

corn talk

Official Publication of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association • July 2019



Inside:

- A positive legislative session for farmers
- Year-round E15 is finally here
- Prevented plant a common choice in 2019

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About the cover

A decade in the making, consumers now have year-round access to E15. Learn more about the effort to grow access to ethanol-blended fuels on page 6.



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Legislative session wraps up with mixed bag of outcomes for corn growers

Minnesota's 91st legislative session wrapped up with a one-day special session on May 25, bringing some much-needed wins for Minnesota corn farmers. Funding for vital ag research, tax relief and more headlined as positive developments for the state's ag sector.

Taxes

Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) priorities for the 2019 legislative session focused on policy that would increase profitability on the farm.

One of the most noteworthy items was an increase in the Ag2School credit, which was a top MCGA priority. The credit is currently at 40 percent and applied to the tax on property attributable to school-district-bonded debt levies. The Ag2School credit would increase to 50 percent in tax year 2020 and would continue to increase to 55 percent in 2021, 60 percent in 2022 and 70 percent in 2023.

It is estimated the Ag2School credit increase will deliver up to \$10 million in property tax relief for farmers in fiscal years 2020-2021 and \$44 million in fiscal years 2022-2023.

The final tax bill also conformed Minnesota tax law to federal tax law for Section 179 capital equipment expensing and bonus depreciation, applicable to the 2018 tax year. State conformity on Section 179 provides certainty for farmers.

Although MCGA helped secure positive wins for agriculture on the tax policy front, we were disappointed to not see the buffer property tax credit included in the final tax package. MCGA will continue to work on this issue with legislators and the Gov. Walz administration.

Ag finance

MCGA was pleased to see baseline funding maintained for the Agricultural Research, Education, Extension and Technology Transfer Program (AGREETT) at the University of Minnesota. The program will

continue to receive \$9.3 million per year for the next two years, with \$5 million maintained in undesignated appropriations.

A multi-sector, interdisciplinary advisory panel will work with the University of Minnesota and Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) to provide direction on the undesignated funds in a way that prioritizes research, extension and infrastructure needs. MCGA appreciates the legislature continuing this investment in long-term sustainability for Minnesota agriculture.

On-farm mental health also received a much-needed funding increase in the bill, providing \$500,000 over the next two years for statewide mental health services through Minnesota State colleges and universities.

A \$900,000 increase for the noxious weed and invasive plant program through MDA was also included. The additional funding will help MDA officials better respond to emerging threats like Palmer amaranth.

Health and human services

The most notable provision for farmers was the extension of the reinsurance program for two years. Many farmers purchase health care coverage through the individual market, and the reinsurance program aims to help stabilize those insurance rates.

Transportation

The final bill allocated \$6.7 billion in transportation spending, with nearly \$200 million in new spending for the next two-year budget. The transportation finance bill maintained general fund allocations for transportation infrastructure and did not include any of the proposed new revenue increases from the gas tax, metro area sales tax for transit, or vehicle registration fees.

MCGA thanks legislative leaders, key committee chairs, legislative champions for agriculture issues and Gov. Walz for working together to craft a two-year budget that benefits farmers and rural communities. ■

The latest on the Groundwater Protection Rule

Last October, the Office of Administrative Hearings ruled the Groundwater Protection Rule may move forward, but also identified six defects that needed to be addressed. The ruling followed a comment period and public meetings that included input from the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) and a number of the state's corn farmers..

In November, the chief administrative law judge determined the defects had been corrected, but the proposed rule could not be finally adopted until after the 2019 legislative session as a result of resolutions passed by the agriculture committees in the Minnesota House of Representatives and Minnesota Senate during the 2018 legislative session.

Following the 2019 legislative session, Commissioner of Agriculture Thom Petersen signed the rule, setting in motion a number of procedural steps that ended with Gov. Tim Walz' signature and the final rule being published in the Minnesota State Register.

