

Minnesota Agriculture

Voice of Rural Minnesota



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September 2026

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Photo Credit U of MN School of Public Health

Farmfest honors Meg Moynihan as the 2026 Woman Farmer of the Year

Meg Moynihan, a senior advisor with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), was named the 2026 Farmfest Woman Farmer of the Year on Aug. 6.

Moynihan joined the MDA as a diversification specialist in 2002. She and her husband run Derrydale Farm in Le Sueur County, a 170-acre certified organic dairy operation with a 70-head herd. Her responsibilities range from caring for calves, maintaining pastures, and operating field equipment to managing the farm's book-keeping and organic certification.

Her experience at Derrydale Farm helped shape some of her most significant work at the MDA. After the farm lost its organic milk buyer in 2016, Moynihan's husband worked out of state as a truck driver while she managed the farm largely on her own. The financial uncertainty, anxiety, depression, and isolation she experienced deepened her understanding of the pressures many farmers quietly face.

As a result, Moynihan developed a suite of farmer well-being programs for the MDA, including the Minnesota Farm and Rural Helpline, a free, confidential 24/7 resource connecting farmers with mental health, financial, and legal support. She also manages funding for three agricultural mental health specialists who

provide free services to farmers and their families. In addition, she led the MDA's Farm Suicide Prevention Campaign, which uses radio, social media, and community based suicide prevention training to raise awareness, reduce stigma, and connect farmers with support before a crisis occurs.

"Meg brings a deep understanding of what farmers face every day, and she has spent her career turning that understanding into practical support," said Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen. "She listens, she shows up, and she works alongside farmers to help them succeed. As a farmer herself, she knows the commitment it takes. Minnesota agriculture is stronger because of her leadership."

Moynihan reflected on the recognition and the farmers she has worked with throughout her career.

"I'm grateful for this recognition, but even more grateful for the farmers I've had the privilege to work with," Moynihan said. "Farming is both humbling and hopeful, and women across Minnesota bring skill, resilience, and heart to this work every day. It's an honor to stand alongside them."

Source: Minnesota Department of Agriculture



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Minnesota Farmers Union



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MN Farmers Union



President's message

GARY WERTISH, PRESIDENT

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It's a few days after Farmfest as I sit down to write this column. I think it was the best weather ever for Farmfest; the temperatures were mild and there wasn't a rainy day during the three-day show, Aug. 4-6.

Farmfest has been held at Gilfillan Estate north of Morgan since 1994. It includes vendors, educational displays, pedal tractor pulls, food and forums.

I gave a brief introduction before the Ag Outlook Forum on the second day, participated in a noontime program on the Linder Farm Network and attended a roundtable discussion with Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins. Several political leaders and candidates for office stopped by the Minnesota Farmers Union hoop barn, located just across from the Wick Buildings Farmfest Center, where all the forums are held. We also bring Pizzeria 201 to Farmfest. The Montgomery restaurant has partnered with us for several years.

Attorney General Keith Ellison spent time in our hoop barn on the second day of Farmfest, visiting with attendees and talking about the work he's doing for Minnesota farmers. Keith has worked with Farmers Union for many years and was one of the leaders who took John Deere to court for its failure to share diagnostic equipment with independent repair technicians and farmers, instead forcing farmers to rely on its authorized dealer network for repairs. This not only increases costs but also could mean a costly delay during the critical planting and harvest windows.

In July, a settlement was reached in the suit. The settlement requires John Deere to make repair resources available to farmers and independent repair technicians that are equivalent to the resources provided to John Deere dealers. It also spells out some of the functionality those resources must have. In addition, if John Deere releases any new repair resources, it would need to make those available to farmers and independent repair technicians once 50 percent of authorized John Deere dealerships

have access. The terms of the settlement are in place for 10 years and will be enforced by the Federal Trade Commission and the five states included in the suit.

Minnesota Farmers Union members have advocated for this Right to Repair their own equipment for years because they believe when they buy a piece of equipment, they should be able to repair it themselves or take it to the independent repair technician or dealer of their choice. It's no different than when you buy a car or pickup; you can take it to the dealership for oil changes and repairs, you can take the vehicle to a service provider of your choice, or you can change your own oil or make other repairs yourself.

In January 2023, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between John Deere and American Farm Bureau Federation that gave farmers and independent repair technicians some access to software but didn't give them the total access they needed to diagnose and fix equipment.

The agreement reached in July is another step forward. We will keep working to advance Right to Repair and extend it to other equipment brands, as this agreement is only with John Deere. We also need to codify the right to repair agricultural equipment in Minnesota's Digital Repair Act, which went into effect on July 1, 2024, but excluded agricultural equipment.

I thank Attorney General Ellison for his leadership on Right to Repair.

Uncertainty

While the Right to Repair settlement was good news for farmers, they have been coping with a lot of uncertainty since President Trump started his trade wars.

I spoke about the need for certainty for farmers whenever I had the opportunity at Farmfest. Farmers have worked hard and spent their own checkoff dollars to create markets overseas. Those markets have been rattled by the Trump administration's

handling of trade policy. Secretary Rollins defended the administration's approach, saying Trump uses tariffs to bring countries to the negotiating table and prefers bilateral trade deals. She boasted that the administration has struck 20 new trade deals in 18 months. It's unclear what the status of those trade deals is.

The top trading partners for the U.S. are Canada, Mexico and China. Trump, who signed the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement in his first term, said he will not renew the agreement in its current form. It will now have annual reviews for up to 10 years and will expire in July 2036 if no agreement is reached.

Meanwhile, U.S. soybean exports to China have been dropping. China is the world's largest soybean market, accounting for 60 percent of total imports. In June, "China imported 12.08 million tons of soybeans from Brazil, up 13.7 percent year-on-year, while imports from the U.S. fell 20.9 percent year-on-year to 1.27 million tons," according to a Global Times article. From January through June, China imported 34.75 million tons of soybeans from Brazil compared to 9.31 million tons from the U.S. China has been investing in export infrastructure in South America and Lucas Beber, president of the Brazilian Association of Soybean Growers, told the Global Times that "the Brazilian soybean industry wants to further deepen this relationship."

The Trump administration is boasting of getting new trade agreements, but in reality, they are just framework deals on paper with no enforcement.

One of the deals is the U.S.-U.K. Economic Prosperity Deal, which can be terminated at any time by written notice, according to the document. As Inu Manak, of the Council on Foreign Relations, said, "The U.S.-UK Economic Prosperity Deal isn't what most trade experts would call a trade agreement," but "a framework for future talks For U.S.

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ANNE SCHWAGERL, VICE PRESIDENT

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In 2026, the global spotlight is firmly on women in agriculture. The United Nations has designated this year as the International Year of the Woman Farmer, elevating awareness of the essential role women play in feeding the world. But as global leaders and farmer organizations increasingly agree, recognition alone will not solve the deeper challenges facing women farmers.

At a recent World Farmers' Organization webinar, participants emphasized a critical truth: acknowledging women's contributions is only the first step. What is needed now is action—ensuring equal access to land, capital, markets, and decision-making power.

This message is echoed in the latest global data. The 2026 edition of *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI)* reports that hunger and food insecurity remain persistent challenges, particularly in rural communities. Nearly 30 percent of people living in rural areas globally experienced moderate or severe food insecurity in 2025, compared with 22 percent in urban areas. That gap highlights a fundamental truth: the people closest to food production are often the most vulnerable.

Across much of the world, women farmers have less secure access to land, financing, technology, and markets. At the same time, they are more likely to experience food insecurity themselves—even as they shoulder primary responsibility for feeding families and communities.

Ensuring that women farmers have equal opportunities is not only a matter of fairness; it is essential for building more productive, resilient, and sustainable food systems. When women have access to the same resources as men, farm productivity increases, household nutrition improves,

Investing in the success of women who farm is essential to strengthening food security



MFU Vice President Anne Schwagerl participated in a World Farmers' Organization webinar where participants emphasized that women who farm need equal access to land, capital, markets, and decision-making power.

and communities are better equipped to withstand economic and environmental shocks. In other words, closing the gender gap in agriculture is one of the most effective strategies we have to strengthen global food security.

Food security is not only a global issue—it is also deeply local. In Minnesota, farmers face their own structural barriers, including access to processing infrastructure, competitive markets, and fair pricing. These challenges can disproportionately affect smaller-scale and diversified farms, many of which are led or co-led by women.

Minnesota Farmers Union has taken a practical approach to addressing these barriers through initiatives like Farmers Union Processing + Meats. By expanding access to local and regional meat processing, MFU is helping farmers—especially those raising livestock at smaller scales—retain more value from their products while increasing the availability of locally produced food.

Processing bottlenecks became highly visible during the COVID-19 pandemic, when supply chain disruptions left farmers without viable options and consumers faced empty store shelves. Expanding regional processing capacity is now widely recognized as a cornerstone of resilient

food systems. It shortens supply chains, strengthens local economies, and ensures that food produced regionally can be consumed regionally.

For women farmers, these investments in local food systems can be transformative. Access to nearby processing reduces transportation burdens, increases flexibility, and opens new market opportunities. Just as importantly, it enables farmers to build viable businesses that support their families and communities.

The connection between global and local is clear. Around the world, women farmers are calling for access—to land, to capital, to infrastructure, and to decision-making spaces. In Minnesota, efforts like Farmers Union Processing + Meats reflect that same principle: strengthening food systems by removing barriers and creating opportunity.

If the UN International Year of the Woman Farmer is to leave a lasting legacy, it must be measured not by how often we celebrate women farmers, but by how effectively we invest in their success. Recognition may start the conversation, but action—grounded in equity, infrastructure, and opportunity—is what will ultimately ensure a more secure and resilient food future for all.



GAIL DONKERS
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Why did you join Minnesota Farmers Union?

Chances are, MFU offered something that mattered to your farm, your family, or your community. But beyond the legislative wins and social connections, there's usually one primary reason most of us signed up: Someone we knew asked us to join.

And the No. 1 reason non-members haven't joined yet? No one has asked them.

The "Silent Invitation" trap

We often assume everyone knows how MFU works. We picture neighbors wondering, "How much does it cost? Do I need an initiation? Where do I send a check?"—

Waiting for new members? Practice your pitch, reach out and make the ask today

and we hope an ad or a news article will answer those questions for them.

The truth? Anonymous ads rarely build strong organizations. One-on-one conversations do. It's natural to feel nervous about asking a neighbor face-to-face but avoiding that conversation means leaving potential members behind.

3 steps to master the MFU pitch

- **Step 1: Know your story.** Write down why you joined and what MFU is doing right on issues that matter to you.
- **Step 2: Build your list.** Get together with your county group and write down the names of neighbors, young farmers, and community members you want to invite to join.
- **Step 3: Practice with "Neighbor Bob."** Pair up with another member and roleplay the conversation. Have

them act like a hesitant neighbor. What questions will they ask? The more you practice, the easier the real conversation becomes.

The winning equation

When you approach a prospective member, focus on three simple points:

- 1. Your why:** Why you originally joined Minnesota Farmers Union.
- 2. Your passion:** The topics and community aspects you love.
- 3. The impact:** How MFU's work is making a difference.

