Minnesota corn farmers are continuously working to improve and become better stewards of our natural resources, while contributing to our rural communities.

The 2018 Year in Review shares the many ways corn farmers and their families impact the overall growth of our state.
While facing a number of challenges in 2018, it was easy as a corn grower to forget the great strides we have made and the impact our proactive efforts have had on the state we call home. The “MN Corn Grows MN” initiative was a story I was particularly proud to share in the last year, as it put our progress in perspective.

The main goal of MN Corn Grows MN when it was launched at Farmfest in 2017 was to promote the vital role corn farming plays in our state with candidates for elected office. The initiative grew to share that impact with all Minnesotans.

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) showed farmers’ positive impact through definitive examples of how we are building a more sustainable future for Minnesota. As a corn farmer myself, I’ve found sharing these examples to be an eye-opening experience.

Minnesota’s corn farmers produce an annual corn crop valued at more than $4.5 billion. That output is a key contributor to the growth of communities statewide. Rural and metro cities benefit from the economic contributions of corn-related taxes and sales, and people employed as part of Minnesota’s corn sector are vital contributors to business on Main Streets across Minnesota.

While supporting our local communities, the state’s corn farmers are working with third-party research institutions, growers and state officials to develop practices that leave the land fruitful for future generations.

For example, Minnesota’s corn growers have invested nearly $6 million since 2012 in education and research that improves nitrogen management strategies to reduce nitrate loss. Nitrogen is key to building the corn plant structure, which eventually returns to the soil and decomposes into organic matter that is vital to future soil health.

Minnesota’s corn growers are also making investments in ethanol infrastructure that is giving consumers more access to cleaner-burning, ethanol-blended fuels. Last year, we saw record-breaking sales of E85 and 88 Octane fuels. This benefits not only our air quality, but also helps increase overall corn demand.

The message of how MN Corn Grows MN has helped promote the impact of corn farming in our state with newly elected officials and beyond. It has also resonated with me. I look forward to building on these efforts and continuing to share how corn farmers and their families are making our land more sustainable while benefitting the state.

As chair of the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC), I would like to thank Minnesota’s corn farmers for their investment in the corn check-off. Your decision to support the check-off makes it possible to identify and promote opportunities for corn farmers statewide.

I look forward to sharing some of the successes we achieved in 2018. We are driving research that will lead to more efficient and productive farms, as well as expanding uses for corn to help turn around today’s tough economic times. Here are a few examples of what you helped us accomplish:

With your support, Minnesota has become a national leader in ethanol infrastructure. Minnesota Corn joined a variety of partners in 2015 to help retailers install pumps that offer higher ethanol blends. The result: locations selling 88 Octane, also known as E15, went from 14 in 2014 to more than 300 last year. Subsequently, gallons of 88 Octane pumped by consumers went from 19 million in 2017 to more than 50 million gallons in Minnesota last year.

Corn farmer-funded research is also bringing corn to previously unthinkable markets. Research at the University of Minnesota is using corn to

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produce rubber and strengthen plastics, and South Dakota State University is bringing field corn to the kitchen table by producing food-grade distillers grain.

Through their check-off, corn growers invested in research to improve the sustainability of corn farming in our state. The return on that investment has helped us better understand practices like cover crops and a number of other practical and proven solutions to improving water quality.

Today’s corn growers are also taking a proactive approach to promoting soil health on the farm. With support from the corn check-off, University of Minnesota Extension’s Nitrogen Smart program has taught more than 600 farmers how they can become more efficient in nitrogen use. With its success over the last two years, MCR&PC is now supporting an Advanced Nitrogen Smart program that will provide in-depth training on specific nitrogen-related practices.

Again, thank you to every farmer who helps make these initiatives and more possible. Your continued investment helps build a more sustainable future for Minnesota’s corn growers.

“I can’t wait for 2018 to be over” was an expression echoed throughout the Minnesota corn community this year. For many, the challenges began with planting delays and were capped by an equally challenging harvest. Net farm income continues to fall short of historic levels and the regulatory environment creates additional uncertainty for corn farmers.

However, there were bright spots that provide reasons for optimism as we enter 2019.

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) continued its “MN Corn Grows MN” initiative this past year with the purpose of sharing how corn and corn farming impact the state. With an election season that included an open governor’s race, combined with a growing number of Minnesotans with no connection to agriculture, it was a great opportunity to highlight the environmental, economic and sustainable impacts that corn has on the state.

MN Corn Grows MN had many different facets, including on-farm visits with all of the gubernatorial candidates, a website highlighting farmer stories, publications, radio spots, billboards and online video ads. Perhaps one of the most visible components of the initiative was co-hosting the Greater Minnesota Gubernatorial Debate that made front-page news in the Star Tribune the following day.

Under the direction of our farmer-leadership, MCGA staff approach 2019 with the same optimism that corn farmers welcome a new cropping season.

