

Minnesota Agriculture

Voice of Rural Minnesota



**IN THIS
ISSUE:**

Register for MFU Summer
Camp or Day Camp
page 2

Surveillance pricing threatens
uniform pricing
page 5

EPA sets RFS volumes
for 2026 and 2027
page 11

May 2026

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





**Minnesota Farmers Union
Executive Committee**

- Gary Wertish, President
- Anne Schwagerl, Vice President
- Missy Bakker Roach, Secretary
- Carol Anderson, Chair
- Ted Winter, Vice Chair
- Linda Larson
- Melany Thomas
- Joshua VanDerPol

Minnesota Farmers Union Staff

- Gary Wertish, President
- Anne Schwagerl, Vice President
- Stu Lourey, Government Relations
- Lisa Holm, Government Relations & Climate
- Samuel Porter, Economist
- Janet Kubat Willette, Communications
- Kyle Hoffman, Communications and MN Cooks
- Glen Schmidt, Operations
- Megan Mathew, Operations
- Gail Donkers, Membership
- John Beaton, Membership
- Elizabeth Hines, Membership
- Brittney Johnson, Membership
- Lee Johnson, Membership
- Peter Ripka, Membership
- Brenda Rudolph, Membership
- Mike Seifert, Membership
- Cindy VanDerPol, Membership
- Justin Stofferahn, Antimonopoly
- Ariel Kagan, Climate & Working Lands
- Jada Csikos-Monroe, Climate & Working Lands
- Danielle Isaacson, Climate & Working Lands
- Dave Endicott, Special Projects
- Robb Kasal, FUPM
- Audrey Jerome, Education

MFU Phone: (651) 639-1223
MFU Toll-Free: (800) 969-3380
MFU Website: www.mfu.org

Minnesota Agriculture

Volume 170 No. 5 May 2026

Janet Kubat Willette, Editor
 Gary Wertish, Publisher

Publication Number
 351340 ISSN 0274-9718

Published monthly by the Minnesota Farmers Union;
 305 Roselawn Ave. E, Suite 200 St. Paul, MN 55117.
 Periodical rate postage is paid at St. Paul, MN.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Minnesota
 Agriculture; 305 Roselawn Ave E, Suite 200
 St. Paul, MN 55117. Phone (651) 639-1223.

Minnesota Agriculture is published exclusively for
 the use of Minnesota Farmers Union members. The
 newspaper is a benefit of membership in the statewide
 organization that represents family farmers and works
 to preserve and improve the quality of life for all who
 live in rural Minnesota. A portion of each member's
 dues, about \$5, funds a subscription.

At MFU Summer Camps, campers gain confidence, grow resilience, develop leadership skills and have fun! Plus, they'll meet campers and counselors from across the state and make lifelong friends.

Day Camp (Ages 6-8)

Twin Cities \$60



Day Camp (Ages 6-8)

Twin Cities \$60



Northern (Ages 9-13)

Lake Sarah Campground \$175



**Southern Elementary
(Ages 8-11)**

Sibley State Park \$200



**Southern Junior
(Ages 11-14)**

Sibley State Park \$225



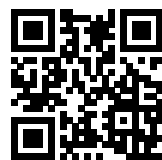
Senior High (Ages 14-18)

Sibley State Park \$250



Register Today! Minnesota Farmers Union members receive a discount.

Visit: mfu.org/camp or scan the QR code





President's message

GARY WERTISH, PRESIDENT

gary@mfu.org

Spring has arrived and I hope that your planting season is off to a great start. Here at Minnesota Farmers Union, we are hard at work planning for the summer camp season.

At the end of March, Audrey Jerome joined our team as the new director of education and camp. She comes to us with years of camp and nonprofit experience, most recently serving as the summer program director and interim executive director at YMCA Camp Widjiwagan. I am excited to welcome her to the MFU family.

For over 80 years, our summer camps have helped young people become good citizens by teaching responsibility, leadership, and cooperation. I look forward to seeing what the future holds for this long-running program.

It has also been a busy past few months traveling around the state for our People's Town Hall meetings. From Feb. 10 through mid-April, we visited Austin, Owatonna, Morris, Barnesville, Perham, Pipestone, Fulda, Sleepy Eye, Little Falls, Thief River Falls, Grand Rapids, and Willmar. Hundreds of farmers and rural residents turned out to make their voices heard and share concerns and ideas about how we move forward.

With each stop, common themes emerged. In addition to healthcare affordability, the need for a strong Farm Bill, and concerns about tariffs, we also heard about immigration and the ICE surge in Minnesota and – more recently – the war in Iran and its effects on agriculture and the global economy.

Since the war began on Feb. 28, President Trump has threatened to widen the conflict if Iran does not stop blocking the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial trade route for global oil supplies. The war has led to rising energy, shipping, and fertilizer costs as 25 percent of the world's supply of petroleum and 30 percent of the world's

nitrogen and some phosphorus moves through the strait.

According to USA Today, "Spiking fertilizer costs are the latest hurdle for farmers grappling with weak grain prices, rising bills for other inputs and uncertainty over China's demand for U.S. crops. A trade war launched by the Trump administration last year dramatically disrupted U.S. soybean export sales to China, the world's largest importer."

On March 30, I participated in a discussion on "The Geopolitical Power of Agriculture," hosted by the Economic Club of Minnesota, which also featured CHS CEO Jay Debertin and CoBank CEO Tom Halverson. During the event, Halverson warned that the war is "going to have a lot of consequences, and some of them are going to be long lasting, and some of them are going to structurally change the business environment."

In response to this growing crisis, Sens. Amy Klobuchar, John Thune, and Roger Marshall introduced bipartisan bills to address high fertilizer costs in the wake of the war. The Fertilizer Transparency Act (Thune-Klobuchar) will create a mandatory price reporting system to offer market participants of all sizes with comparable levels of market information on fertilizer components, and the Homegrown Fertilizer Act (Klobuchar-Marshall) will create a grant and loan program to expand the domestic fertilizer production and improve fertilizer storage capacity.

In my statement of support for this bipartisan legislation, I wrote, "Four multinational companies dominate the market for fertilizer and often leave Minnesota farmers with even fewer options to purchase locally. This is far from a competitive market, which is why I'm glad Sens. Klobuchar and Thune are leading to bring more transparency to the market. This, coupled with Sens. Klobuchar and Marshall's support for

more domestic production, will help create a more resilient system that farmers can count on. Between depressed commodity prices and increased costs of everything from equipment parts to healthcare, our members are being squeezed enough without companies padding their pockets by inflating the cost of fertilizer."

President Trump's decision to go to war with Iran will have long-lasting effects. In addition to rising fertilizer costs, the price increase of diesel fuel will also hurt farmers already dealing with negative cash flow due to tariffs. Diesel fuel moves the vast amount of freight in the United States by trucks, trains, and ships; and a fuel surcharge is already being added to the cost of goods shipped. Farmers cannot add a surcharge to their commodities to recover the increased cost of fuel. And even if the Strait of Hormuz is opened back up, shipping costs will be substantially higher due to added fuel, security, and vessel insurance costs. This added cost will show up in everything including food prices.

Since the start of the war, gasoline prices have risen over one dollar per gallon. In response, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced an emergency fuel waiver allowing the nationwide sale of E15 gasoline this summer. Farmers Union has long advocated for year-round access to E15 and higher blends of ethanol and biodiesel. As National Farmers Union President Rob Larew said in the wake of this announcement, "Nationwide access to E15 is a much-needed win for family farmers and consumers alike. At a time of increasing global uncertainty, E15 helps lower costs at the pump while creating reliable markets for farmers."

Though these are, indeed, uncertain times, Farmers Union will continue to work and fight for you at both the state and national level. I wish you all a safe planting season.



Legislators gathering input from citizens as they work to put together legislation before May 18

STU LOUREY GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DIRECTOR

stu@mfu.org

At the time of writing this on April 7, state legislators are returning from a weeklong break with just six weeks left to complete their work before a constitutional adjournment on May 18. As this biennium draws to a close, MFU's leadership, staff and members are busy working to ensure lawmakers are responsive to the priorities laid out in the Special Orders of Business and grassroots policy adopted at the annual convention. You can always find up-to-date legislative reports in MFU's weekly e-newsletter and online at www.mfu.org/legislation.