Don't wait for new members to fall into your lap. Practice your pitch, reach out, and make the ask today.

Farmers Union members show up at conventions, county fairs and other events

The Membership team and county leaders have worked together to host several events and conventions across the state this summer. They've also been busy promoting Farmers Union at county fairs. Here's a few who shared photos. Share your images with janet@mfu.org.



DFL Lt. Gov. candidate Ben Schierer spoke at the Swift County Convention. Schierer is the running mate of Sen. Amy Klobuchar.



Deputy Agriculture Commissioner Andrea Vaubel spoke at the Dodge/Olmsted County Convention.



MFU members Cheryl Reitmeier and LouAnne Olson volunteered at the Polk County Farmers Union fair booth.



Kelsey Wulf and Brittney Johnson staffed a booth at the West Otter Tail County Fair in July.

Zimmermanns build multi-faceted farm business in Crow Wing County



By Candice Zimmermann

When high school sweethearts Thomas and Candice Zimmermann got married 17 years ago, they never imagined they would end up farming in rural Minnesota.

Having a desire to experience life outside of their hometowns in Stearns County, they found adventure and purpose in several areas before landing in Brainerd and buying their 48-acre farm in 2020.

Moving to a new community in the midst of the pandemic was a difficult task but the Zimmermanns felt a sense of community in Brainerd and began setting roots for the first time. At that time, Candice was the executive director of a nonprofit organization in the area.

"Picking up and settling somewhere new is always hard," Candice said, "But we were fortunate to have opportunities to connect with the community through my work. We were lucky to have met so many wonderful and supportive people. From there our network just grew and grew."

Not long after moving to the farm, Thomas and Candice created Treeline Acres, LLC. "We just knew that this land was meant to be shared and enjoyed. We didn't have a complete vision at that time, we just knew we wanted to get started," Candice said.

Their farm was historically used for hay production and livestock, but the land needed a lot of work to restore soil, replace infrastructure, and build a farm business. Over the last six years, the Zimmermann family, with the help of new-found friends, have built a greenhouse, put up a high tunnel, installed livestock fencing, put up solar panels, and converted an old garage into a farm stand.

"With every project the vision for our farm business and our future grows," Candice said. "We are constantly evolving."

Treeline Acres Farm and Nursery boasts a seasonal plant nursery, fresh produce CSA, honey CSA, farmstand and on-farm events where they invite the public to the farm. Visitors can feed and interact with their Nigerian dwarf goats, babydoll sheep, chickens, and alpacas; learn about where their food comes from and how it is grown; witness honeybee hives and take part in honey harvest; and surround themselves with nature.

The farm has become an identity for the Zimmermanns and as responsibilities have grown on the farm, Candice made the tough decision to step away from her career in economic development to become a full-time farmer last July.

"Making that transition to step away from a comfortable job and salary is always scary, but we wholeheartedly believe that local food and farm experiences are essential to a healthy, thriving community," Candice said. "Our interactions with our patrons show that our community is here to support us and we aren't going anywhere."

Thomas continues to work an off-farm job at Region Five Development Commission in addition to being the farm's fix-it man and lead baker. Thomas began making sourdough during the pandemic and the couple started selling his product at farmers markets alongside their vegetables, honey and other farm products.

Thomas and Candice have two children, Wren, 14, and Miles, 11, who are involved in the farm business as well. Wren enjoys

caring for the animals while Miles is the right-hand man when it comes to planting and harvesting.

"I hope that the experience of growing up on a farm will instill a sense of responsibility to our environment and the understanding that you can create and steward something beautiful with a little love and hard work," Candice said.

The Zimmermann's hard work is paying off. During the summer, Treeline Acres runs a 12-week CSA program as their main enterprise. The program provides weekly deliveries to customers with stops in Brainerd, Nisswa and Crosby. What started as an experiment with six customers in 2023 has grown to 40 CSA members this season.

"People want local food and they want convenience and the CSA is one-box shopping," Candice said. Their CSA boxes are based around vegetables, but their cottage food license allows them to include baked goods and canned items, and they provide eggs when the chickens are cooperating.

A fenced plot near the house is their workhorse garden, providing much of the produce for the CSA. It is still a work in progress, Candice said, but it is productive and they are proud to grow using sustainable practices. They are not a certified organic farm but say they are beyond organic. They use no chemicals on their produce and fertilize with their own formula of compost tea using alpaca manure.

Candice has planted elderberries, chokecherries and apple trees, laying the groundwork for future sales. What works this year may not work next year or in five years, she said, so she's constantly

planning and looking for the next trend that is going to catch on and bring an income stream to Treeline Acres. It's a constant challenge to navigate what's new, what works and what's going to work.

In the spirit of innovation, Treeline Acres launched its plant nursery as a new addition this year. "An opportunity came up that we just couldn't pass on," Candice said. A friend of theirs operated a greenhouse for over a decade but was ready to retire. After some candid conversations about the amount of work, finances, and trusted advice, the Zimmermanns moved the greenhouse down the road to their farm. "Our first year was a huge learning curve," Candice said, "but we are excited to implement changes next year and see the nursery side of the farm grow."

Candice also credits networking opportunities for the success of her farm. To strengthen other small farm businesses in the Brainerd Lakes Area, Candice formed a small coalition of greenhouse growers that meet monthly and discuss business, share challenges, and encourage one another. "We support other small businesses and they support us back," Candice said. "As small farmers, we can be part of big change."

Treeline Acres includes alpacas, a seasonal plant nursery and Nigerian Dwarf goats. The family invites visitors to the farm to feed and interact with the animals.

That mindset was what led to Candice and Thomas applying for the Farmers Union Enterprise Leadership (FUEL) program. They participated in leadership training events in 2025-26 in Door County, Wis., the MFU State Convention, the NFU Fly-in and the National Farmers Union Convention.

"The entire FUEL experience was impactful, and we were thrilled to be connected to FUEL participants in other states," Candice said.



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Celebrating agriculture at Farmfest

After enduring a hot, dry July, visitors to Farmfest welcomed a string of mild weather days to kick off August. Several Minnesota Farmers Union members traveled to southwestern Minnesota for the three-day farm show, which takes on a fair atmosphere with pedal pulls, food and entertainment. There were also educational seminars, political forums and farm services and equipment for sale.



Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen and Sen. Ann Rest, chairwoman of the Senate Tax Committee, stopped by to visit MFU President Gary Wertish.



MFU Membership Director Gail Donkers and MFU President Gary Wertish met with the Minnesota 4-H Agriculture Ambassadors.



MFU Vice President Anne Schwagerl and MFU President Gary Wertish talked with Sen. Amy Klobuchar, who is also running for governor.



Swift County Farmers Union President Jim Falk and Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison.



The Minnesota FFA State Officer team visited with Attorney General Keith Ellison, President Gary Wertish and Vice President Anne Schwagerl while in the MFU hoop barn.

Rollins announces 60-day extension to pay crop insurance premium

By Janet Kubat Willette

Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins told a Farmfest crowd how her boss, President Donald J. Trump, is delivering for American farmers during a first-day visit to the three-day farm show in southwestern Minnesota.

Rollins, a Texas native, spent the morning meeting with commodity group leaders in their tents before taking the stage in the Wick Buildings Farmfest Center prior to the forum featuring candidates in the first and second congressional districts.

She said the One Big Beautiful Bill Act was the largest investment in rural America in history. It added base acres, improved crop insurance, made the estate tax exemption permanent and invested in rural health care.



Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins held a roundtable with agricultural leaders in the soybean tent at Farmfest.

The administration is focused on expanding markets abroad, she said, by negotiating new trade deals and slashing the ag trade deficit. Rollins said she wasn't sure about the Make American Healthy Again movement when she got the call to join the administration. However, Rollins told the crowd that while she and "Bobby" (U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services

Secretary Robert Kennedy) don't agree on everything, they do have a partnership that puts farmers and ranchers first. It's about putting real food back at the center of everything they do.

She boasted of the administration's efforts to bring down the number of people who qualify for and receive food stamps – the



Fillmore County Secretary/Treasurer Eunie Biel with Membership Organizer Lee Johnson.



Membership Director Gail Donkers and Executive Committee member Linda Larson.



Membership Organizer Peter Ripka with Cottonwood County leaders Brent and Jane Imker.

number has dropped to 38 million from 45 million, Rollins said – and she hopes that the number of people on food stamps will continue to decline.

She made three announcements. The first is a series of listening sessions that USDA leadership will host to gather public comments on data collection, analysis, and reporting. Second, Rollins announced that the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) is authorizing Approved Insurance Providers (AIPs) to provide producers with up to 60 additional days to pay crop insurance premiums, administrative fees, and amounts due under Written Payment Agreements with scheduled premium billing dates between July 1, 2026, and Sept. 30, 2026. AIPs may waive interest charges during this period. Thirdly, RMA is reinstating the option for insured producers to purchase an additional 5 percent prevented planting coverage beginning with crops associated with the Aug. 31 filing date for 2027 and succeeding crop years.



The Ag Outlook Panel at Farmfest included, from left, Dr. Frayne Olson, Dr. Faith Parum, Brian Werner and Mark Schultz.

Ag experts weigh in on farm policy, farm finances and farm markets during Farmfest outlook panel

By Janet Kubat Willette

The four speakers presenting during the Farmfest Ag Outlook Panel offered insight into agriculture from a macro perspective, talking about economics, ag policy, renewable fuels and crop conditions.

But, as North Dakota State University Crops Economist Frayne Olson said, the focus is on the averages and there's a wide diversity behind those averages.

Olson, who made his first visit to Farmfest this year, said the livestock ag economy is doing better, while the crop sector, on the other hand, is having some issues. He talks a lot with ag bankers to gauge the health of the farm economy and he's hearing that bankers did some creative accounting to get operating loan packages together this year. Depending on the size and scope of the package, this could be a critical year for those farmers. The groups he's most concerned about are those farmers who have recently gone through an expansion and young and beginning farmers in addition to farmers who are in the middle of a farm transition.

On the plus side, Mark Schultz, of Northstar Commodity, said he saw one good field after another driving to Farmfest from the Twin Cities.

"It is the best-looking crop I have seen," he said. "I have never seen it so uniform in all the years I've been doing this."

He's been coming to Farmfest for 35 years, coming from Texas for the last nine years. The crop looks good now, he said, but the crop isn't in the bin. In 2010, the crop looked great in August but then the rains stopped and expected yields dropped.

Grain traders are seeing what he's seeing, with corn prices dropping as the U.S. crop condition stays good to excellent. The crop

in South America has been a record, he said, but the crops in Europe are suffering as that continent endures record heat and drought. USDA in July estimated the European corn crop will be down this year. If the hot and dry conditions persist, look for that number of fall further, which will be favorable to grain markets. El Nino is another factor that may impact grain markets, with an El Nino favoring a drier than normal trend in northern and central Brazil and a wetter trend in southern Brazil and Argentina. In early September, Brazilian producers start planting their first crop corn and soybeans. It's going to take crop problems in Brazil to take prices significantly higher, Schultz said, as the country is the world's largest soybean producer.

