

Minnesota Agriculture

Voice of Rural Minnesota



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



Rooted in trust, grown with care: The legacy of Cattnach Insurance

In the heart of rural Minnesota, where hard work and community values are a way of life, family businesses stand as pillars of trust and resilience. One such example is Cattnach Insurance, a multi-generational agency where Barb Anderson continues a legacy of excellence and service.

The Cattnach story began in 1965, when Wallace Cattnach started offering crop insurance, laying the foundation for a service rooted in integrity and dependability. His son, Steven Cattnach, carried the torch from 1980 to 2025, expanding the agency's insurance book. Under his leadership, the agency thrived and evolved with the times, always with the same unwavering focus: to serve the community well.

In 1992, after graduating from South Dakota State University, Steve's daughter, Barb Anderson, joined the family agency. She brought not only a fresh perspective but also the same grit, heart and loyalty that defined her father and grandfather's approach. Her commitment led her to become a partner, and now she officially leads the agency.

Continuing the legacy, Barb's daughter, Kaitlyn Anderson, joined the team in 2024, marking the fourth generation of family leadership. "We've cultivated the most amazing, world-class staff," said Barb. "Our people are the reason clients stay with us for many decades."

Loyalty that spans generations

Bill and Gayle Stegemann are among those loyal clients. "We started farming in 1980, and one of our first stops was at Cattnach with Wallace. The service was good and has remained that way through Steve, Barb and now Kaitlyn," said Bill. "We've recommended Cattnach to family and friends. In today's world, it's unusual to have a 45-year relationship with your insurance agent, but as they say, 'If it ain't broke, don't fix it.'"

Wayne and Mary Thompson echo that sentiment: "We've had a great customer-



Barb Anderson

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agent relationship spanning into three generations. It began with my parents working with Steve, my wife and I working with Steve, and now continuing with Barb as we and our children receive the same great service. It's a testament to how they run their business, how they treat customers with honest answers, and are always striving for the best coverage at the best value."

For Gath Farms, the partnership with Cattnach spans four generations, "Through changing times and growing needs, Cattnach has consistently provided the protection and support our family farm depends on," the Gath family shares. "Their dedicated team, deep understanding of agriculture, and commitment to our success are why we continue to do business with them today."

Why it matters

Cattnach Insurance is a part of local life. In an era when large corporations often dominate the landscape, the Cattnach team exemplifies the power of local, personal and generational service.

"Family businesses like ours, working together with farms like Gath's, the Stegemanns, and the Thompsons, are what keep communities strong," Barb said. "We're proud to walk alongside our clients in every season of life."

Whether you're a new business just starting or a family farm preparing for the next generation, Cattnach Insurance is a name you can trust because, for Barb Anderson and her team, this work is personal.



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President's message

GARY WERTISH, PRESIDENT

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On June 6, we broke ground for Farmers Union Processing + Meats. It was a great time to celebrate how far we've come on this project.

It was before the pandemic when resolutions started coming in from county organizations calling for Farmers Union to do something about the dwindling amount of local meat processing infrastructure. Live-stock farmers shared tales of local locker plants being booked out a year or more.

The pandemic only exacerbated the bottleneck with large farmers looking for options when the pandemic slowed production at major meatpackers.

Farmers Union members got to work on a multi-pronged solution to ease the bottleneck. They lobbied for legislation to support workforce training, applied for grants to support infrastructure development and conducted a study to hear directly from local locker plant owners.

That work has borne fruit in several ways, including the establishment of meat processing training programs at Ridgewater and Central Lakes Colleges, securing Meat and Poultry Intermediary Lending Program (MPILP) funds and now the establishment of Farmers Union Processing + Meats in Staples.

The training programs at Ridgewater and Central Lakes are the first to operate in the state since 2006. Learn more about the programs at <https://bit.ly/RidgewaterMeatCutting> and <https://bit.ly/CLCmeatcutting>.

The MPILP is administered by the MFU Foundation, which received \$900,000 from USDA Rural Development to start a revolving loan fund to support Minnesota's small and medium-sized meat and poultry processors. The low-interest loans are available for the start-up, expansion and operation of slaughter and further processing of meat and poultry. Special Projects Coordinator Dave Endicott oversees the program for MFU.



MFU President Gary Wertish participated in a press conference with Rep. Ilhan Omar and Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith on the proposed cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the budget reconciliation bill passed by the House of Representatives.

Farmers Union Processing + Meats will be a state-of-the-art, USDA-compliant meat processing facility primarily for beef and pork. The more than 8,000-square-foot facility will employ up to 15 people when fully operational and partner with Central Lakes College and Ridgewater College to provide training and internship opportunities for students studying meat processing and butchery.

We are now seeking a manager to lead this project. If you know someone who would be a good person for the job, have them email dave@mfu.org.

Federal budget

The House of Representatives passed President Trump's budget package, which is known as H.R. 1 - One, Big, Beautiful Bill Act, on May 22 by one vote, 215-214. House Republicans passed the bill with all House Democrats and two House Republicans, Rep. Warren Davidson, R-Ohio, and Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., voting against the bill, which needs to pass the Senate before going to the president for his signature.

Here's some of the provisions in the 1,000-plus-page bill:

- The individual income and estate tax cuts passed in Trump's first term in 2017 are made permanent. Taxes on tips and overtime are repealed.
- The child tax credit increases to \$2,500 from \$2,000 through 2028.
- There is a 10 to 20 percent increase to Price Loss Coverage program reference prices and a bump to revenue guarantees under the Agriculture Risk Coverage program.
- Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) is increased and the payment cap of \$155,000 per entity is raised.
- The 45Z Clean Fuels Production Tax Credit is extended through 2031 for domestically produced feedstocks.
- The debt ceiling, the limit on the amount of money the government can borrow to pay its bills, increases by \$4 trillion.
- The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is cut by more than \$300 billion over 10 years and pushes more costs associated with running the program to the states.

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As of June 10, state lawmakers have fulfilled their constitutional duty to approve a new state budget. Legislative leaders and the governor reached this deal despite a strained budget outlook and a historically divided legislature. Out of 201 lawmakers, Minnesotans elected 100 Republicans and 101 DFLers, delivering a House that was evenly divided (67-67) for the first time in nearly five decades.

Despite these challenges—and through the hard work of members who took time to travel to St. Paul, host farm tours, and contact their representatives—the budget reflects a step forward for several of MFU's grassroots priorities in agriculture, taxes, healthcare, education and other areas. In all, MFU testified more 30 times, helped draft legislation and amendments, wrote detailed comments for committees, and otherwise maintained a presence at the State Capitol throughout session.

The 14 bills that make up the bulk of the new \$67 billion budget were negotiated after the legislature's constitutionally required adjournment on Monday, May 19 and passed during a marathon one-day special session on June 9. Passage averted a partial government shutdown on July 1.

Ag omnibus passes

In a bright spot of early bipartisan agreement—and one day before the legislature was set to adjourn—the Minnesota House and Senate passed a new, two-year budget for agricultural programs on a broad bipartisan basis. Out of 201 legislators, only 12 legislators voted against the final package.

The ag bill was negotiated by Senate Chair Aric Putnam, DFL-St. Cloud, and House Co-Chairs Rep. Paul Anderson, R-Starbuck,

Historically divided legislature delivers a balanced state budget for the next two years

and Rep. Rick Hansen, DFL-South St. Paul. According to an agreement negotiated by legislative leaders and the governor, the package increases general fund investment in agriculture programs by \$9 million over the next two years and \$3 million in the following. This increase is notable given the long-term fiscal challenges facing the state and the steep cuts in other jurisdictions.

"This is in stark contrast to what we're seeing in Washington, D.C., where we're still waiting on a new Farm Bill," said Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) President Gary Wertish in a press release following passage. "In Minnesota, lawmakers came together on a bipartisan basis to get a bill done and they did it on time."

In addition to increased base funding for the Department of Agriculture (MDA), the Board of Animal Health (BAH), and the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute (AURI), the next two-year budget for agriculture programs includes:

- More than \$2 million in new funding to expand local and regional markets, including:
 - \$1.4 million to create a new Local Food Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) program to help organizations establish wholesale agreements with farmers to provide food for people in need.
 - \$550,000 in additional funding for Farm to School and Early Care, helping farmers access new markets and ensuring young people have healthy, nutritious meals.
- New support for local and regional processing, including:
 - \$1.5 million in additional state funding for meat inspections, so processors can count on those critical services from the state.

- \$100,000 in additional funding for meat processing grants, in addition to continued support for value-added grants which help meat, poultry, dairy, and other processors start up, expand, or modernize their facilities.
- Support for new and emerging farmers, including:
 - \$500,000 in additional funding for Farm Business Management (FBM).
 - \$500,000 in additional funding for Down Payment Assistance Grants, along with a change that will allow up to \$20,000 per eligible farmer.
 - Continued funding for the Emerging Farmers Office (EFO).
- \$200,000 in new funding for Farm Safety and Rural Mental Health to support MDA's outreach and counseling services. This is in addition to continued base funding for Minnesota's Rural Mental Health counselors.
- Continued funding for Farm Advocates to continue their work to support farmers experiencing financial hardship, funded at \$337,000 per year.
- More than \$2 million in new funding for zoonotic disease preparedness, including an increase for the Board of Animal Health (BAH) and:
 - \$1.5 million in new, one-time funding for the Ag Emergency Account, to ensure the state is well-prepared to respond quickly in the face of an animal disease outbreak.
 - \$400,000 in new funding for Protect Grants to help poultry farmers install measures to prevent the transmission of avian influenza.
- Continued funding for Cooperative Development Grants, helping build and scale cooperatives that add value to Minnesota-grown farm products, funded at up to \$200,000 per year.