DAIRI legislative update

In mid-March, the Minnesota Senate passed its first agriculture bill, one of the first standalone bills to clear the body this session. Sen. Rob Kupec's, DFL-SD4, legislation would clarify eligibility for the Dairy Assistance, Investment, Relief Initiative (DAIRI) program (SF3832), ensuring that new farmers can benefit from the program.

"The Dairy Assistance, Investment, Relief Initiative helps our dairy farmers when the cost of milk goes down and the price of feed goes up," Kupec said. "Our dairy farmers are facing a lot of uncertainty right now and we've got to support them."

MFU shared support for the clarification through its committee path. And—while not a substantial policy change or significant investment in a new program—it's notable that a closely-divided Senate acted quickly to ensure this long-awaited program could be rolled out effectively. The bill passed unanimously (66-0), demonstrating that agriculture can still be a bright spot of broad bipartisan agreement.



Government Relations Director Stu Lourey testified in support of Rep. Samantha Vang's bill to extend funding originally appropriated in 2023 for meat processing workforce development.

Unfortunately, and as of this update, the bill hasn't received the same treatment in the House. In the House Ways and Means Committee DFLers voted against the House version (HF3508), carried by Rep. Nathan Nelson, R-HD11B. That was despite bipartisan support in the House Agriculture Committee and supportive testimony from Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen.

"I really would appreciate if we could move this bill, because we'd like to get these dollars out to our dairy farmers as soon as possible," Petersen said.

DFL Co-Chair Cedrick Fraizer, DFL-HD43A, thanked Nelson for his work and said he was "looking forward to helping these farmers."

"We're gonna get this done," he continued, "but today we're not going to vote to move it on."

The bill was laid over, pending further action by the House Ways and Means Committee. It is an example of how difficult the politics of moving legislation can be this session. MFU will continue making the case for acting quickly.

Ag omnibus bill moves ahead

That said, there are examples of bipartisan work this session. The week before break, Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Aric Putnam, DFL-SD14, acted on an amended policy omnibus bill and considered a slate of funding bills, including many MFU has worked to advance. His policy omnibus (SF4561) was unanimously passed out of committee.

"This committee works well together," Putnam said in closing his last hearing before break. "That's why today

went as efficiently as it did because we talk with each other . . . and keep focusing on what needs to be done."

This sort of cooperation is not found in all jurisdictions and could prove central to getting a final deal on agriculture done this year. As a reminder, Minnesota budgets on a biannual basis and there's no constitutional requirement for lawmakers to make changes to policy or budgets in 2026.

The policy omnibus largely included non-controversial items brought forward by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. That said, there were some key provisions for which MFU shared support.

First, the bill would create a first, clear, statutory definition of 'agrivoltaics'—the practice of engaging in production agriculture under or alongside solar panels.

"We have members who are building their enterprises based on this model," said MFU President Gary Wertish in written comments. "We appreciate MDA's work to provide a clear definition and believe this will help this emerging industry continue to develop in a way that benefits farmers."

continued on page 14



Surveillance pricing threatens uniform pricing majority of Americans expect

JUSTIN STOFFERAHN,
ANTIMONOPOLY DIRECTOR
justin@mfu.org

Ensuring fair prices is a foundational principle for Minnesota Farmers Union. MFU's founding in 1918 was spurred in part by farmers' need to ensure a fair price for what they produced. The fight for fair prices in Minnesota dates back even further.

In 1873 farmers in Minnesota helped form the Anti-Monopoly Party to increase their political clout and subsequently won seats in the state legislature. The legislature went on to pass rules addressing the personalized and discriminatory prices charged by powerful railroads. That same era popularized the price tag, establishing the uniform pricing consumers have come to expect.

Polling by Groundwork Collaborative, an economic think tank in Washington, D.C., has found that 83 percent of Americans believe that businesses should charge all customers the same price for the same item. Despite that expectation, uniform pricing is under threat by a new practice called surveillance pricing.

Surveillance pricing is the use of personal data and artificial intelligence (AI) to set personalized prices. An initial investigation of this practice by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) found that retailers across

many industries can use third-party data brokers to build comprehensive profiles on a consumer using everything from your search history to mouse movements on your browser to predict someone's pain point, or the highest price you are willing to pay.

The consumer watchdog Consumer Reports investigated the surveillance pricing practices of Instacart, an online grocery delivery service. That investigation included an experiment at a Target in St. Paul where despite purchasing the same items, shoppers fell into one of seven price groups with costs ranging from \$81.24 to \$86.78. This sort of behavior eliminates the very idea of a uniform price, which is critical to a fair and democratic economy. Just like they did in 1870, Minnesota legislators are taking notice.

During this legislative session a variety of bills have been introduced that would prohibit the use of surveillance pricing in Minnesota. The broadest of these proposals would ban the use of surveillance pricing across the economy as well as prohibiting those tactics from being used in setting worker wages. Bills have also been introduced that would prohibit surveillance pricing in the grocery industry.

MFU has been working with consumer advocates and small businesses to push legislators to limit the use of surveillance pricing. MFU has testified before committees to highlight the potential harm to

consumers and the broader implications this tactic could have on competition.

Consider Google's announcement at a national retail conference in January that the company was taking steps to integrate its AI agent, Gemini, into retail decision-making. Given Google's dominance over online search and advertising, this could create a future where Google is determining where you shop, what brands you purchase and the price you pay. This could not only mean higher prices but also put small businesses at a disadvantage. For farmers, surveillance pricing raises the question of what dominant seed, fertilizer and pesticide companies might do with AI tools and personal information on producers.

While legislative proposals have failed to advance in the Minnesota House, the Senate Commerce and Consumer Protection Committee is likely to include surveillance pricing legislation in its omnibus policy bill.

Efforts to limit surveillance pricing are just one of the ways MFU is positioning concerns about affordability as a competition issue. MFU has also highlighted other unfair pricing tactics across the economy including price discrimination (charging retailers different prices for the same good) and algorithmic price-fixing (use of third-party analytics companies to tacitly collude). These tactics are not only driving up prices but are used to squeeze small businesses as well.





Plant the seeds of membership in good soil, add water and give it time to grow

GAIL DONKERS MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR

gail@mfu.org

Spring is a busy time for us in Minnesota. The birds return and begin chirping, the snow melts, the grass turns from brown to green, and the scent of earth fills the air. It is my favorite time on the farm as we bring new life into the world: It's lambing season! For others, it is planting—sowing seeds and seedlings with plans for a big harvest later in the year.

Much like Johnny Appleseed, we all need to be planting seeds year-round—seeds for MFU membership. You are probably scratching your head and wondering, “How can I help with membership?” Building membership is rarely an “instant” win. It follows a natural progression; much like a plant, it requires soil, seeds, water, sunlight and patience.

- **Soil (Community):** Creating a community space where members regularly show up and feel valued. Providing a space to share specific “pain points” to create grassroots resolutions for change.
- **Seed (Value):** Sharing high-quality content—such as educational meetings on current topics, opportunities to share stories and concerns at



Left: MFU Membership and Outreach staff member Mike Seifert talks about the Farmers' Share of the Food Dollar at the Dodge County Expo, where the Dodge County Farmers Union had a booth and helped organize a Rural Health Fair. Right: Membership Director Gail Donkers with Veterinarian Angela Varnum (center) at MFU/Extension lambing course.

town halls, and social events—that builds community.

- **Water (Engagement):** Consistently showing up at county events, answering questions, and being a visible leader.
- **Sunlight (Social Proof):** Retention is the real goal. Planting seeds isn't just for new people; it's about continuously adding value so current members don't “wilt” and leave. Highlight members or have “Member of the Month” spotlights to show the “bloom” others are experiencing.

- **Patience (Time):** It often takes six to 12 months to see the results of marketing “seeds.” It is seldom instant.

