed postcard.

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# More than 70 members attend Lobby Day as legislators prepare to craft new state budget

## STU LOUREY GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DIRECTOR

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The Legislature's first month was a busy one—even if conversations about the next biannual budget are just now taking shape. The House ended their historic stalemate and brokered a power sharing agreement, the Senate stopped power sharing when DFLers won a race for the tiebreaking Senate seat, and more than 70 MFU members from across the state joined lawmakers at the Capitol to talk about a stable agriculture budget, affordable healthcare and childcare, land access, Right to Repair, and building new local and regional markets for Minnesota farm products.

We held our annual Lobby Day Drive-in early in session on Feb. 4. While the House had not yet convened and despite logistical challenges created by construction of the New House Office Building, the day was a success. The overall goal of our Day the Capitol is to make sure that state policies work well for family farmers and rural communities, and we do that through building (or building on) relationships and demonstrating the power of our organization.

On relationships, the impact of conversations members had with individual legislators was clear. For example, after his conversation with Swift County leaders Jim and Karen Falk, House Agriculture Committee Chair Paul Anderson, R-Starbuck, agreed to lead legislation to ease new and burdensome audit requirements on very small gain buyers, like feed mills and independent seed dealers. Rep. Kaohly Her, DFL-St. Paul, agreed to author a fix for small farmers who are cut out of the Ag Homestead Tax Credit because they don't cultivate enough acres contiguous with their home. This will be one of her first bills



*MFU President Gary Wertish and members met with Gov. Tim Walz during their Feb. 4 Lobby Day.*

this biennium and she agreed to lead only after a conversation with Kelsey Zaavedra, a Chisago County leader, at MFU's legislative reception. A bipartisan group signed on to House Right to Repair legislation and many more echoed our calls for a strong, stable agriculture budget.

And that's just a report from some conversations less than a week out from Lobby Day.

On demonstrating our power as an organization, we did that just by showing up. The day after we met at the Capitol another lobbyist stopped me to ask, "how many members did you have here on Tuesday? Every time I turned a corner, I felt like I was being trampled by people with blue stickers!"

This is important because now whenever MFU President Gary Wertish, Vice President Anne Schwagerl, legislative staff, or members come to the Capitol to testify, legislators will understand that they're speaking for more than just themselves. They're speaking for a powerful and engaged group of farmers from across the state.

### How Lobby Day worked

We started Lobby Day with an orientation at the MFU Office before heading over to the Capitol and fanning out for nearly

40 meetings with individual legislators and constitutional officers. We met with Attorney General Keith Ellison, Secretary of State Steve Simon, Senate Majority Leader Erin Murphy, DFL-St. Paul; Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Aric Putnam, DFL-St. Cloud; Senate Agriculture Committee Ranking Member Torrey Westrom, R-Elbow Lake; Senate Minority Leader Mark Johnson, R-East Grand Forks; House Assistant Leader Paul Torkelson, R-Hanska; House Agriculture Committee Chair Paul Anderson, R-Starbuck, and many others.

After most legislative meetings, members gathered in the governor's reception room to speak with him about priorities and the upcoming budget. Morrison County President Brenda Rudolph talked about the need to make childcare more affordable and accessible, describing how they live in a "childcare desert" and how she gets called on at least weekly to fill in for another mother who's struggling to find childcare.

Surely planned prior but of note, on Feb. 6 the governor announced \$6.1 million in grants to expand childcare across the state, expanding capacity by 1,400 slots statewide. His team was quick to note that the large majority (\$5.1 million) of these

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**JUSTIN STOFFERAHN,**  
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On Jan. 15 the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) along with Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison and Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul sued John Deere for monopolizing the market for repair of its tractors and combines in violation of federal and state antitrust laws. The lawsuit claims that “Deere’s unlawful business practices have inflated farmers’ repair costs and degraded farmers’ ability to obtain timely repairs, which is especially critical in times of planting and harvesting.”

In a statement issued the day the lawsuit was filed MFU President Gary Wertish said, “This lawsuit represents a critical step in creating a more competitive market for farm equipment repair that will benefit farmers and independent repair technicians. I am grateful for the leadership of FTC Chair Lina Khan and Attorney General Keith Ellison in bringing this important enforcement action.”

The lawsuit focuses on Deere’s control of its diagnostic tool Service ADVISOR, which is the only software repair tool capable of performing all repairs on Deere equipment. Modern day farm equipment is heavily reliant on computer software. A single combine, for example, can have as many as 125 software-connected sensors, making diagnostic tools like Service ADVISOR essential to properly fixing equipment.

According to the FTC’s complaint, Deere uses access to these digital tools to bolster its dominant position in manufacturing

# FTC, two states sue Deere for monopolizing market for tractor, combine repairs

where Deere produces over half of the tractors and combines in North America. Deere limits access to Service ADVISOR to its network of authorized dealerships. This unfair practice, according to the lawsuit, has “boosted Deere’s multi-billion profits” on repair by increasing costs on farmers. A customer-facing diagnostic tool that Deere has made available to farmers and independent repair businesses does not allow the level of access necessary to make all needed repairs.

The lawsuit points out that not having access to a fully functioning diagnostic

The lawsuit seeks to require Deere to make Service ADVISOR available to farmers and independent repair businesses on reasonable and nondiscriminatory terms. The lawsuit was brought in the final days of Lina Khan’s tenure as chair of the FTC. The commission voted 3-2 to issue the complaint with the two Democrat members joining Khan while the two Republican members voted against it. That included Republican Andrew Ferguson who has since become chair under President Trump.

Ferguson’s ascendancy to the chairmanship does not automatically mean the case will be dropped by the FTC, but could impact how aggressive the agency is in seeking to change Deere’s behavior or settle the case. Fortunately, Ellison’s role in the lawsuit gives MFU members a strong ally on that case and staff in his Antitrust Division continue to meet with and talk to members about the repair challenges they are facing. It is also possible that additional states will join the case, further bolstering the resources in the lawsuit.

This lawsuit also adds to the momentum MFU has been building at the legislature to remove the exemption for farm equipment in Minnesota’s right to repair law. Legislation to accomplish that was a key topic of conversation at MFU’s Lobby Day which you can read more about in Stu’s article. Legislation ensuring agricultural right to repair will ensure a fair and competitive market for repair, protect dealerships’ ability to earn a fair margin on parts, and safeguard trade secrets and intellectual property belonging to equipment manufacturers.