The final Groundwater Protection Rule was published in the State Register on June 24, 2019. Part 2 of the rule is effective; however, no regulatory action will occur until after three years. In Part 2, farmers operating in drinking water supply management areas (DWSMA) with elevated nitrate levels will be subject to voluntary and regulatory actions based on the level of nitrate concentration in the area.

Part 1 will not be effective until Jan. 1, 2020. In Part 1 of the rule, fall application of nitrogen fertilizer will be restricted in an area with vulnerable groundwater or a DWSMA with high nitrate levels.

To find out if you are impacted by either part of the Groundwater Protection Rule, visit mda.state.mn.us/nfr.

If you would like to learn more about the history of the Groundwater Protection Rule and MCGA's involvement throughout, visit mncorn.org/nitrogenrule. ■



The Groundwater Protection Rule will go into effect in 2019, but not impact farm practices immediately.

More prevented planting in 2019 for farmers

Already late into the planting season, Minnesota farmers had only 58 percent of their corn acres planted on May 28. The year prior, more than 90 percent of corn acres were planted on that date. The culprit: A spring filled with cool temperatures and too-many-to-count untimely rainfalls.

Pockets in Minnesota farm country experienced some luck and were able to get their acres planted, but many weren't so fortunate.

Richard Syverson, who farms near Benson, asked himself the same questions many were pondering in the state around mid-to-late May: Should I plant my remaining acres when I'm facing a possible 20-percent yield loss?

"We do the best we can with the tools we have, but, thankfully, we have the crop insurance system we have now, so that if we get into a 'prevented plant' situation, we can take the payment and live to farm another year," said Syverson, who is in his 38th year of planting.

For those who consulted with their crop insurance agent and decided prevented planting was the best option, cover crops became a preferred option for many, as opposed to leaving their fields bare.

Axel Garcia y Garcia, an assistant professor at the University of Minnesota's Southwest Research and Outreach Center, said it is important for growers turning to cover crops to consider both source of the seed and planting method.

First, Garcia y Garcia emphasized the need for growers to go through a reputable dealer to purchase their cover crop seed. Cover crop

establishment was less than ideal in Minnesota last year due to the weather, so seed may not be as plentiful as in past years.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) issued an advisory in June also emphasizing the need to follow Minnesota Seed Law for cover crop seed. Per the law, seed must have a label that confirms it was tested for noxious weed seeds and must be sold by an authorized dealer.

Garcia y Garcia also strongly recommends farmers drill the seed as opposed to broadcast seeding. Cover crop seeds are small and require strong seed-to-soil contact for establishment.

Overall, Garcia y Garcia is a big proponent of planting cover crops on prevented plant acres, which will deter weeds, protect the soil and help recycle nitrogen. He also hopes the unconventional introduction to cover crops will lead to more farmers considering the practice in the future.

"This could be a great opportunity for farmers to see the benefits of cover crops," Garcia y Garcia said. "They won't make you money directly, but they bring great ecological benefits by recycling nutrients, protecting the soil, and, eventually, improved soil health."

Another benefit for farmers turning to cover crops on prevent plant acres: The USDA's Risk Management Agency announced it will be moving the 2019 final haying and grazing date from November 1 to September 1. The change will make good stewardship of the land easier to accomplish while also providing an opportunity to ensure quality forage is available for livestock this fall. ■

For more resources on cover crop seed from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, visit mda.state.mn.us.



MCGA heads to nation's capital to advocate for federal priorities

Every July, Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) directors travel to Washington, D.C., to meet with fellow corn farmer leaders from other states during National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) Corn Congress. During the meeting, corn farmer leaders will gather to debate grassroots resolutions that will determine federal positions on policy impacting corn farmers.

Minnesota Corn directors will also spend time on Capitol Hill meeting with members of Minnesota's congressional delegation, agriculture

committee leadership, and key agencies like the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Environmental Protection Agency to advocate directly on policy priorities for Minnesota corn farmers.

There is no shortage of important policy topics to discuss with elected and administration officials. Trade is a top priority, and the ratification of the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) will be a point of emphasis in each visit. Mexico and Canada are the U.S. corn industry's largest, most reliable markets, and congressional approval of USMCA is a major focus for MCGA.