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Federal Trade Commission dismisses price discrimination suit against PepsiCo

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Earlier this year, I wrote that one potential area of continuity between the Biden and Trump administrations respective approaches to antitrust could be on the issue of price discrimination. This is the practice of charging different prices to different buyers for the same goods.

That practice is prohibited by the Robinson-Patman Act (RPA), a law passed in 1936 that aimed to protect small businesses but had been abandoned by antitrust enforcers even while big box retailers and e-commerce giants used discriminatory pricing practices to gobble up market share.

This changed in December when the Federal Trade Commission filed its first RPA lawsuit in over 20 years against Southern Glazer's Wine & Spirits, for allegedly providing preferential prices to large retailers at the expense of smaller ones. The FTC followed this up with another lawsuit in the final days of the Biden administration against PepsiCo, which claimed the soft drink manufacturer had given preferential pricing to Walmart, resulting in higher prices for other chains as well as independent grocers.

While President Trump's new FTC Chair Andrew Ferguson had voted against bringing those lawsuits under former Chair Lina Khan, Trump appointee Mark Meador had written publicly about the need for stronger RPA enforcement. Despite that, Meador joined Ferguson and his fellow Republican commissioner Melissa Holyoak in voting 3-0 to dismiss the lawsuit against

PepsiCo in May. In a statement Chair Ferguson said, "The Biden-Harris FTC rushed to authorize this case just three days before President Trump's inauguration in a nakedly political effort to commit this administration to pursuing little more than a hunch that Pepsi had violated the law."

What this means for the Southern Glazer's lawsuit and RPA enforcement more broadly remains to be seen, but it underscores



MFU Antimonopoly Director Justin Stofferahn testifies in support of funding for the Attorney General's office.

the importance of Minnesota having tools to police price discrimination. That is why MFU has been working with legislators and advocates to push for legislation that cracks down on unfair pricing practices, particularly in the grocery industry.

Protecting fair and open markets

In St. Paul, legislators took several important steps to protect fair and open markets this session. The final bill that was passed during the regular legislative session was the State and Local Government and Elections omnibus bill, which included funding for the Attorney General's office. While the \$4 million operating increase in FY26-27 was less than what Attorney General Keith

Ellison had proposed to legislators, the budget will protect the progress that has been made in recent years.

A significant increase in funding passed during the 2023 legislative session allowed Ellison to hire additional antitrust attorneys and establish a standalone Antitrust Division. This enhanced capacity has supported the office's work to crack down on anticompetitive behavior impacting farmers and rural communities.

Legislators also took significant steps to address competition in healthcare during the one-day special session on June 9. The Health and Human Services budget bill includes a one-time additional per prescription Medicaid dispensing fee to small chain and independent pharmacies that are struggling to survive because of low reimbursement from consolidated pharmacy benefit managers. The bill also moves the administration of Medicaid pharmacy benefits to a "single-PBM" model.

The single-PBM model should save the state money, improve reimbursement to independent pharmacies, and prohibit the PBM selected to administer Medicaid pharmacy benefits from engaging in anticompetitive conduct.

The HHS bill also includes new reporting requirements for health systems that utilize outpatient hospital facility fees, which research has shown can create incentives for further consolidation. While provisions prohibiting certain facility fees were cut from the final agreement, these reporting requirements are an important first step.

Petersons reflect on a career in agriculture, legislation, education and cooperation

By Janet Kubat Willette

Doug Peterson is the only past Farmers Union state president who played for the Augustana Vikings, coached gymnastics and took up the mantle of county leadership after retiring from leading the state organization.

Doug and his wife, Elly, live in Lac qui Parle County with their Covid dog, Griff. Doug is the Lac qui Parle County Farmers Union President; Elly is the county treasurer. They started their life together in Sioux Falls, where Doug earned his degree at Augustana, and moved to Glencoe before moving back to Doug's family farm near Madison.

After a stint in the metro, they returned home to Madison in 2016. Doug enjoys hunting, fishing and creating art. Elly is a Master Gardener who enjoys quilting. They have two adult sons, Aaron and Ryan.

Early years

Doug earned a four-year, full-ride, football scholarship to Augustana College, where he played linebacker, offensive guard and center for the Augustana Vikings. He also threw shot put and discus and was the college's first and only men's gymnast. His football coach knew he was a gymnast in high school, so he sent him to a meet to represent the university. He remembers participating in the free exercise routine but doesn't remember where he placed.

Elly earned an accounting degree from the Minnesota School of Business. She and Doug both attended country school and started hanging around with the same friends in high school. They married during his junior year of college; she worked at McKennan in Sioux Falls while he attended college.

After earning his degree, Doug landed a job teaching art at Glencoe. He also coached football and boys' and girls' gymnastics. He worked at Glencoe Schools

from 1970 to 1981. Elly stayed home during the day with their children, dropping them off with Doug on her way to work at 6 p.m. They again switched parenting duties when she went home, and Doug went in to wash down the Green Giant factory during the busy packing season.

In 1981, Doug and Elly moved back to his family's farm near Madison. He planted his crop that year using his dad's Minneapolis Moline UB and four-row John Deere 494A planter. He also started auctioneering. He did retirement, household and farm auctions.



The orange chair in Doug Peterson's art studio belonged to his father, Harry, a former state legislator.

At first, the auctions were community get-togethers, and he enjoyed the social interactions. Then the farm crisis set in.

"I had a lot of sales during those years which weren't a lot of fun," Doug said. The worst one was for two young brothers. The double-ring auction was on a snowy March day. He sold the children's toys and swing set while they were swinging. As soon as the sale was over, the two families piled into a pickup and left for California.

He also taught during that time, working at Canby and Montevideo. Elly worked at Madison Schools and Heather Nursery and Floral.

Public service

In 1986, Doug ran for a seat on the Lac qui Parle County Board. He lost by less than

20 votes. Two years later, with a drought gripping Minnesota, he ran for Congress. Nothing was growing, he said, so running for Congress was something to do. Incumbent Vin Weber outspent Doug 4-to-1 and was re-elected.

In 1990, he ran for a seat in the Minnesota House of Representatives. He won with 54 percent of the vote and was re-elected five more times, leaving the Legislature in 2002.

"I didn't like what was going on," Doug said. In the 1980s, rural people still had party line telephones, and he wanted change. Party lines are phone lines where several homes share the same line. It wasn't unusual for neighbors to be heard eavesdropping on conversations. Doug introduced legislation outlawing party lines in the state of Minnesota and in 1993, party lines were mandated to cease.

Doug became the point man on ethanol in the Legislature. Rural Minnesota needed

something besides commodity corn to sell, he said. He worked on the 10 percent ethanol mandate language and secured funds for ethanol producer payments, which gave fledgling ethanol cooperatives a way to secure banker investments. The plants bolstered corn prices and created jobs in rural areas.

He had to fight for money for rural Minnesota and agriculture, which he did through personal discussions.

"You don't see that today. It's all confrontational," Doug said. "You can't do gotcha games if you're going to have a successful government."

The meanness of politics keeps good people away from running these days, he said. "It's too much work. It's hard on your personal life. It's too divisive."



At one time, all Farmers Union county presidents were given a briefcase like this one. At right, Doug Peterson looks at his artwork hanging from the ceiling of his on-farm studio.



Yet, he reflects positively on his time in the Legislature and the relationships he made. It was not uncommon, he said, to sketch out an idea for a bill on a napkin while out for coffee with a colleague and bring that napkin to the revisor's office to draft it into a bill.

His proudest legislative accomplishments are ethanol legislation, agricultural bonding and securing money for education.

Both Doug's father, Harry W., and his son, Aaron, served in the state Legislature. All three were from Madison when first elected.

"I would tell you that's a lot of politics around the Thanksgiving table," Elly said.

Harry was first elected in 1964 and served until 1974. Aaron was first elected in 2002 and served until 2008.

Doug has several words of advice for candidates and legislators. "Run your own bill. If you want something done, have a consensus from the community. Be honest with people. Stop talking and let them talk to you. Be a good listener and be more than one question deep."

Farmers Union

In April 2002, Doug was elected president of Minnesota Farmers Union. He held that post until 2016. He's been the Lac qui Parle County President since 2018.

As state president, Doug moved the office to the present space and refreshed the organization's state fair space, turning it into a coffeeshop in 2004. He launched the Taste of Tuesday with the Midwest Food Alliance and others. The Taste of Tuesday grew into Minnesota Cooks Day in Carousell Park. The idea was to pair chefs with

farmers and celebrity taste testers. That first year was challenging to find enough chefs to fill the slots, but the program grew to a popular state fair staple until the pandemic.

While Doug served as a legislator and led Farmers Union, Elly worked for the Minnesota Department of Revenue.

Since retiring and moving home, the couple have noted the declining membership in many organizations and churches. It's welcome to the club, what job do you want, Elly said.

They have a booth at the county fair each year and share the benefits of Farmers Union membership. Farmers Union is your special interest, Doug said, it's standing up for you to have a better life in rural Minnesota.



Celebrating 45 Years of Dedicated Service

Please join us in honoring Steve Cattnach, who is retiring after an incredible 45 year career serving the Luverne community and surrounding areas in the insurance industry.

Steve built his career on integrity, honesty, and always putting his clients first. Thank you, Steve, for your leadership, your loyalty, and the many lives you've impacted over the years.



Climate change guides the way Kelsey Zaavedra farms and lives

By Jada Csikos-Monroe

Kelsey Love Zaavedra owns and operates Heirloomista farm in Chisago County, where she grows fruits, vegetables and herbs on just under an acre of land using only heirloom seeds. Through the MFU Foundation's Co-ops for Climate grant, she received funding for herself and several other local farmers to market their products at a cooperative farm shop called The Summer Kitchen Cooperative. She is the Chisago County President and was a 2024 state and national convention delegate.