Farm policy

American Farm Bureau Federation Economist Faith Parum and Minnesota Biofuels Association Executive Director Brian Werner talked about policy that may impact prices and farmer balance sheets.

Parum said she is focused on four pieces of ag policy.

First, the farm bill. The Senate Ag Committee was due to begin markup of the farm bill on Aug. 6, the day after the outlook panel at Farmfest. The farm bill was last passed in 2018, and it has been extended three times since. Many of the provisions of the farm bill were included in the One Big Beautiful Bill Act passed in July 2025, but others, including research, conservation and education, were not included in that bill.

Second, the Trump administration is interested in bilateral trade agreements and uses tariffs as a negotiating strategy.

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MFU members recognized as U of M Farm Families of the Year

The University of Minnesota Farm Family Recognition Program honors farm families from throughout Minnesota for their significant contributions to the agriculture industry and their local communities.

The Farm Family Recognition Program has honored Minnesota farmers since 1979. It is coordinated by University of Minnesota Extension, the College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences, and the College of Veterinary Medicine.

Several MFU members are Farm Families this year. The families were recognized Aug. 6 at Farmfest.

MFU members who are Farm Families of the Year this year include:



Schram Vineyards

Schram Vineyards, which was established in Carver County in 2008 by Aaron and Ashley Schram. The vineyard operates 10 acres of intensively managed wine grapes, planted with cold-hardy University of Minnesota varieties selected for winter survival and wine quality. These varieties support an on-site winery producing award-winning wines recognized at national and international competitions.

The family operation includes Aaron and Ashley's teenage children, Axel and Bridget, who are beginning to take on responsibilities within the vineyard.

The Schrams are members of the Waconia Chamber of Commerce and the Minnesota Wine and Grape Alliance. The farm collaborates with University of Minnesota horticulture research programs, contributing to cold-climate grape research and helping advance sustainable viticulture in Minnesota.



Stratmoen Farms

Stratmoen Farms, a multi-generational family farming operation in Lac qui Parle County. The Stratmoen family farm was started in 1896 by Edwin and Esther Stratmoen. Their son, Roger Stratmoen, and his wife, Beverly, carried the legacy forward. Together, they raised seven children and had 18 grandchildren.

Their son, Keith Stratmoen, and his wife, Janet, have been operating the farm since 1984. The farm is diversified, with a grain operation, hog production, trucking, tiling and manure hauling.

Keith is one of four brothers who farmed. One has retired while two others continue to farm. Keith and Janet's three sons and their wives all stayed to continue the family operation. This includes Keith Jr. and Laurel Stratmoen and their children, Carson, Claire and Chloe; Brett and Larisa Stratmoen and their children, Brock and Dane; and Preston and Jordan Stratmoen and their children, Quinn, Shay, Riley and Wells.



The Bisek family

The Bisek family farm was purchased in 1989 in Mahnom County's Pembina Township by Ray and Betsy Bisek. Over the years, Ray and Betsy and their children, Nicolas, Monica, Peter and Patricia, raised

fruits, vegetables, small grains, row crops, sheep, poultry and rabbits. The farm also welcomed Head Start and elementary school children for visits and brought livestock to community events.

All of Ray and Betsy's children were active in 4-H and FFA, with Ray and Betsy volunteering at both the club and county levels. Betsy passed away in 2007, leaving a strong legacy of agriculture and community service.

Now, Ray raises wheat, corn and soybeans using conservation tillage and cover crop practices. His professional career has been rooted in agriculture, including service as the Mahnom County Extension agent, a high school vocational agriculture instructor, a technician for the Mahnom County Soil and Water Conservation District, and a field reporter for the USDA Farm Service Agency. He has held leadership and membership roles with the Minnesota Association of Extension Agricultural Professionals, the Mahnom County Agricultural Society, the Mahnom County Livestock Association and the Mahnom County Farmers Union.



Hermanson Harvest

Hermanson Harvest is the fourth generation of farmers on the land in Nicollet County, and they farm in a very different way from the previous three generations. Hermanson Harvest began producing and selling vegetables, fruit and chicken at farmers markets and on-farm. They produce over 30 different vegetables and fruit on two acres, selecting varieties that provide a wide range for their customers. Their vegetables are grown using organic methods, including compost, organic fertilizer, and no chemicals.

Don Hermanson, a University of Minnesota graduate and former high school and

college agriculture instructor, manages the farm. Rhonda Hermanson is the marketing director. Other family members include Gwen Hermanson, who was a harvester and vendor; Hannah Hermanson Rivard, a former assistant manager; and Andrew Hermanson, a former assistant manager.

Education has been an important focus of Hermanson Harvest, providing tours for kindergarten through high school students, farm and gardening groups, and the general public, making the connection from farm to fork.



The Wertish family

The Wertish family farm began in Renville County in 1945 when John and Dorothy Wertish purchased their farm in Emmet Township. Their son, Gary, along with his brothers, Richard and Doug, grew up helping on the diversified grain and livestock operation.

Today, Gary and Jeanne Wertish's son, Tom, and daughter-in-law, Jessica, operate the fifth-generation farm with the help of their children, Annabelle, Jack and Kalleigh. The family raises corn and soybeans, along with a few hogs and cattle for family and friends.

Gary serves as president of the Minnesota Farmers Union, advocating for family farmers and rural communities. He has also served as an Emmet Township supervisor for more than 30 years and on the Renville Ambulance Board for 12 years. Gary and Jeanne are founding members of the St. Mary's Preservation Association, which is dedicated to the maintenance, upkeep and history of the former St. Mary's Church in Bechyn. The family has a long history of involvement in 4-H and FFA, serving as officers and participating in competitions and programs.



Jim and Gail Donkers

Jim and Gail Donkers' farming journey began in 1989 when Jim returned home after graduating from the University of Minnesota and took over management of the dairy herd. Gail, also a University of Minnesota graduate, joined the operation when they were married in 1993. In 2008, they sold the dairy herd, converted the milking barn into a calf barn and began finishing calves.

Today, the Donkers family operates a diverse farm in Rice County that includes soybeans, corn, alfalfa, finishing hogs, starting and finishing baby calves, and a sheep enterprise raising Babydoll and Dorset breeding sheep. They work closely with the local Soil and Water Conservation District to implement conservation practices and manage water to reduce soil loss. Jim and Gail farm full-time alongside their son, Mitch, Jim's father, Paul, and Jim's brother, Matt. Their son, Riley, manages the sheep operation with Gail, and their daughter, Abby, assists with sheep marketing and registrations. Their daughter-in-law, Daiton, contributes through farm photography.

The Donkers family is deeply involved in their community. Jim has served on the Richland Township board in various roles for 28 years and is also an election judge and 4-H leader. Gail serves as the MFU membership director, is a 4-H leader, and is the Rice County Fair Sheep Superintendent. She is also secretary of the Kenyon Wanamingo FFA Alumni, serves on the Minnesota FFA Foundation Board and is an All-American Junior Show Babydoll Breed representative and volunteer. Gail was elected to the Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council in 2018 and has served in several leadership roles.



The Jostock family

The Jostock family farm was established in Wabasha County in 1942 when Robert and Audrey Jostock began raising dairy cows and operating a farrow-to-finish hog operation on 200 acres overlooking the Zumbro River near Hammond.

In 1991, their son, Edwin, and his wife, Lynn, purchased the farm while raising their four children, Katie, Samantha, Alan and Rebecca. In 2015, they sold the dairy herd and transitioned to a crossbred beef herd with a focus on Red Angus cattle.

Today, Alan and his wife Betsy represent the third generation on the Jostock farm. Their daughters, Gracelyn and Alexa, are also involved in the operation. The family manages a 60-head cow-calf herd and operates a 25-sow farrow-to-finish hog enterprise focused on Berkshire and Duroc genetics.

The Jostocks farm 250 acres of corn, soybeans, oats, barley and hay, utilizing no-till practices and cover crops on some acres. They have diversified in recent years by adding pumpkins, squash, popcorn and 80 laying hens, with eggs marketed directly to customers.

The family is deeply engaged in their community. Edwin and Lynn previously served on the board of directors for the Minnesota Milk Producers Association. Edwin currently serves as chair of the Zumbro Township Board, president of the Wabasha County Minnesota Farmers Union and treasurer of the Wabasha County Pork Producers. He is also a past advisor for the Riverland Community College Farm Business Management Program. Lynn served as president of the Plainview Milk Products board and was a key leader for her children's 4-H clubs. The family are members of the Wabasha Cattlemen's Association.

Nichols family goes from moldboard plowing to eliminating fall tillage as their farm adapts to changing weather patterns

By Jada Csikos-Monroe

The Nichols family has a 640-acre farm in Lincoln County, where they grow corn and soybeans and have land in the Reinvest in Minnesota (RIM) Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP).

Jim Nichols was the Minnesota Department of Agriculture Commissioner from 1982 to 1990. He continues to farm alongside his family. His daughter, Dr. Kris Nichols, is a soil microbiologist and has informed the management practices on the farm. Kris, along with her brother-in-law Al Trigg and her nephew-in-law Glenn Hofer, are the next generation farming the land.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Q. What is the background of your farm?

Jim: I bought my farm 50 years ago at a very low price in Lincoln County. Because I bought it so cheap, I've made a very good living out here. When I started farming, I was moldboard plowing and I had four-row planters and a two-row combine, that's how it was back then. I was always hoping to get 100 bushels of corn an acre but never got there.

Since I bought my farm, I've added two more pieces of land totaling 640 acres, or one square mile. I'm 80 years old and retired from full-time farming two years ago, but I have the machinery so I keep going. Over the years I've grown a lot of things, but right now I'm only growing corn and soybeans.

Kris: My brother-in-law and my nephew-in-law are the next generation on the farm who have been doing the field work for about seven years now.



Jim and Dr. Kris Nichols

They're renting half of the farm, and then on the other half they're doing custom labor for my dad, so they make their decisions on their half and dad makes his decisions on his half.

After 25 years I've moved back to the area, and I've been using some of my dad's land to conduct experiments. I also manage an approved cattle grazing plan on a section of the farm that we have in a RIM WRP to permanently protect and restore wetlands and associated native grassland habitats.

Q. Have you seen weather patterns changing over the years? If so, how has that impacted your farm?

Jim: Of course the weather has changed because it's hotter and drier now. When I first started farming, I didn't expect the land to get dried out, but I kind of expect that all the time now. Like every farmer, I keep track of the weather all the time. They're predicting that some places in Minnesota this summer will have four days in a row of temperatures over 100 degrees, and that really hurts the crop because it takes so much water out of the ground and plants.

Luckily, by farming with changes I've made with Kris's help, I've been able to get through drought and still get a successful crop.

Kris: We're able to harvest a little bit earlier than I remember us harvesting in the past. With it being so hot during the summers now, the crops, especially corn, seem to be growing really fast.