*The Federal Trade Commission along with Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison and Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul sued John Deere for monopolizing the market for repair of its tractors and combines in violation of federal and state antitrust laws.*

tool makes it challenging to distinguish whether a repair could be performed by an independent repair technician or must be completed by an authorized dealer. This results in farmers defaulting to using a dealership, further limiting choices. The lawsuit also says that Deere holds significant power over dealerships, overseeing changes to ownership and business structure.



# All-States Leadership Summit is open to all members ages 18 to 22 this year

## WINONA ANDERSON EDUCATION DIRECTOR

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For the first time, the All-States Leadership Summit is headed to Washington, D.C.

The All-States Leadership Summit, or just All-States as it's often referred to, is the capstone event for Farmers Union Education Program graduates. Historically only available to those who had met their individual state's requirements for attendance, this year, the gates are open and National Farmers Union (NFU) is excited to welcome new faces to the event as we look forward to the 87th annual All-States program.

This year, any Farmers Union member ages 18-22 is invited to attend from Friday, May 30 to Monday, June 2, with the summit being hosted in the Georgetown area. The agenda will focus on providing attendees with sessions and workshops geared to-

wards professional development, networking and opportunities to practice the soft skills that help young leaders stand out as they embark on their career journeys.

In addition, another first for the program is the opportunity for previous All-States attendees to join. This is a shift from the previous policy that only allowed for one trip to All-States – now, even if you have attended one of the previous All-States summits, as long as you are still within the age window and are a Farmers Union member, you are eligible to attend. With the programming updates and new location, there's plenty of reasons to mark your calendars for the 2025 All-States Leadership Summit!

Like in previous years, alumni of the MFU Leadership Camp program will also be notified of their eligibility to apply for an All-States scholarship, which will cover most of their program fees and transportation costs. Eligible campers will be

notified directly if they meet the following requirements: camper will be between the ages of 18-22 during All-States and camper has attended the MFU Senior Leadership camp for four years, or three years and is registered to attend again in 2025.

Please note that if a camper has not attended the appropriate number of MFU Senior Leadership camps, but completed a special project as outlined by the Education Director, that may be used to make up one year of senior camp.

If you meet the above requirements but have not received additional information about how to apply for a scholarship, or if you are not eligible for the scholarship but are interested in registering for All-States on your own, please reach out to Winona Anderson, Education Director, for further details. The full price for the summit is \$250, excluding transportation to Washington D.C. May 29 and June 3 are designated travel days.

## Camp registration is now open Learn more at [mfu.org/camp](https://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

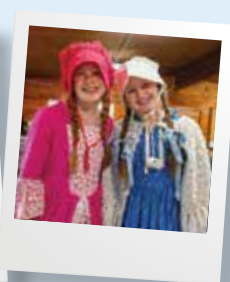
Sunday, July 20 to Friday, July 25

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







# MFU Lobby Day 2025

More than 70 Minnesota Farmers Union members traveled to St. Paul on Feb. 4 for MFU's Lobby Day. Members met with nearly 40 policymakers, advocating for a stable budget for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Members also discussed the

need to make healthcare and childcare more affordable and accessible in rural Minnesota, ways to improve access to land for beginning farmers and why it's important to pass agricultural Right to Repair.



*Senate Minority Leader Mark Johson, R-East Grand Forks, with MFU Vice President Anne Schwagerl and MFU Intern Deidra Meyer.*



*Beau Fabian, Sen. Steve Green, R-Fosston, and Paul Benson.*



*Ella Daniels, Funwi Tita, Sen. Bruce Anderson, R-Buffalo Township, and Nikki Warner.*



*Secretary of State Steve Simon encouraged MFU members to serve as election judges to learn more about the state's voting system.*



*James Kanne, Rep. Scott Van Binsbergen, R-Montevideo, Josh VanDerPol and Mary Sullivan.*



*Friendly Vang-Johnson and her daughter with Rep. Wayne Johnson, R-Cottage Grove.*




*Swift County leaders Karen and Jim Talk with Rep. Paul Anderson, R-Starbuck.*





*Wabasha County Farmers Union President Ed Jostock and his granddaughter, Gracelyn, with Rep. Steve Jacob, R-Altura.*


## Get social with Minnesota Farmers Union!

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

 Minnesota Farmers Union

 @mnfarmerunion

 mnfarmersunion

 MN Farmers Union

# CannonBelles makes, sells award-winning cheese in Cannon Falls

By Janet Kubat Willette

CANNON FALLS, Minn. – Like so many small businesses, CannonBelles started as a hobby.

Jackie Ohmann and Deeann Lufkin had made beer and wine together for several years, but they decided to try making cheese after Ohmann married a dairy farmer. Their first batch in 2011 was a quick mozzarella, which was great for about an hour until it turned into a flavorless cross between mozzarella and “the blob.”

Undeterred, they tried again. This time they used cheddar cheese cultures and a recipe from a beer making supply store. It looked, felt, smelled and tasted like cheese. They were hooked.

In the years since, they added a business partner, Kathy Hupf, and grew their kitchen experiment into two businesses in Cannon Falls.

## The beginning

At first, Ohmann and Lufkin were making cheese in a turkey roaster and giving it away to family and friends. That group served as their research and development department.

Ohmann, who has a degree in youth ministry, comes from an entrepreneurial family and says starting a business is in her blood. She and her husband (now a recovering dairy farmer) live in Randolph.

Lufkin, of Northfield, is a retired Air Force Reserve Weather Officer and her last assignment was with the Hurricane Hunters. A graduate of the cheesemaker short course at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, she uses her science background to create cheese in her den of creativity at the CannonBelles processing plant.



## CannonBelles Coffee and Ice Cream

402 Mill St. W., Cannon Falls,  
is open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Monday through Saturday and  
11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday.

Tours are available of the  
CannonBelles processing plant,  
email them at  
[info@CannonBelles.com](mailto:info@CannonBelles.com).

Cheeses can be ordered online.  
Learn more at  
[cannonbelles.com](http://cannonbelles.com)

In 2014, Hupf joined the duo. She was working in childrens' ministry but her background was in dairy production.