We have spent the last year laying the foundation by elevating issues important to corn farmers with residents, legislators and a newly elected administration. These efforts will help us realize the shared mission of MCGA and the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council to identify and promote opportunities for corn farmers, while enhancing quality of life.
MN Ag EXPO is great success
Hundreds of farmers, agriculture researchers, policymakers and ag-centric businesses attended MN Ag EXPO 2018 in Mankato. Attendees were treated to a number of informative education sessions, the latest in agricultural research, and insightful panels focused on policy impacting farmers.

MCGA discusses biofuels during Small Grains Update
The annual Small Grains Update was held in northern Minnesota, as representatives from commodity groups and researchers came together to discuss the topics of most interest to farmers in the region. Minnesota Corn Growers Association’s (MCGA) Mitch Coulter discussed the growth of ethanol in Minnesota.

Ag leaders recognized at EXPO
MCGA recognized two individuals who have played an important role in advocating for Minnesota agriculture. Farmer Gerald Tumbleson received the Golden Kernel Award for his dedication and leadership in MCGA. University of Minnesota Extension Educator Brad Carlson was given the Friend of Agriculture Award for helping Minnesota farmers become even better stewards of the land through the Nitrogen Smart program.

‘Moving billboards’ celebrate ethanol on grain trucks statewide
The Renewable Fuels Association and MCGA distributed decals to farmers for placement on grain trucks to promote the use of ethanol. The decals raise awareness of the benefits of ethanol with fellow drivers.

MCGA elects board members
Richard Syverson, representing district four, and Blair Hoseth, representing district six, were elected to the MCGA board of directors. Re-elected were Jean Knakmuhs (district one), Harold Wolle (district two), Les Anderson (district three), Brian Thalmann (district five) and Dan Root (at-large).

MCGA sets priorities for 2018
Minnesota legislative session
In advance of the 2018 legislative session in St. Paul, MCGA grower leaders and staff identified state tax reform and federal conformity, responding to water quality and environmental concerns, ensuring flexibility in potential ditch mowing restrictions, securing additional transportation investments, and improving healthcare for farmers as its priorities during the session.

2017 was record-breaking year for ethanol
The Minnesota Department of Commerce released its year-end station report outlining ethanol-blended fuel sales for 2017. It was a banner year for E15, which totaled more than 19 million gallons in sales – more than doubling the prior year. Stations selling E15 also surpassed 250 in 2017.

The 2018 Nitrogen Smart program begins
In its second year, the Nitrogen Smart program kicked off in February with an 11-stop tour of educational seminars on nitrogen management. The program built on the momentum from its inaugural year when more than 600 farmers attended the sessions.

Classic 2018 draws crowds
Commodity Classic attendance for 2018 was estimated at more than 8,000. That total included hundreds of Minnesota farmers who attended to participate in the huge trade show, educational sessions and all that Classic has to offer.

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MCGA board members make spring visit to Washington D.C.
A group of MCGA board members and staff traveled to the nation’s capital to advocate for federal policy priorities. The spring fly-in took place at a time when uncertain U.S. trade policy could have negative impacts on farmers, and legislators were working on a number of major pieces of legislation, including the farm bill, before the two-week spring recess.

MCR&PC member sees growth of Moroccan farming firsthand
Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC) member Chad Willis joined the U.S. Grains Council in Morocco to see the country’s emerging ag sector up close and the opportunities for American agricultural exports. The group’s tour focused on developing infrastructure around modern farming.

Making connections at the legislative reception
Corn farmers and legislators came together in an informal setting in St. Paul to discuss a variety of issues affecting Minnesota agriculture. The event is held annually during the legislative session.

Following ag community’s response, BWSR says proposed buffer penalties a mistake
The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) released a proposed amendment to the Administrative Penalty Order plan for Minnesota Buffer Law implementation that would assess penalties up to $500 per linear foot out of compliance with the law. The ag community, including MCGA, responded swiftly to call the proposed amendment unreasonable, and BWSR eventually rejected the amendment.

Farmers unite to prevent harmful actions to Renewable Fuel Standard
Grassroots action by the nation’s corn farmers raised awareness of the importance of the Renewable Fuel Standard with the Trump Administration. In April, signs pointed to the White House considering cutting a deal with oil refiners that would destroy ethanol demand, but outreach by corn growers prevented those actions and encouraged positive developments later in the year.

Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council elections
Duane Epland from Twin Lakes was newly elected to the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council to represent district 8. Doug Albin (districts 1, 2 and 4), Myron (Mickey) Peterson (districts 3, 5 and 6) and Scott Winslow (district 9) were re-elected.
MCGA names 2018-2019 intern
McKenzie Barth, a student at the University of Minnesota, was selected as MCGA’s 2018-2019 student intern. Barth works on behalf of Minnesota corn farmers, while gaining practical and hands-on experience in agriculture.