Q. What is the background of your farm?

A. I went to school for biodynamic agriculture in England. I got into farming because of bees — I used to teach biodynamic beekeeping. When I came home and started searching for land, I was convinced I would find land the next day, but it took me six years. I started my farm business before I bought land.

I finally settled on a piece of unwanted land leftover from the 1980s farm crisis. I have five acres and cultivate just under one acre with all specialty crops — vegetables, herbs and fruit perennials and annuals. I only grow heirlooms. A majority of what I grow is from seeds I save, and all the perennials I propagate myself the old-fashioned way. I always want to be able to host bees on my farm, so half of my farm is dedicated to pollinator habitat. We got power for our co-op in the farm shop, but other than that the farm is off-grid and that is by design.

When I finally had enough infrastructure on my farm, I also started raising poultry and processing them on the farm. I wanted to keep investing in the carbon cycle, which is hard to do



Kelsey Love Zaavedra

with specialty crops, and animals are the best way to do it. It was a big step when I was finally able to build a chicken tractor and have chickens running around my farm. It's made the farm a different type of space with animals scratching and pooping on it. But I took a break in 2024 from chickens because there was too much on my plate.

I farm alone, and it's not for the faint of heart. I have built a community around the farm, but that social network is separate from the daily farmwork and operations. I do occasionally have people come out to help on the farm. Farm Buds [a group that volunteers on farms in Minnesota and Wisconsin] comes out maybe once a year for projects, but in terms of maintenance that's me. I invite people to come out for chicken processing and usually one or two people come out. It's important for me to offer that opportunity but I don't

depend on it for labor. It's important to scale it for me, I know what I can do sustainably. It's a small farm with two greenhouses, and things change every year. I'm able to adapt to the labor and what the farm needs.

Q. What is the story of your farm shop and cooperative?

A. When I went to school in England it wasn't uncommon for farms to have shops and it was really beautiful. The biodynamic farm I worked on had a farm shop that was amazing, and to see that happen in real life was like 'holy crap it's possible'. People wanted to support the local community so that's what they did. So when I came back in 2012 I wanted to be an asset to my community and a cool way to do that is through food. I found this funny little shop and kept it in my friend's barn for six years until I could buy land. I finally put it up and people were confused about the concept of it which is funny. But now a lot of people come to buy veggies and hang out. It has been cool to build community that way.

The tradeoff to having a smaller parcel and growing specialty crops is you have to direct market in order to get the price you need, wholesale doesn't work. There was a whole bunch of us that were not meeting our market needs so we started a cooperative, which MFU had a huge part in supporting. It's called The Summer Kitchen Cooperative, and now we have all the licenses needed to sell products from everybody's farm. So now the farm shop on my property carries products from different farmers in our co-op. We sell year-round on our online platform and the shop is open from May to October.

The closest grocery store is 20 minutes away and they don't sell organic animal products. It's important to me that people in our community can buy high quality food and support local farmers, and it feels good to feed the community and educate people.

Q. What challenges has climate change caused you as a farmer?

- A.** The weather has become unpredictable and challenging. As a specialty crop farmer, we typically have a set timeline for seeding, and when conditions become unpredictable, it can disrupt our entire operation.

Drought conditions have been awful. For three years it didn't rain - it's insane. Another issue is that my well pump is off grid, so I can only pump water when there's enough sun. The wind has also been scary the past few years. And with the wildfires - I don't get to not work because it's smoky, I just get sick.

My seasonal allergies have gotten worse because the season doesn't end. When I went to school in England, you'd get a frost in September, and it'd kill off all the tender stuff, but the season eventually ended. But it feels like the season doesn't end anymore.

Climate change scares me and it has guided my farming decisions and how I live. There's a reason I'm off-grid; this has been something I've lived with for a very long time. Small-scale farms are generally using less inputs, but it's a lot of work to farm sustainably. I want to share what I'm doing and how I'm doing it with everyone.

Q. What programs and certifications have helped you as a small-scale farmer?

- A.** The MDA Cooperative Development grant which was finally authorized last year. I applied and we received two years of funding to help pay for things to develop our co-op. We also received

MFU's Co-ops for Climate grant which has been the most helpful for us.

I have the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification and received endorsements by default because I'm a biodynamic farmer. Besides that, I'm not certified in anything, not because I don't believe in it, but because it's just more paperwork and I can't take on any more things. How I market my product is by being fully transparent and honest with my customer base.

Q. How has your farm remained resilient in the face of climate change?

- A.** I feel that the smaller farms are more resilient because we often have more diversified production, but I'm not romanticizing it whatsoever. I grow perennials because they're hardier and more resilient than annuals. I'm able to pivot all the time and I don't want to, but climate change is constantly making us.

Todd County Farmers Union President Alan Perish died May 14

Alan Perish, a fourth-generation farmer and Todd County Farmers Union President, died at his home on May 14. He was 76.



Alan Perish

Perish grew up on the family dairy farm in rural Browerville and took over the operation after his father died. He milked cows for 45 years, operating the farm with the help of his wife, Karen.

While farming, Perish became an advocate for farmers' rights and the preservation of family farms. He volunteered countless hours, won too many awards to count and was recognized amongst his peers for his relentless and thankless work in agriculture.

He became the Todd County Farmers Union President in 1998 and in 2000 convinced 28 people to go to the Rally for Rural America in Washington, D.C. "Todd County was the best-represented county in the nation," he said in 2022.

For many years, he and Karen worked with other Todd County Farmers Union members to put on the annual Todd County Farmers Union Picnic, which drew nearly 600 people one year. With his leadership, the county Farmers Union members helped distribute Toys for Tots, sponsored 4-H awards at the county fair and contributed to the local food shelf.

Perish was a delegate to the MFU State Convention for more than 20 years and the recipient of five Silver Star Awards from the National Farmers Union for excellence in member recruitment.

After retiring, Perish served as a volunteer driver for people who needed rides to their medical appointments. In 2022, his three-year-old car had 220,000 miles on it, mostly from driving people to appointments.

He served on the Hartford Township Board for more than 30 years and was active on the state Noxious Weed Committee, drainage working group and the Minnesota Board on Aging.

His work to improve the lives of those in his community and rural America was recognized by numerous awards, including the Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) Outstanding Leadership Award in 2011, the Orville L. Freeman award for Distinguished Service to Greater Minnesota in 2015 and the MFU Lifetime Service Award in 2022.

"Alan and Karen are always there when you need someone to promote Farmers Union," said Doug Peterson, former MFU President, in 2011. "Minnesota Farmers Union is lucky to have such strong and dedicated members as Alan and Karen."

Karen was by Alan's side at every event; she died in 2016.

Perish created the Alan D. Perish Trust to carry on his work by supporting the Farmers Union and the Minnesota DFL.

Read the full obituary at: itenfuneralhome.com/obituary/Alan-Perish

Building climate resiliency requires a multifaceted approach that considers economic, social and environmental factors

By Lisa Holm

Across Minnesota, farmers are grappling with the impacts of a changing climate. From hotter temperatures and increasingly unpredictable growing seasons to extreme weather events and rising disease pressures, climate disruptions are becoming routine. This reality that “abnormal is the new normal” emerged as a key theme from conversations with Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) members – from *Farmers Union Conversations about Climate and Agriculture* listening sessions held across the state in 2023 and our *Climate Resilience on the Farm* series.

There is significant interest among farmers and community members in how to address the stress of these concerns. Some have discussed the importance of proactive farm management and community planning to better prepare for the unpredictability of the future.

Members have also raised concerns about food security and continue to champion programs and policies that strengthen local food systems by developing infrastructure as well as distribution and processing networks that connect farmers to markets. Together, these are efforts to help build a more resilient food system.

MFU members are powerful advocates for building resilience, sharing their stories and experiences through testimony, letters, and meetings with lawmakers during our annual lobby day. Their voices send a strong message that we are eager to see investments that strengthen resilience both on and off the farm.

While not exhaustive, this summary provides a snapshot of our legislative efforts related to building resilience.

On-farm resilience

To help farmers adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change, MFU advocated for greater access to capital and technical assistance. This included supporting an increase in funding for Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and a new

pilot program offering a \$5 per acre tax credit in targeted areas for farms participating in the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP).

Although the final tax bill did not include increased funding for SWCDs or the MAWQCP pilot program, MFU remains committed to building bipartisan support for these efforts. In testimony on the MAWQCP pilot program, Government Relations Director Stu Lourey noted, “This kind of incentive could play a key role in expanding certification across the 25 million acres of agricultural land in our state.”

Fortunately, the agriculture bill continued funding for Soil Health Financial Assistance Grants that help farmers get started with practices that make farmland more resilient. These grants provide a cost-share for the purchase and retrofit of soil health equipment, including no-till drills and air seeders. The program, first piloted in 2022 and consistently oversubscribed, ensures that soil health practices are implemented across more acres while helping farmers overcome the significant financial hurdle for implementing these practices.



Peter Schwagerl

Peter Schwagerl, a grain farmer in Big Stone County, explained to legislators how the grant helped him to adopt climate-smart agriculture practices on his family farm, “In late 2023 we applied for and received a Soil Health Equipment Grant that allowed us to take our first step towards realizing our future vision and goals. With that award we were able to



A row of spring-seeded soybeans grows under a stand of fall-seeded Winter Camelina at the Rosemount Research and Outreach Center in early June.

purchase a no-till drill and immediately began experimenting with and implementing no-till techniques on our farm, eliminating tillage passes and opening additional cover cropping opportunities to keep our topsoil covered and protected for more months out of the year.” Schwagerl highlighted these grants are a win-win for farmers and our state.