“This was God opening a door for me to get back into (the dairy industry),” Hupf said.

A Randolph native, Hupf has an animal science degree and had her own dairy herd for 18 years. She was a Dakota County Dairy Princess and her daughter, Molly Kappers, was a Princess Kay finalist in 2007. There are eight butterheads in her family.

She joined Ohmann and Lufkin in their venture for several reasons, including the potential to both promote dairy products and to succeed in an era where people want clean, local food.

“I think it’s just the beginning,” Hupf said.

## Breaking ground

In 2015, Grow Cannon Falls reached out and asked them to consider starting their business in Cannon Falls to be part of the local foods initiative that was growing in the community. They weren’t ready to make that leap but got their team together to start planning.

A year later, they started making cheese at the University of Minnesota Food Science and Nutrition Building. It’s where all the cheesemakers in the state get their start. They figured they would be making cheese at the U of M for six months, Hupf said.

But they made cheese there for seven years, Lufkin said.

Getting funding for the building was a big undertaking, Ohmann said, and they wanted to be sure they were building a building that not only fit their needs but also allowed room to grow.

*The cheese varieties sold by CannonBelles include Queso Fresco, Tomato Basil Queso Fresco, Gouda, five flavors of Cheddar, four flavors of Colby and eight flavors of fresh cheese curds.*

They toured more than a dozen other cheese creameries, and every cheesemaker told them to build bigger than they needed, Lufkin said. They toured existing facilities for possible renovations, but discovered it was more cost-effective to build than renovate.

They decided to put down roots in Cannon Falls.

"I'm so glad we did," Hupf said. They joined Ferndale Turkey, which is a third generation turkey farm that raises turkeys the same way they did 80 years ago; Raw Bistro, a raw pet food production company that utilizes some of the byproducts of Ferndale Turkey; Cannon River Winery, which has a tasting room in the heart of downtown; Tilion Brewing Co., a craft brewery located directly across the street from the winery; Sweet Harvest, the largest natural sweetener processor in the world; Minny Grown, a CBD and Hemp Derived products processor; Churchill Reserve 100% Grass fed Beef and Santa Martha Café, which roasts coffee beans in small batches and sells locally.

They broke ground on their cheese processing plant in 2020. It was a nightmare to build during the pandemic. Contractors were busy, it was difficult to find materials and prices kept rising.

They were lucky to secure their bulk tank from a retiring dairy farmer in Hastings. The farmer came with the 1,000-gallon tank to be sure it went to a good home.

## Another venture

A year prior to the creamery's groundbreaking - in April 2019 - they opened CannonBelles Coffee and Ice Cream in Cannon Falls. The shop caters to all ages with its menu of coffee, breakfast, lunch, soup and ice cream.

The menu is built around CannonBelles cheese with the grilled cheese being the most popular sandwich on the menu.

Other sandwiches on the menu include Ferndale Gobbler Grilled Cheese, Garlic Chicken Grilled Cheese, Honey Mustard Ham Grilled Cheese and Barbecued Pork Grilled Cheese.

"For so long, the community has needed a 'good' coffee shop," said Laura Qualey, regional manager for Community and Economic Development Associates. "We don't have a franchise coffee shop in town and unless you go to McDonald's or the convenience stores, there isn't a place to grab a coffee and you couldn't get a real latte or espresso drink without driving out of town. It has become a wonderful gathering place for the community. There's a men's coffee group that meets daily (a morning and afternoon group) and it is definitely the spot that grandparents



*The owners of CannonBelles are Kathy Hupf, Jackie Ohmann and Deeann Lufkin. The three are pictured in their Cannon Falls processing plant.*

treat their grandkids to for ice cream when they visit."

The creamery and the coffeeshop are separate businesses. However, brand recognition from the coffeeshop has helped the processing plant build a stronger relationship with the community.

"That's been a huge factor in our business success," Hupf said.

Ohmann runs the coffeeshop. Her duties are finance and flavor, she said.

## Making cheese

CannonBelles made their first cheese at their plant in May 2022. The building looks like a red farm shed from a distance, but inside it's modern and open with natural light streaming through windows into the production area. The equipment was

carefully chosen with expansion in mind. The partners say they only make cheese "for now" while ideas fly about future options.

Lufkin is the head cheesemaker. She takes milk from Square Deal Dairy in Randolph and turns it into award-winning cheeses. The Holstein herd has high quality milk with good components, with seven pounds of milk yielding a pound of cheese, which is above the industry standard of one pound of cheese from 10 pounds of milk.

They are known for their Queso Fresco, which translates to fresh cheese. In 2017, just 11 months after they started making cheese at the U of M, their Queso Fresco placed first in the Hispanic category in the American Cheese Society competition.

This competition includes cheesemakers from across North and South America.

In 2024, they received second place for their Grim Reaper Cheddar in the American Cheese Society competition. They entered the Grim Reaper Cheddar in the cheddar with pepper category. There were 1,454 entries in the category.

Also in 2024, they took first place in the artisan cheese category at the Minnesota State Fair. Their cheese scored higher than any other cheese entered.

Their cheese was also featured at the Minnesota Farmers Union Coffeeshop at the Minnesota State Fair. The Turkey Kristo sandwich featured turkey from Ferndale Market and cheese from CannonBelles. About 600 pounds of CannonBelles cheese went through the coffeeshop during the state fair.

"It was a big state fair for us," Lufkin said.

Hupf's goal is to make the state fair even bigger for all cheesemakers in the state by serving only Minnesota grown cheese curds at the Great Minnesota Get Together.

Another goal for Hupf, who does sales and marketing for CannonBelles, is to continue to grow their farm-to-school presence. They are in 14 schools, primarily in the Twin Cities metropolitan area in addition to their hometown of Cannon Falls. It's a great market for them and a great opportunity for students to eat local.

# Sorgs are proactive and committed to change to remain resilient

By Jada Csikos-Monroe

Father and son Randy and Jay Sorg manage a 2 Gen Partnership. Randy and Jay, the fourth and fifth generation on their family farm, raise corn and soybeans on 3,000 acres. Randy is the Dakota County Farmers Union Vice President and was a 2024 State Convention Delegate. Jay works for Agri Spray Drones, which they utilize for their farm's fungicide applications.