Ethanol Summit of the Asia Pacific arrives in Minneapolis
Officials representing 17 countries in Asia and Oceania met in Minneapolis for the Ethanol Summit of the Asia Pacific. Agriculture, environmental and energy ministries met with members of the U.S. ethanol industry and U.S. officials to discuss current and future prospects for expanded ethanol use throughout the Asia Pacific.

Minnesota farmers face hurry-up-and-wait planting season.
An April blizzard, followed by cool weather made for a late start to planting in much of Minnesota farm country. In the week leading up to May 13, Minnesota farmers had finished 40 percent of corn planting, according to the latest USDA report. This compares to the five-year-average of 65 percent planted by this date.

Ag organizations unite for buffer tax credit
In an effort led by MCGA, 15 Minnesota agricultural organizations signed a joint letter to Gov. Mark Dayton and legislative leaders urgently requesting the passage of legislation providing farmers with a much-needed property tax credit for farm acres that were removed from production and converted into buffers. The legislation, which corrects an unfair financial penalty for farmers complying with the Buffer Law, did not pass in 2018 and remains a top priority during the 2019 legislative session.

‘Field To Fork’ Blogger Bash connects farmers, foodies
CommonGround Minnesota held its annual Field To Fork Blogger Bash, inviting Twin Cities bloggers and foodies to Wolf Creek Dairy near Dundas for an evening of conversation about food and farming. Guests toured the farm and used the power of social media to bring their fans along as they learned about modern agriculture.

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Early results indicate corn could feed surging shrimp industry
MCGA worked with trù Shrimp researchers to explore corn as a cost-efficient and nutritious feed for growing shrimp. Initial results from the study, which tested the growth rates of shrimp with corn added to their diet, indicated that corn could substitute for a portion of a shrimp diet. In the near future, trù Shrimp hopes to confirm growth rates with a larger production setting.

Farmer-led, conservation-minded research returns
MCGA launched the third year of the Innovation Grant Program, investing in 12 farmer-led research projects focused on preventing nitrogen loss. Each accepted proposal focuses on innovative solutions to prevent the nitrogen loss to ground and surface water, keeping the nutrient in the soil.

Indonesian embassy takes two-day journey through MN farm country
MCGA had the opportunity to serve as the guide for the Indonesian embassy on a tour of southern Minnesota farm country. The two-day journey brought the group to family corn farms, agricultural businesses and a co-op to demonstrate the quality and breadth of Minnesota’s ag sector.

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‘Farmtastic Night’ brings the farm to the ballpark
Sponsored by the Kandiyohi County Corn and Soybean Growers Association, “Farmtastic Night” featured a fair of farm activities and information outside of Bill Taunton Stadium for attending families prior to the Willmar Stingers baseball game. More than 300 area kids attended to learn more about farming and its impact through fun, interactive exhibits.

Another great year at Farmfest
Farmfest was a success in 2018, as thousands stopped by the MCGA tent to learn about research investments, conservation practices and advocacy efforts by the state’s corn growers. This year, MCGA shared how “MN Corn Grows MN” and hosted many candidates for state and federal offices prior to the midterm elections.

MCGA raises concerns on proposed Groundwater Protection Rule
In written comments and testimony, MCGA emphasized the effectiveness of voluntary efforts in successfully lowering nitrate concentrations in drinking water. With farmers more efficiently managing nitrogen applications by adopting new technology and practices, implementing best management practices and investing in nitrogen management research and education, MCGA stated the regulation was unnecessary at this time.
MCGA expresses concern with proposed RVO targets
MCGA submitted comments to the EPA addressing concerns with the 2019 Renewable Volume Obligations (RVO) under the Renewable Fuel Standard. In the comments, MCGA said small refinery waivers have led to doubt that 2019 numbers would be met unless exempted volumes are accounted for in the RVO.

MCGA unveils new one-stop source for ethanol-blended fuels
MCGA revamped MNFuels.com to serve as a resource for the millions of Minnesotans topping off their tank with ethanol-blended fuels. The new website features a station locator, flex fuel vehicle identifier, information on ethanol blends and a blog regularly updated with ethanol-related news.

NCGA President Skunes visits MCGA office
MCGA and MCR&PC welcomed NCGA President Kevin Skunes to its joint board meeting in September. For Skunes, it was an opportunity to recap a tumultuous year for NCGA as it worked to overcome federal policy issues impacting the nation’s corn farmers.

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MCGA elects Plato farmer Brian Thalmann president
MCGA board of directors elected Brian Thalmann as its new president for 2018-2019. Thalmann joined the board in 2012 and previously served as vice president and secretary.

Major Mexican pork producer visits MN to explore adding DDGS in their rations
Granjas Carroll, the second-largest pork producer in Mexico, visited Minnesota to analyze re-introducing DDGS into their rations. Hosted by the U.S. Grains Council and MCGA, the tour was an opportunity to demonstrate the cost-saving and nutritional benefits of DDGS.