In addition to USMCA ratification, farmer leaders will continue to emphasize the important role trade plays in farm income and markets for corn and corn products, such as ethanol and dried distillers grains. Securing a trade agreement with China and other important trade opportunities for Minnesota corn farmers will be a topic of conversation during the visits.

The other important policy priority to discuss with policymakers is ethanol. Here again, there is no shortage of topics to cover, from the Renewable Fuel Standard and annual renewable volume obligations, to the impact of small refinery waivers on the ethanol industry and corn farmers.

Farm bill implementation for commodity and conservation programs will be covered, along with reinforcing support for crop insurance, especially due to this year's weather challenges.

July Corn Congress is an important time for Minnesota corn leaders. Given the current challenges in agriculture, it's a critical time to strongly advocate for policies that will help corn farmers and benefit agriculture. ■



MCGA directors will stress the importance of trade resolutions to preserve vital markets for corn.

MCGA joins Minnesota Department of Agriculture for Colombia/Peru trade mission

A recent Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) trade mission brought representatives of the corn, beef, pork, poultry and soybean industries to meet with members of the wholesale and feed industry in Colombia and Peru.

MDA Commissioner Thom Petersen led the delegation of 14, which also met with U.S. Department of Agriculture officials and the U.S. ambassadors to both countries. U.S. Grains Council (USGC) representatives accompanied the tour to offer their expertise. Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council member Jim O'Connor represented Minnesota's corn sector on the mission.

"It's so important to have relationships between us and our customers. People buy from people," said O'Connor, who farms in Blooming Prairie. "There is real value in shaking hands, looking the other person in the eye. Maybe sharing a smile or a concern. There is an emotional connection that is there, and you don't get that through an email or a text message."

Between 2013 and 2018, the USGC reports American exports of all grains to Colombia rose from just over 4 million metric tons to 6.3 million metric tons. Of that, five million metric tons was corn, worth an estimated \$840 million dollars. Between 2013 and 2018, U.S. exports of all grains to Peru

rose from 1.5 to almost 4 million metric tons. About 3.25 million metric tons of that was corn.

The United States has had a free trade agreement with Colombia since 2012, and in that time U.S. exports to Colombia have tripled. ■



Jim O'Connor (right) met with Under Secretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs Ted McKinney during the trade mission.

ethanol highlights

After long road, year-round E15 becomes reality for farmers, consumers

At the end of May, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established a rule that finally allowed for year-round sales of E15. The rule was a major victory for corn farmers and consumers who now have another option at the pump.

Dating back a decade, grassroots action by Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) members have played a pivotal role in removing the outdated barrier for the 2019 summer driving season. Most recently, hundreds of comments from Minnesota farmers during an April comment period called for year-round access to E15.

In addition to summertime access to E15, comments submitted in April also cautioned the EPA against finalizing proposed Renewable Identification Number (RIN) market rule changes that would be counterproductive to greater biofuels blending supported by the E15 rule. The state's corn growers appreciated that the final rule focuses on RIN market transparency and data.

Overall, the EPA rule allowing year-round E15 sales is a major development for Minnesota farmers and consumers. Minnesota has long been a national leader in ethanol, and because of the forward thinking of our state's growers, Minnesota is well positioned to serve those consumers interested in purchasing cleaner-burning, higher-octane E15 fuel.

In preparation for the increased access, the state's corn growers have taken a multi-faceted approach to investing in a more sustainable future for ethanol.

Establishing the infrastructure

Last December, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), MCGA, biofuel supporters and more celebrated an important milestone when Minnesota surpassed 400 E85 stations and 300 stations selling E15, also known as 88 Octane. Just three years prior, only 14 retailers statewide offered E15 fuel.

The rapid rise in retailers offering ethanol-blended fuels was the result of an investment in 2015 by both the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and a coalition of biofuel supporters.