It's also been warmer over the winter in particular. In the winter we've seen a lot less snowfall and snow not sticking around if we do get it, which impacts spring conditions. Recently we've had very dry springs during the time we're normally planting, so we have some difficulty being able to get the seeds to germinate because we're waiting for rain.

Q. What management changes have you made on the farm over the years?

Kris: I think the biggest change we've made was building our organic matter. My dad has been able to increase his organic matter levels by eliminating fall tillage and instead only doing very minimal till in the spring to incorporate fertilizer and make a seed bed, so there's no in-season tillage and there's no fall tillage.

Additionally, for a very long time my dad has looked at how we're managing nitrogen fertilizer. Fall fertilizer applications on farms oftentimes end up contaminating our groundwater and our lakes because of wind and rain erosion, so very little of it is taken up by the plants. Here in southwestern Minnesota that pollution has had a major impact on our groundwater.

Jim: Fertilizer applied in the fall can easily get washed away before corn has time to absorb it, which hurts your yield in addition to polluting our groundwater. So instead of fall fertilizer applications, I apply dry nitrogen fertilizer in the spring during seeding, which is closer to when corn will actually absorb and use it. Corn uses almost all of its nitrate in about 28 days during the time it starts growing consistently, around June and July. Timing is everything with fertilizer applications.

Q. Have you seen positive outcomes since you've reduced tillage passes and managed fertilizer more efficiently?

Kris: At this point my dad doesn't have the erosion on his fields that has happened in the past, and he doesn't get the gullies that his neighbors get either.

This spring was really dry, but as I was driving around and looking at his neighbors and his fields, I noticed he got better and faster germination of his crops because he was able to hold on to water through higher levels of organic matter. Germination rates can really affect your yield in the end, and being able to make those changes has improved things dramatically.

Jim: I have very good yields now. I generally forward contract 200 bushels of corn an acre, so that's what I shoot for, and I pretty much get there every year which is important. But what matters more is the environment and the things we do on our farm to help it.

Q. Besides changes to the row crop operation, what other conservation practices does your family implement on the farm?

Kris: With rolling hills on the land, we've had a small area that's always been in pasture. About ten years ago, my dad put about 55-acres of that land in a long-term easement with RIM WRP. The land is fairly wet and has a creek that runs into the Missouri River, and we want to make sure that we're filtering the water by having ample organic matter on the land. I manage those acres and we have a grazing plan on it, so we have some neighbors that bring their cattle to feed on the forages.

Additionally, my dad has done a lot over the years to add trees, windbreaks, and living snow fences throughout the farm to mitigate erosion from wind.

Jim: Speaking of wind, about 20 years ago I put up a big wind turbine on my farm and it generates enough power for about 400 homes. I'm glad I got that wind turbine because it's cheap energy that reduces pollution, and I think as a nation we got to do a lot more of that. Wind turbines are great because they take nothing out of production.

Kris: It's worth mentioning that while my dad was the Commissioner of Agriculture for Minnesota in the 1980s, he was able to get legislation passed on ethanol and wind production, which helped farmers earn an income that allows them to stay on the land. Lincoln County was one of the poorest counties in the United States at the time. Now, with the wind production we have and the associated tax benefits, it has really changed the amount of income that the county has.

Q. Are there more changes you still hope to make on the land to improve the farm or protect natural resources?

Kris: We've worked a couple of times on cover crops, and that's something that we'd like to expand a little bit more into. When we tried cover crops in the past, we saw some positive things that were going on but it was hard to make some of the economics work. Unfortunately, there's a lot of infrastructure issues that exist in our area from a marketing standpoint that lock you into corn and soybeans. A lot of the local elevators have closed, so you have very few places to take your crop and they only take corn and soybeans.

My dad has also tried to grow oats on occasion, and after his oat crop he had the highest yield he's ever had at a 316-bushel yield in corn, which was very impressive. But the oat crop was difficult too. We don't have all of the equipment anymore to be managing a small grain, and it was difficult to find markets in our area that were close enough to be able to sell that crop to.

Q. Your family is clearly passionate about conservation. What has been the motivation for you to implement and advocate for these conservation strategies?

Jim: Reducing pollution was a motivating factor for us to change, because we have a severe problem with carbon dioxide and nitrates. As farmers, those are the two main things we need to think about. Carbon dioxide is causing raising temperatures, and nitrates are polluting our groundwater, which can be really dangerous for drinking water. I don't do any fall tillage because using fossil fuels for excess tillage causes more carbon dioxide emissions, and I don't do any fall fertilizer applications because it can get washed away and contribute to nitrate pollution in our groundwater. We had to change the way we take care of our land to reduce those pollutants.

Kris: We are always thinking about what we can do to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and pollutants, and in farming there's a lot of opportunities to have a positive impact on that. That's really what my dad's been trying to do all of my life, and what I've been working with him in my adult life trying to do.

Reducing erosion was another motivating factor for us to change our practices. Since Lincoln County is very windy, we've had many dust storms during the fall which cause erosion. As a soil scientist, I saw a reduction in tillage as an important and easy step to mitigate erosion by increasing our organic matter.

Q. What is something that you are looking forward to?

Kris: Since I've just moved back to the area, I've been able to use some of my dad's land as an experimental test plot, and right now we've got an experiment set up to look at moisture loss on the bare spots between crops. Being able to make observations like that will be really important for us to understand how to best manage the land moving forward. I'm looking forward to continuing to learn from experiments on the land.

FUEL cohort meets in Redwood Falls, hears from state presidents

By Janet Kubat Willette

REDWOOD FALLS, Minn. – The 2026-27 Farmers Union Enterprises Leadership cohort met for their first seminar July 27-30 in Redwood Falls.

The Farmers Union Enterprises Leadership (FUEL) program is a leadership program for members of the five states involved in Farmers Union Enterprises (FUE). Those states are Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. Each member state selects two people to participate. In Minnesota, this year's participants are Todd and Stacy Leiding of Fillmore County. Todd is the Fillmore County Farmers Union president.

The cohort will meet three times. The first was in Redwood Falls. The second will be in Washington, D.C., in September just before the National Farmers Union (NFU) Fall Fly-in and the third will be at the NFU Annual Convention in San Antonio. In addition to programming before the Fly-in, they will participate in Fly-in activities with their state delegation.

In Redwood Falls, the group came together in the training room of the Farmers Union Industries (FUI) building. Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) Membership Organizer John Beaton led the programming committee this year since the event was held in Minnesota.

The programming included a presentation by former MFU Membership and Minnesota Cooks Director Claudine Arndt,



The Farmers Union Enterprises Leadership cohort gathered July 27 at Farmers Union Industries in Redwood Falls. The cohort includes two people from each of the states involved in Farmers Union Enterprises. Todd Leiding, far right, represented Minnesota at the seminar. He and his wife, Stacy, are representing MFU in the program this year.

a legislative storytelling workshop, a self-inventory assessment by John Beranek of Intersections Consulting of Sioux Falls, a FUE presidents panel and tours of Sleepy Bison Acres, Artex and Sweet Haven Tonics.

President's Panel

The presidents of the Farmers Union organizations in Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin talked about their Farmers Union journeys during an hourlong panel discussion with the FUEL participants.

All but MFU President Gary Wertish are generational members of the organization. Wertish joined Farmers Union shortly after he and his wife, Jeanne, married. Retired

MFU field organizer Wendell Bakker drove into their yard and recruited them into the organization.

Montana Farmers Union President Walter Schweitzer is a third-generation member. He said he often wishes he could thank his grandparents for having the foresight to start Farmers Union and Farmers Union Industries. South Dakota Farmers Union (SDFU) President Doug Sombke is a fourth-generation member and Wisconsin Farmers Union (WFU) President Darin Von Ruden is a second-generation member whose parents joined the organization when he was a one-year-old. North Dakota Farmers Union (NDFU) President Matt Perdue came to his first convention when



NDFU President Matt Perdue, WFU President Darin Von Ruden, SDFU President Doug Sombke, Montana Farmers Union President Walter Schweitzer and Minnesota Farmers Union President Gary Wertish answer questions during a FUEL seminar in Redwood Falls.

he was five months old. Two of his great-great grandparents were charter members of the organization in the state. Both Schweitzer and Von Ruden participated in FUEL.

The presidents explained the difference between FUI and FUE and why they are significant. FUI is a collection of businesses, including Central Bi-Products, Artex, Performance Pet Products, Redwood Farms Meat Processors, Midwest Grease and Northland Choice. Dale Bednarek is president and CEO of Farmers Union Industries, and the board of directors includes MFU Vice President Anne Schwagerl and members Josh VanDerPol, Aaron Chervestad and Steve Anderson. FUE owns FUI. FUE funds the organizations in the five states and is governed by the five state presidents. FUE also invests in other businesses, serving as a small town 'Shark Tank,' Sombke said.

The presidents also shared their reflections on what it means to be a leader.

Perdue said a leader identifies a problem and motivates people to solve it. A leader has the courage to ask hard questions, accept the answers and rally people around a cause.

Von Ruden said a leader has honesty and integrity. He got involved in the organization because of the milk pricing issue and he learned from that experience. He encouraged FUEL participants to show the facts, get behind a cause and "don't be afraid to say you're right."

If you get asked to serve on a church board or community board, don't think you don't have time, Sombke said. Don't be afraid to step up and continue to learn and grow. Country of Origin Labeling was the issue that motivated him.

Show up, Schweitzer said. Many people who join Farmers Union feel alone and isolated where they live because they think differently than a lot of their neighbors. Show up, get involved and you can make a difference, he said.

Don't be afraid to get involved, Wertish added. When he was young, neighbors would gather to visit after chores, creating a community. Now is the time to rebuild community.



*Paul Sobocinski in the 1980s and today. Sobocinski raised hogs in Redwood County near Wabasso. The photo on the left is from the book, *Breaking Hard Ground Stories of Minnesota Farm Advocates*.*

Farm crises continue to wreak havoc throughout farm country

By Aeden Evenson-McDermott

In 1984, farming got tough for Paul Sobocinski. The price of pigs dropped significantly, and land values dropped in half. Interest rates rose from 8 percent to 19 percent on the Redwood County farmer's loans.

Sobocinski foresaw a farm crisis occurring in 1983-84 during his time on the board of directors of the National Farmers Organization (NFO). He followed his father into NFO. His father was active in the organization in the 1970s and did organizing with dairy and hog farmers.

In 1976, Sobocinski began farming, raising hogs, crops and beef cattle. Prior to that, from 1973 to mid-1976, he worked as a grain elevator operator and manager for Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association. The Grain Terminal Association wanted to get farmers a decent price for their grain, Sobocinski said.

As the farm crisis of the 1980s began to unfold across Minnesota, he organized with others in Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), NFO, and the American Ag Movement. The American Ag Movement (AAM) is a grassroots organization founded in Campo, Colorado, in 1977 by struggling farmers protesting against the Farm Bill. AAM organized national strikes, boycotts, and massive D.C. rallies. AAM remains active in their support for farmers and ranchers.