By “sowing the seeds”—sharing your MFU story, helping organize engaging events and inviting friends to attend—and having patience, you will see growth in your counties and be able to “harvest” new members.

ATTENTION MEMBERS!



Is your contact info up to date?
Email changes to operations@mfu.org.

Welcome new members

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

Karla and Justin Cronen, Pope County

Bryan and Deron Demeritte, Loving More Farmstead, Waseca County
 Shirley and John Dove, Lac Qui Parle County
 Lindsey Grass, Bernie's, Polk County
 Robert and Lisa Hanna, Three Pines Farm, Hubbard County
 Jeffrey Larson, Polk County
 Heidi Mears, Otter Tail County
 Derek Meyers, Sharing Our Roots, Rice County

Dan Mitchell, Cass County
 Brooke Reeser, Le Sueur County
 Brendan Rouzer, Chisago County
 Lisa Shoberg-Weiner, Spring Creek Acres, Goodhue County
 Skyler and Liz Vilt, Hennepin-Ramsey County
 Suzanne and Brad Vold, Dorrich Dairy, Pope County
 Scott Wagner, BST Holdings Inc., Hennepin-Ramsey County

Audrey Jerome joins MFU as the new Director of Education and Camp and invites youth to register for camp



Audrey Jerome

By Audrey Jerome

I'm thrilled to introduce myself as the new Director of Education and Camp with Farmers Union, and to connect with this statewide community.

A bit about me: I recently returned to the Twin Cities after several years in Ely, where I served as Summer Program Director and later Interim Executive Director at YMCA Camp Widjiwagan. My work there focused on hiring, training and guiding program direction that centered on instilling an ethic of respect, resilience and leadership in young people.

Prior to directing youth programs, I spent seven years as a camp counselor and outdoor educator at Widjiwagan, leading canoe and backpacking expeditions ranging from one to seven weeks with youth ages 11 to 18. These trips took me across the Boundary Waters and Quetico, into the mountains of Montana and Wyoming, and as far as the Canadian and Alaskan Arctic. During the off seasons I led outdoor recreation, ecology education and team-building programs for both youth and adults and facilitated grant-funded programming for rural youth focused on social, emotional and academic growth through cultural experiences at Ely Community Resource.

As the daughter of a chef, I grew up appreciating local food, but my interest in agriculture deepened during a 2013 internship at The Spannocchia Foundation in Tuscany, Italy, where I worked with heritage-breed livestock. Since then, I've continued learning about Minnesota agriculture through work with Rochdale Farms Dairy at the Mill City and Midtown Farmers Markets, at Seward Co-op, and on several CSA farms across Minnesota and Wisconsin between seasons of wilderness travel.

Fun fact: this is my second role with MFU—I previously worked as a barista at the Farmers Union Coffee Shop at the Minnesota State Fair in 2019.

Minnesota Farmers Union Camp

There's nothing quite like watching a young person grow into newfound confidence, community and resilience at camp.

As I continue learning more about MFU Summer Camp, the Youth Advisory Council and our national programs, I'm struck by the depth of MFU's cooperative curriculum and its potential to serve future leaders in their own civic and community engagement. At MFU Summer Camp, campers

and staff disconnect from technology and the pressures of everyday life at home or school and reconnect with a supportive network of peers, with their own sense of identity, and with the experience of being part of a tradition that spans generations past, present and future.

I am thrilled to present this summer's camp expanded options.

Twin Cities Day Camps

Twin Cities Day Camps let our youngest campers sample MFU's co-op and agricultural curriculum while getting plenty of time to play outside, make arts and crafts, and get to know each other. Drop off and pick up is at the MFU Office at 305 Roselawn Ave. E., St. Paul.

These camps are designed for youth ages 6 to 8 and the cost is \$60. This year, we will have two sessions of our Twin Cities Day Camp. The first is a five-day session from June 8 to June 12. The second is a four-day session from June 15 to June 18. The programming will be similar for each one. Learn more and register for the day camps at mfu.org/camp.

Here is a sample week of our day camp.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday (first session only)
Morning: Drop off at 9 a.m. Welcome Circle, name games and expectations. Co-op tour and cooking class	Morning: Drop off at 9 a.m. Farmers Market tour	Morning: Drop off at 9 a.m. Local farm tour	Morning: Drop off at 9 a.m. Local farm tour	Morning: Drop off at 9 a.m. "Agrilympics" competition featuring seed art, butter carving and wool packing, and end of week prizes.
Afternoon: Lunch, group games, choices for independent activities Pick up at 4 p.m.	Afternoon: Lunch, group games, choices for independent activities Pick up at 4 p.m.	Afternoon: Lunch, group games, choices for independent activities Pick up at 4 p.m.	Afternoon: Lunch, group games, choices for independent activities Pick up at 4 p.m.	Afternoon: Pick up at noon



2026 Overnight Camps

MFU will be offering three camps this summer at Sibley State Park near New London and one at Lake Sarah Farmers Union Campground near Erskine.

Our overnight camps offer campers progression in responsibility and leadership opportunities as well as in successive

learning around co-ops, Farmers Union history and its current issues, and civic engagement.

Overnight camp season begins on June 22 with the Northern Camp at Lake Sarah. The Elementary, Junior and Senior Camp are all held at Sibley State Park in Kandiyohi County.



2026 Session details:

Camp	Ages	Location	Session dates	Cost
Northern Camp	9-13	MFU Lake Sarah Campground	June 22 to 26	\$175
Elementary Camp	8-11	Sibley State Park	July 14 to 17	\$200
Junior Camp	11-14	Sibley State Park	July 20 to 24	\$225
Senior Camp	14-18	Sibley State Park	July 26 to 31	\$250

Making camp accessible to all

We believe summer camp does not need to be expensive to offer unique and transformative experiences. MFU is eager to bring together youth from across the state and across all backgrounds. With below industry camp costs, MFU also offers:

- Discounts for MFU members
- Sibling registrations
- Scholarships

Get in touch with me at audrey@mfu.org for more information on camp scholarships and payment options.

A day at overnight camp

A day in life at overnight camp is best described by one of our senior camp counselors, Aerial Eitreim.

"The day starts with the sunrise and flag rise and ends long after sunset to the sound of everyone's voices lifted together in song. In the morning we learn about cooperation and make friendship bracelets that will last a lifetime (or at least until the next year). In the afternoon we hike and swim and play games. In the evening we gather around the fire to share stories and sing songs and laugh. But in everything that we did today, the best part was the family we created."

Register for camp at mfu.org/camp

Join our Camp Advisory Committee

If you feel passionate about the traditions and values of the Minnesota Farmers Union, youth leadership development, and want to work together towards our programmatic growth, then we want your voice on our advisory committee. We anticipate Camp Committee meetings will be one hour over zoom once every two months, except during the summer camp season. We would love to recruit anyone with enthusiasm and especially individuals who have specific knowledge around:


- Education or social work
- Legal or financial work
- Marketing and communications work

For more information or to express interest for the Camp Advisory Committee please contact me at audrey@mfu.org.

Social media

For more information on camp, follow MFU Summer Camp on Instagram and Facebook.

 [instagram.com/mfusummercamp](https://www.instagram.com/mfusummercamp)

 [facebook.com/people/Minnesota-Farmers-Union-Camp/](https://www.facebook.com/people/Minnesota-Farmers-Union-Camp/)
61579528804992



Past camper, YAC and NYAC returns as camp counselor

Rebecca Keddy and her twin sister, Julia, grew up on the outskirts of Sebeka. Her family has a small hobby farm with chickens, miniature ponies, and cows.

Keddy is studying wildlife biology at Bemidji State University. After graduation, she plans to pursue a career in conservation, specifically working with invasive species.

This article has been edited for length and clarity.

Q. How did you get involved in Farmers Union camps?

A. I got involved in the Farmers Union camp because of my grandma. She was a Torchbearer and when my mom realized the camp was still going, she sent my sister and I immediately.

Q. What camps did you go to?

A. I have attended both the northern and southern camps as well as All States in Washington, D.C. I had a blast at all of them.