Tanner Sanborn joins MCGA as a district field manager
Tanner Sanborn joined MCGA to serve as the new district field manager for Field District Five in southeastern Minnesota. Sanborn quickly jumped in and has had a strong presence representing MCGA at county meetings throughout the region.

Events promote ethanol in metro and beyond
Fuel promotion events throughout the Twin Cities metro kicked off in October with hundreds of consumers stopping by their local station to learn more about the benefits of 88 Octane and E85. The American Lung Association was also on-hand at each event to promote the clean air benefits of ethanol-blended fuels. Events continued through November and extended to locations in Greater Minnesota.

Export Exchange comes to Minneapolis
Hosted by the U.S. Grains Council, the Export Exchange brought more than 250 representatives from 35 countries to Minneapolis to learn about American grain. The conference was an excellent opportunity to promote Minnesota corn and ethanol exports with international partners.

Rough harvest for Minnesota farmers
October snow and frigid temperatures brought many challenges to Minnesota farmers, most of whom pushed up against Thanksgiving before wrapping up harvest. The delay also complicated post-harvest field work for many farmers across the state.

MCGA hosts Greater Minnesota Gubernatorial Debate
MCGA partnered with WCCO News Radio and Minnesota AgriGrowth to host the Greater Minnesota Gubernatorial Debate, with candidates Jeff Johnson and Tim Walz. The debate took place in Willmar on Oct. 9 and was broadcast live on WCCO. The debate was another opportunity to elevate the issues impacting farmers and their rural communities.

President Trump announces year-round E15
President Donald Trump announced on Oct. 9 that he had directed the EPA to lift restrictions that prevented year-round access to E15, potentially providing Minnesotans another option at the pump and helping grow demand for the nation’s corn farmers. Rulemaking will begin in early 2019.

MCGA requests candidate support for Buffer Property Tax Credit
MCGA sent a letter to candidates for governor and the Minnesota House of Representatives requesting their support for the Buffer Property Tax Credit. The letter’s goal was to elevate the issue with candidates and begin discussion about its importance heading into 2019.

Attendees listened to speakers and spoke with exhibitors at the two-day conference.

Rulemaking in 2019 will determine if consumers have access to E15 during the busy summer months.

Ethanol ambassadors shared information with consumers and answered questions at each event.
UMN Arboretum breaks ground on agriculture exhibit

Supported by MCGA, the multi-acre field exhibit will feature the conventional crops that make up Minnesota’s ag sector, including corn. The goal is to share the story of modern agriculture with metro residents who may not have a connection to the farm.

Renewable Fuel Standard numbers set

The EPA finalized required renewable fuel volumes under the Renewable Fuel Standard. Total renewable fuel volume as part of the 2019 Renewable Volume Obligations (RVO) was set at 19.92 billion gallons, which is a slight increase compared to 2018 volumes. The threat of small refinery waivers preventing those volumes from being reached still brought concern.

Nicole Frank comes on board as district field manager

Nicole Frank joined the MCGA team as the district field manager for west-central Minnesota (Field District Two). Frank returns to MCGA after serving as Minnesota Corn’s intern from 2016-2017.

Pre-resolutions meeting

Corn farmers showed grassroots engagement and leadership in action by gathering for MCGA’s annual pre-resolutions meeting. There was good discussion on state and federal legislative policy and priorities.

Macy Petrowiak joins MCGA

Macy Petrowiak started as the district field manager for southwestern Minnesota (Field District Four) in December. Petrowiak comes to MCGA after graduating from South Dakota State University.

Corn growers enjoy high yields

Corn growers nationwide have continued to produce high yields, helping offset another year of low corn prices. While yields varied throughout Minnesota, statewide yield for the 2018 crop year was estimated at 184 bushels/acre. The number is a decrease from 2017’s record-breaking yield of 190 bushels/acre in Minnesota.

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How does MN Corn Grow MN?

Spurring economic development

Minnesota corn exports contribute more than $404 million to the gross state product.

CORN EXPORTS CONTRIBUTE $404 MILLION
Since its official launch at Farmfest in 2017, the momentum behind the Minnesota Corn Growers Association’s (MCGA) “MN Corn Grows MN” initiative continues to strengthen. The campaign began by bringing candidates for elected office to family corn farms and has since grown to promote the vital role of corn farming in our state with all Minnesotans.

Nearly 20 candidates for governor, senate and the 1st congressional district visited family corn farms prior to November’s midterm election. By spending a couple of hours on the farm, candidates have built relationships with the state’s farmers and learned more about the issues impacting the ag sector.

In addition to one-on-one engagement with candidates, MN Corn Grows MN also raised awareness of issues impacting corn farmers and their rural communities through high-profile events. MCGA sponsored the live broadcast of the Farmfest gubernatorial forum in 2018, and co-hosted the Greater Minnesota Debate in October with then candidates Tim Walz and Jeff Johnson. Both were carried statewide on WCCO News Radio.