Through the Biofuel Infrastructure Partnership (BIP) program, the USDA awarded Minnesota \$8 million in 2015 for ethanol infrastructure development to make cleaner-burning ethanol fuels more accessible. A coalition including the MDA, American Lung Association in Minnesota (ALA), Minnesota Biofuels Association, Ethanol Producers, Prime the Pump, and MCGA brought the total investment to \$14 million.

The return on the investment in infrastructure was quickly realized.

Even with E15 sales previously prohibited from June 1-Sept. 15 due to an outdated regulation, popularity of E15 has taken off in Minnesota. According to the Minnesota Department of Commerce, more than 59 million gallons of E15 fuel were sold to Minnesota consumers in 2018, nearly tripling sales from 2017.

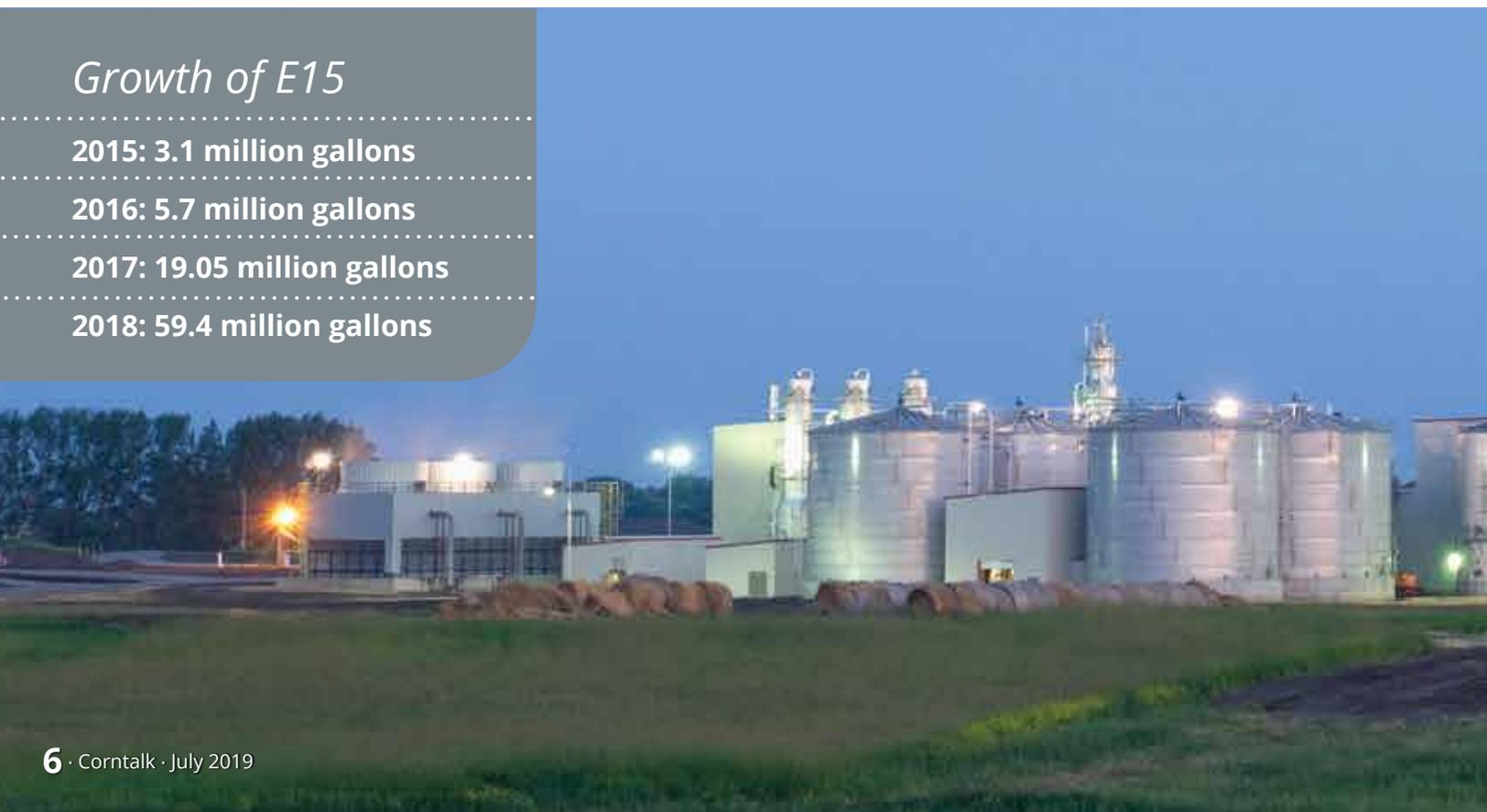
Growth of E15

2015: 3.1 million gallons

2016: 5.7 million gallons

2017: 19.05 million gallons

2018: 59.4 million gallons



Raising awareness of E15

While MCGA advocated for year-round E15, it also launched a consumer outreach campaign to raise awareness of the benefits of the homegrown option at the pump.

MCGA launched a revamped MNFuels.com to serve as a one-stop shop for drivers interested in 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.

The most popular resource on the website is the station locator. Minnesotans can find a station offering E15 or flex fuels by entering their location or clicking the icon to have their location detected via their mobile device. From there, consumers can choose which station they would like to visit, and quickly and easily get directions to that station via Google or Apple Maps.



Metro commuters learned about the benefits of E15 from buses that served as moving billboards throughout the Twin Cities as part of an MCGA-funded campaign.

MCGA also launched a marketing campaign driving Twin Cities metro area consumers to the redesigned MNFuels.com website. Viewed or heard more than 76 million times in 2018 alone, the campaign promotes the cleaner-burning and higher-octane attributes of E15 and included billboards, digital ads, metro transit bus sides, traditional and internet radio ads, and ads on the popular app Gas Buddy, which is used to compare fuel prices.

MCGA also partnered with the ALA to promote the clean air benefits of higher blends of ethanol. ALA has played a valuable role in promoting E15 as the clean-air option at the pump.

For more than 15 years, ALA has joined MCGA for fuel promotion events throughout the metro and Greater Minnesota. At each, consumers can take advantage of a discount on ethanol-blended fuels and learn about the many benefits of the homegrown, cleaner-burning option at the pump.