Diversification as adaptation

Many farmers are also concerned about how they will adapt to unpredictability and make their operations resilient in the face of challenges like a changing climate and volatile markets. In response to this, they are looking at options for diversifying their income to be financially resilient. Crop diversification and rotation, adding renewable energy, and livestock integration are a few strategies farmers are either already implementing or considering adding to protect their incomes.

Crop diversification – This year, MFU successfully advocated for continued funding for the University of Minnesota’s Forever Green Initiative (FGI) to develop new perennial and winter annual crops. MFU Vice President Anne Schwagerl shared in her testimony to legislators that winter camelina, an FGI-developed crop, offers new marketing and cash flow opportunities for her family’s farm.

Renewable energy – MFU has long championed protecting and expanding opportunities for on-farm renewable energy. This year, we supported maintaining incentives for farm scale distributed energy generation through Minnesota’s Community Solar

Garden Program, which helps to diversify the energy grid while creating income for farmers. MFU continues to advocate for policies that enable farmers to host smaller energy projects, diversify their farm income, and contribute to bringing cleaner energy to our state's electric grid.

Jim Falk of Swift County supported this work by testifying on the importance of maintaining the payment structure for net metering, which ensures fair compensation and encourages the adoption of on-farm renewable energy systems. Falk, who produces both wind and solar at this farm, shared with legislators, "I produce approximately 70 percent of my energy needs annually from those renewable energy systems. There is no disputing that producing energy on site where it is used, is the most efficient energy system."

Livestock integration - MFU advocated successfully for updates to Minnesota's Livestock Investment Grant program so that farmers can reinvest more money into their operations. Through this program, farmers will be able to take on projects that improve facilities and expand pasture. In addition to income diversification, integrating livestock onto cropland acres can improve soil health through nutrient cycling, managing weeds, and increasing soil organic matter. Providing resources for livestock infrastructure supports diversified family operations that are more resilient to economic and climate volatility and contributes to the health of our rural communities and main street businesses.

Market opportunities for local food systems

Through members' advocacy, the state stepped up to invest in and support small scale farmers through expanding local and regional markets and processing.

The new Local Food Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) program will help community organizations build wholesale relationships with farmers, offering more stable markets for beginning and underserved producers who have historically faced barriers to access.

Jane Windsperger, a specialty crop farmer in Kanabec County, shared with legislators how the LFPA program helped her scale her operation. While Windsperger started farming with a quarter-acre lot and no



Jane Windsperger

market, with support from The Good Acre, a food hub in the Twin Cities, she was able to grow her operation to 30 acres. With the influx of Windsperger's locally grown food, her community is a beneficiary of the LFPA, which brings her great pride.

The legislature also increased funding for Farm to School and Early Care programs, helping farmers enter institutional markets while ensuring young Minnesotans get fresh, healthy food. Brenda Rudolph from Morrison County emphasized in her testimony to legislators that farm-to-school contracts have directly benefited her farm business and provided stability. Rudolph also expressed gratitude for the dedication and commitment of public-school staff in incorporating more local foods into school meals.

Support for regional, small and mid-scale processing is also key to building resilient local markets. The agriculture bill included new and continued funding for AGRI's meat, poultry, egg, and milk processing grants. Wabasso livestock farmer Paul Sobocinski testified, "Without local processing, I can't bring what I raise to market. Processors connect us to consumers and help keep dollars in our local economy."

Mental and behavioral health support

This year, legislators delivered on investments in rural mental health and behavioral health services by including new funding for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's (MDA) Farm Safety and Rural Mental Health Outreach, plus continued support for Minnesota's two Rural Mental Health counselors. The agriculture bill also maintained funding for Farm Advocates, who provide essential support to farmers facing financial or disaster-related crises.



Gail Donkers

Minnesota Farm and Rural Helpline

Phone: 833-600-2670

Text: FARMSTRESS to 898211

Email: farmstress@state.mn.us

Gail Donkers of Rice County testified about the impact of the SafeTALK Suicide Prevention training she attended, which was offered by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. She shared that she has used the training several times and noted that demand is high, with workshops often filling up and having waiting lists. These investments save lives, she said.

Multifaceted approach

Building climate resiliency requires a multifaceted approach that considers economic, social, and environmental factors. From soil health to market access and mental health care resources, MFU is committed to building a more resilient agriculture sector in Minnesota—one that supports people, land stewardship and strengthens local economies.

To learn more about farmers' perspectives on building resilience and the intersection of climate and agriculture, scan the QR code to read our full report, *Climate and Agriculture: What*

Do Farmers Think? on MFU's website. Email operations@mfu.org to get a physical copy of the report sent to you.



Reach out to MFU's Climate and Working Lands Program Director, Ariel Kagan, with any questions or comments at ariel@mfu.org.



The 2025 camp staff, from left, Ariel Eitreim, Jasmine Nimis, Sy Wright, Ashton Johnson, Jonah Pfoser, Ellie Frahm and Micah Vail.

Camp counselors ready for exciting 2025 camp season

The MFU Education Team has brought seven counselors on board for this year's camp season. Camps kicked off with a Twin Cities Day Camp on June 10, before heading north to Erskine for the northern camp. The southern camps begin on July 8. There's still time to register. Learn more about the camps at mfu.org/camp and check the graphic elsewhere in the magazine for dates and locations.

Let's meet your 2025 camp counselors.

Sy Wright

Hello! My name is Sy Wright (they/them) and I'm from Wausau, Wis. I have been involved with Wisconsin Farmers Union for over a decade as a camper and a counselor. I was on WFU's Youth Advisory Council and I attended All-States Camp. This is my first year working for Minnesota Farmers Union. Outside of the camp sphere, I am studying to be a clinical counselor, and I hope to continue working with youth in a mental health setting. I can't wait to see you all out at camp.

Micah Vail

Hey everyone! My name is Micah Vail (he/they) and I'm from Stillwater. I'm a senior at the University of Dubuque majoring in both mathematics and theology, with a minor in music. I plan on attending grad school for my master's in secondary math education. Though this is my first year with the Minnesota Farmers Union camp,

I've been a camp counselor at Trout Lake Camps and a lead teacher for TechTacToe. I am extremely excited to start the camp season, and hope to make MFU an exciting and memorable experience for everyone.

Ashton Johnson

Hey everyone, my name is Ashton, and I am from New Richland, in southern Minnesota. I am close to graduating from the University of Nebraska, with a major in elementary education and a minor in coaching. I love sports, reading, movies and music. This is my second summer as a counselor at MFU and I am super excited to get to work and see all the kids again.

Ellie Frahm

Hello! My name is Ellie (she/her). I'm originally from Tyler. I've been involved in farming since I was little. I rode on the tractor with my dad while we planted corn and beans. I've never been involved in the Farmers Union until now and I'm so excited to be a part of this community. I'm going to Inver Hills Community College for elementary education and I work as a reading tutor through the AmeriCorps program. I love being able to help shape the minds of our future. See you all at camp.

Ariel Eitreim

Hey y'all! My name is Ariel Eitreim, and I am from Sioux Falls, S.D. I have been involved with South Dakota Farmers Union

ever since I was little; it runs in the family. I was both a camper and a counselor at the state level and was part of the National Youth Advisory Council for National Farmers Union for the past year. This is my first year working for Minnesota Farmers Union, but I have also worked for South Dakota Farmers Union. Outside of camp, I am studying history education at South Dakota State University. I love reading, swimming, and skiing, and I can't wait to see what this summer brings.

Jasmine Nimis

Hi! My name is Jasmine (she/her). I'm from Mounds View and I attend the University of Wisconsin-Madison where I'm majoring in biology. I love the outdoors, sports and camping. This is my first summer as a counselor, but I work at a nursery school, and I tutor kids in Madison. I am so excited to make memories at camp.

Jonah Pfoser

Hey everyone, my name is Jonah Pfoser, and I'm from Saint Paul. I love writing and recording music and spending time with my family. I'm going into my sophomore year at the University of St. Thomas, where I'm majoring in business administration, with a music industry minor. I've been going to the Minnesota Farmers Union camp since elementary school, and after serving two years on the camp's Youth Advisory Council, I'm excited to come back as a counselor.

10 young women named Princess Kay finalists

On May 16-17, dairy princesses from across the state gathered for the annual May Leadership Event held at the Delta Hotel in Minneapolis. The weekend included opportunities for networking, leadership workshops and a chance to compete for a finalist spot for Princess Kay of the Milky Way.

To compete to be a finalist for Princess Kay of the Milky Way, each princess submitted an application, participated in a professional interview, prepared and delivered a speech, and participated in a mock media interview. Princess Kay candidates are judged on their general knowledge of the dairy industry, communication skills, and enthusiasm for promoting dairy.

Of the participants, 10 finalists were named and will go on to compete for the title of Minnesota's 72nd Princess Kay of the Milky Way in August 2025.

These ten young women will have their likenesses carved in butter during the 2025 Minnesota State Fair.

Midwest Dairy sponsors the Princess Kay of the Milky Way program, which is funded by dairy farmers through their promotion checkoff. Midwest Dairy represents 3,600 dairy farm families and works on their behalf to build dairy demand.