Q. What were your favorite camp activities? Did you ever get homesick? On the flip side, did you ever want to stay at camp instead of going home?

A. My favorite camp activities were definitely the games. Bonkers will always hold a very special place in my heart. I was homesick at my first-ever camp but then it became the exact opposite,

and I would get camp sick when I was home.

Q. I believe you were both a Youth Advisory Council (YAC) member in Minnesota and a National Youth Advisory Council (NYAC) member. Tell me more about these positions.

A. I was on both YAC and NYAC. They were both really good opportunities to be more involved in camp and also gave me a lot of confidence in being in a leadership position. YAC was my first official position with Farmers Union and just made me want to keep coming back and doing the next big thing.

Q. How did Farmers Union camp impact your life?

A. Farmers Union has absolutely changed my life. Through camp, YAC and NYAC I've had to grow as a person, learn many new skills, and build on the ones that I already had. I met my best friend through camp, and I can't picture my life without Farmers Union.

Q. How would you recruit others to come to camp?

A. Back when I was going to camp, I would just ask my friends to come with me. Now that I'm older, I talk to parents about sending their kids to camp and post on my socials about camp.



Rebecca Keddy

Q. For parents nervous about sending their 8-year-old to camp, what words of wisdom do you have?

A. Don't be scared. They are in good hands. There is no other group of camp counselors that is so dedicated to camp. They will have an absolutely amazing time, and it will give them the opportunity to come out of their shell and become a more confident kid, just like in my case.

Q. This year, are your twin brothers going to camp? Are you returning to camp as a counselor?

A. Both of my brothers and my little 7-year-old sister are coming to camp, so we will be having a family reunion at camp. I will be coming back to camp as a first-year counselor, and I could not be more excited about the position.



Past camper is now county Farmers Union secretary

Julia Keddy and her twin sister, Rebecca, grew up on the outskirts of Sebeka. Her family has a small hobby farm with chickens, miniature ponies, and a beef herd. They also grow a wide variety of fruits and vegetables in their gardens.

Keddy is studying business administration at Minnesota State University Moorhead. Her career goal is to work for a nonprofit organization that works to help people who are experiencing poverty.

This article has been edited for length and clarity.

Q. How did you get involved in Farmers Union camps?

A. Our grandmother, Carol Bruns, was an MFU Torchbearer, so we got involved when our mom rediscovered Farmers Union and was getting involved in it herself. We went to our first MFU camp when we were 8 years old, and we had such a great time we decided to continue going every year and continued to get more involved.

Q. What camps did you go to?

A. We went to both north and south camps, as well as All-States when it was hosted at the northern camp location in Minnesota in 2024.

Q. What were your favorite camp activities? Did you ever get homesick? On the flip side, did you ever want to stay at camp instead of going home?

A. Bracelet making and singing the classic camp songs were always my favorite camp activities, and to this day, I still make bracelets in my free time when I'm bored. Being able to sit down and reminisce on the good memories I have from camp is still one of the best ways for me to wind down after a long day, and even though it's been a few years since I "graduated" from camp, I continue to get camp sick when I'm at home. I

never really got homesick when I was at camp because I was surrounded by my friends and I was having the time of my life. When it came to the last day of camp, it was always really hard to say goodbye to everyone—the worst part of going to camp is having to go home.

Q. I believe you were both a Youth Advisory Council (YAC) member in Minnesota and a National Youth Advisory Council (NYAC) member. Tell me more about these positions.

A. While I was never a YAC, I was a NYAC, and that position taught me that I am able to organize with people and make a difference. As a NYAC, one of the requirements is to go to the National Farmers Union Legislative Fly-in, which occurs in Washington D.C. every year. Being a part of the Fly-in meant that we were able to talk to legislators and lobby for the Farm Bill. While we were unsuccessful in getting the bill passed, being there and having the opportunity to talk directly to lawmakers and their staff lit a fire deep inside me to get involved with politics and fight for what I believe in. On top of getting involved in the legislative side of Farmers Union, we also went to the 2025 National Farmers Union Convention in Oklahoma City, where we were responsible for helping out and watching the policy meetings. Since we were not voting delegates, we were not allowed to participate, but we were able to see the conversations and debates occur around what changes people wanted to make to the NFU policy book.

Q. How did Farmers Union camp impact your life?

A. Going to Farmers Union camp has probably been the most impactful thing in my life. Through camp I learned about how co-ops benefit communities and how grassroots



Julia Keddy

organizations like Farmers Union can advocate for policy changes to help family farmers, ranchers and rural communities. Being able to learn and grow with Farmers Union through their educational camp programs has given me a deep-rooted passion for helping others and advocating for what I believe in, and I continue to carry my Farmers Union button with me everywhere I go.

Q. How would you recruit others to come to camp?

A. I honestly use personal testimony to promote camp a lot; having gone to camp for most of my life and graduating as a Torchbearer, my words have a little bit more weight to them when I talk to others about how incredible camp is. MFU has the kindest staff, and they work incredibly hard to create a safe and welcoming space for anyone and everyone who is fortunate enough to go to MFU camp. In addition to telling people about all the positive impacts that going to camp has had on me, I also post on social media about camp.

Q. For parents nervous about sending their 8-year-old to camp, what words of wisdom do you have?

A. Going to camp and being away from home for the first time can be scary; but as that 8-year-old who was nervous my first day, I promise you your child will be okay. I was a shy and quiet kid and going to camp and being in such a welcoming environment allowed me to branch

continued on page 19

EPA sets Renewable Fuel Standard volumes for 2026 and 2027



The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) "Set 2" rule, which sets renewable fuel volume requirements for 2026 and 2027 on March 27.

The "Set 2" final rule establishes the applicable volumes and percentage standards for 2026 and 2027 for cellulosic biofuel, biomass-based diesel (BBD), advanced biofuel, and total renewable fuel. EPA is also partially waiving the 2025 cellulosic biofuel volume requirement and revising the associated percentage standard due to a shortfall in cellulosic biofuel production.

"We thank EPA for finalizing updated Renewable Volume Obligations under the RFS," said National Farmers Union President Rob Larew. "These increased targets for biodiesel and renewable diesel send a strong signal to the marketplace and create meaningful new demand for America's family farmers and ranchers."

"At a time of significant economic pressure across agriculture, policies that strengthen domestic demand are more important than ever. Expanded biofuel volumes translate directly into stronger markets for

our corn and soybean growers, helping support farm income and rural communities.

"We are especially encouraged by steps that prioritize domestically produced feedstocks. Ensuring that American-grown commodities remain at the center of biofuel production is critical to delivering the full economic benefits of the RFS here at home.

"We look forward to continuing to work with EPA and policymakers to build on this progress and secure long-term, stable growth in renewable fuel markets that works for family farmers and ranchers."

2026 and 2027 Renewable Fuel Volume Requirements, SRE Reallocation Volumes, and Total Applicable Volumes (billion RINs)

	Proposed Volume Requirement			Finalized Volume Requirement			SRE Reallocation Volume		Total Applicable Volume	
	2025	2026	2027	2025	2026	2027	2026	2027	2026	2027
Cellulosic biofuel	1.19	1.30	1.36	1.21	1.36	1.43	0	0	1.36	1.43
Biomass-based diesel ¹	N/A	7.12	7.50	N/A	8.86	8.95	0.21	0.25	9.07	9.20
Advanced biofuel	N/A	9.02	9.46	N/A	10.82	10.98	0.28	0.34	11.10	11.32
Total renewable fuel	N/A	24.02	24.46	N/A	25.82	25.98	0.99	1.04	26.81	27.02

¹ Through 2025, the BBD volume requirement was established in physical gallons rather than RINs. In this final rule, we are specifying the BBD volume requirement in RINs, consistent with the other three renewable fuel categories, rather than physical gallons. For the sake of comparison, we converted the BBD volume requirements for 2023–2025 from physical gallons to RINs using the BBD conversion factor of 1.6 RINs per gallon.