In 1984, Sobocinski worked with others in Minnesota to found Groundswell to respond to the 1980s farm crisis. He served on the board from 1985 to 1990 and was the foreclosure chairman. Groundswell worked to organize meetings and tractorcades, The organization spearheaded farm protests and worked with legislators to establish farmer-lender mediation and the right for farmers to settle debt along with right of first refusal. Groundswell also worked to convince Gov. Rudy Perpich to call for a moratorium on farm foreclosures.

His playbook for organizing in the 1980s came from a banker in Redwood Falls. The banker told him, "well Paul, here's your playbook, do what they did in the 1930s."

"Stand up, protest, raise heck" is the motto Sobocinski used in his advocacy.

He explained there was a piece of legislation with a buy-down program which provided state money to help buy down the interest rate with the bank when the bank worked with a farmer. Sobocinski also advanced the farm advocate program and worked with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to push legislation that would help farmers.

Sobocinski draws parallels between the 1980s farm crisis and the current farm

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NFU, AFBF issue joint statement on Packers and Stockyards Act



National Farmers Union President Rob Larew and American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall issued a joint statement on July 9 on reports that USDA plans to rescind rules that protect farmers under the Packers and Stockyards Act.

"America's farmers are deeply troubled by news that USDA plans to rescind or continue to delay several rules that are specifically designed to benefit America's farmers and ranchers. The rules help protect farmers from retaliation by large processors, increase transparency and improve pay systems for contract poultry growers. They make it clear that unfair and deceptive practices by meatpackers will not be tolerated, and they take on the



National Farmers Union President Rob Larew



American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall

poultry tournament pay system that for too long created winners and losers based on factors outside of growers' control.

"The American Farm Bureau Federation and National Farmers Union, representing millions of farm families, worked for years advocating for a more level playing field. That progress is now at risk of being undone.

"The Trump administration has long said that it supports farmers and ranchers, but voiding these rules would do the exact opposite. Instead, more power would be given to large processing companies at the expense of America's farmers. We urge President Trump and Secretary Rollins to demonstrate their commitment to farmers by leaving these critical safeguards in place."

Rollins visits Arizona to highlight screwworm work

On July 29, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins announced USDA's commitment to invest \$25 million toward the opening of a new sterile fly dispersal facility in Arizona to strengthen the nation's long-term response to New World screwworm (NWS). Rollins also visited the livestock inspection facilities at the Douglas, Ariz., Port of Entry, highlighting the Department's preparedness measures ahead of the planned reopening of the port to livestock trade on Aug. 24.

"The Douglas Port of Entry will reopen only because USDA has implemented one of the most rigorous livestock inspection protocols in history, giving us confidence we can safely resume this critical trade while ensuring cattle crossing the border are free from New World screwworm," Rollins said. "At the same time, today's announcement marks another major investment in our long-term strategy to push this pest back into Mexico and ultimately eradicate it from North America."

The proposed Arizona sterile fly dispersal facility would complement existing



Screwworm

investments in Texas, Mexico, and Panama while improving USDA's ability to respond to NWS threats along the southwestern border, Rollins said. USDA will continue working with the Arizona state leaders to identify the specific location and operational plan for the facility in Arizona. Depending on the selected site and available infrastructure, construction could be completed in as little as several months.

Under USDA's phased reopening plan, each animal will receive multiple veterinary inspections, including by USDA veterinarians, before entering the United

States. Any animal failing to meet APHIS import criteria will be denied entry, and detection of NWS would immediately halt imports through the facility.

USDA announced a coordinated, phased reopening of southern livestock ports contingent upon Mexico's continued adherence to the Joint Action Plan to combat NWS. Douglas was selected as the first port to reopen because Sonora, Mexico, maintains one of Mexico's strongest animal health systems and remains the lowest-risk state for NWS, while the Douglas facility is well positioned to implement USDA's inspection protocols. Following a successful reopening of Douglas and continued evaluation of disease risk, USDA will consider reopening the Santa Teresa and Columbus, New Mexico, ports.

USDA's reopening timeline remains contingent upon continued progress by Mexico and ongoing risk assessments.

Source: USDA

Image: Adobe Stock

President's message

continued from page 3

trade policy writ large, this means a new approach whereby no deal is ever really done, as each one is subject to constant modification and threats of withdrawal."

The European Union paused action on its framework deal with the U.S. after Trump threatened to impose a 25 percent tariff over the lack of support for the U.S. purchase of Greenland. Vietnam and Thailand continue to negotiate the deals of their framework agreement. However, the United States–Argentina Agreement on Reciprocal Trade and Investment was signed on Feb. 5.

Trade update

Since my last update, Trump has signed three proclamations under Section 338 of the Tariff Act of 1930 imposing additional 50 percent tariffs on a range of Canadian goods. These tariffs take effect Aug. 19 and apply to a broad range of products, including hockey sticks, cement and alcohol, according to Matthew West of Baker Botts. Trump also implemented a 10 percent forced labor tariff on Canada on July 24.

In the meantime, the administration is conducting bilateral trade talks with Mexico in hopes of reaching an agreement by year's end. The only active tariff against Mexico is a Section 301 of 10 percent implemented on July 24, according to the ReedSmith Trump 2.0 Tariff Tracker.

Trump has implemented 25 percent Section 301 tariffs on Brazil for unreasonable policies. That went into effect on July 22. A Section 301 tariff for forced labor was implemented on July 24, according to the Tariff Tracker.

As West of Baker Botts said, "keeping track of all the tariffs that have been promulgated or proposed during the Trump administration continues to be a head-spinning task."

Farm bill update

On Aug. 6, the Senate Agriculture Committee took up the farm bill, but the bill failed to advance. The Republican leader of the committee was quick to blame Democrats.

"America's farmers and ranchers have pleaded for more farm in the farm bill. Republicans provided it and Democrats

rejected it and they simply cannot afford continued delays," said Ag Committee Chairman John Boozman, R-Ark. "... Democrats remain fixated on a partisan policy that allows states to continue the incredible wasteful spending of taxpayer dollars, ignoring our negotiated proposal. This debate was about the farm bill, not protecting the mismanagement of billions of dollars in food aid."

Ranking Member Sen. Amy Klobuchar, D-Minn., advocated for Minnesota and other states being penalized for having a lower error rate.

"I am committed to continuing to work with Chairman Boozman on this bill to get it done and there are good things in it for our farmers and ranchers," Klobuchar said. "I also appreciate he has acknowledged the problem with the SNAP cost shift to states and counties. But amid tariff-related rising grocery prices in states across the country where SNAP has been critical, this is only a one-year fix. It still advantages high error rates states over states with mid-level error rates. A state with an error rate twice that of Minnesota will pay nothing in the second year, whereas states that have reduced their error rates will still be disadvantaged over high error rate states. Our members are simply asking for the two-year delay so all states will be on the same footing in working to reduce their error rates. That is 10 percent of the total SNAP cuts."

When the One Big Beautiful Bill Act was passed in July 2025, a few states with significantly higher error rates including Alaska, Florida and Georgia, were given additional time to comply with the SNAP legislative changes. States with lower error rates were expected to comply beginning in fiscal year 2028 while states with higher error rates were given until 2029 or 2030. The OBBBA also includes a cost shift from the federal government to the states or local units of government. In Minnesota, the costs shift to the counties as the counties administer SNAP. This means property taxes will rise as counties fund their operations through property taxes.

The Senate is expected to return to session on Sept. 14.

State fair

That brings us to the state fair. The Minnesota State Fair runs Aug. 27 through Labor Day, Sept. 7. The Minnesota Farmers

Union Coffee Shop has two foods on the Official State Fair New Foods List: An Apple Donut Ham Grinder and a Banana Butterscotch Barnraiser.

The Apple Donut Ham Grinder features First Kiss apples from Pleasant Valley Orchard sliced into rings, battered, deep-fried and tossed in cinnamon sugar and stacked with sliced uncured ham from Hidden Stream Farm, dressed arugula and drizzled with hot honey. It is served with herb-whipped ricotta spread on a toasted hoagie roll.

Created by James Beard-nominated chef John Kraus of Patisserie 46, the Banana Butterscotch Barnraiser is vanilla pound cake layered with roasted bananas, butterscotch sauce and caramelized croissant croutons. It is topped with whipped cream from Stony Creek Dairy and garnished with nut-free cereal mix made with Corn Chex, Biscoff cookie butter, chocolate chips, butter, powdered sugar, vanilla and salt.

Other new foods this year include:

Amazing Grain Bowl featuring a bed of baby spinach and grain blend of wild rice and brown rice topped with pickled beets, onions and roasted butternut squash. It's finished with sunflower dressing, goat cheese crumbles and toasted sunflower seeds.

Farmers Muffin Top from Chef John Kraus and his pastry team at Patisserie 46. The item features vanilla crumb cake, cinnamon swirl, blueberries and maple glaze.

Watermelon Mint Limeade features Earl Giles Distillery watermelon and lime elixir with house-made mint syrup.

The fan-favorite Maple Cream Nitro Cold Press Coffee, which made the state fair's new foods list in 2017, remains on the shop's menu, along with the Pork Schnitzel sandwich, which made the list in 2022. The schnitzel sandwich features a crispy breaded Minnesota pork tenderloin that is deep fried and topped with pickled cabbage and mustard mayo on a toasted bun.

A couple of other state fair reminders. Let Communications Director Janet Kubat know if you or your child will be exhibiting at the fair and let me or Membership Director Gail Donkers know if your child makes it to the 4-H Purple Ribbon Auction.

Be sure to stop by the coffee shop and say hi while you're at the fair.

MINNESOTA FARMERS UNION – STATE BYLAWS

The MFU bylaws committee met to review and update the bylaws. This proposed update to the MFU bylaws will be discussed and debated at the state convention in November. The content in red with underlines is proposed for addition and the content with the strikethrough is proposed for deletion.