Last year MN Corn Grows MN also shared the importance of corn farmers and their families with the general public through blog posts, videos and infographics at MNCorngrowsMN.org. Each highlighted the impact of farmers in promoting rural development, building relationships abroad, investing in conservation-minded research and much more.

Minnesotans also heard the message of MN Corn Grows MN on their favorite radio stations, as well as on billboards throughout Minnesota.

The multi-faceted efforts behind MN Corn Grows MN reached both households and legislative offices statewide. MCGA grower leaders look forward to continuing those conversations in 2019 as they advocate for the state’s 24,000 corn farmers.
1. Radio advertisements and live interviews on Red River Farm Network promoted the impact of corn growers in northwestern Minnesota.

2. Throughout the summer, radio advertisements in key communities shared with residents and elected officials the many ways corn growers impact the state.

3. U.S. Senate candidates Tina Smith and Karin Housley and gubernatorial candidate Jeff Johnson visited the farm of MCGA director Les Anderson.

4. 1st Congressional Candidate Dan Feehan and Governor-elect Tim Walz visited the Courtland farm of MCGA director Tim Waibel.

5. Representative-elect Jim Hagedorn visited Al-Corn Clean Fuel. MCGA organized the tour to emphasize the importance of the ethanol industry.

6. WCCO News Radio broadcast live from MCGA’s tent, and MCGA sponsored WCCO’s live radio broadcast of the gubernatorial forum during Farmfest.

7. MCGA co-hosted the Greater Minnesota Gubernatorial Debate, which was broadcast statewide by WCCO News Radio, to raise awareness of rural issues.

8. MCGA directors and staff continued to stress the importance of corn farming to the state’s overall economy with legislators at the capitol.

9. MCGA director Harold Wolle hosted gubernatorial and 1st Congressional District candidates throughout 2018 on his Madeia farm.

10. MCGA partnered with Linder Farm Network to reach key communities in central and southern Minnesota as part of its MN Corn Grows MN outreach.

11. Fargo-Moorhead area residents and northern Minnesota’s ag community learned about the many ways corn growers benefit the state at Big Iron Farm Show.

12. From International Falls to Albert Lea, thousands of Minnesotans visited MNCornGrowsMN.org to learn about the vital role corn farmers play in the growth of our state.

13. Whether it was a candidate visit or an event, media outlets like the Duluth News Tribune took notice of the initiative and highlighted the importance of corn and corn farmers in news stories throughout the year.
The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) continued advocacy efforts last legislative session on behalf of the state’s corn growers, but ultimately most state policy initiatives failed to pass due to end-of-session vetoes by Governor Mark Dayton. On the federal level, MCGA grower leaders continued to work with policy makers to emphasize the importance of the Renewable Fuel Standard and a new farm bill in 2018.

**Buffer Tax Credit**
A top legislative priority during the 2018 legislative session, the Buffer Property Tax Credit proposed to provide an annual $50 per acre tax credit for ag land in compliance with Minnesota’s buffer law. In addition to elevating its importance at the Capitol, MCGA organized a letter with 14 other agricultural organizations to legislative leadership stating its importance in correcting an unfair financial penalty for farmers complying with the law. Despite gaining widespread support, the bill stalled for further consideration due to a disagreement on the funding source.

Since the end of session, MCGA elevated the issue with candidates during the 2018 midterm elections through a letter addressed to each candidate for the Minnesota House of Representatives and in one-on-one conversations with gubernatorial candidates during “MN Corn Grows MN” farm visits. Governor-elect Walz has stated his support for the tax credit, and MCGA looks forward to working with him and the Legislature to get it done in 2019.

**Groundwater Protection Rule**
MCGA testified and submitted comments showing that the additional regulations were not necessary at this time, but if the rule was to move forward, MCGA recommended specific modifications to make it more workable for farmers.

Through in-person testimony and detailed comments, MCGA emphasized the steps Minnesota corn farmers have taken to more efficiently manage nitrogen applications by adopting new technology and practices, implementing best management practices and investing in nitrogen management research and education.

The Chief Administrative Law Judge ruled in late September the rule could move forward with some needed modifications. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture made the necessary modifications and resubmitted the rule. In late November, the Chief Administrative Law Judge determined prior defects had been corrected, but determined the rule could not be adopted until after the 2019 legislative session due to a resolution passed by policy makers during the 2018 legislative session.

**Tax Conformity**
Section 179, which is a tax deduction that would increase the deduction amount from $25,000 to $1 million on equipment expensing and bonus depreciation, was another top priority last year. MCGA successfully advocated to have Section 179 included in both the House and Senate versions of the tax bill, but Gov. Dayton vetoed the final bill due to reasons unrelated to Section 179. MCGA will work to pass this necessary conformity at the beginning of the 2019 legislative session.
Championing sustainable practices through their investment in the corn check-off, the state’s corn growers devote more than $4 million annually in research that shapes the future of agriculture and the way we use agricultural products.