EPA allows E15 in the summer



On March 25, U.S. EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin, in consultation with U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and in accordance with the Clean Air Act (CAA), issued a temporary emergency fuel waiver to allow nationwide sales of E15, gasoline blended with 15 percent ethanol, and to remove all federal impediments to selling E10, gasoline blended with 10 percent ethanol, across the country.

Beginning on May 1, EPA's waivers will work to prevent disruption in America's fuel supply by keeping E15 on the market

and giving Americans more fuel options. The waiver will initially remain in effect through May 20. This 20-day window is the maximum number of days allowed under the CAA.

The emergency fuel waiver will temporarily waive the summer low volatility requirements and blending limitations for gasoline. This will increase fuel supply and provide a variety of gasoline fuel blends to choose from without changing environmental protections already in place.

continued on page 17

Kanabec County farmer weaves culture, community together as she grows food, leads others in agriculture

By Jada Csikos-Monroe

Jane Windsperger grows culturally important East African and specialty crops on her farm in Kanabec County. She farmed in Kenya and started farming again in Minnesota in 2019, after an injury prevented her from continuing her career in the healthcare field as a registered nurse (RN). She markets her crops through The Good Acre and farmers markets. She also gives a portion of her produce to food banks. She is the vice president of the Minnesota African Immigrant Farmers Association (MAIFA), and on the board of directors for the Minnesota Farmers Market Association representing the northeast region.



Jane Windsperger

Q. What is your background?

A. My name is Jane Windsperger and I'm a woman, person of color, and an emerging farmer. The name of my LLC is GEDEF Farm, which is named after my five children. I was farming back in Kenya and when I came to Minnesota I started farming for a city farm. In 2021 I bought my first land in Ogilvie that was 3.8 acres and farmed there until 2025. Then I bought my current farm that is 30 acres in Mora in 2025, and I moved my mobile home here. This is my second year here.

I grow all kinds of specialty crops like cabbage, collards, kale, spinach and squashes. I grow East African cultural foods like pumpkin leaves, sweet potato leaves and beans. I sell my produce at The Good Acre, Pillsbury United Communities, at farmers markets, and I have a food stand at my farm for whoever wants to come.

I am a leader of so many things and I'm wearing a lot of hats. I lead children ages 10 to 17 to take them through the bible. This year I was chosen to be on

the board of Minnesota Farmers Market Association to represent the northeast region. I am also starting a new position at the University of Minnesota as a counselor for people whose second language is English. I am the Minnesota African Immigrant Farmers Association vice president, and we sell food to Second Harvest Heartland and food shelves like CAER (Community Aid of Elk River). I am also a Minnesota Farmers Union member. So that is who I am, that is my story and I love farming and meeting people.

Q. Who is involved on your farm operation?

A. I farm by myself, but I have a few other farmers from the city who help me, and my neighbors and my daughter help me. This year my daughter is helping me with documentation, and she's going to a market training to learn more.

I have volunteers through WWOOF (Worldwide Opportunities on Organic Farms) come and help me, and I do love to teach people a lot. That's what I've been doing with MAIFA, we have a training for farmers to come to my farm

and I teach them how to start seeds and have the correct spacing for crops. Today we had 40 people come for the training, and I was translating from English to Swahili. They are willing to come and drive to my place to learn what I do.

Q. It sounds like you are very connected with other farmers and the community around you in northern Minnesota. Do you feel that community is essential to you as a farmer?

A. Yes. I've been connected with the Amish community, and they have been teaching me what types of plants are supposed to be planted up north. Last fall when the cold came earlier my farm was affected big time. I didn't know that eggplants didn't like cold, so I covered the peppers and other crops but not the eggplants and tomatoes. When I came back in the morning it looked like someone poured water over them.

Q. With climate change, Minnesota is experiencing more heavy rain events as well as intense summer heat waves and drought. What has your experience been? How do you stay resilient?

A. I actually did very well last year because it rained so much. I usually build beds to raise up the soil, so when the rain comes I'm not affected as much. I started bedding that way in 2022.

But sometimes there's too much rain. One time I had squash in a lower area on my new land, and my crops were destroyed. It rained and the water stayed there stagnant. Last year many people were flooded, so I gave farmers from Lino Lakes my land to plant so they could still serve their customers in Edina.

It has also been too hot with no rain. We've had to ask the fire department to bring water, and we went into the police station to ask if they could help us with water. For extreme drought, I have overhead sprinklers to water my plants in my hoopouses. The University of Minnesota has helped me install hoses to bring water to my farm.

Q. What equipment is useful for your specialty crop operation?

A. I'm so excited and it's a privilege to have a greenhouse to start seedlings. I have three hoopouses and one is a starter greenhouse. It was on the land when I bought it.

Q. Was it a challenge for you to find and buy land?

A. It was a challenge to find land, but not as much as in the city. I know 20 farmers that are farming in east St. Paul and they called me and said they aren't farming this year. I've been looking for land for them and finally found land in Pine City. It's going to be so hard because they don't drive. But we are still looking and asking people to help us. In Pine City, Mora, and Ogilvie people are willing to rent the land.

Q. What programs have helped you or other farmers you know?

A. Some farmers I know who bought land are benefitting from the emerging farmer down payments from MDA. Now they are applying for the grant for equipment and are hoping they will get it. I've never received one but I always apply. I wish I could have a tractor, a weeder, or a seeder.

In the past I got a grant from Mill City Farmers Market for a well on my first farm. This year I received DNR funding for a fence. I have a lot of deer, racoons, and woodchucks on the farm. Last year I had to ask my neighbors for help with animals eating seedlings in the greenhouse.

Q. What would you tell lawmakers to help you keep farming into the future?

A. For me, I want lawmakers to look to the small farmers, especially emerging farmers putting good food on the table. These farmers need to be helped out with tools for weeding and markets

to sell their crops, that would be huge for small scale farmers. If they can give The Good Acre support, that would help emerging farmers that have limited resources. I want to tell them that these are all the foods we want you to eat, so help us to stay farming.

Also, farmers whose second language is English need help to understand grants better, especially MDA grants.

Q. What do you want the general public to know about your farm and farming practices? What practices are you employing to strengthen your soil health and grow healthy food as a specialty crop farmer?

A. That's my target, these are the people that need to support the farmers. They can come and buy our fresh food from the garden and go to the farmers markets, and support farmers to continue producing good food to eat, that helps us. Why would we buy food from California when we are growing the same things here? The community around us can come together and say let's promote local and buy from small farmers.

My farm is not certified organic but is chemical free, I don't use any chemicals. On one section I practice no-till. I put mulch on some sections like on the garlic. I'm on new land so this year I will do a soil test to know what kind of improvements are needed. I have clay, mixed soil with lots of stones.

Q. How do you persevere as a specialty crop farmer amidst challenges with resources, weather and expenses?

A. What helps me is my determination, I love farming. Professionally I'm an RN but left because I was injured and had back surgery. After I healed, I started growing a farm. Whatever little I got from selling food I put it back into farming to have good soil, and that has helped me a lot. I'm using my hands now to make something out of it. I just want to continue going until I can't go anymore.



Government relations

continued from page 4

Wertish also shared support for provisions that would help clarify expanded scope of practice for Licensed Veterinary Technicians.

"Particularly in the face of damaging new animal diseases, now is the time to ensure that farmers, county fairs, livestock auctions, and others have the professional help they need to ensure the health of livestock," he wrote.

In addition, Wertish made the case for provisions requiring the clear and accurate labeling of cell cultured meat. He explained that "clear, informative labeling will help consumers make informed decisions and ensure a level playing field.

"[We] believe strongly that livestock bring important benefits to our communities and economies. Consumers should have the right to choose to support the work of Minnesota farmers and ranchers," he continued. This change was brought forward by Sen. Rich Draheim, R-SD22.

On the budget side, both committees are hearing proposals that could be considered for a potential agriculture spending bill.