This year's finalists:



Natalie Clemenson, Zumbrota, daughter of Tiffany and Brian Clemenson, representing Goodhue County



April Klaphake, Sauk Centre, daughter of Jennifer and Mark Klaphake, representing Stearns County



Monica Evers, Kellogg, daughter of Tammy and Jerry Evers, representing Wabasha County



Heidi Montag, Sauk Rapids, daughter of Christa and Brian Montag, representing Benton County



Paige Frenchick, Manannah, daughter of Melissa Tessmer and Josh Frenchick, representing Meeker County



Lauren Steffl, Sleepy Eye, daughter of Leah Sandbo and Tim Steffl, representing Brown County



Nicole Hauschildt, Zumbro Falls, daughter of Stephanie and Chad Domke, representing Wabasha County



Malorie Thorson, Waverly, daughter of Colette and Andrew Thorson, representing Wright County



Alexis Hoefs, New Prague, daughter of Lisa and James Hoefs, representing Le Sueur County



Haylie Wielenberg, Long Prairie, daughter of Sarah Maland and Mike Wielenberg, representing Todd County

Source: Midwest Dairy Association

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

Summer Youth Leadership Camps

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

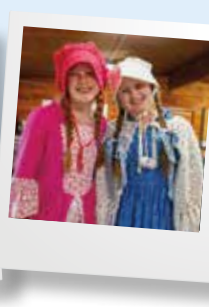
Monday, July 14 to Friday, July 18
Sibley State Park, 800 Sibley Park Road NE, New London

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.
• Southern Day Camp, Aug. 5-7, Albert Lea



Producers who sold fed cattle to JBS from 2015 to 2020 may qualify for settlement, apply by Sept. 15



On Feb. 20, 2025, the cattle plaintiffs in the In re: Cattle and Beef Antitrust Litigation against JBS, Tyson, Cargill and National Beef received preliminary approval of an \$83.5 million settlement with JBS. The class action lawsuit, filed in 2019 by National Farmers Union (NFU), R-CALF USA and four individual ranchers, alleges anticompetitive conduct in the cattle market. Eligible parties may now submit claims under the terms of the JBS settlement.

The court's action establishes certain deadlines for people who may be eligible to share in the JBS 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 Chicago Mercantile Exchange (CME) prior to June 1, 2015, and subsequently liquidated the long position through an offsetting market transaction at any point prior to Nov. 1, 2016. The deadline to submit claims is Sept. 15, 2025.

The settlement website, www.CattleAntitrustSettlement.com, informs both cattle feeders and futures traders of the details of the settlement. The website also provides instructions as to how claims can be filed, and how people can object or opt out of the settlement.

NFU urges those who meet the Settlement Classes' description above to review the

information on the website and submit claims before the Sept. 15, 2025, deadline.

As noted in the claim form, any information feeders and futures traders submit in connection with their claim "will be maintained confidentially and will not be made available publicly or to any Defendant."

The cattle plaintiffs are represented by Scott+Scott Attorneys at Law LLP, Cafferty Clobes Meriwether & Sprengel LLP and Robins Kaplan LLP.

The court has appointed a Claims Administrator that can answer any questions potential class members may have about the JBS settlement, including any questions regarding how to submit a claim to share in the JBS settlement. The Claims Administrator can be reached at 1-844-435-8844 or Info@CattleAntitrustSettlement.com.

Larew comments on Make Our Children Healthy Again Assessment

On Feb. 13, President Trump issued an executive order to establish the Make America Healthy Again Commission. The initial focus of the commission is on chronic childhood diseases. On May 22, the commission delivered a Make Our Children Healthy Again Assessment.

National Farmers Union (NFU) President Rob Larew released the following statement in response to the report.

"NFU appreciates the attention the White House brings to the health and well-being of America's children. We agree that addressing chronic disease, nutrition and environmental exposures must be grounded in sound science, transparency and a commitment to public health.

"Farmers and ranchers live, work and raise their families on the same land where they grow the safe, nutritious food that feeds our nation and the world. Policy solutions must ensure family farmers retain the tools they need to support their livelihoods and the well-being of their communities. Innovation has long been a cornerstone of American agriculture, and we must be cautious not to stymie progress with one-size-fits-all restrictions.

"The report rightly highlights the threat of corporate consolidation in our food and agriculture system. As small and mid-sized farmers are pushed out, diversity in farming, local food systems and rural economies decline. Improving health outcomes

must go hand-in-hand with restoring fairness and competition. We stand ready to work with the administration on meaningful solutions to this long-standing issue.

"Farmers are key partners in building a healthier food system. But meaningful progress requires that farmers have a seat at the table. Disregarding the expertise of respected regulatory bodies and leaving farmers out of the conversation undermines public trust and puts the future of American agriculture and rural economies at risk. We urge the administration to include the voices of family farmers and ranchers as they continue this work and to ensure that solutions are rooted in sound science, fairness and transparency."

Get social with Minnesota Farmers Union!

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

MFU is now on Blue Sky social
[@mnfarmersunion.bsky.social](https://twitter.com/mnfarmersunion.bsky.social)



Minnesota Farmers Union



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MN Farmers Union

NW Minnesota farmer stays grounded with plans to help a new generation of growers

By Dan Gunderson, Minnesota Public Radio

This spring has been a new experience for Tim Dufault. He isn't repairing machinery or waiting anxiously to plant crops on his farm in northwestern Minnesota. Standing in his front yard listening to a chorus of bird calls, though, he still gets the itch.

"In the spring, you hear those red-winged blackbirds singing, and it just smells a little warmer," he said. "Oh, man, your blood gets going again."

A fourth-generation farmer whose great-grandfather bought the family's first tract of land from the railroad in 1885, Dufault faced a question as he readied to retire: Who should work the land? His three children had fulfilling careers outside farming and weren't interested in taking over.

Rather than cash out to a corporate interest, he cut a different path. This spring, Dufault, 65, is giving six young farmers access to his land in Gentilly Township. He hopes to cultivate a new generation of farmers who'll stay rooted in his community.

"The last thing I want to do is to rent to somebody that doesn't shop local," he said. "And these guys are all going to be local. They're going to raise their kids in the school districts. They'll be on the school boards, or the church boards."

He picked young men he felt were good farmers who were trying to expand. "I wanted to keep it to guys that are just starting."

'He could have named his price'

Access to land is one of the biggest challenges for young farmers. The average age of Minnesota farmers is 57, so the transition to a younger generation is accelerating.

Dufault decided to rent his crop land to young farmers, rather than one large operator that might be willing to pay a bit more per acre to farm the land.

It is getting "harder and harder every year" to find land to rent, said Alex Prudhomme, one of the six young farmers renting a

piece of the Dufault farm, which runs about 1,100 acres total.

"Tim could have named his price, and I know people were knocking at his door," said Prudhomme, 32, who's been farming for about 12 years.

"For a guy like that to do what he did, spread it out amongst a few young farmers, you can't even put it into words how much that means to some of the smaller guys who have a seriously uphill battle to climb."

Prudhomme hopes to buy his first farmland this year, but there are challenges with rising prices and competition from large farmers and investors who see farmland as a profitable holding for the future.

'Life beyond farming'

Dufault and his wife Marlene will still live on the farm. They enjoy the bucolic setting and he enjoys caring for the spacious yard.

The stress of farming is what led him to retire while he's still healthy and on solid financial ground, but he's still going to miss the routine. He's familiar with every square foot of the land after a lifetime of planting and harvesting wheat, corn and soybeans.

"You can't beat being in a tractor going up and down the field," he said. "It's just something about putting a seed in the ground and watching it grow and harvesting it, there's just such fulfillment with that."

On the other hand, he won't miss the combine breaking down in the middle of harvest, the markets crashing when he's trying to sell grain, or a hailstorm that wipes out a beautiful crop.



Polk County Farmers Union member Tim Dufault is preparing for an auction this month to sell off most of his machinery. He is retiring and renting his land to young farmers.

"Those are the days you wish you were doing something else," he said.

Dufault still has work to do preparing for a July auction to sell off most of his machinery but he's planning to buy golf clubs, and he recently tried his hand at pickleball. "I might have to get in the pickup and go to town," he said with a chuckle.

He also went to hear an author speak in the middle of the day, an unthinkable use of time in the past 44 spring seasons. "There's life beyond farming," he said, although he admits with a smile that he'll still be watching the crops grow.

And wishing a good harvest for his young renters.

"I remember when I was at their point in my career, it's like you were just hungry to get a piece of ground. So they've got that optimism, that drive, and I know those guys are going to be successful."

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President's message

continued from page 3

- The bill adds new requirements to receive Medicaid and reduces Medicaid spending by nearly \$700 billion.

This bill does contain some provisions beneficial to agriculture, but it tears apart the coalition that has worked together to pass farm bills.

As National Farmers Union President Rob Larew said, "we appreciate that the House Agriculture Committee recognizes the financial pressures facing family farmers and ranchers. Proposals to strengthen crop insurance, bolster the farm safety net, and maintain voluntary conservation programs are important steps toward securing the future of our food system.

"But this is not the best way to produce a meaningful farm bill. Our members know that the process matters. Pitting farm and nutrition priorities against one another creates unnecessary division and weakens the broader effort. A strong farm bill—however it comes together—must reflect the full scope of challenges facing agriculture and rural communities, and it must work for everyone it touches: farmers, ranchers and families across the country."

The first 13 pages of the 97-page House ag reconciliation bill, which was rolled into HR1, deal with SNAP. The bill tightens work requirements and changes who qualifies for the program that is used by more than 40 million people. Now, some parents are exempt from work requirements until their children are 18, but the bill reduces that to age 7. Further, able-bodied adults without dependents must fulfill work requirements until they are 64 under the bill; the current requirement is age 54.

I participated in a press conference with Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith and Rep. Ilhan Omar on the proposed cuts to SNAP after the bill passed the House. While we need an updated farm bill, we should not be cutting SNAP and taking funding away from vulnerable people.