**Farm Bill**
The 2018 farm bill was passed and signed into law by President Donald Trump in mid-December. The $867 billion bill strengthens the farm safety net, boosts conservation programs and secures funding for developing foreign market initiatives. With the severe economic stress on farm families today, MCGA advocated for an even greater investment in the farm safety net, but the bill made some meaningful improvements and provides growers with much needed certainty.

**Ethanol**
The Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) and ethanol overall faced major challenges in 2018. Big Oil-backed changes to the RFS first surfaced in February with a proposed Renewable Identification Numbers (RINs) cap, which would have severely undermined the RFS. Meanwhile, the EPA continued issuing waivers to oil refineries that destroyed demand for corn ethanol.

Throughout the process, the nation’s corn growers made their voice heard on the importance of the RFS to their economic viability. Recent actions suggest that voice was heard in Washington. The issuing of waivers to refineries now has necessary transparency, and President Trump called for year-round sales of E15.

**Trade**
Uncertainty around trade caused the nation’s farmers major headaches in 2018. While more progress is still needed, headway was made towards the end of the year. An agreement was reached on the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), formerly the North American Free Trade Agreement, and now it is up to Congress to make it official. In September, a new United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS) was announced, stabilizing trade relationships with the third-largest importer of U.S. corn and DDGS.

**How does MN corn grow MN?**
- **Sustainably**
- **Focused on sustainability**

**Corn Farmers Invest $4 Million in Research**
- **Year-round sales of E15**
- **New United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS)**
- **US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA)**
- **EPA continued issuing waivers to oil refineries**
The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) and the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC) direct more than $4 million annually to independent research projects that promote the environmental and economic sustainability of farmers. The following are projects that have advanced these goals for the state’s farmers in the last year.

Research brings DDGS to the kitchen table
Padmanaban Krishnan, a professor at South Dakota State University, is developing a food-grade distillers grain (DDGS) that could be a nutrition-packed, wholesome ingredient in everyday food products. His group has worked with food-grade DDGS in dough-based foods like tortillas, breads and pizza crusts. It could also be used as a shelf-stable protein supplement that would greatly aid international food relief programs.

Value-added materials from corn
Marc Hillmyer at the University of Minnesota’s Center for Sustainable Polymers (CSP) is taking corn-based biomass and converting it into higher-value polymeric materials. Hillmyer and his team at CSP are developing an efficient chemical transformation that would take an abundance of corn and convert it into a material that could then be used to develop products that are part of our everyday lives. By using corn, a renewable resource, these products would also be more sustainable.

Corn has a future in rubber production and strengthening plastics
CSP’s Dauenhauer Group, led by researcher Paul Dauenhauer, is using glucose obtained from corn in a process that forms isoprene, which is a key ingredient in rubber. The use of corn would replace petroleum, making the process more sustainable.

Concurrently, the group is also developing a process to strengthen Polylactide (PLA) plastics, which are developed using a process that ferments sugar derived from corn. The project would add copolymer micelles to PLA plastic, greatly increasing its toughness and, consequently, expanding its uses.

New technology for Spark Ignition Engines
William Northrop at the University of Minnesota is developing engine fuel technology that will improve the utilization of ethanol beyond being the oxygenate additive in fuel to an octane-on-demand system. The technology involves a bolt-on thermal reactor where the fuel is atomized into small droplets and interacted with a catalyst at elevated temperatures. The ethanol in the fuel mixture is partially converted to reformed gas species and sent to the intake of the engine. The process leads to improved engine performance while also improving exhaust emissions.

Innovation Grant Program completes its third year
In 2018, MCR&PC funded 12 farmer-led projects and one field day showcasing past project success focused on reducing nitrogen loss. Projects centered around diverse approaches to this challenge include cover crops; manure management and application via a strip-tillage operation; in-season nitrogen and potassium applications based on crop demand curves, and much more. See details of each project at mncorn.org/research.

Better understanding corn pests in Minnesota
Bruce Potter, an integrated pest management specialist at the University of Minnesota, is leading an ongoing research project assessing corn pests. The project intends to improve our
understanding of where and when economically important Minnesota insects and diseases are impacting the state’s corn crop.

Ultimately, the findings will lead to a long-term cooperative effort to predict and quantify changes in losses from corn pests.

A potential revolution in plant disease prevention
Michael Sadowsky, a professor in the University of Minnesota’s Department of Soil, Water and Climate, is researching a novel method to stop bacterial infections in crop plants. Many bacteria use a chemical signaling system to spread in the plant. Sadowsky is developing a technology that would use the enzyme lactonase to disrupt this communication, stopping the bacteria in its tracks.

The Soil Health Partnership
The Soil Health Partnership (SHP) is a farmer-led initiative fostering transformation in agriculture through improved soil health, benefiting both farmer profitability and the environment. Since its start in 2014, SHP has built a network of working farms where scientists and technicians test, measure and share results of advanced farm management practices that will enhance sustainability and farm economics for generations to come.