Local food legislation discussed

Both committees heard bills to increase funding for the Local Food Purchasing Assistance (LFPA) program. In the Senate, MFU member Mary Metelak, the co-owner and business manager of Benson + Turner Meats in Waubun, testified in support of Sen. Mary Kunes's, DFL-SD39, bill to increase funding for the newly dubbed Farm to Food Security Grant Program by \$500,000.

Metelak highlighted how LFPA funding supports multiple parts of the local food system.

"The Red Lake Indian Reservation's Agriculture Department and the White Earth Food Shelf have received funding and partnered with us to supply nutritious beef and pork," she said. "We then purchase from over 18 local farmers—many of them emerging producers."

Metelak also highlighted the jobs their business has created, noting that "employing people within our own community helps strengthen our economic viability."

MFU worked to establish this program in 2025 after USDA cut future funding for the federal program. That said, while \$3 million was cut, the state was only able to dedicate \$700,000 annually—far below the nearly \$5 million requested in 2024. Increased funding would help meet demand and expand market access for beginning and underserved farmers, while improving access to healthy food.

The House Agriculture Committee also heard Rep. Fue Lee's, DFL-HD59A, bill to increase funding of the Minnesota LFPA program (HF3693).

Waseca County Farmers Union member Dan Zimmerli testified in support of new funding for LFPA.

"It's a true win-win-win for farmers, people who need help with food, and our local economy," said Zimmerli, who has used the program to market his products.

Unfortunately, the full proposal in the House was voted down based on objections over an author's amendment to take the funding from the green fertilizer grant program that MFU worked to establish in 2023. MFU did not support or advocate for the funding mechanism and has long maintained that agriculture deserves more overall investment. Despite driving as much as a fifth of Minnesota's economy, state investment totals less than half of one percent of the overall budget.

Both will still be part of conversations for any final spending deal.

Testimony given on land trends report

Both committees heard bills to fund an Agricultural Land Trends Report to better understand changes in farmland ownership across the state.

MFU Vice President Anne Schwagerl joined the Minnesota House Agriculture Committee to share MFU's support for Rep. Luke Frederick's, DFL-18B, bill (HF3260). She described how the high cost of farmland was one of the biggest challenges she and her husband faced when they were starting out and transitioning into the family farm. Finding land they could afford—enough to support another family on the operation—was difficult then and remains a challenge today.

"Our farms don't come with a retirement plan," Schwagerl said. "The promise of agriculture, for many family farmers including my own, is that over time we can build some equity and economic security through owning the land that we farm."

She also raised concerns about increasing competition for farmland from investors, sharing that while she understands competing with neighbors, the dynamic changes when pricing pressure comes from investors. She told committee members about social media advertisements promoting farmland as an investment opportunity that is "better than the stock market."

"Land is the foundation of agriculture," Schwagerl said. "If we want the next generation of farmers to have a real chance to get started and stay in farming, we need to understand the pressures shaping farmland ownership today."

In the Senate, Melany Thomas, a certified organic producer in Clay County, testified in support of the companion bill (SF2431), carried by Kupec.

"We're competing against buyers who have teams dedicated to purchasing farmland because it offers, quote, better returns than the stock market," she said.

While the bill does not propose a specific solution, Thomas emphasized the importance of better data.

"I hope it provides meaningful insights into what's driving up land costs and helps strengthen existing programs.

Down Payment Assistance Program discussed

MFU staff testified in support of work to update Minnesota's Farm Down Payment Assistance Program (SF4586; HF3548).

In the Senate, Putnam noted that "since its creation in 2023, 439 people have applied, and 112 have been able to use this benefit to start a life in agriculture and contribute to their communities and local economies."

However, \$800,000 of the funding made available to the program last year was returned to the general fund because farmers couldn't close a land deal before the funding expired. This is a majority of the funding available.

In the House, the Agriculture Committee also revisited Co-Chair Paul Anderson's, R-HD12A, bill to make changes to the Down Payment Assistance Program and adopted an amendment with changes negotiated by Rep. Samantha Vang, DFL-HD38B. In her time as Agriculture Chair, Vang championed the creation and funding of Minnesota's Farm Down Payment Assistance Program, modeling it after similar programs in housing.

Both bills offering changes to the Down Payment Assistance Grant program extend the timeline for using grants and add some basic readiness requirements for applicants.

Member testifies in support of Minnesota Grown

Sam Birkholz, co-owner of Pleasant Valley Orchard in Shafer, testified in support of Sen. Heather Gustafson's, DFL-SD36, bill to increase funding for the Minnesota Grown program from \$186,000 to \$261,000, expanding access to marketing tools and resources for local producers (SF4066). Birkholz direct markets apples, pumpkins and berries, and serves on both the Minnesota Apple Growers Association and the Minnesota Grown Advisory Board.

"We're a very traditional orchard—we don't have a lot of bells and whistles," Birkholz said. "While we offer some agritourism through tours and small events, our focus is on growing high-quality fruit."

He noted that during the fall season, Minnesota apple growers face stiff competition from apples grown and shipped in from states like Washington and Michigan, often at lower prices.

"It can be difficult to secure and defend space on the produce shelf," he said. "That's where the Minnesota Grown program comes in. Their trusted brand helps consumers quickly identify our product and choose to support a local business."

"Participation has grown by over 40 percent since 2007, but funding has remained stagnant," Birkholz said. "We know consumers value locally grown food. This investment adds value to small family farms like ours, and I hope it earns your support."

Other Senate proposals are potentially close to receiving attention as standalone bills. Putnam's bills to extend Minnesota's Farmer-Lender Mediation (FLM) program

(SF3583), fund an additional staff at the FLM program (SF3584), and provide additional bonding authority for Minnesota's Rural Finance Authority (SF1209) are all awaiting action in the Senate Finance Committee. Together with legislative champions, we're making the case for early action on these priority bills.

Farmer-Lender Mediation did receive a first vote in the House, weeks after Co-Chair Paul Anderson, R-HD12A, heard the bill on March 9 and just days before legislative deadlines. Rep. Andy Smith, DFL-HD25B, carries both bills to extend and provide additional funding to FLM (HF3692; HF4191).

Meat processing bills weighed

The House Agriculture Committee has taken action on select other bills, including some with potential fiscal notes. In March, the committee approved Co-Chair Rick Hansen's, DFL-HD53B, bill that would bar the nation's largest retailers from buying or signing exclusive contracts with meat processors (HF4080). This hard line against vertical integration among those who have more than \$18 billion in grocery sales, would help curtail future anticompetitive practices and otherwise promote competition.

"Preventing massive grocers from amassing even more control of our food system will not reverse the extreme consolidation that already exists in the industry. That said, this bill represents an opportunity to prevent even further monopolization," Wertish wrote in a letter to committee members.

Another letter signed by Lorentz Meats and others named examples.

"Dominant retail grocers are aggressively moving to vertically integrate entire meat supply chains," they wrote. "For example, Costco has opened a chicken plant in Fremont, Neb., and Walmart has acquired beef processing and slaughter plants in Kansas, Georgia and Nebraska."

Redwood County Farmers Union member and beef producer Leon Plaetz shared his experience in the sector.

"In the Holstein beef market we are down to only one packer now and that is in Green Bay Wisconsin," Plaetz said. "In the last 40 years I have been farming, we have seen one loss after another of beef

marketing options. Each time that happens we see a widening of the basis."

The bill was passed out of committee with bipartisan support.

Also on meat processing, the House heard Vang's bill to extend funding for meat processing workforce development (HF4372), an initiative MFU worked to create in 2023.

The Meat Processing Train and Retain Grant program provides funding to partner organizations to help small- and mid-sized meat and poultry processors recruit, hire and train new employees.

"This work is critical to address the shortage of meat processing in our state—and to create new opportunities for more people in agriculture," Vang said.

In testimony, I emphasized that the program builds on broader efforts to support local and regional processors.

"During the pandemic, we all saw what Farmers Union members have long understood: when just four multinational companies control most of the meat processing industry, the system becomes brittle, prone to disruption, and doesn't serve workers, consumers, or farmers particularly well."

Grant funds can be used for a range of workforce-related expenses, including tuition reimbursement, signing and retention bonuses, and employee relocation costs. The program has already supported training opportunities for students studying meat cutting at Central Lakes College in Staples and Ridgewater College in Willmar.