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

**A.** My dad and I are out of the livestock side of things so now we're row crop growers. We moved into a strip-till cropping system instead of conventional tillage and changed from two tillage passes to one pass. We strip-till in the fall and that's it. We do all in-season nitrogen and apply potassium and phosphorus in a strip-till pass - that's a shank that goes six inches into the ground and applies it in a band. Our goal is to reduce erosion, increase soil structure and help with weed suppression. We don't look at our practice changes as boosting yields but more so to save time and inputs.

In terms of the future, we've had a lot of change in the past two years. I would love to add another crop into the rotation, but we don't have the market to do that. We've looked at ways to integrate cover crops but have to do some more tinkering with that. At the moment, we are getting used to strip-till and trying to get that dialed in.

**Q. How has climate change informed your plans for the future of your farm?**

**A.** The reality of it is I'm only 27. In the past three years we've seen record yields, followed by a season of drought, then a season with too much rain. We've made some changes like implementing strip tillage to increase the water-holding capacity of our fields. It's hard for the soil to hold all that water. By minimizing tillage, the soil will have more structure



Jay and Randy Sorg.

and water holding capacity. Reducing water run-off will help our farming system handle the weather extremes that we've seen.

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

**A.** Our willingness to change. If something isn't working, we are proactive and committed to finding out why.

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

**A.** There are an incredible number of resources. The hot button issue right now is regulation, and farmers are scared of regulation coming down from a climate standpoint. If we don't adapt to what the consumers want, we put ourselves in a dangerous spot for regulation. I wish more farmers would be open minded and know that they don't have to change every single acre, but they can try something different and compare it.

**Q. What do you think Congress is missing in the conversation around climate?**

**A.** A lot of these rulings lately are heavy on no-till and cover crops. I would argue for strip-till to be included. If I split a field and implemented no-till on

half and strip-till on the other, I'd get a better return on fertility with strip-till than I would no-till. Lawmakers should be more open-minded and encourage producers to explore what's out there. The discussion needs to be centered around what is truly sustainable from an economic standpoint. If Congress wants to see real change they are going to have to tie climate-smart practices to subsidies. Dollar signs are what drives change in this industry.

**Q. What opportunities for advancing climate-smart agriculture through markets and policy have been on your radar?**

**A.** I'm working on getting our farm water certified through the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) in order to be eligible for more grants and opportunities. There is going to be a point where the consumer is going to demand climate-smart raised grain. Currently, we are taking advantage of carbon credit programs through Cargill. It's great because we're getting paid for something we were doing anyways. I'd rather there be rewards than penalties for implementing climate-smart practices.

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

**A.** Continue to advocate for world trade. We need to have export markets while also protecting our markets at home. Importing ag products that we make here does not help our bottom line. For example, how is importing sugar cane ethanol from Brazil for supposedly 'sustainable fuel' sustainable? I'd like to think I wouldn't need help from Congress to keep farming, but it's important for policymakers to keep an open dialogue with farmers, not lobbyists.

# American Beef Labeling Act introduced in Senate



National Farmers Union (NFU) supports the American Beef Labeling Act (ABLA), introduced by Sens. John Thune, R-S.D., and Cory Booker, D-N.J. This legislation codifies mandatory country-of-origin labeling (MCOOL) for beef sold in the U.S., distinguishing American-produced products in grocery stores.

"America's family farmers and ranchers produce the best agricultural products in the world, and consumers have the right to know where their products come from," said NFU President Rob Larew. "I'm

very grateful to Sens. Thune and Booker for listening to Farmers Union members across the country who have been calling for mandatory country-of-origin labeling legislation for decades. The passage of the American Beef Labeling Act will help create greater transparency for consumers and a more competitive market for cattle farmers and ranchers."

Specifically, the ABLA will give American cattle farmers and ranchers more power in production and marketing by including package labeling indicating that their

product has been born, raised, slaughtered and packaged entirely in the U.S. This allows small and mid-size producers to occupy a larger market share and receive a greater share of the consumer's food dollar.

NFU has advocated for mandatory country-of-origin labeling for decades to give family farmers and ranchers a chance against growing anti-competitive business practices by large corporations.

## Settlement reached with JBS in class-action antitrust suit

National Farmers Union, alongside ranch group R-CALF USA and four fed cattle producers who filed a class-action antitrust lawsuit in April 2019 against JBS, Tyson, Cargill and National Beef, filed a motion with the Federal District Court for the District of Minnesota for preliminary approval of a proposed \$83.5 million class action settlement with the JBS defendants.

Through their counsel Scott+Scott Attorneys at Law LLP, Cafferty Clodes

Meriwether & Sprengel LLP, and Robins Kaplan LLP, NFU and the other cattle plaintiffs agreed to the proposed settlement, which includes the \$83.5 million cash payment and certain non-monetary consideration, including the provision of certain documents, and certain assistance in relation to any subsequent trial against the remaining three defendants, Tyson, Cargill and National Beef. The settlement is not an admission of liability by JBS, who continues to deny any wrongdoing.

If the court grants preliminary approval of the proposed settlement, it will order that notice be sent to the settlement classes informing them of the proposed

settlement's details, including how class members can make a claim for their share of the settlement.

The settlement classes covered by the proposed settlement include, subject to certain exclusions and conditions, all persons or entities: a) within the U.S. that directly sold fed cattle for slaughter to Tyson, JBS, Cargill and/or National Beef from June 1, 2015 to Feb. 29, 2020 other than pursuant to a cost-plus agreement and/or a profit sharing agreement; b) who held a long position in live cattle futures traded on the CME prior to June 1, 2015 and subsequently liquidated the long position through an offsetting market transaction at any point.



## 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
- 1 year - \$75
- 3 years - \$200
- 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>

## Government relations

*continued from page 6*

grants will go toward increasing childcare availability in Greater Minnesota.

Rice County President Tessa Parks talked about land access and the importance of programs like Minnesota's Beginning Farmer Tax Credit. The legislature reauthorized and expanded that credit in 2023. However, as part of final budget maneuvers, lawmakers lowered the cap for the total amount of money available for credits each year. In 2024, this resulted in many farmers being turned away from the program. This year,



*MFU Vice President Anne Schwagerl testifying on sustainable aviation fuel in the House Agriculture Committee.*

we're working to remove that overall cap so that no beginning farmer is turned away from utilizing this nation-leading credit to help them secure land or otherwise build their farm business.