Most people who receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits are already working one or two jobs, but their paychecks don't stretch far enough to feed their families. Farmers want to feed people. We shouldn't be limiting who has access to the bounty produced by America's hard-working farmers.

According to the Congressional Budget Office, the bill increases the federal deficit by \$2.4 trillion over 10 years while cutting \$1 trillion from the most vulnerable people through cuts to Medicaid and SNAP.

Not only does this bill increase the deficit, but also it will be devastating to the health care infrastructure in our rural communities. These Medicaid cuts, if enacted, will result in hospital and nursing home closures across rural Minnesota.

Though Medicare is the primary health insurance provider for those who receive Social Security, it is Medicaid that pays for care at nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. Nationally, Medicaid covers more than 60 percent of residents in nursing homes and about 20 percent of people in assisted living facilities, and it pays 82 cents for every dollar of cost.

An American Health Care Association report found that 774 nursing homes closed between 2020 and 2024, displacing 28,421 residents and creating 40 more counties without a nursing home. In addition, 20 percent of nursing homes have closed a unit, wing or floor due to staffing challenges and 66 percent are concerned that if staffing challenges continue, they may have to close the facility.

If these cuts remain in the Senate version of the bill, it will be hard to pass comprehensive updated farm bill. If a new farm bill isn't passed, what happens to other areas funded by the farm bill, including rural development, conservation and research?

New members for February, March, April and May

Welcome to the new members who joined MFU in February, March, April and May. 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.

Beverly and Steven Antonich, Buck Hills Farm, Aitkin County

Thomas Fasteland, Aitkin County

Kevin and Debby Flowers, Ole Lake Farm, Aitkin County

Robert and Sharon Lake, Pine Lake Farm, Aitkin County

James and Diane Miller, Aitkin County

Donald and Cathy Niemi, Aitkin County

Doug and Linda Thoms, Aitkin County



Olmsted County Farmers Union President John Larsen, Sinead Crimmins of People's Energy Cooperative and Southeast Minnesota Outreach Organizer Gail Donkers. MFU has used the People's Energy Cooperative community room to hold several meetings.

Bruce and Kristi Moberg, Big Stone County

Jacob Shelstad, Big Stone County

Adam and Laura Suess, Brown County

Isaac and Cameo Bertram, Carlton County

Mercedes Moffett and Tristan Mills, Carlton County

Paul and Patricia Ritter, Cass County

Charles and Cindy Sobocinski, Clay County

Kristine and Matt K. Klein, Dakota County

Gregory and Victoria Langer, The Langer Family Farm, Dakota County

Rebecca Savoie, Savoie Consulting, Dakota County

Marie Schuhwerck, The Lavender Barnyard, Dakota County

Mary Buck and Curtis Oeltjenbruns, Spirit Valley Farm, Dodge County

Amanda Taylor, Dodge County

Alan Roebke, Al's Forest, Douglas County

Julie Fryer, Fillmore County

Theron Gjersvik, Freeborn County

Agricultural policy has always been bipartisan; this reconciliation bill ends that tradition.

We all know that we need to get our federal budget under control, but we need to pursue a balanced approach that doesn't target those most in need. We need to find common ground.

Tariff update

On May 28, the Court of International Trade ruled that President Trump did not have the authority to impose tariffs on nearly every country as he did on April 2. A day later, the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington paused the ruling to consider the government's appeal. The two sides are expected to be back in court in mid-June.

The trade court judges ruled that Congress, not the president, has the power to levy taxes and tariffs and that the president exceeded his authority by levying the tariffs.

Because of the stay issued by the Court of Appeals, the tariffs remain in effect as of May 30.

Brad Lubben, an ag policy specialist with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, told Brownfield Ag News that Trump's trade policy could have long-term implications for commodity prices.

The back and forth creates uncertainty for potential trade agreements and reliable trading partners could turn to other countries, he said. "The legal questions of whether they can or can't be used really shortcuts any sort of bargaining power. Any sort of agreements that might be offered, then if tariffs are reduced and we have new deal in place, but if the tariffs aren't allowed in any way that deal could fall apart before it gets together."

Trump also doubled tariffs on foreign steel and aluminum to 50 percent, which took effect June 4. The previous 25 percent tariff had been in effect since mid-March. The 50 percent tariff is expected to raise prices across the board, on everything from paper clips and canned goods to stainless steel refrigerators and farm equipment. It will hurt any business that utilizes steel and aluminum in their production process and cost all of us more.

Farmers still haven't recovered from the trade war Trump started during his first term. Exports to China dropped by 77 percent, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported, after China levied retaliatory tariffs on American soybeans following Trump's action.

While soybean exports to China have increased in the years hence, the Chinese

market hasn't returned to pre-trade war levels because China made investments in South America. They turn to Brazil for soybeans instead of the United States. Importers across the globe are looking for alternatives and dependable exporters.

U.S. farmers are dependable producers who need their government to back them instead of launching trade disputes in a competitive market.

Saying goodbye to Alan Perish

In May, MFU said goodbye to a man who embodied the pillars of Farmers Union. Alan Perish died May 14 after a lengthy battle with cancer. He was 76.

I met Alan more than 30 years ago at a Farmers Union Full Board meeting when I was the Renville County Farmers Union President. He was always dedicated to supporting legislation helping family farmers and rural communities. He devoted his life to helping people. Even after his own diagnosis, Alan continued to drive veterans to medical appointments in Rochester, a three-and-a-half-hour drive one way.

Alan put his estate into a trust which will benefit the causes he championed throughout his life. I will miss his wise counsel.

Angie Hanson, Freeborn County
Jeanne Anderson, Goodhue County
Eric LaCanne, Goodhue County
Brian McDonald, Goodhue County
Charlene and James Nelson,
Nelson Century Farms, Grant County
Rachel Banken, Well Rooted Teas,
Hennepin County
Jason Garcia, Hennepin County
Caleigh Gumbiner, Second Harvest Heartland,
Hennepin County
Danielle Isaacson, Hennepin County
Marnie Macgregor, Hennepin County
Beth Rademacher, Hennepin County
David Stevens, LiveSmart Essentials,
Hennepin County
Hana Tanberg, The Good Acre, Hennepin
County
Sarah Willis, EarthOptics, Hennepin County
John Otten, Isanti County
Judith Peters, Jackson County

Jaren Peplinski, Kanabec County
Betsy Shadowick, Goat Ridge Brewing,
Kandiyohi County
Luke and Jamie Watrin, Ann River Winery and
Vineyard, Kanabec County
Steve and Summer O'Neill, McLeod County
Dillon Krebs, Morrison County
Melissa Vogt and Frank Yost, Nicollet County
People's Energy Cooperative, Olmsted County
Kelsey Wulf and Ben Anderson, Wild Wood
Farm, Otter Tail County
Cheryll Reitmeier, Polk County
Jean Andreasen, Ramsey County
Thad Erickson, Minnesota Aquaculture
Association, Ramsey County
Christopher Moore and Mary Bortscheller,
Ramsey County
Ruby Sheaffer, Ramsey County
Jill Stewart, Ramsey County
Jon Baune, Redwood County

Raechel Baumgartner and Michael
Zimmerman, Renville County
Josh Gewerth, Renville County
Josh and Brittney Kelm, Kelm Dairy and
Kelm's Krazy Acres, Rice County
Erik Sahlin, Rice County
Rebecca Ekmark, Saint Louis County
Donita Ascheman, Ascheman Partnership,
Swift County
Robert and Theresa Mueller, Todd County
Allie Kuppenbender, Bleed Heart Floral Farm &
Design, Wabasha County
Erik Osberg, Wadena County
Wendy Schoen, Wright County
Jon Valdivia and Hillary Spatola,
Monticello Bison, Wright County
Jaivir Baweja, Virginia
Alicia LaPorte, Maryland
Roland and Jennifer Schlepp,
Schlepp Livestock, Montana

Government relations

continued from page 4

- Increased potential grant awards for small Livestock Investment Grant projects, increasing the state share of projects under \$20,000 from 10 percent of project costs to 50 percent of project costs, helping more farmers and ranchers improve their operations.
- \$350,000 in additional funding for livestock depredation to compensate farmers and ranchers for depredation from wolves and elk.
- Continued funding for Soil Health Financial Assistance Grants, which help farmers get started with practices that make farmland more resilient.
- Continued funding for the Forever Green Initiative at the University of Minnesota to help develop new perennial and winter annual crops.
- Continued support for county fairs to help promote agriculture and enhance arts education.
- \$1 million in new funding to control the spread of noxious weeds, through grants to county ag inspectors.
- \$3 million in one-time funding to support First District Association in upgrading their wastewater treatment facilities to continue operating at full capacity and serving small and mid-sized dairies.

The bill also updates cottage food laws, creates a new license for milk marketers, gradually increases fees for some grain buyers to fund the inspection program, and boosts support for 'limited land access farmers' using the Beginning Farmer Tax Credit.

Though agricultural programs saw an increase in spending, belt tightening was required across state government and agriculture was no exception. To make room for other investments, the budget cut Green Fertilizer Grants by \$3 million to \$4 million, biofuels infrastructure grants by \$500,000 down to \$5.5 million, and \$1 million from the previously appropriated DAIRI program, which is awaiting an updated Farm Bill.

Supporting antitrust funding

Another bill the legislature passed on time was the State and Local Government and Elections omnibus bill, which includes funding for the Attorney General's office. MFU played an important role in defending funding for the Attorney General's new standalone Antitrust Division. This enhanced capacity, first funded in 2023, has supported the office's work to enforce antitrust laws and crack down on anticompetitive behavior impacting farmers and rural communities.