Walz releases supplemental budget

Gov. Walz released his supplemental budget proposal on March 17.

On healthcare, Walz included proposed reforms to administration of the state's Medicaid program. The proposal would transition Medicaid from being administered through multiple private insurance companies, or managed care organizations (MCO), to a single statewide administrative service organization that would pay providers directly for services delivered to Medicaid beneficiaries. This would also shift county-level administrative functions to the state.

continued on page 19



MAY 1946

President Harry S Truman sent a telegraph to M.W. Thatcher, president, National Federation of Grain Cooperatives, about the Mercy Wheat initiative. "I want all farmers . . . to know that their government is earnestly backing the program of sending wheat abroad to help those peoples who now are facing dangers of mass famine. . . . All those who give . . . will earn the gratitude of hungry people in many lands."

Soil and crop progress reports as of April 6 from GTA field representatives show conditions in the northwest to be generally good, with field work well along in some areas, and a good to plentiful supply of moisture in all areas. Reports from southern Minnesota indicate about 20 percent sown over the area with ample moisture to start the grain growing.

After several years of campaigning for more taxes on cooperatives, the National Tax Equality Association has failed utterly to convince Rep. Wright Patman's Committee on Small Business.

MAY 1986

At the 27th International Federation of Agricultural Producers Meeting in West Germany, National Farmers Union representatives discussed agricultural policy with world farming leaders. They talked about the need for production controls, commodity diversification, alternative uses for agricultural products, and fear of a trade war. They emphasized the importance of global cooperation in balancing production with consumption and navigating world agricultural needs.

Minnesota Farmers Union sought a Congressional investigation of grain export practices. This came about due to a theory that U.S. grain merchants may be



Germany before 1990's reunification

jeopardizing export markets in search of higher profits. Minnesota Farmers Union president Willis Eken was quoted supporting the investigation due to the need to rebuild markets in a time of increasing foreign criticism of the quality of U.S. grain products.

Minnesota Farmers Union's travel program celebrated its 36-year history. Minnesota

Farmers Union had long owned a tour bus, conducting sightseeing tours for its members. The Minnesota Farmers Union Tour and Travel Department had three upcoming tours in 1986: the Canadian Rockies and Glacier National Park, Northeast USA and New York City, and Eastern Canada and New England.

MAY 2006

Funding for the Milk Income Loss Contract (MILC) program was extended through September 2007. MILC, a part of the 2002 Farm Bill, was designed to act as a financial safety net for farmers. Funding expired in September 2005, and National Farmers Union supported an amendment to extend funding, citing its importance to dairy farmers, especially when prices drop. The proposed amendment passed in the U.S. House Appropriations Committee.

Minnesota Sen. Mark Dayton joined other Midwestern senators and agriculture advocates in challenging a veto threat from President Bush on a disaster aid bill.

President Bush stated he would veto the bill if it included a proposed \$4 billion farm appropriation for farm disasters, approved by the Senate in early May. Minnesota Farmers Union President Doug Peterson supported Sen. Dayton's efforts, saying northwestern Minnesota farmers needed disaster aid.

Minnesota state lawmakers approved eminent domain reform, which was signed into law by Gov. Pawlenty. The Minnesota Farmers Union-supported law strengthened property rights and raised the agriculture appraisal cap from \$1,500 to \$5,000. This was especially important for protecting farms near growing regional centers.



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

Monster Bars *Submitted by Melany Thomas, Clay County*

Ingredients:

- ½ cup soft butter
- 1 cup brown sugar
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 eggs
- 1 ½ cup peanut butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 teaspoons of baking soda

- 4 ½ cup rolled (old-fashioned) oats
- 1 ½ cup chocolate chips
- 1 cup M & M's

Instructions:

In a large bowl, cream together the butter, peanut butter, brown sugar, and granulated sugar until smooth and fluffy. Add the

eggs and vanilla extract, beating until fully combined. Mix in the baking soda and old-fashioned oats. Stir in the chocolate chips and M&M's by hand. Put in ungreased 9 X 13 pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes, until light brown and the center is set.

Washington corner

continued from page 11

E15 is currently offered at more than 3,000 gas stations nationwide. Without this action, E15 gasoline cannot be used by roughly half of the country this summer. Additionally, EPA is also waiving federal enforcement of all state “boutique” fuel requirements for gasoline, allowing the production and distribution of gasoline with 9 to 15 percent ethanol content at a single common Reid Vapor Pressure (RVP) standard of 10 psi across the nation.

The agency will be ready to extend the emergency fuel waivers as long as the fuel supply circumstances warrant such action.

NFU applauded the EPA’s emergency fuel action. NFU has long advocated for year-round access to E15 and the expansion of higher ethanol blends, such as E30, and is calling for a permanent solution that strengthens domestic demand for American-grown agricultural products.

“Nationwide access to E15 is a much-needed win for family farmers and consumers alike,” Larew said. “At a time of increasing global uncertainty, E15 helps

lower costs at the pump while creating reliable markets for farmers. However, this remains a temporary fix. It’s past time for Congress to deliver common-sense legislation that allows for the year-round, nationwide sale of E15.”

Poultry rule delayed

The Poultry Grower Payment Systems and Capital Improvement Systems rule proposed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has been delayed from July 1, 2026, to Dec. 31, 2027.

“NFU is disappointed that USDA is delaying the implementation of its rule to increase fairness in poultry contracting and payment systems,” Larew said. “Growers have long raised concerns about the unfairness of tournament pricing and the amount and quality of information provided to them by poultry companies. The rule establishes guardrails on the tournament system, giving producers more certainty and transparency so they can operate their farm businesses successfully. NFU is eager to see implementation of this long-overdue rule. Delaying it is a disservice to family farmers who deserve a fairer system.”

On Jan. 9, 2025, USDA’s AMS announced the finalization of the Poultry Grower Payment Systems and Capital Improvement Systems rule to address unfairness and deception in broiler grower payments, poultry grower tournaments, and capital improvement systems.

The final rule contains three main provisions that NFU and family poultry growers are eager to see enforced:

- Prohibit Livestock Poultry Dealers (LPDs) from reducing any rate of compensation under a broiler growing arrangement based upon a grouping, ranking, or comparison of growers (commonly called a tournament)
- Establish a duty of fair comparison that requires LPDs to design and operate their broiler grower ranking system to provide a fair comparison among growers
- Require LPDs to provide Capital Improvement Discloser Documents to broiler growers when the LPD requires the grower to make an additional capital investment

The final rule was originally listed in the Federal Register to be effective beginning July 1, 2026.

You deserve the best. Leave the shopping to us.

As an independent agency, we are not tied to just one insurance company. In fact, we work with a wide range of top-rated insurance carriers. This means our agents can compare coverage and rates across the industry to find the best options tailored specifically to your needs.