Members came together again in mid-afternoon at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, where they met with Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen, Revenue Commissioner Paul Marquart and Natural Resources Assistant Commissioner Bob Meier.

The day ended with our annual legislative reception at Farmers Kitchen + Bar. This might have been the highlight of day with a large, bipartisan group of both House members and senators joining for good food and conversation. Some who joined us were longtime allies and others were

newer to MFU and agricultural issues, but everyone enjoyed their time.

During our Lobby Day, House Leader Melissa Hortman, DFL-Brooklyn Park, had to cancel a meeting with our group because she got called into negotiations. Other members of Republican leadership had to leave meetings early for the same reason. We all agreed that was a good sign and it turns out we were right.

The day after our Lobby Day, House leadership announced a power-sharing agreement that allowed the House to officially convene after a nearly month-long impasse. While we can't say that the deal was due to

the bipartisan cheer sparked at our legislative reception, it couldn't have hurt.

"It was great to see so many members turn out to take part in the legislative process," said MFU President Gary Wertish. "We had a great mix of first-time and experienced members come to Lobby Day. MFU looks forward to continuing to advocate for family farmers throughout the legislative session."

### Getting organized

The House power sharing agreement, offered as a resolution by House Majority Leader Harry Niska, R-Ram-

sey, outlines a plan whereby Republicans will take the Speaker spot for the biennium and will lead committees for the next five weeks. That's until a rescheduled special election fills the safely DFL Roseville area house seat, returning the body to a 67-67 tie. DFLers earned assurances that a tie would result in even partisan split and co-chairs for all committees except one. The new House Fraud Prevention and State Agency Oversight Committee will continue to be chaired by a Republican with a 5-3 Republican majority.

Significant for the weeks leading up to the March 11 Special Election for the Roseville area House seat, even with partisan advantages on committees, Republicans will need at least one DFL vote to pass any legislation off the floor.

Rep. Paul Anderson, R-Starbuck, will chair the House Agriculture Committee for the next five weeks before he shares that gavel with Rep. Rick Hansen, DFL-South St. Paul.

In the Senate, Sen. Doron Clark, DFL-Minneapolis, won his special election, ending power sharing in that body. Putnam will now chair the Agriculture Committee with Westrom returning to his role as Ranking Member.

Now that both the bodies are organized, the legislature will begin crafting a new two-year budget for state government.

### Budget work begins

The governor released his budget request on Jan. 16. While not as detailed as legislative language, the extensive document provides the administration's position on spending going into budget negotiations.

The governor released these recommendations with a strong message about fiscal restraint and managing the projected structural imbalance long term. In all, this meant cutting around \$5 billion from state general fund spending, taking the overall budget from \$70.7 billion to \$65.9.

For agriculture, the good news is that 'base' spending on ag programs was largely unchanged and there wouldn't be cuts to core staffing or services. However, the agriculture budget was not immune to belt-tightening proposed across government.

First, the governor proposed cutting the Green Fertilizer Grant program that MFU worked to establish from \$7 million to \$4 million.

Second, many programs in the agriculture budget are funded on a biennium-to-biennium basis and others were established with one time spending in 2023 (when we had a significant one-time surplus). Under this proposal, all one-time spending would not be renewed, discontinuing programs including those MFU has worked hard to establish or support, including:

- Meat cutting grants to establish K12 education programs
- Noxious weed grants
- Grants for farmers' market hubs
- State support for The Good Acre LEAFF program
- Farm safety grants

- Wolf-livestock conflict prevention grants
- State support for the Minnesota Livestock Breeders Association
- State support for the Center for Rural Policy and Development

Under the governor’s proposal, state spending on agriculture would be down upwards of \$30 million from the last biennium. Of course, budget pressures are real and necessary to address to avoid more challenges in the future. The governor is likely to amend this following a new budget forecast in late February.

Amid these challenges, President Trump is attempting to freeze a wide swath of government funding.

Trump’s Office of Management and Budget issued a memo to all federal agencies directing them to “temporarily pause” all grants, loans and other financial assistance programs that could conflict with the wide swath of executive orders the president signed in his first days in office. This led to significant concern and confusion for a broad array of local and state officials who rely on federal funding to provide services — and often on a reimbursement basis. In Minnesota, this could endanger as much as \$1.8 billion in federal funding each month. State officials said this

includes everything from SNAP to highway maintenance.

In agriculture, many state programs are matched on the federal level. Our state inspection program for meat processors is half funded by the federal government.

The Trump administration released a list of more than 2,600 programs subject to this freeze, including more than 400 USDA programs. The Trump administration said in a statement that funds for farmers would not be paused, but they haven’t provided specific programs from this list that are exempted. USDA programs from this list that are sure to affect Minnesotans include:

- Agriculture Risk Coverage Program
- Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program
- Conservation Reserve Program
- Conservation Stewardship Program
- Crop insurance
- Dairy Margin Coverage
- Farm to School Grant Program
- Higher Blends Infrastructure Incentive Program
- New Empowering Rural America (New ERA) Program
- Regional Food Business Centers

A federal judge temporarily blocked the freeze, and the White House rescinded the memo—before clarifying that the executive orders should still be interpreted as freezing federal funding. As of Feb. 8, the move continues to cause significant confusion.

We’re hearing concerns from members, including those who are implementing projects on a reimbursement basis, as a delay in payment can cost not just time, but also money. If you’re affected by the freeze, please reach out as that will help us in our communication with lawmakers on the state and federal level.

If you have questions, thoughts or concerns, reach out at [stu@mfu.org](mailto:stu@mfu.org) or (320) 232-3047.



## ATTENTION MEMBERS!

Is your contact info up to date with MFU?

Email changes to [claudine@mfu.org](mailto:claudine@mfu.org).



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## MARCH 1945

The farmers of the great flax producing area are patriotic Americans. Providing Mother Nature allows, they will produce the flaxseed necessary to meet war and civilian needs in 1945-46. Preliminary surveys show there will be a 20 to 50 percent increase in planting over 1944. The ceiling price on flax in Minneapolis is \$3.10 per bushel.

In the last year or so perhaps 40 radio stations have changed hands. Without

exemption, the Federal Communications Commission has approved these sales. They have been sold at prices which five years ago would have been laughably high.