*

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. ~~To Regular Members Qualifications. In order to~~ be admitted ~~toas a regular membershipmember~~, a person must

~~a) be over the age of sixteen, a citizen of the United States (or have declared an intention to become a citizen);~~

~~b) be actively engaged in or retired from farming or ranching. "Actively engaged in farming or ranching" is defined by the USDA and further described by National Farmers Union as a farmer/rancher who (1) makes (or made) significant contribution of labor and management in a farm or ranch AND (2) depends (or depended) on a tangible income from farming or ranching.~~

~~c) file or, if retired, have filed, a Schedule F in connection with their Federal Income Taxes. An associated family farm entity may file or have filed such Schedule F to reflect the labor of the regular member.~~

~~Section 2. Regular Member Affiliation with County Union. A regular member shall be admitted to membership in a county union. In the event that a regular member is not designated to be a member of a certain county union, such regular member shall be a "member at-large" and may choose to become a regular member of the most convenient county union by request to the MFU President, in writing. Such request shall be granted upon approval of the MFU President and the county union where membership is requested.~~

~~Section 3.). A regular member must be a farmer (a farmer is defined as one who operates a family farm, derives an appreciable income from family farming, or retired from farming, Rights of Regular Members.~~

~~a) Regular members shall have the exclusive right to vote at the county, state and national levels. Regular members shall have the right to debate and discuss proposed policy in accordance with the rules in effect during the proceeding. Only regular members can serve as delegates to the MFU Union State Convention and National Farmers Union Convention. Only regular members can be elected as officers and/or directors of any county, state or national Farmers Union.~~

~~b) All regular members of MFU must be held in the name of an individual. The spouses of dues paid regular members, and such regular members' children between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, are regular members of the county and state union with all rights and privileges of the regular members, including the right to vote. The MFU State Office shall register and issue family regular membership cards to all dues-paying regular members.~~

~~Section 4. Associate Members. In order to be an associate member, a person must be~~

~~a) a farm employee, a manager or employee of a farmers' cooperative enterprise, an employee of a Farmers Union cooperative enterprise or an instructor in agriculture education.; and/or~~

~~Section 2. The membership shall consist of:~~

~~a) A regular member is a person who has been admitted to membership in a local or county union.~~

~~b) A member at-large is a regular member who is not designated to be a member of any certain local or county union may choose to become a members of the most convenient local or county union as provided for in Sections 6, 7, and 15 of this Article.~~

~~c) Aa consumer who is interested in promoting the principles and goals of the organization may be admitted to consumer membership. Such consumer member shall have voice but not the right to vote or hold officeFarmers Union.~~

~~Section .d) The President may, with approval of the Full Board, create other classes of membership.5. Rights of Associate Members.~~

~~a) An associate member has the right to attend county union meetings and the MFU State Convention, although the associate member does not maintain the right to vote or to become elected as a county or state director or officer and may not be a delegate to the MFU State Convention or National Farmers Union Convention. An associate member has the right to debate and discuss proposed policy in accordance with the rules of the proceeding, after regular members have exercised their rights.~~

~~b)~~

~~Section 3- All votingassociate memberships in Minnesota Farmers Union must be held in the name of an individual. The spouses of dues paid associate members, and such associate members' children between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one and unmarried, are associate members of the local, county and state union with all rights and privileges of the regularassociate members. The MFU State Office shall register and issue family associate membership cards to all dues-paying associate members.~~

~~c) An associate member shall be admitted to membership in a county union. In the event that an associate member is not designated to be a member of a certain county union, such associate member shall be a "member at-large" and may choose to become an associate member of the most convenient county union by request~~

to the MFU President, in writing. Such request shall be granted upon approval of the MFU President and the county union where membership is requested.

Section 4-6. Other Classes of Membership. The President may, with approval of the MFU Board of Directors, create other classes of membership.

Section 7. Religious and Political Neutrality. No person shall be disqualified for regular or associate membership on account of religious or political views, providing those views do not support the overthrow of our government.

AFFILIATED MEMBERSHIP

~~Section 5. Persons who are members of an affiliating nonprofit association or organization shall become members of Minnesota Farmers Union upon:~~

- ~~1) approval of an affiliation agreement by the Minnesota Farmers Union Board of Directors;~~
- ~~2) approval of the affiliation agreement by the affiliating nonprofit association or organization's Board of Directors;~~
- ~~and~~
- ~~3) payment of the annual dues as required by action of the Minnesota Farmers Union Board of Directors and so stipulated within the affiliating agreement.~~

~~The membership of an affiliating nonprofit association or organization would receive only those benefits of membership as are defined and described within the affiliation agreement approved by the Minnesota Farmers Union Board of Directors and the Board of Directors of the affiliating nonprofit association or organization. This agreement must be reviewed no less than annually. In the event that the Minnesota Farmers Union and the affiliating nonprofit association or organization intends to review the agreement, including modifications thereto, the renewal shall occur no later than three months prior to the expiration of the initial agreement. In the event a renewal is not approved, the affiliation shall not continue.~~

~~In the event that the affiliated association or organization elects to incorporate within its name, identity and promotional activity the phrase "Minnesota Farmers Union" or "Farmers Union" or any derivative thereof, such use shall be limited by the terms of the affiliation agreement and subject to annual renewal and may not be used in association with the endorsement of any products or services without the specific written authority of the Board of Directors of the Minnesota Farmers Union.~~

~~The President/Vice President or designated representative of the affiliated nonprofit association or organization may be a member of the Minnesota Farmers Union Board of Directors with full participation rights limited to presentation, discussion and consideration of organizational policy development. The President/Vice President or designated representative may represent the membership at the annual meeting of the Minnesota Farmers Union with full participation rights including voting, presentation, discussion and consideration of organizational policy development.~~

APPLICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP Section 8. Applications for Membership.

~~a) Any person qualified for regular or associate membership in this organization under these bylaws, wishing to become a regular or associate~~

~~Section 6. Any person qualified for membership in this organization under these bylaws, wishing to become a member, shall make an application in writing, accompanied by the membership dues. The official state membership receipt shall constitute a written application for regular or associate membership.~~

~~Section 7. b) If a questionable application is received, the MFU President of this organization may appoint a committee of three to investigate the eligibility of the applicant and report as soon thereafter as convenient.~~

~~Section 8. c) When an applicant has been rejected for regular or associate membership, a new application shall not be considered until the applicant qualifies in accordance with the bylaws. If expelled from the organization, a regular or associate member shall not be considered for reinstatement for a period of one year.~~

MEMBERSHIP DUES

Section 9. **Membership Dues.** State membership dues for regular ~~and at-large~~ members shall be at such rates and under such terms as may be established by the MFU State Board of Directors, subject to ratification at a special or regular MFU State Convention. Dues for associate membership and any other classes of non-voting membership, shall be set by the MFU President, with approval of the Full Board of Directors.

Money received for dues shall be held in reserve pending payment of annual dues to National Farmers Union and payment to ~~local and~~ county unions. ~~\$1.503.00~~ of each membership shall be paid to the county union ~~and \$1.50 to the active local union to which the member belongs. For those counties that choose not to have locals, the entire \$3.00 should be returned to the county union.~~ Disbursement of dues shares to county ~~unions and local~~ unions shall be withheld until such time as a current roster of officers are reported to the MFU State Office. Said report shall be made no later than March 1st.

Section 10. ~~A~~Regular or associate member who ~~has~~have not paid dues by ~~his or her~~the membership anniversary date shall be considered past due. The ~~state office~~MFU State Office shall advise the ~~local or~~ county units of members who are still past due and shall mail at least two past due notices to the individual member.

Section 11. Payment of dues entitles regular and associate members to receive general publications which may be issued by the state or national organization. For this purpose, a share of the state and national dues may be designated as being a subscription for the applicable publications.

*

Section 13. When any regular or associate member shall be charged with violating the obligations of Minnesota Farmers Union or of conduct unbecoming a member and charges have been presented in writing by five regular or associate members residing in the member's county, the following process shall be followed. The Executive Committee of Minnesota Farmers Union shall hold a fair hearing on the charges. If, following the hearing, two-thirds of the Executive Committee members vote for expulsion, the member shall be dropped from the roll but shall have the right to appeal to the State Board of Directors and its decision shall be final.

*Section 14 replaces local with county.

TRANSFERRING MEMBERSHIP

Section 15. Transferring Membership. Any member in good standing who wishes to transfer membership from one county to a local another may do so by informing the MFU State Office, in writing, of the wish to transfer. The If approved by the MFU President and the county receiving membership, the State Office shall inform the locals and counties involved and shall cause the request to be filed in the MFU State Office.

ARTICLE IV. HAS BEEN REMOVED

ARTICLE V. COUNTY UNIONS

LOCAL UNIONS

Section 1. A local county union may be instituted established in any county which wishes to form a county upon application of five or more dues-paying regular members.

Section 2. The local county union shall be composed of its officers and its active regular and associate members.

Section 3. The local county union should endeavor to meet once a month and shall have as many called meetings as the business of the union may demand.

Section 4. A quorum of the local county union for the transaction of business shall consist of five voting regular members in good standing.

Section 5. The charter is the warrant of the existence of the local county union as an organized body and is the authority under which the local county union carries on its work.

Section 6. All regular members present and in good standing shall be entitled to vote on all questions proposed. Visiting Associate members shall be allowed the privilege of the floor and may be invited to participate in the discussions at the pleasure of the majority of the regular members present, but shall not be allowed to vote. The President president of the county union shall vote only in case of a tie vote or when the vote is by written ballot.

Unless otherwise provided by the county bylaws, the basis of representation at any county union meeting shall be via the open convention system.

The open convention system entitles any regular member in good standing in the county to one vote in the convention provided, however, that notwithstanding any other provision to the contrary, no regular member shall be entitled to participate in said county convention who was not a member as of thirty days prior to the date of the county convention.

Section 7. The officers of the local county union shall be the following: president, vice president, secretary-treasurer, which officers shall be the executive board committee of three members the county union. The regular membership or executive board committee shall determine such other officers as they may deem necessary and provide for their selection.

*Sections 8 and 9 replace local with county.

Section 10. All local county unions shall operate according to the provisions of the state and national bylaws and may adopt additional bylaws not contradictory thereto, with a two-thirds majority vote of regular members present being necessary to change the county established bylaws.

Section 11. Robert's Rules of Order shall be used in the conduct of local county union meetings.

Section 12. The president of the local county union shall:

- preside at all meetings;
- decide all questions of constitutional law; and
- have the power to call a special meeting when deemed necessary and shall call special meetings when requested to do so in writing by five dues-paying members in good standing.
- the county president (or vice president) shall represent the county membership in all meetings of the MFU State Board of Directors as provided in Article VI, Section 4.

Due notice of the time, place and purpose of any special meeting shall be given to all members in good standing. The local county union executive board committee shall fill by appointment any vacancy in local county union offices, such appointments to continue to the next annual meeting.

Sections 13 and 14 replace "local" with "county".

Section 15. The executive board committee of the local county union shall have custody of all its property and shall provide for an audit of its books at least once a year and make a report to the local county union and shall require bond for the secretary-treasurer of other officers or employees whenever bonds are required.

Sections 16-19 replace "local" with "county".

Section 20. Following attempts by the state union MFU—acting with each respective county union—to reorganize or consolidate inactive locals counties, the MFU State Board of Directors may authorize representation for at-large members in said inactive locals counties in the following manner.

1) All members of said inactive locals in the county shall be given written notice of a special county meeting called by the county president to enable said members to choose delegates and to propose resolutions to the State Convention. Such meeting may be in conjunction with, but separate from, the county convention.

2

1) Delegates and alternates shall be chosen at-large from the area affected.

32) The number of delegates and alternates shall be determined in the manner prescribed for active localscounties in Section 2 of Article VII.

43) The county president and secretary shall confirm the election of these delegates to the MFU State Office.

54) Votes of these delegates may be carried by the county president as provided in Section 2 of Article VII.

ARTICLE V. COUNTY UNIONS

*Sections 1-7 of County Union section deleted and addressed in new section.