Next steps

In 2018, the EPA issued numerous waivers to refineries nationwide exempting them from purchasing RIN credits to comply with the RFS. Normally meant for small refineries experiencing severe financial hardship, waivers were granted to refineries of all sizes at an unprecedented level in 2018. The result was 2.6 billion gallons of renewable fuels were removed from the nation's fuel supply.

Today, the EPA has an additional 39 waiver petitions pending for the 2018 RFS compliance year and currently waiting for review. For the full benefits of year-round E15 to be realized, it is imperative no additional biofuel gallons are waived from the nation's fuel supply.

MCGA will continue working with its national partners to advocate for the end of unnecessary waiver exemptions, while supporting legislation that protects ethanol demand. ■



"This is great news for all of rural America and the ethanol industry. This decision will help Minnesota's agricultural sector, as well as our economy as a whole. Minnesotans are pleased that E15 will be available all year across the state and throughout the nation."

Governor Tim Walz



Corn farmers work alongside national organizations to grow ethanol demand in Minnesota

Building a bright future for ethanol-blended fuels is a team effort, requiring partners not only in Minnesota, but also on the national level. The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) proudly works alongside a number of biofuel advocates to drive change that increases access to ethanol, whether that is building demand, investing in infrastructure or affecting policy.

American Coalition for Ethanol

The American Coalition for Ethanol (ACE) has played a pivotal role in strengthening Minnesota's ethanol industry by helping grow demand abroad, specifically with our neighbors to the south.

In 2016, Mexico deregulated its oil industry, allowing retailers to explore fuel options beyond the country's state-owned oil companies. ACE Senior Vice President Ron Lamberty saw potential in the change and began organizing workshops with Mexican fuel retailers to introduce ethanol-blended fuels.

In 2017 Lamberty held one workshop in Mexico, followed by 6 in 2018 and 12 scheduled for this year. The approach ACE is taking, according to Lamberty, is the same approach taken with American retailers more than a decade ago—speaking with station owners directly to help them realize the business potential of ethanol.