American farmers carried out a record-breaking volume of soil and water conserving practices under the AAA program during 1944. The cropland on farms participating in the 1943 AAA conservation program comprised 89 percent of the nation's cropland.

## MARCH 1985

Problems in agriculture can be traced back to the shift from supply management farm programs to the so-called market-oriented approach, according to National Farmers Union. At the group's 83rd annual convention, delegates said the marketed oriented label is a misnomer, and has instead created a supply-oriented situation, resulting in greater instability, insecurity and more widely fluctuating farm prices.

Many Farmers Union members joined about 500 other farmers, labor union members and members of organizations including the state American Agriculture Movement, National Farmers Organization, Groundswell and others in chanting "no sale, no sale." Pope County Sheriff Gerlad Moe concluded he could not hold the sale of Jim Langman farm as planned. The sale was to be rescheduled.

Art Persons was the guest speaker at the Winona County Farmers Union meeting, held at 8 p.m. March 22 at the Wilson Town Fire Hall. Winona County land planning issues were discussed.



Minnesota's delegates represented Minnesota Farmers Union in farm policy discussions at the NFU Convention in Lexington, Ky., Feb. 25-28. Front row, from left, Markell Vogt of Aitkin, MFU President Doug Peterson and Merlyn Hubin of Westbrook. Back row, from left, Dwight Ault of Austin, Jim Falk of Murdock, Alan Perish of Long Prairie, Roger Schaefer of Frazee and Alan Benz of Tyler.

## MARCH 2005

Twelve Minnesota Farmers Union units earned Leadership Achievement Awards at the National Farmers Union Convention. First time winners were Renville Local and Blue Earth County. Todd and Kandiyohi County earned the award for the seventh year at the convention. Other winners include Renville County, Cottonwood County, Brown County, Nobles County, Brewster Northeast Local, Browerville Local, Northeast Local and East Central Local.

Minnesotans joined NFU members from across the nation in mid-March to voice

opposition to the Central American Free Trade Agreement. The event included 200 participants from 22 states.

Ron Solheim of Fergus Falls was named Agent of the Year by Farmers Union Agency in St. Paul. Solheim was selected from 40 agents from throughout the state of Minnesota.

Alan Benz is the Lyon County Farmers Union President. He started farming in 1978. He raises corn and soybeans. Energy and beginning farmers are the top issues in his area of the state.



Alan Benz



## Wild Rice Porridge

Submitted by Colleen Carlson, U of M Extension Educator, Scott and Carver counties

This porridge is a family favorite, especially when made with locally made maple syrup. The original recipe is from Hell's Kitchen restaurant in Minneapolis. The recipe, adapted from 1800's trapper's journals as they journeyed up the St. Louis River, has since become one of the most popular menu items at Hell's Kitchen.

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup wild rice, rinsed or 4 cups of cooked wild rice
- 1 ½ cups cream
- ¼ cup pure maple syrup
- ½ cup chopped roasted hazelnuts
- ¼ cup sweetened dried cranberries (craisins)
- ¼ cup dried blueberries



## President's message

*continued from page 3*

competing with more grain from South American countries, who were incentivized to expand their production during Trump's tariff trade wars during his first term. More grain means lower prices, which makes it increasingly difficult for farmers to make ends meet. Farmers are not able to add a 25 percent tariff tax to the commodities they sell.

### Food for Peace

On Feb. 7, I sent a letter to all 10 members of Minnesota's congressional delegation, sharing MFU's support for the Food for Peace program.

The Food for Peace program is authorized by Title II of the Farm Bill and implemented by the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. The program benefits farmers, the agricultural industry and hungry people around the world.

Food for Peace supports Minnesota farmers by procuring commodities on the commercial market to provide to vulnerable populations around the world. Created in the 1950s, the program has fed more than 4 billion people in 150 countries and helps to combat world hunger, expand international trade and advance foreign diplomacy.

According to data from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), between fiscal year 2020 and 2024, Food for Peace provided more than 13 billion pounds of commodities including wheat, corn and soybeans to help feed people in conflict-affected areas including Sudan, Yemen and Ukraine. These purchases

injected nearly \$3 billion into the United States agricultural economy and also benefitted the American maritime industry, which is used to ship these commodities abroad.

Unfortunately, there is significant uncertainty about the future of this program. Trump and ally Elon Musk had placed all USAID personnel on administrative leave starting Feb. 7, but a Trump-appointed judge ordered a temporary halt to the order on Feb. 7. There is also confusion regarding the status of funding for existing humanitarian programs, including reports that food distribution has been stopped.

Elimination of the program or significant changes would also undermine our diplomatic goals as feeding people is critical to maintaining stability around the world. Farmers are ready to help hungry people, and this program helps us do that.

In 2023, I joined Gov. Tim Walz, Heather Conley of the German Marshall Fund (GMF), and Oksana Markarova, the Ukrainian Ambassador to the U.S. for a conversation about the dire conditions facing farmers in Ukraine. This included harrowing stories such as fears of uncovering a land mine during harvest. In fiscal year 2024 Food for Peace provided 605 million pounds of commodities to Ukraine alone.

### Farm bill

On Jan. 14-15, I was in Washington, D.C., for a meeting of the National Farmers Union Executive Committee. While there, we met with leaders of the House and Senate agriculture committees, including Ranking Members Sen. Klobuchar and Rep. Angie Craig, D-2nd District. All leaders said they are committed to getting a farm bill done. House Agriculture Committee

Chair Rep. G.T. Thompson, R-Penn., said he would have a farm bill hearing in March. Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Sen. John Boozman, R-Ark., shared that Sen. John Thune, R-S.D., would like to have the farm bill done by the end of June.

In a Jan. 23 statement Thompson said, "This committee's No. 1 priority for this Congress will be the passage of a bipartisan, five-year Farm Bill. One that restores the farm safety net, prioritizes voluntary, locally led and incentive-based conservation programs, advances our competitiveness through robust market access and trade promotion opportunities, strengthens programs, including those in the nutrition title, to demand transparency and accountability to the taxpayer, and revitalize rural communities and restore their prosperity."