DUTIES OF COUNTY UNION OFFICERS

~~Section 8. The several officers of the county union shall discharge the duties assigned to similar officers of the local union. In addition, Section 21. The county executive committee the county president (or vice president) shall represent the county membership in all meetings of the MFU State Board of Directors as provided in Article VI, Section 4.~~

~~Section 9. The county executive board~~ shall exercise the powers of the county union when same is not in session. It shall have power to remove from office any officer of the county union for incompetency, dishonesty or immoral conduct. It shall fill all vacancies in the county union caused by death, resignation or any other reason.

~~Section 10. When geographic conditions are such that a local union would be subjected to unreasonable expense and inconvenience to affiliate with its county organization, it may, on action by the executive committee of the county union, obtain a transfer to another county union signed by its county president.~~

~~Section 11. Any local~~22. Any county union holding a transfer may attach itself to any adjoining county union by presenting such transfer within three months from date of issue.

~~Section 1223.~~ When geographic conditions are such that two or more counties or parts of counties, ~~containing not less than three locals~~ find it more advantageous to unite and affiliate together as a county organization, they may do so by the consent of the MFU State President and the State Executive Committee.

~~Section 1324.~~ Any ~~boardcounty executive committee~~ member or officer may be recalled at any regular meeting provided a petition for recall shall have first been signed by at least five percent (5%) of the members in good standing in said county, and provided the county secretary shall notify the members in writing stating the name of the person to be recalled and charge made against that person to the secretary of each localcounty, and provided such notice is sent out by the county secretary at least thirty (30) days before the regular meeting.

Persons subject to recall shall be notified of said petition giving names and charges thirty (30) days before the date of meeting and shall be given a hearing before membership of the county union. The charges and the name of the officer to be recalled shall be shown in the notice, which shall be sent by registered mail.

ARTICLE VI. STATE UNION AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 1. The officers of Minnesota Farmers Union shall be: President, ~~First~~ Vice President, one or more additional vice presidents, if deemed necessary, secretary, a Board of Directors as may be fixed by the bylaws and an Executive Committee as provided in Section 6 of this Article.

Section 2. The President shall be elected for a term of two years and until a successor is elected and qualified. The Vice President shall be ~~an active~~a farmer or rancher actively engaged in farming or ranching, as defined in Article III Section 1, and shall be elected for a term of two years and until a successor is elected and qualified. Both shall be elected in the manner provided in Article VII, Section 4 of these bylaws.

*Section 3 also eliminates "First" before "Vice President"

Section 4. The State Board shall consist of the duly elected and qualified president of each chartered county union. Each director (county president or, in case of absence, the county vice president) is required to attend **all** meetings of the State Board, and shall be reimbursed for the cost of travel ~~and subsistence while attending the regular or special board meetings~~ on the basis of such amount per mile and such subsistence and lodging allowance as ~~may be fixed from time to time~~approved by the State Board of Directors, President, and paid by Minnesota Farmers Union. The President, ~~First~~ Vice President and state secretary shall be ex-officio members of the Board of Directors with voice and vote. The Board of Directors shall meet in regular session not less often than semi-annually.

Section 5. The MFU State Board of Directors shall elect a secretary, who shall be ~~an active~~a farmer or rancher actively engaged in farming or ranching, as defined by Article III Section 1, and shall serve at the pleasure of the Board, and shall elect an Executive Committee of five (5) from its own members, which Executive Committee shall act for the Board of Directors when that Board is not in session.

*

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Section 7.

*

The President, ~~First~~ Vice President and State Secretary of Minnesota Farmers Union shall be ex-officio members of the Executive Committee with voice and vote.

The Executive Committee shall have all the powers and privileges of the MFU State Board of Directors when the Board is not in session. Further, the Executive Committee shall determine the budget of the organization, including compensation for officers and directors.

*

DUTIES OF OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Section 8. The State President shall be the Chief Executive Officer of Minnesota Farmers Union. The President may appoint an Assistant Secretary to carry out the day-to-day duties of the Secretary. The President shall:

*

- perform such other duties as may be required ~~of him~~ by the Board of Directors;
- receive for services a salary, the amount of which shall be determined and authorized by the ~~Board of Directors~~ Executive Committee; and

*

Section 9. The ~~First~~ Vice President shall:

- perform the duties of the President in case of inability or refusal to act, or absence;
- receive such compensation, if any, as may be fixed by the ~~Board of Directors~~ President; and
- be reimbursed for necessary expenses on work for Minnesota Farmers Union.

Section 10. The Secretary shall:

- be selected by the majority of the Board of Directors, ~~which shall fix compensation,~~
- receive such compensation, if any, as may be fixed by the President;

*remainder of paragraph removing local reference

Section 11.

*

c) The ~~State Board~~ Executive Committee shall require bond from any officer or employee handling funds or property and shall pay the costs thereof or assume the responsibility for funds or property. They shall designate depository banks for the funds of Minnesota Farmers Union.

d) The State Board shall ~~have control~~ approve of all transactions relating to real estate and securities belonging to Minnesota Farmers Union ~~and may buy, including the purchase,~~ pledge, mortgage, ~~sell~~ sale, and ~~convey/or conveyance~~ such real estate and securities.

*

Section 12. Copies of the minutes of each Executive Committee meeting shall be furnished to each member of the Board of Directors not a member of the Executive Committee. Members of the Executive Committee shall be reimbursed for necessary travel and subsistence costs for their attendance upon regular or special meetings of the Committee as shall be determined by the ~~Board of Directors~~ Executive Committee.

~~Each~~ Any additional compensation for a member of the Executive Committee ~~shall receive for his services while in charge of official duties, a per diem as, if any,~~ shall be determined ~~fixed~~ by the ~~Board of Directors,~~ plus the travel and subsistence costs above provided Executive Committee.

*

ARTICLE VII. STATE CONVENTION

*

Section 2.

* First Portion of Section 2 replaces local with county

However, so that the number of convention delegates will be sufficient to constitute a state convention, no one delegate may carry more votes than the maximum number carried by ~~six~~ three duly-elected delegates or ~~sixty (60)~~ thirty (30) votes.

All county presidents in good standing shall automatically be delegates to a state convention and shall be entitled to all the privileges of elected delegates, except that voting strength will be based on the following conditions.

1. If ~~local or~~ county members, in meeting assembled, elect their county president to be a convention delegate, that president may cast the weighted vote of a delegate from that ~~local or~~ county;
2. If a county president is that county's only registered convention delegate, that president may carry the maximum weighted vote of a county as noted in this Section (~~60~~ 30);

*

Section 3. A quorum for the transaction of business in a State Convention shall consist of one or more delegates from half of the ~~local~~ county unions and counties with at-large membership having delegates certified and registered at the state convention.

* Section 4 replaces local with county.

~~_____ e)~~ e) Credentials Committee and Election Committee. The State President shall appoint a Credentials Committee of at least four people. The State President shall appoint an Election Committee of nine people including the members of the Credentials Committee, which shall conduct the election of President, Vice President and delegates to the National Convention in accordance with this Article and the rules adopted by the state convention.

*

DUTIES OF CONVENTION COMMITTEES

*Section 7 replaces local with county.

Section 8. It shall be the duty of the Resolutions Committee to meet far enough in advance of the state convention so it can consider the resolutions adopted and submitted by the ~~local and~~ county organizations ~~and that were passed~~ by ~~individual~~ a county convention or a duly called meeting of the members after the county convention with a quorum present pertaining to the policy and operation of Minnesota Farmers Union. It shall be the committee's duty to write up a tentative program, including policies on education, legislation, and cooperation for the ensuing year, and to present it to the convention for its approval. When adopted by the convention, this program shall constitute the policy of this organization.

Section 9. Rules and Bylaws Committee. The Rules ~~and Bylaws~~ Committee shall meet ~~just prior to~~ before the convention to ~~draw up~~ propose a set of rules for the consideration of the convention. When adopted, these rules shall govern the convention for the year.

Section 10. The Rules and Bylaws Committee shall meet before the annual meeting to consider necessary changes in the bylaws and shall receive and consider all amendments suggested by ~~local unions and~~ county unions that received a majority vote to recommend such changes. The committee shall formulate recommendations and make reports to the annual meeting. The committee shall meet in accordance with time and publication requirements of Minnesota law as described in Article XIII, AMENDMENTS.

*

a) Each delegate to the state convention shall present written credentials from the Secretary-treasurer of the delegate's ~~local or~~ county union. No regular member shall be a delegate to the state convention unless current dues are paid.

b) All regular and associate members of Minnesota Farmers Union in good standing but who are not elected delegates from their ~~local or~~ county unions shall be considered advisory members of that body at the state convention.

*

d) Only regular members serving as delegates can vote at the State Convention. Non-delegate, regular members and associate members can attend the State Convention and participate as stated in Article III Section 5.

*

ARTICLE IX. BUDGET FUND

* Section 1 replaces local with county.

ARTICLE X. INITIATIVE, REFERENDUM AND RECALL

Section 1. The right of initiative and referendum, the recall and imperative mandate, shall not be denied to the members of Minnesota Farmers Union. It is the purpose and policy of Minnesota Farmers Union to preserve this democratic right for its members so as to guarantee that the supreme authority in Minnesota Farmers Union shall reside in its membership.

A referendum vote on any action taken by the state convention ~~or for an imperative mandate~~ shall be conducted upon presentation to the State President of a petition signed by five (5) percent of the regular dues-paying members in good standing. Any recall or referendum vote shall be taken by the delegates from the State Convention that voted on the matter.

*

ARTICLE XII. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

* Sections 1-3 replaces local with county.

Section 4. ~~No persons shall be permitted~~ Any person seeking to hold any county, State or National office ~~in MFU while in or serve as a county, State or National delegate must be a regular member of the employ of a corporation other than a family farm corporation or cooperative~~ Minnesota Farmers Union.

*Section 5 replaces local with county.

Section 6. Any meeting conducted on behalf of the organization such as Board Meetings, Executive Committee meetings, committee meetings and the state convention may be conducted by electronic means provided participants may simultaneously hear each other during the meeting, and have a recognized means to communicate with each other. Motions or resolutions may be approved by electronic mail, so long as such motion or resolution is emailed to all members of the Board or the Executive Committee voting on a particular motion or resolution.

*



SEPTEMBER 2006

Minnesota Farmers Union members joined more than 250 farmers and ranchers from across the nation during the annual Fall Fly-in Sept. 10-13, While in Washington, D.C., the group asked members of Congress to extend the farm bill, provide disaster assistance and support farm-based and fair trade.

Farmers Union is opposing the merger of two of the nation's biggest livestock processors. When Smithfield Foods announced plans to buy Premium Standard Farms, NFU immediately asked the Department of Justice to investigate. Smithfield is the nation's largest hog producer, while Premium is the second largest. In pork processing, Smithfield is No. 1, while Premium is No. 6.

By a unanimous vote, the MFU State Board of Directors passed a resolution opposing the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax constitutional amendment. The measure will be on this fall's ballot.



Huge GTA signs soon will be selling cooperation in more than 150 Northwest communities. A new and distinctive GTA emblem is expected to be emblazoned on the sides of all GTA line elevators next year. First test signs were painted on the co-operative elevator at St. James in southern Minnesota.