"You want to spark their imagination and let them know this is a way they can make extra money at the pump," Lamberty said. "At first, we were just introducing it to them, but now we are going back to talk about the nuts and bolts and how to actually distribute it."

Growth Energy

In 2018, Minnesota surpassed more than 300 locations offering E15 and 400 offering E85. It was a tremendous achievement that Growth Energy helped reach with its "Prime the Pump" program, working alongside MCGA and a Minnesota coalition of ethanol supporters.

Prime the Pump was launched in response to flex fuel auto manufacturers requesting more locations that dispense ethanol-blended fuels, according to Growth Energy CEO Emily Skor. The program answered the call by partnering with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to invest \$190 million in ethanol infrastructure with individual retailers. Growth Energy worked with a Minnesota coalition of ethanol supporters to invest those dollars with a number of local retailers in Minnesota.

With the help of the Prime the Pump investment, 31 states today now offer E15, primarily through independent retailers. As more retailers offer E15 and E85, Skor said it will only lead to more widespread adoption.

"Each retailer is doing this because it is good for their own business, but it also has the impact of getting other retailers to come on board," Skor said. "Many think they don't want to be the first [to offer higher blends of ethanol], but they are willing to be the second."

Renewable Fuels Association

The Renewable Fuels Association (RFA) has helped fuel ethanol growth in Minnesota and beyond by conducting research that makes the case for higher blends of ethanol at the pump.

For example, RFA played a key role in achieving year-round E15 sales by conducting research that proves ethanol's benefits. RFA research showed



National partners helped Minnesota reach important ethanol infrastructure milestones over the last year.

E15 reduces emissions while saving consumers money at the pump by helping hold down gas prices. RFA data also supported the Trump administration's decision to grant Reid Vapor Pressure (RVP) clearance for E15 (88 octane) for U.S. consumers.

Currently, RFA Vice President Robert White said they are preparing for the reset of Renewable Fuel Standard volume levels. RFA will present research that makes the case for increasing biofuel volumes and also respond to any challenges from the oil industry to do the opposite.

"If the science prevails, we will win," White said. "That is why we are working to ensure we have all the data we need. For the most part with the EPA, the science always puts ethanol in a good position." ■

Addressing the false statements around ethanol-blended fuels

As news of year-round E15 made headlines, detractors of the homegrown fuel also made their voices heard, dispersing the same old myths and misconceptions that have, unfortunately, been around for years.

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) would like to address some of the more commonly heard myths surrounding E15 and other ethanol-blended fuels:

■ **“Ethanol wouldn’t be around if it wasn’t subsidized.”** Ethanol is not subsidized. The Volumetric Ethanol Excise Tax Credit (which was also known as the “blender’s tax credit”) expired in 2011. A state ethanol producer payment program, which applied to ethanol plants, not farmers, ended in 2012. And in 1980, Minnesota reduced the state fuel tax on gasoline that contains at least 10 percent ethanol by 4 cents per gallon, but that credit diminished over time and was phased out completely in 1997.

■ **“The Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) is a corn ethanol mandate.”** The RFS actually mandates that a certain amount of renewable fuels be part of the nation’s fuel supply. Renewable fuels are produced from a multitude of feedstocks that make up the mandated volumes of the RFS. The amount of corn ethanol that can comprise this volume is actually capped.

■ **“Ethanol is bad for my car. I’ll never use it.”** First, ethanol is found in 98 percent of our fuel. Regular unleaded, or E10, contains 10 percent ethanol, which is required by Minnesota law. You are already putting ethanol in your vehicle by using regular unleaded fuel, or E10. Additionally, before it was sold to consumers, E15 was tested more than 6 million miles with 86 different manufacturers, models and years, making it the most-tested fuel in history without any performance issues. This has led to the conclusion by the EPA that E15 is safe for all vehicles model year 2001 and newer.