A new Farm Bill is limited to baseline funding, and we can't take from one program to pay for another. It will be a challenge to pass a new Farm Bill as it needs bipartisan support, particularly in the House, where some Republicans will not back the bill. The House has 218 Republicans and 215 Democrats. It will be easier to pass a farm bill in the Senate, which has 53 Republicans, 45 Democrats and two independents.

As of Feb. 10, there's been no movement on the farm bill, but there seems to be a good working relationship between the agriculture committee leaders.

At the state level, MFU held a successful Lobby Day on Feb. 4. Thank you to the more than 70 members who participated in the annual event. Check out the Government Relations column for a recap of the event.

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### Instructions:

**1.** To cook wild rice, place wild rice in a medium saucepan with 4 cups of water. Season water with a generous pinch of salt. Cover and bring water to a boil. Once boiling, reduce heat to slowly (but steadily) simmer until rice is chewy, tender and a few grains have burst open (about 45 minutes). Pour rice into a fine mesh sieve to drain. Return drained rice to saucepan.

**2.** Roast the hazelnuts in the oven at 400 degrees or cast iron skillet for 3 or 4 minutes

**3.** Stir cream and maple into drained rice. Simmer cream over medium heat until it thickens and surface of rice is coated in bubbles (about 6 minutes). Stir hazelnuts and dried fruit into porridge. Serve warm with additional cream and maple syrup

Additional mix-ins can be golden raisins, dried apricots, dried cherries or walnuts.

Can substitute frozen mixed berries, just heat to warm.

Share your recipe with other readers of *Minnesota Agriculture*. Send it to [janet@mfu.org](mailto:janet@mfu.org).



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

The 2025 enrollment period for Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) ends on April 15. ARC and PLC provide financial protections to farmers from substantial drops in crop prices or revenues and are vital economic safety nets for most American farms. The American Relief Act of 2025 extended many Farm Bill authorized programs for another year,

Producers can elect coverage and enroll in ARC-County (ARC-CO) or PLC, which provide crop-by-crop protection, or ARC-Individual (ARC-IC), which protects the entire farm. Although election changes for 2025 are optional, producers must enroll through a signed contract each year. Also, if a producer has a multi-year contract on the farm it will continue for 2025 unless an election change is made.

All farm producers with interest in the cropland can make a unanimous program election of either ARC-CO or PLC on a crop-by-crop basis; or ARC-IC for all covered commodity base acres on a farm for the 2025 crop year during the election period. If producers do not submit their election revision by the April 15 deadline, their election remains the same as their 2024

# Enroll for ARC or PLC by April 15; make sure form CCC-941 is up-to-date

election for commodities on the farm from the prior year. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a shared interest in the cropland.

Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

Base acres on farms where all cropland acres have been planted entirely to grass or pasture, including cropland that was idle or fallow from Jan. 1, 2009, through Dec. 31, 2017, will be maintained, but no ARC or PLC payments will be issued for those base acres from 2019 through 2025. Reconstitutions are not permitted to void or change this treatment of base acres.

USDA also reminds producers that ARC and PLC elections and enrollments can impact eligibility for some crop insurance products including Supplemental Coverage Option, Enhanced Coverage Option. The Risk Management Agency (RMA) final date to apply for crop insurance for the 2025 crop year is March 15, 2025, for corn, soybeans, beets, peas, small grains and forage. For more crop insurance information visit [rma.usda.gov](http://rma.usda.gov).

Producers enrolled in ARC or PLC programs must protect all cropland and noncropland

acres on the farm from wind and water erosion and noxious weeds. By signing ARC county or individual contracts and PLC contracts, producers agree to effectively control noxious weeds on the farm according to sound agricultural practices. If producers fail to take necessary actions to correct a maintenance problem on the farm that is enrolled in ARC or PLC, the County Committee may elect to terminate the contract for the program year.

When completing ARC/PLC enrollment, producers can also complete any necessary eligibility paperwork. Delays in receiving ARC and PLC payments may be due to eligibility paperwork such as form CCC-941, Adjusted Gross Income Certification not being filed. Producers that don't have a valid CCC-941 on file for the applicable crop year you will not receive payments. All farm operator/tenants/owners who have not filed a CCC-941 and have pending payments should file the form with their recording county FSA office. Unlike the past, producers must have the CCC-941 certifying AGI compliance before any payments can be issued. Payments for PLC, ARC-CO and ARC-IC, if triggered for the 2025 program year, will be issued after Oct. 1, 2026.

For more information, contact your local USDA Service Center or visit [fsa.usda.gov](http://fsa.usda.gov).

## Member photos

*Brenda Rudolph of Morrison County shared this photo from Lobby Day. Rudolph brought her son, Everett, and friends to Lobby Day. From left, Danny Gunderson, Upsala; Nathan Van Heel, Swanville; Owen Van Heel, Swanville, Ag Commissioner Thom Petersen, Connor Gerads, Swanville; Hunter Van Heel, Swanville; Everett Rudolph, Little Falls, and Brenda Rudolph, Little Falls.*

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



## Membership

continued from page 5

### National Farmers Union Fly-In – Early September

Farmers Union members gather in Washington, D.C., in September each year for the Legislative Fly-In. During this time together, members hear from U.S. Department of Agriculture officials and other Congressional leaders discussing key initiatives. Farmers Union members then meet with their legislators, highlighting Farmers Union priorities and sharing their stories. Contact [stu@mfu.org](mailto:stu@mfu.org) to express your interest in participating in the NFU Legislative Fly-In.

### National Farmers Union Spring Advocacy Training – April 7-8

Want to learn how to be a better advocate for farmers? Go to Washington, D.C. and learn from NFU staff about how to advocate on the Hill and more. Contact [stu@mfu.org](mailto:stu@mfu.org) and [claudine@mfu.org](mailto:claudine@mfu.org) if interested.

### FUEL – Farmers Union Enterprise Leadership Program – Apply by Feb. 15, 2026, for the 2026 program

The FUEL program is intended to empower future leaders in the Farmers Union Enterprise states of Minnesota, North Dakota, Montana, Wisconsin and South Dakota. Members from each state participate in a series of trainings to gain skills and build relationships. Each annual cohort will

travel to four locations across the nation and have the opportunity to immerse in concepts ranging from emotional intelligence and conflict resolution to public speaking, storytelling and how to have a lasting impact on one's local community. Applications will open again in late 2025 for the 2026 cohort.