SEPTEMBER 1986

Farmers are suffering under lower prices than ever while our surpluses grow, exports fall and the government makes multi-million-dollar payments to corporate farms. Those are the words of the Minnesota Farmers Union Board of Directors summarizing what the organization's leadership sees as the results of the failed 1985 Farm Bill.

The Farmers Home Administration announcement that it has hired a private agency to collect farm debts has outraged

SEPTEMBER 1946

The growing mountains of grain that cannot be moved because of lack of boxcars is causing widespread concern among Northwest farmers. It already runs into many millions of bushels.

The general manager of GTA, M.W. Thatcher, has been re-elected to the board of the Central Bank for Cooperatives in Washington. It is his third three-year term.

The Clay Center Co-op Association is managed by H.J. Perkins, Albert Koops is the co-op president and Edwin Steen is secretary-treasurer. Other board members are August Krabenhof, vice president, and Charlie Bouton and Fred Anstadt, directors. All are residents of Glyndon.

agricultural leaders across the country. The FmHA, the USDA's lending agency, has turned over 6,000 delinquent farm accounts to Capital Credit Corporation, a private collection agency in Fairfield, N.J.

The State Livestock Advisory Board, the group which oversees the operation of the joint Minnesota Farmers Union and National Farmers Organization livestock marketing system in Minnesota, is concerned with the possible effects of low grain prices and the USDA Whole Herd Dairy Buyout program on livestock markets.

Canning meat (open jar method)

Submitted by Dan Reed, Carlton County



Finnish American immigrant method of canning venison, moose, elk and antelope. Can be used for canning meat from domestic livestock too.

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

1. Butcher your animal, deboning the meat, cutting meat into inch-by-inch chunks. Discard all tallow, fat, etc., to minimize wild taste. Some pork may be added to the wild meat being canned.
2. Sanitize the quart mason jars.
3. In one of the jars, fill one third full with meat chunks, chopped onion, salt to taste and add allspice, peppercorns or cloves. Repeat process two more times to fill the jar to the shoulder. Average deer, for example, will fill 26 quarts with this method.
4. Add no water.
5. Place in cold oven with jars not touching and with no lids.
6. Start oven and raise the temperature to about 350 degrees and heat until the jar contents start to bubble.
7. Reduce heat so that bubbles come about every 10 to 15 seconds.
8. Keep jars in oven for 3 to 4 hours until the top meat looks dark roasted.
9. Heat lids in a pan of boiling water.



MFU President Gary Wertish, MFU Executive Committee members, Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith, Staples Mayor Ron Murray, Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen and other supporters at the FUPM ribbon cutting on Aug. 18.

Farmers Union Processing + Meats celebrates grand opening

By Janet Kubat Willette

More than 100 people gathered Aug. 18 for the grand opening and ribbon cutting for Farmers Union Processing + Meats in Staples.

The plant grew from resolutions passed at county conventions in 2019, calling attention to the lack of meat processing infrastructure for small and mid-sized producers and producers who wanted to sell directly to consumers.

Through partnerships, collaboration and dedication, the more than 10,000-square-foot facility opened June 2, a year after the groundbreaking took place. The facility received USDA certification on July 27 and now offers custom-exempt and USDA inspected processing for cattle, sheep and hogs.

Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith, Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner

Thom Petersen and Staples Mayor Ron Murray participated in the grand opening ceremony, which was emceed by Minnesota Farmers Union President Gary Wertish.

Following the program, participants toured the facility and ate a meal of brats, beans and potato salad prepared by Tyler Ehrmantraut of BBQ Smokehouse. The brats were made at Farmers Union Processing + Meats.

YOU MATTER.

TALK TO US.

No concern is too small

Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline

833-600-2670

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

10. Clean the top rim of the jar with a sanitary, clean, wet cloth.
11. Install lid and tighten ring.
12. Put jars on a towel, covering as you go.
13. Make sure the lids pop after cooled.

To eat:

Empty contents into a large skillet, adding some water. Warm up and simmer with open lid. Mixture may or may not need a little thickening with corn starch. Add butter, of course. Put on boiled potatoes or serve as hot sandwich. It's tasty. Enjoy.



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



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

USDA offers disaster assistance programs, which are especially important to livestock producers who have fewer risk management options. Minnesota counties have experienced extreme heat, drought, and other damaging weather conditions in 2026. The following programs are available in some Minnesota counties. The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) and Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP) reimburses producers for a portion of the value of livestock, poultry and other animals that died as a result of a qualifying natural disaster event or for loss of grazing acres, feed and forage. The Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) provides assistance to producers of grazed forage crop acres that have suffered crop loss due to a qualifying drought.

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to producers for livestock deaths in excess of normal mortality caused by eligible adverse weather, as well as disease and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. USDA

Check out USDA disaster assistance programs available to aid livestock producers

has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under “normal” conditions.

For disease losses, FSA county committees can accept veterinarian certifications that livestock deaths were directly related to adverse weather and unpreventable through good animal husbandry and management.

For 2026 livestock losses, producers must file a notice of loss, and LIP application for payment to the local FSA office by March 1, 2027. Applicants must provide the following supporting documentation; proof of death documentation, copy of grower’s contracts (if applicable), proof of normal mortality documentation, and livestock beginning inventory documentation.

The Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP) provides compensation if producers suffer grazing losses for covered livestock due to drought on privately owned or cash leased land or fire on federally managed land.

County committees can only accept LFP applications after notification is received by the national office of qualifying drought or if a federal agency prohibits producers from grazing normal permitted livestock

on federally managed lands due to qualifying fire.

LFP applicants must complete a CCC-853 and the required supporting documentation no later than March 1, 2027, for 2026 losses.

Emergency Assistance for Livestock, Honeybee and Farm-raised Fish Program (ELAP) provides emergency assistance to eligible livestock, honeybee, and farm-raised fish producers who have losses due to disease, adverse weather or other conditions, such as blizzards and wildfires, not covered by other agricultural disaster assistance programs.

Eligible losses include grazing losses not covered under the Livestock Forage Disaster Program (LFP), loss of purchased feed and/or mechanically harvested feed due to an eligible adverse weather event, additional cost of transporting water and feed because of an eligible drought, and additional cost associated with gathering livestock to treat for cattle tick fever.

ELAP Applicants must complete an application for payment and the required supporting documentation no later than March 1, 2027, for 2026 losses.

For more information about LIP, LFP and ELAP, contact the county USDA Service Center or visit fsa.usda.gov.

Farmfest outlook

continued from page 9

The administration says it has signed 18 new trade agreements and is focused on getting new markets for agriculture. One trade agreement being discussed is the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), which expires in 2036.

Third is year-round E15, which has passed the House and is included in the Senate farm bill draft. It’s an easy way to build

domestic demand for ag products, Parum said.

And fourth is rising input costs and the need for more domestic fertilizer production.

Werner brought the focus back to ethanol as the Minnesota Biofuels Association works to promote the renewable fuels industry in Minnesota. He said now is the time to allow the nationwide, year-round sale of E15, a gasoline which contains 15 percent ethanol and is sold as unleaded 88. E15 is approved for use in vehicles that

are model year 2001 and newer, which includes most vehicles on the road. The House passed the measure in May, with the entire eight-member Minnesota House delegation voting in favor. The language is included in the Senate version of the farm bill, which had a hearing on Aug. 6 in the Senate Agriculture Committee. Allowing year-round E15 is not a mandate, it’s giving consumers a choice at the pump, Werner said.

Farm crisis

continued from page 15

crisis. He said it is worse now due to the pressures of corporate consolidation in agriculture.

Times have changed, he said, with a third of the dairy cows in the state controlled by Riverview.

"We have lost the opportunity, in many cases, for farmers to own the livestock and are losing the dairy farmers. We are down to two dairy farms left in Redwood County and it used to be closer to a third of the farmers in that area that did dairy," Sobocinski said.

On the issue of corporate consolidation in agriculture, he said the system of doing more for less has coincided with population loss in rural America.

In the 1980s and earlier, hogs were dispersed among many farms, with smaller

herds owned by the farmer who raised them. Now, hog production is consolidated, with fewer farmers raising more hogs they often don't own. The hogs are owned by fewer people and sometimes by companies.

"It stems back to the concentration of wealth in a few hands and in agriculture today," Sobocinski said. "It is the concentration of the investors on the land in a few hands."

There was a concerted effort to fight the concentration of the hog industry from the 1980s into the 2000s, he said.

"We won the fight to keep local control, the rights of townships and counties to do land use ordinances," Sobocinski said.

He remains active in advocacy work through the MFU Bottleneck Project and the Minnesota Farmers Union, serving as vice president of the Redwood County Farmers Union.

The MFU Bottleneck Project brought together several organizations to address

bottlenecks in local meat processing infrastructure. Sobocinski and others interviewed local plant owners and are doing outreach to underserved populations to encourage careers in local plant ownership. They advocate for apprenticeships in meat processing and for meat processing training at Central Lakes and Ridgewater colleges. Sobocinski speaks highly of MFU's work to support new, beginning and emerging farmers through MDA's grant programs including small meat processing revitalization and workforce development.

He said Paul Wellstone's quote, "we all do better when we all do better" is a way of banding together in the current era. He encourages people to consider the past and the future when they head to the voting booth in November. For rural communities to have a voice, they need to elect "people who are committed to the people on the land and how we unite and not divide."

Welcome new members

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

Mike and Cindy Maudal,
Douglas County

Vance Johnson, Wilkin County

Marsha Odom, Polk County

Danny Olson, Polk County

Zach Sutton, Renville County

Tommy Traxler, Sibley County

Lauren Wustenberg, Dakota County

Wendy and William Wustenberg,
Dakota County

ATTENTION MEMBERS!

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



Calendar of events

Sept. 2	Douglas and Grant County Convention, 5:30 p.m., Alexandria
Sept. 3	Wabasha County Convention, 6:30 p.m., Plainview
Sept. 9	Renville County Convention, Olivia
Sept. 9	Waseca/Steele Convention, 6 p.m., Waseca
Sept. 13	Farm to Fiber Festival, 11 a.m. to 5 pm., Ivanhoe
Sept. 14	Polk County Convention, 10 a.m., Lake Sarah Campground
Sept. 16	Carlton County Convention, 10 a.m., Barnum
Sept. 16	Red Lake, Kittson, Roseau, Pennington, Marshall, Clearwater convention, 6 p.m., Thief River Falls
Sept. 28	Morrison County Convention, 6:30 p.m., Little Falls

Find the latest news online at mfu.org/events

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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
Mankato	FUA Insurance
Maple Grove	Brandon Hummel
Marshall	Dennis Klocow, Jr.
Marshall	Mike Panka
Menahga	Kristine Hendrickson
Montevideo	Ivan Anderson
Moorhead	FUA Insurance
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. Cloud	FUA Insurance
St. Paul	FUA Insurance
Thief River Falls	Brady & Jay Swanson
Warren	Brady & Jay Swanson
White Bear Lake	Abby Moffitt
Willmar	Paul Johannes
Windom	Jessica Krick