Finally for regular session, the legislature also approved the Legacy omnibus, which appropriates funding levied according to the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment passed in 2008. In addition to funding water quality programs at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and crop development at the University of Minnesota, the bill includes a new appropriation to the Minnesota FFA to celebrate and educate the public about FFA's 100-year legacy. MFU's legislative intern, Amber Findlay, from Herman, testified in support of this initiative.

Ag homestead tax changes approved

When the regular session adjourned, lawmakers continued their deliberations through informal "working groups." Though—much to the ire of lawmakers on both sides of the aisle—most of the actual negotiating was done behind closed doors.

In the Senate Tax Committee, Chair Anne Rest, DFL-New Hope, carried in a Senate offer that included a long list of agricultural provisions. These provisions included lifting the cap on total state funding for the Beginning Farmer Tax Credit, piloting a new \$5 per acre tax credit for farms enrolled in Minnesota's Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP), increasing aid for Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) and extending the state tax credit for Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF). Much of this was championed by Senate Agriculture Chair Putnam, who also serves on the Tax Committee. Putnam made an impassioned case for investments in agriculture during multiple public meetings.

Ultimately, and through negotiations with the House, the tax bill was narrowed significantly. In part, House lawmakers highlighted that this avoided cuts to aid for counties and local governments. Despite a more limited proposal, one important and long-awaited MFU priority was retained in the final deal.

The final Tax Bill expands the Agricultural Homestead Tax Credit to those farming small acreages, a proposal MFU worked hard on with Putnam, Sen. Steve Drazkowski, R-Mazeppa, Rep. Kaohly Her, DFL-St. Paul, and others. Under current law, farmers can qualify for ag homestead—and often agriculture zoning—only if they cultivate 11 or more contiguous acres. This leaves many beginning, vegetable, cut flower, and other farmers operating on fewer acres unable to benefit from this keystone credit.

After many years of work—including before my time with MFU—the 2025 tax bill will allow farmers living on parcels that are less than 15 acres to qualify for ag homestead if they are engaged in market farming and demonstrate at least \$20,000 in gross income on their Schedule F. This compromise ensured key support from the Association of Minnesota Counties and members of both caucuses at the legislature. The deal also adds cut flowers to the definition of agricultural products, ensuring that they and other farmers on small acreages will benefit from targeted tax relief and ag zoning.

Session over, for now

Also during Special Session, the legislature approved a new Higher Education budget that retains funding for Large Animal Veterinarian Loan forgiveness, a program that was targeted for cuts. While not nearly enough to solve the shortage of large animal veterinarians, MFU was eager to highlight that somewhere near 95 percent of those who've received loan forgiveness have stayed to practice in rural areas.

The longest and most contentious debate during Special Session was over a standalone bill to prevent undocumented adults from benefiting from MinnesotaCare—the state, premium-supported, healthcare program that covers lower income working Minnesotans. This change was a priority for House Republicans, who made it clear that



Sen. Amy Klobuchar, Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen, MFU Executive Committee Chair Carol Anderson, MFU President Gary Wertish and others broke ground for Farmers Union Processing + Meats on June 6 in Staples.

Construction begins on Farmers Union Processing + Meats

Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) broke ground for Farmers Union Processing + Meats in Staples on June 6.

Farmers Union Processing + Meats will be a state-of-the-art, USDA-compliant meat processing facility for primarily beef and pork located at 901 Prairie Ave. N.W. in a Staples industrial park. The more than 8,000-square-foot facility will employ up to 15 people when fully operational and partner with Central Lakes College and Ridgewater College to provide training and internship opportunities for students studying meat processing and butchery.

"This project beautifully illustrates the power of grassroots membership driving action at the state and national level," said MFU President Gary Wertish. "MFU members raised the issue of a lack of meat processing infrastructure in 2019 and COVID-19 elevated the issue. MFU members called for more investment in meat processing at the state and federal level. Lawmakers responded and both

levels of government made investments in this vital part of local processing infrastructure. MFU is proud to work with partners from across the political spectrum at all levels of government in addition to private sector supporters to bring Farmers Union Processing + Meats to fruition.

"MFU looks forward to working with live-stock farmers in the Staples area to provide a USDA-compliant meat processing facility, which will open new market opportunities to them," Wertish continued. "In addition, we are proud to work with Central Lakes and Ridgewater colleges to train the next generation of meat processors and local locker plant owners. We hope this facility serves as a catalyst for rural economic development in the region."

Hy-Tec Construction of Brainerd is the lead contractor on the \$8 million project and Widseth is the project architect. Construction is anticipated to start this month with a tentative opening date of January 2026.

Project partners include:

- Minnesota State Agricultural Centers of Excellence
- Region 5 Development Commission.
- United States Economic Development Administration
- United States Department of Agriculture, Ag. Marketing Service
- Agricultural Utilization Research Institute
- Happy Dancing Turtle
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Farmers Union Enterprises
- Farmers Union Industries
- Central Telephone Company
- The Small Business Development Center

their votes on the state budget hinged on this change. Along with the hospital association and faith leaders, MFU supported the inclusion of undocumented adults in MinnesotaCare, citing the fact that people are working in our communities, paying taxes, and need affordable healthcare.

In the broader healthcare package passed during special session, MFU played a role in securing some important wins for rural independent pharmacies. This includes

a \$4.50 additional per prescription dispensing fee to small chain and independent pharmacies located in medically underserved areas. And a more structural reform, the bill would implement a "single-PBM" model for administering drug benefits in state programs, decreasing administrative costs and helping level the playing field for independents. The health bill also includes new requirements for health systems to report on their hospital facility fees.

The next regular session is set to start on Feb. 17, 2026. That said, Gov. Tim Walz and others were quick to warn that lawmakers would need to return to St. Paul if the trifecta in Washington succeeds in cutting Medicaid, SNAP and other programs that make up a significant portion the state budget.

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



JULY 1945

Estimates of prices received by farmers at local farm markets based on reports to the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. Five-year average price of wheat from August 1909 to July 1914, \$.884 per bushel. Price on April 15, 1944, is \$1.47 per bushel and April 15, 1945, is \$1.49 per bushel.

Nearly 2 million U.S. farms have been wired for electric service since the Rural Electrification Administration was established on May 11, 1935. REA's latest survey shows that nearly half of all U.S. farms are electrified.

Farmers Cooperative Association has paid off the Farm Security Administration loan that made it possible to set up the cooperative. Elmer Fortier is the cooperative manager. Officers include Peter Robidoux, president; P.N. Nelson, vice president; William Delage, Fred Berberick and Harry Hinkle, directors, all of Brooks.

JULY 1985

Lawmakers in Washington, D.C., are at this moment deciding the future of Minnesota's family farms. While several committees have taken action, no clear consensus has emerged and the make-up of the 1985 Farm Bill is far from final. Minnesota Farmers Union, using input from members, is hoping to help break the ice.

Farmers Union interests and Lamar Life Investors of Jackson, Miss., have teamed up to purchase National Farmers Union

Insurance Companies from the Baldwin United Corporation.

Dry conditions are threatening yields in the southern parts of the state. Agriculture Secretary Jim Nichols says some damage to corn and soybean crops is already visible.

On July 1, an Environmental Protection Agency ruling took effect lowering the amount of allowable lead in gasoline by 50 percent. Also on July 1, the tax credit for ethanol blended gasoline went from two cents to four cents per gallon for Minnesota consumers.

JULY 2005

The 2005 session of the Minnesota Legislature finally ended on July 8. The final four major bills were all passed that day. They included the Health and Human Services, Tax, Education and Transportation bills. The Health and Human Services bill does repeal changes made in 2003 that allow for liens to be placed on life estates and joint tenancies to recover costs associated with Medical Assistance.

The 2005 Minnesota ag funding bill included \$34 million for the state ethanol producer payment program, \$2 million for dairy development and profitability

enhancement and dairy business planning grants and \$200,000 for mental health counseling for farm families.

Heavy rains in recent months prevented planting in northwestern Minnesota. Tens of thousands of acres are unplanted in Kittson and Roseau counties.



The new members of the NFU Youth Advisory Council are, front row, Matt Leidholm, N.D., and Jill Stine, Illinois. Second row, Emily Schlosser, N.D.; Carrie Johnson, Grygla, Minn.; Jayme Reed, Clarissa, Minn. Back row, Roald Aageson, Mont.; Ryan Soren, S.D., and Josh Livingston of Wis.

Johnny Appleseed Pizza

Recipe courtesy of Cindy Femling, Afton Apple Orchard, Hastings. Femling is a MFU member in Washington County.



Ingredients:

- 1 loaf of frozen bread dough (thawed)
- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup white sugar
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 5 cups sliced apples
- ⅓ cup melted butter

Instructions:

Press thawed bread dough onto greased cookie sheet or pizza pan. Sprinkle with cheese and apples. Mix sugars, flour and cinnamon together and sprinkle on top of apples and cheese. Pour melted butter over the top of all and bake at 350 degrees for 20-30 minutes.

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

Cannon River Social connects farmers and conservation partners

By Lisa Holm

On May 22, Clean River Partners along with Goodhue, Rice and Dakota County Farmers Unions co-hosted the Cannon River Social at Tilion Brewing Company in Cannon Falls. The open-house style event brought together farmers, conservation professionals and community members.

The goal of the event was to facilitate connections between conservation organizations and producers while highlighting locally available conservation programs. These included the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP), as well as per-acre incentives for cover crops and strip or no-till practices offered by Dakota and Rice Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Attendees had the opportunity to meet and talk with staff from SWCDs, University of Minnesota Extension, and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Staff shared updates on current research and enrollment opportunities for conservation initiatives and answered specific questions about eligibility requirements and implementation support. Farmers and landowners also shared their experiences and needs.