### Share stories and photos – Year-round

MFU's Communications Team appreciates when members share stories and photos for us to share and amplify, whether in Minnesota Agriculture magazine or on social media. Do you have an interesting farming/Farmers Union story, memory or photo? If so, reach out to [janet@mfu.org](mailto:janet@mfu.org) or [kyle@mfu.org](mailto:kyle@mfu.org).

### Social media ambassador – Year-round

Please follow us on social media [@mnfarmersunion](https://www.instagram.com/mnfarmersunion) and consider amplifying MFU posts. Contact [kyle@mfu.org](mailto:kyle@mfu.org) for more on MFU's social media.

I've spoken with enough new members throughout the years to know that it can feel daunting to get involved with MFU or to know where and how to plug in. Whether you are a new member or a longtime member seeking to get reengaged, please don't hesitate to contact me or another MFU staff member to express your interest. We can help guide you. This is your community, and we want you to make the most of it.

closely with 4-Hers. At the Minnesota State Fair Deidra assisted in the organization of the "Minnesota Meats" program where 4-Hers put their cooking skills to the test against other 4-Hers.

Deidra joined the Minnesota Farmers Union to better understand rural agricultural issues and policies.

In her free time she enjoys playing tennis, weightlifting and playing board games with her friends.



Deidra Meyer

## Membership intern joins staff

Deidra Meyer joined MFU in late January as the Membership Intern. She grew up on a hobby farm near Amery, Wis., where the family raised animals to show at the county fair. Deidra is a junior at the University of Minnesota majoring in agricultural communication and marketing with a minor in leadership and agricultural education.

Last summer Deidra worked with University of Minnesota Extension and the Minnesota State Fair, where she worked

## Calendar of events

**Mar. 3** 7 p.m.  
**Brown County Winter Meeting,**  
Dawg Haus Bar & Grill, Sleepy Eye

**Mar. 5**  
**Visit Girlhood (It's complicated)**  
**at Minnesota History Center.**  
Go to [bit.ly/GirlhoodAtHistoryCenter](https://bit.ly/GirlhoodAtHistoryCenter) to register.

**Mar. 9-11**  
**National Farmers Union Convention,**  
Oklahoma City

**Mar. 18**  
**MFU tour of AGCO plant in Jackson.**  
Call Lee Johnson at 507-317-7537 for more information.

**Mar. 24**  
**Women in Ag Day,**  
Minnesota state Capitol, St. Paul

**Apr. 5**  
**Rural Health Forum and Fair,**  
sponsored by Dodge and Olmsted  
County Farmers Unions.

See [mfu.org/events](https://mfu.org/events) for more information and the latest news on upcoming events

## New members for January

Welcome to the new members who joined MFU in January. 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.

**Amanda and Stephen Anderson,**  
Aitkin County

**Kenric Baune,** Redwood County

**Alicia Holtz,** Morrison County

**Jason Leigh,** Maple Brook Farm LLC.,  
Olmsted County

**Robert Nyandega and Joyce Begi,** Dezrabi  
Organic Farm, Hennepin County

**Emily and Mitchell Olson,** Kanabec County

**Michael Salzl,** Night Owl Farm, Isanti County

**Funwi Tita,** Better Greens LLC.,  
Wright County

**Allen Wagner,** Hubbard County

**Gregg and Marie-Ann Westigard,** St. Louis  
County

**Brook and Nate Williams,** Grove Bakery &  
Fat Kitty Farm, Dakota County


**FUA**  
 FARMERS UNION AGENCY

It is the perfect moment to reassess your insurance and confirm that you have the essential coverage in place.

Reach out to one of our dedicated local Farmers Union Agents to schedule an appointment for a complimentary and thorough review today!



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<b>Argyle</b>	Jay & Brady Swanson	(218) 437-8512
<b>Bejou</b>	Joe McCollum	(218) 844-5970
<b>Bemidji</b>	Ben Caron	(218) 751-7761
<b>Canby</b>	Mike Panka	(507) 223-5527
<b>Detroit Lakes</b>	Joe McCollum	(218) 844-5970
<b>Duluth</b>	Brad Anderson	(218) 481-0812
<b>Elk River</b>	Rob Pampusch, Jr.	(763) 441-4250
<b>Elk River</b>	Todd Ostrow	(763) 515-3200
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<b>Fosston</b>	Barb Sweep	(218) 435-2063
<b>Franklin</b>	Joel Harmoning	(507) 557-7000
<b>Goodhue</b>	Ali Peters	(651) 923-4433
<b>Ivanhoe</b>	Mike Panka	(507) 694-1750
<b>Lake Crystal</b>	Matt Peterson	(507) 726-2961
<b>Lakeville</b>	Sam Zappa	(952) 456-0029
<b>Luverne</b>	Steve Cattnach & Barb Anderson	(507) 283-8383
<b>Maple Grove</b>	Brandon Hummel	(651) 288-4076

<b>Marshall</b>	Dennis Klocow, Jr.	(507) 532-0418
<b>Menahga</b>	Kristine Hendrickson	(218) 564-5300
<b>Montevideo</b>	Ivan Anderson	(320) 269-9463
<b>Moorhead</b>	Mari Berggren	(218) 512-0536
<b>Moorhead</b>	Aaron Schenck	(218) 236-1966
<b>Moorhead</b>	Robin Swanson & Jenna Crabtree	(218) 512-3003
<b>Morris</b>	Debbie Anderson	(320) 589-3245
<b>New York Mills</b>	Lisa Preuss	(218) 385-3344
<b>Norwood YA</b>	Lisa Valiant	(952) 467-2922
<b>Olivia</b>	Paul Johannes	(320) 523-1150
<b>Owatonna</b>	Ben Flemke	(507) 413-6116
<b>Rochester</b>	Chris Sanders	(507) 282-4411
<b>Roseau</b>	Emily Baugher	(218) 463-2369
<b>Thief River Falls</b>	Jay & Brady Swanson	(218) 681-6443
<b>Warren</b>	Jay & Brady Swanson	(218) 745-5313
<b>White Bear Lake</b>	Abby Moffitt	(651) 217-3638
<b>Willmar</b>	Paul Johannes	(320) 235-2540
<b>Windom</b>	Jessica Krick	(507) 831-3541

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