Nitrogen Smart
Conceived by MCR&PC and Minnesota Agricultural Water Resources Center, the Nitrogen Smart program has taught more than 600 farmers about how nitrogen behaves in the environment and how that impacts nitrogen fertilizer management. The curriculum, developed and taught by University of Minnesota Extension, has been deemed a success, with nearly 90 percent of Minnesota farmers who attended reporting they would recommend the program to their peers. Documented outcomes have also shown reductions in unnecessary N-fertilizer applications and increased profits due to changes in application practices.

With its success over the last two years, MCR&PC is now supporting an Advanced Nitrogen Smart program, which will provide an in-depth training around a single topic. Subjects like manure application will be rolled out for farmers looking to go beyond standard Nitrogen Smart seminars.

For his Innovation Grant project, Brian Velde (center) created an underground system that feeds the precise amount of nitrogen needed to his corn crop.
MNFuels.com has received thousands of visitors since launching.

Major Milestone: More than 400 E85 and 300 88 Octane stations in Minnesota
Ethanol-blended fuels had a record-breaking year in 2017, and that momentum only built in 2018. Through nine months, sales already surpassed 2017 record highs.

Marketing the benefits
The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) launched a large marketing campaign in 2018 to promote ethanol-blended fuels at the pump. The clean, renewable and homegrown benefits of ethanol were seen on billboards, heard on the radio and streamed on music streaming services.

- 50+ rotating digital billboards across the Twin Cities metro
- Heard on hit radio stations MPR, KFAN, KDWB, KQQL, K102 and more
- Streamed on both Pandora and iHeartRadio online radio services
- Viewed on the popular app Gas Buddy, which is used to compare gas prices at gas stations

MNFuels.com is the one-stop resource for ethanol-blended fuels
MCGA also set out to make it easier for consumers to find 88 Octane and flex fuels by revamping MNFuels.com. The new website features a station locator, flex fuel vehicle identifier, information on ethanol blends and a blog regularly updated with ethanol-related news.

At the website, Minnesotans can find a station offering 88 Octane or flex fuels by entering their location or clicking an icon to have their location detected. From there, they can choose which station they would like to visit and get directions via Google or Apple Maps.

Fuel promotion events bring consumers to the pump
Since October, drivers in the Twin Cities metro and beyond have had the opportunity to enjoy discounts at the pump on ethanol-blended fuels during fuel promotion events held during rush hour. In addition to fuel savings, the American Lung Association was on-hand at each to discuss the clean air benefits of ethanol-blended fuels that have helped drive the popularity of 88 Octane and higher blends.
MCGA continues to work with the U.S. Grains Council to build export markets for American corn and ethanol. During what has been a tumultuous year for trade, these efforts are more crucial than ever.

By hosting delegations from across the world and traveling abroad to see export market opportunities up close, Minnesota’s corn growers are building relationships that will lead to a more sustainable future for our state’s ag sector.

**Minneapolis**
Minnesota hosted the U.S. Grains Council Export Exchange, which brought officials from 36 countries to Minnesota to learn about American grains. MCGA was on-site to promote our corn products and ethanol industry.

**Southeast Asia** (Malaysia, Philippines and Vietnam) & **Central America** (Costa Rica, Panama, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador and Cuba): Officials visited MCGA President Brian Thalmann’s business, Thalmann Seeds; along with Heartland Corn Products, FAMO Feeds and Lawrence Herefords.

**Mexico**
Granjas Carroll Pork Producers, the second-largest pork producer in Mexico, visited the farm of MCGA director Bruce Peterson. The group participated in a DDGS feeding short course at the University of Minnesota and visited the Valero Ethanol Plant in Welcome.

**Indonesia**
The Indonesian embassy toured southern Minnesota with stops at the farms of George Goblish, Brandon Fast and Bryan Biegler, along with industry visits to RALCO Industries & Farmers Cooperative Elevator in Hanley Falls.

**Ethanol Summit of the Asia Pacific**
More than 150 participants representing 18 countries across the Asia-Pacific region met in Minneapolis for the summit promoting American ethanol. Government and industry officials toured Flint Hills Resources, POET Biorefining, Al-Corn Clean Fuels, and saw blender pumps in use at a Coborn’s fueling station.

**Morocco**
Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council member Chad Willis visited Morocco to see the country’s emerging ag sector up close and its opportunities for American agricultural exports.

**Japan**
Japan’s largest corn purchaser, ZEN-NOH Grain Corporation, visited Minnesota in July to gain a better perspective on the 2018 corn crop and learn about grain handling at the Farmers Cooperative Elevator in Hanley Falls. MCGA directors were also on hand to share information on harvest, storage and transportation practices on the farm.

**Taiwan**
MCGA Director Brian Thalmann traveled to Taiwan with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for the Agriculture Good Will Buyers Mission, meeting with the Taiwan Economic & Cultural office. Taiwan represents $3 billion in Minnesota ag sales.

**Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar**
MCGA Director Dwight Mork traveled with the U.S. Grains Council to promote corn and DDGS throughout the southeast Asia region.
Star Tribune: “Corn farmers begin pressing for tax break on land put aside as vegetation buffers”
The largest newspaper in the state covered the Minnesota Corn Growers Association’s (MCGA) efforts to elevate the importance of the property tax credit with candidates for governor and the Minnesota House of Representatives in October. Through both op-eds and articles, the legislation was covered going back to the 2018 legislative session.

KEYC-News: “Walz, Feehan tour local family farm”
The Mankato news station joined MCGA on the farm of MCGA director Tim Waibel, who was hosting congressional candidate Dan Feehan and gubernatorial candidate Tim Walz. Organized through the “MN Corn Grows MN” campaign, the candidate visit was one of many covered by local media.

AgWeek: “Looking for Octane 88? MN Corn Growers Association wants to help”
AgWeek and other ag media covered the unveiling of a revamped MNFuels.com, which connects consumers to retailers offering ethanol-blended fuels throughout the state. The one-stop resource will benefit the ethanol industry and the state’s corn growers by making it easier than ever to find 88 Octane and flex fuels.

West Central Tribune: “Walz, Johnson stick to common themes in Willmar forum”
The Greater Minnesota Gubernatorial Debate brought local media like the West Central Tribune and Twin Cities media to Willmar. MCGA co-hosted the event to raise awareness of issues in Greater Minnesota, which was highlighted by articles in the Star Tribune, MPR and a live broadcast on WCCO News Radio.

WCCO helps spread impact of corn growers statewide
MCGA partnered with WCCO News Radio on two different events in 2018 to help elevate the impact of Minnesota’s corn growers and the issues impacting corn farming in our state.

At Farmfest, MCGA was the official sponsor of WCCO’s live broadcast of the Minnesota Candidate Forum, which focused on rural issues with candidates from both parties. In addition to the forum, WCCO’s Dave Lee broadcasted live from the MCGA tent during Farmfest for an ag-focused show. MCGA grower leaders and Executive Director Adam Birr were part of the program discussing the impact of the state’s corn growers.

MCGA partnered again with WCCO, as well as Minnesota AgriGrowth, to host October’s Greater Minnesota Gubernatorial Debate with candidates Jeff Johnson and Tim Walz. WCCO brought the debate live to its statewide audience, raising awareness of the issues impacting rural Minnesota.

‘Field To Fork’ Blogger Bash connects farmers, foodies
In June, CommonGround Minnesota held it’s annual “Field To Fork” Blogger Bash, inviting Twin Cities bloggers and foodies to Wolf Creek Dairy near Dundas for an evening of conversation about food and farming. Held in partnership with KTMY-MyTalk 107.1, more than 60 guests toured the barns and milking parlor, got an up-close look at modern farm equipment, and enjoyed delicious dairy-themed food. CommonGround volunteers joined attendees to answer questions and discuss modern family farms.
MCGA hits the pitch and the ballpark
MCGA continued its partnership with Major League Soccer’s Minnesota United and the St. Paul Saints to share the many ways our corn growers benefit the state.

With the United, the partnership was an opportunity for MCGA to connect with a young, enthusiastic fan base at Minnesota United matches. Soccer fans had the opportunity to learn how our state’s corn farmers are caring for our natural resources via in-stadium signage, in-game announcements, print features and more.

Throughout the season, fans watching the Saints at CHS Field in downtown St. Paul learned about modern corn farming through in-stadium promotions, interactive games and advertisements during Saints broadcasts and on the team’s website.

Featuring future ag leaders with the Gophers
MCGA partnered with University of Minnesota athletics to feature current student-athletes who aspire to be agricultural leaders. Seven current student-athletes from the University’s College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS) were interviewed about their agricultural background and ag career ambitions. A video of each interview was played during Gophers’ sporting events and shared online, highlighting CFANS students who are also making an impact in athletics. You can view each at gophersports.com/mncorn.

Twin Cities Road Crew brings corn fun to all
MCGA continued its partnership with Twin Cities Road Crew to bring corn knowledge and entertainment to metro youth. The group presented corn facts during school assemblies, at sporting events like MCGA Night with the United, and at community events like the Aquatennial. Twin Cities Road Crew is just one way MCGA brings a positive message about corn farming to metro area youth and their families.

Maizy participated in a dance-off during MCGA Night at a MN United match.
MCGA AND MCR&PC STAFF

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Delavan

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Vice Chair
District: 9
Fountain

James O’Connor
Treasurer
District: 8
Blooming Prairie

Brandon Fast
Secretary
District: 7
Mountain Lake

Doug Albin
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Clarkfield

Duane Epland
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Twin Lakes

George Goblish
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Vesta

Dwight Mork
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Myron “Mickey” Peterson
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