Additional topics discussed included the nitrogen application recommendations provided by Extension and concerns about data centers purchasing farmland and their excessive water usage.

The event was a casual and informative kickoff to the busy summer season, offering space for attendees to ask questions, share ideas, and explore opportunities for stewardship on their land.

As a reminder, the University of Minnesota Extension is hosting interactive *Strategic Farming: Field Notes* webinars every Wednesday from 8-8:30 a.m. for farmers and agriculture professionals to address crop-related concerns with experts as they arise during the season. To learn more and register, visit Extension's website or reach out to Ryan Lerman at Lermo004@umn.edu.

Share your experiences

Lastly, MFU created the Soil Health Program Survey to document the experiences and perspectives of producers participating in soil health programs offered by private companies and county, state and federal governments. We are also interested in the perspectives of ag advisers and program implementors.

Programs of interest include carbon markets, SWCD programs, grants, federal cost-share programs and any others related to soil health. The information gathered may be used anonymously in future reports to communicate how various programs benefit farmers and their land, and to help inform policy makers.

Surveys can be taken online, on paper, or over the phone. We welcome you to share as little or as much as you are comfortable with. Contact Jada Csikos-Monroe,



Top photo, Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program Certification and Assessment Coordinator Ellen Friedrich talks about the program. Above, Randy Sorg of Dakota County and University of Minnesota Extension Educator Ryan Lerman.

Working Lands Member Engagement Coordinator, at jada@mfu.org or 612-807-4179. You may also scan the QR code or visit <https://bit.ly/SoilHealthSurvey2025>.



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>



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

Agricultural producers who have not yet completed their crop acreage reports after spring planting should make an appointment with their County Farm Service Agency (FSA) before the applicable deadline. An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch, its intended use and location. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits.

The deadline to certify spring seeded commodities is July 15, 2025. To file a crop acreage report, producers need to provide crop and crop type or variety, intended crop use, number of crop acres, planting dates, producer shares and irrigation practice(s). The county office can provide a map with approximate crop boundaries. Producers are required to provide acreage prevented from planting, when applicable.

If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed. If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, then the acreage

Remember to certify your acres with the Farm Service Agency by July 15

must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP-covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or crop harvesting begins.

Agricultural producers with perennial forage crops have the option to report their acreage once, without having to report that acreage in subsequent years, as long as there are no applicable changes on the farm. Interested producers can select the continuous certification option after FSA certifies their acreage report. Examples of perennial forage include mixed forage, birdsfoot trefoil, chicory/radicchio, kochia (prostrata), lespedeza, perennial peanuts and perennial grass varieties.

Once the continuous certification option is selected, the certified acreage will roll forward annually with no additional action required by the producer in subsequent years unless the acreage report changes.

Conservation Reserve Program reminders

The CRP primary nesting season began May 15 in southern Minnesota and June 1 in northern Minnesota and runs through

Aug. 1. The required CRP management and maintenance activities may not be conducted during this timeframe. CRP participants must refrain from mowing or spraying unless you have contacted FSA to receive permission to control weeds or rodents by spot spraying or spot mowing. FSA also advises contract holders to take some time and explore their CRP acreage throughout the year to ensure they do not have volunteer trees or noxious weeds. It is a CRP participant's responsibility to maintain their CRP practice and failure to do so could result in penalties of noncompliance up to and including contract termination.

Maintenance or management mowing, for those who are eligible to complete, can begin after the end of the primary nesting season on Aug. 1. If you have required maintenance or management activities due in your conservation plan of operation, please remember to keep track of those activities completed for potential cost-share purposes and inspections.

For more information on annual acreage reporting and the Conservation Reserve Program, please contact your local USDA Service Center.



ATTENTION MEMBERS!

Is your contact info up to date?

Email changes to claudine@mfu.org.

Victoria Evans is summer policy intern

Growing up in Chicago, Victoria Evans' limited access to nature sparked a deep passion for environmental exploration and conservation. Surrounded by busy streets and persistent plastic pollution, she



Victoria Evans

envisioned a world where people and the planet could live in harmony. Inspired by the plastic-free movement, she began working as a youth activist for a local sustainability nonprofit, where she advocated for composting and solar energy programs within her school district.

Evans later moved to Minnesota to pursue a bachelor's degree in environmental science, policy and management as well as a bachelor's degree in finance at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. As a

member of the Honors Program, Evans became an undergraduate leader with the Institute on Environment, a student consultant with Net Impact and field manager for Environment America to advance sustainability initiatives and climate policy while studying.

Evans hopes that her work at MFU will not only support farmers facing the threat of climate change but also promote a greener and more resilient food system for all.

Maya Mortenson is membership and operations summer intern

Maya Mortenson has joined MFU as the Membership and Operations Intern for the summer. She grew up in Blaine and attends Macalester College where she is majoring in political science and minoring in media and cultural studies and Russian studies.



Maya Mortenson

Mortenson has previous internship experience in both non-profit and government roles. She has recently worked as a public engagement intern at the Office of Gov. Tim Walz and Lt. Gov. Peggy Flannagan and a nonprofit operations intern at Open Arms of Minnesota.

In her free time, Mortenson enjoys going hiking, trying new coffee shops and spending time with her pet chinchilla Walter.

Calendar of events

July 3-4	MFU office closed for Fourth of July holiday
July 8	Kanabec County Convention , 6 p.m.
July 8	Dodge/Olmsted County Convention
July 8-11	Southern Elementary Camp , Sibley State Park
July 10	Minnesota Association of Agricultural Educators annual banquet, Grand Casino Hinckley
July 12	Second Annual Pizza Night at Stone Creek Farm
July 13	Aitkin County Convention , noon
July 14-18	Southern Junior Camp , Sibley State Park
July 16	Goodhue County Convention
July 17	Redwood, Cottonwood, Lyon County Convention
July 20-25	Senior High Camp , Sibley State Park
July 29	Swift County Convention , 6 p.m.
July 30	Wadena County Convention , 7:15 p.m., Sebeka Community Senior Center
July 31	Dakota County Annual Meeting , 6 p.m. Pizza Buffet, 6:30-8 p.m. annual meeting, The BLVD Tavern, West St. Paul.
July 31	Benton County Convention , Carol and Steve Anderson farm, 7 p.m.
Aug. 5-7	Farmfest , Morgan
Aug. 5-7	Southern Day Camp , Albert Lea
Aug. 18	Stearns County Convention , Greenwald Pub, 7 p.m.

Find the latest news online at mfu.org/events

Green Acres Milling breaks ground in Albert Lea, seeks investors for its oat processing facility

Green Acres Milling has broken ground on a \$60 million oat processing facility on the south side of Albert Lea. Construction began in early May and the plant is expected to begin processing oats in August 2026.

The facility will process 4 million bushels of food-grade oats per year, or about 40,000-acres worth, creating opportunities for farmers in Minnesota to add a third crop to their rotations.

Demand for oat-based products like oat milk, bread and cereal is growing, while at the same time farmers are looking for crops that allow them to diversify their income and improve their environmental sustainability.

Today, 92 percent of food-grade oats consumed in the United States are

imported from Canada. Per capita oat consumption has been increasing by 8 percent annually in the U.S., said Matt Kruger, a Farmers Union member and the first employee of Green Acres Milling. "Our unique transportation logistics allow us to pay a premium price to farmer investors with QR level traceability."

Oats are one of the more sustainable crops, Kruger said. They are planted as soon as the frost is out and harvested in mid-July, allowing many farmers the opportunity to grow alfalfa, double crop soybeans, or a cover crop. He plants cover crops following oats and puts his beef cows out on the cover crops once his summer pastures start to get dry at the end of August.

"Many farmers believe there isn't any money in growing oats, but we are growing premium food-grade oats. The average price per bushel that Green Acres Milling is offering is \$6.50," Kruger said. "I average around 100 bushel per acre, plus I get around two months of grazing cover crops with my beef cows."

More than 90 farmers from Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin and North and South Dakota have already invested in the project, said Landon Plagge, a Latimer, Iowa, farmer and company founder, but more investors are invited to join.

If anyone is interested in growing premium food-grade oats and becoming a farmer-owner-investor, reach out to Kruger at matt@greenacresmilling.com or (651) 564.2086. The investment window closes Aug. 1.

YOU MATTER. TALK TO US.

 *No concern is too small*
Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline

 **833-600-2670**

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



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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Argyle	Jay & Brady Swanson	(218) 437-8512
Bejou	Joe McCollum	(218) 844-5970
Bemidji	Ben Caron	(218) 751-7761
Canby	Mike Panka	(507) 223-5527
Detroit Lakes	Joe McCollum	(218) 844-5970
Duluth	Brad Anderson	(218) 481-0812
Elk River	Rob Pampusch, Jr.	(763) 441-4250
Elk River	Todd Ostrow	(763) 515-3200
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Fosston	Barb Sweep	(218) 435-2063
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Lake Crystal	Matt Peterson	(507) 726-2961
Luverne	Barb Anderson	(507) 283-8383
Maple Grove	Brandon Hummel	(651) 288-4076
Marshall	Dennis Klocow, Jr.	(507) 532-0418
Marshall	Mika Panka	(507) 337-4024

Menahga	Kristine Hendrickson	(218) 564-5300
Montevideo	Ivan Anderson	(320) 269-9463
Moorhead	Mari Berggren	(218) 512-0536
Moorhead	Aaron Schenck	(218) 236-1966
Moorhead	Robin Swanson & Jenna Crabtree	(218) 512-3003
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Willmar	Paul Johannes	(320) 235-2540
Windom	Jessica Krick	(507) 831-3541