FUA
FARMERS UNION AGENCY



DAN MAHONEY
DEPUTY STATE EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR, MN FSA

daniel.mahoney@mn.usda.gov

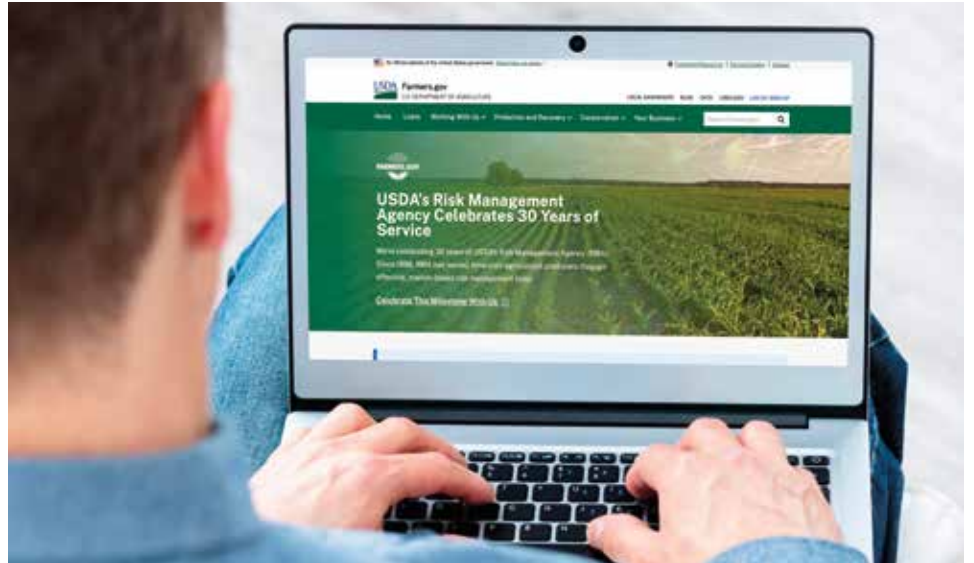
Whether you're looking to access capital or disaster assistance through USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) or address natural resource concerns on your land with assistance from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), a great place to start is farmers.gov. **Farmers.gov** is a single site for information about the assistance available from FSA and NRCS. The site also offers many easy-to-use tools for farmers, ranchers, and private forestland owners, whether you are reaching out for the first time or are a long-term customer with a years-long relationship with USDA.

The recent Farmer Bridge Assistance Program utilized the new "One Farm, One File" initiative that works with login.gov and farmers.gov for program enrollment. In just four days USDA received 50 times more producer applications online than the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program did over its entire five-month sign-up period last year.

With a secure login.gov account, producers can be the first to apply for programs. To conduct business with FSA online, producers will need a login.gov account. **Login.gov** is the public's one account for government. Producers can use one account and password for secure, private access to participating government agencies, including FSA. Creating a **login.gov** account is the first step to working with FSA online. Visit farmers.gov/account to create your **login.gov** account. If you already have a **login.gov** account, you can work with FSA using your existing account.

With a **farmers.gov** account, producers can complete a wide range of actions. Customers can complete an AD-2047, Customer Data Worksheet, prior to the first meeting with FSA and NRCS. Existing

Go to farmers.gov to create your login.gov account to work with FSA online



customers with farm loans can view farm loan payments history from FSA. Additionally, existing borrowers can view information on current loans and make USDA direct farm loan payments using the Pay My Loan feature. Currently, new and existing customers can also apply for a farm loan online. NRCS program participants can view cost share assistance received and anticipated from NRCS conservation programs. Producers can request conservation assistance from NRCS as well as view and track conservation plans, practices, and contracts. Customers with established farm records can view, print, and export detailed farm records and farm or tract maps for the current year, which are particularly useful when fulfilling acreage reporting requirements. Through **login.gov** customers can print FSA-156 EZ, Abbreviated Farm Record and your Producer Farm Data Report for the current year; these forms are often required for participation in programs outside USDA. Existing customers may also pay FSA debt using the "Make an FSA Payment" feature.

To create your **login.gov** account and tie it to your FSA customer record users will need to create the login.gov account, complete identity verification, and then link your FSA customer record. If you have

worked with FSA in the past and have an FSA customer record, the system will attempt to automatically link your login.gov account to your existing FSA Customer Record. If you are new to working with USDA, you will need to create an FSA Customer Record. This record is sometimes called a Business Partner ID, BPID, or Business Partner Customer Record. After you verify your identity online, you will be taken to a page to fill out and submit a form to begin that process.

After logging into their **farmers.gov** account, new customers without an existing customer record will be taken to a page where they can fill out customer record paperwork prior to meeting with FSA and NRCS staff in-person at a local service center. Doing so streamlines the process and enables USDA Service Center employees to input your information and create your customer record prior to the meeting.

For more information or assistance with instructions on establishing a **login.gov** account, customers can visit farmers.gov or the local USDA Service Center. New customers can obtain contact information for the local USDA office using the 'find your local service center' feature on farmers.gov.

Julia Keddy

continued from page 10

out of my comfort zone and make friends and countless happy memories.

Q. Are your twin brothers going to camp this summer?

A. Our brothers, Matthew and Andrew, are returning to camp, and like us, they are on track to become Torchbearers. Going to camp is always one of the highlights of the summer for them. When they get home from camp, they always talk non-stop about how much fun they had and what activities they did that week.

Q. What is your present involvement in Farmers Union?

A. I am the Wadena County Farmers Union Secretary, and I go to as many Farmers Union events as possible. Last year I went to the People's Town Hall in Moorhead, and I brought a friend with me to show her the value MFU has on the community and to get her involved too.

Correction

Randy Sorg was mistakenly identified in a photo on page 3 of the April 2026 issue of *Minnesota Agriculture*.

Minnesota Agriculture regrets the error.

YOU MATTER. TALK TO US.

No concern is too small

Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline

833-600-2670

Text farmstress to 898211

Government relations

continued from page 15

Removing MCOs could save the state money on administrative expenses in the long run as seen in Connecticut, which has reduced its Medicaid administrative costs to below 3 percent compared to the 12 percent in Minnesota. This proposal would also allow Minnesotans receiving Medicaid to access the same provider networks, rates and billing rules regardless of where they live, while strengthening consistency and program controls. Under Walz's proposed supplemental budget, the transition would be complete by July 1, 2028.

The governor proposed extending Minnesota's Sustainable Aviation Fuel

(SAF) Tax Credit, which provides a tax credit for SAF that achieves a lifecycle greenhouse gas reduction of greater than 50 percent. For agriculture, this could create a new market incentive for conservation practices and a drive for new crops, like winter camelina.

Walz also proposed raising new revenue by enacting a new tax on large social media platforms. The tax would scale with the number of users on a platform and would max out at \$165,000 plus 50 cents per user.

As always, this is just a snapshot of our legislative work. If you have questions, thoughts or concerns, reach out to me at stu@mfu.org or (320) 232-3047.

Calendar of events

May 7 Washington County Social, Rustic Roots Winery, Scandia, 6-8 p.m.

May 22-25 MFU state office closed for Memorial Day

May 28 Farm and Rural Emergency Response Training, Walnut Grove, 6 p.m.

Find the latest news online at mfu.org/events



Membership application

Name: _____ Spouse's Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____

County: _____ Zip code: _____

Email: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Type of farm: Check all that apply

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

Membership: Fee includes family unless student is checked.

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

JOIN TODAY!

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

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



FUA
FARMERS UNION AGENCY

BIG i | MINNESOTA
Member



**AGENT
LOCATION
MAP**

OUR AGENTS

Ada	Rodney Mathsen
Alexandria	Daylon Faber
Argyle	Brady & Jay Swanson
Bejou	Joe McCollum
Bemidji	Ben Caron
Canby	Mike Panka
Detroit Lakes	Joe McCollum
Duluth	Brad Anderson
Elk River	Rob Pampusch
Elk River	Todd Ostrow (Health Specialist)
Fergus Falls	Grant Davenport
Fosston	Barb Sweep
Franklin	Joel Harmoning
Goodhue	Alison Peters
Ivanhoe	Mike Panka
Lake Crystal	Matt Peterson
Luverne	Barb Anderson
Maple Grove	Brandon Hummel
Marshall	Dennis Klocow, Jr.
Marshall	Mike Panka
Menahga	Kristine Hendrickson
Montevideo	Ivan Anderson
Moorhead	Mari Berggren (Health Specialist)
Moorhead	Aaron Schenck
Moorhead	Robin Swanson & Jenna Crabtree
Morris	Debbie Anderson
New York Mills	Lisa Preuss
Norwood YA	Lisa Valiant
Olivia	Paul Johannes
Owatonna	Ben Flemke
Rochester	Chris Sanders
Roseau	Emily Baugher
St. Paul	FUA Insurance
St. Paul	Abby Moffitt
Thief River Falls	Brady & Jay Swanson
Warren	Brady & Jay Swanson
Willmar	Paul Johannes
Windom	Jessica Krick

305 Roselawn Ave E, Suite 100, Saint Paul, MN 55117-2031

fuinsurance.com • info@fuinsurance.com • (800) 229-1064