■ **“Ethanol is bad for my small engine.”** E10 has been found to be safe for all ATVs, motorcycles, boats and lawn equipment.

■ **“There is no demand for E15.”** False. Look no further than our own state, where E15 sales went from 42,000 gallons in 2013 to more than 59 million gallons in 2018. Retailers who have committed to offering ethanol-blended fuels have also found it to be a very popular option. For example, fuel retailer Minnoco has reported E15 contributed to over 35 percent of overall fuel sales.

MCGA appreciates advocates of cleaner-burning, renewable, homegrown ethanol-blended fuels and efforts to have respectful conversations with others about the benefits of ethanol. Higher ethanol blends like E15 are another great year-round option at the pump for any consumer who is interested in purchasing a higher octane and lower-priced fuel. ▀



To find a retailer offering E15 near you or for more FAQs about ethanol-blended fuels, visit MNFuels.com.

Respectfully addressing ethanol misconceptions is important for its growth.

Station events to offer discounts and raise awareness of ethanol-blended fuels

Drivers in Twin Cities suburbs and Greater Minnesota will have the opportunity to enjoy discounts on E85 and E15 while learning about ethanol-blended fuels at fuel promotion events throughout the summer and fall.

Building on successful events that reached hundreds of Twin Cities residents last fall, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association again partnered with the American Lung Association in Minnesota (ALA) and Twin Cities Road Crew to raise awareness of ethanol-blended fuels with Minnesota drivers.

In addition to discounts on E85 and E15, ALA will be on-hand to promote the clean air benefits of ethanol-blended fuels. Twin Cities

Road Crew will also be chatting with drivers to answer questions about homegrown options at the pump.

There are more than 25 fuel events occurring this summer, with many organized by local county corn organizations. To find an event near you, visit MNFuels.com. ▀



Ethanol ambassadors spoke with consumers about the benefits of ethanol-blended fuels at a recent event in New Hope.

Potential growth opportunities for American meat exports

Tim Waibel, a Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) board member and a farmer in Courtland, heard about the latest developments in trade, updates on African Swine Fever, and more at the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) Spring Conference in Kansas City.

Waibel and his family raise hogs, along with corn and soybeans. For the Waibel family and farmers nationwide, ratification of the proposed United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) would be welcome news, assuring producers that their two biggest export markets will remain open for business with plenty of customers ready to buy.

Among the specifics of the agreement: Mexico has removed retaliatory duties on U.S. pork, and Canada has dropped a 10% duty on prepared

beef products. Also potentially helping producers stateside is the United State-Japan Trade Agreement. In the proposed agreement, Japan has lifted longstanding restrictions on U.S. beef exports that put America at a competitive disadvantage to Europe. The new marketing in Japan could be worth \$150 to \$200 million annually.

Another headline from the USMEF Spring Conference was the African Swine Fever crisis in China, which is the world's largest hog producer. The country has lost more than a million hogs and some estimates say losses could run to 200 million animals before the epidemic plays out. By comparison, America typically has a herd of about 60 million hogs.

According to presenters at the conference, the current epidemic is actually the second wave of African Swine Fever losses among Chinese hog producers. After a first occurrence of the disease, hog producers there had been trying to rebuild their herds when the disease struck again with even more brutal results. Pork has been China's favorite protein source, but in the wake of the latest devastation, many of the hog barns across China are being refitted to raise chickens. With that, more Chinese are now relying on poultry and eggs for their protein intake.

As China's pork production recovers, Waibel said the country may need to increase its reliance on trade to fulfill the country's demand, which is another reason American producers hope trade negotiations with China will be concluded sooner rather than later.

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association is a member of the U.S. Meat Export Federation and supports its mission to increase demand for U.S. livestock industries. Livestock feed remains the largest market for American corn. ▀



President Dan Halstrom addresses USMEF members at the organization's Spring Conference Meeting in Kansas City.

MCGA awards scholarship to Academy for Sciences & Agriculture students

Each year, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) offers a \$1,000 scholarship to two students at the Academy for Sciences & Agriculture (AFSA) Charter School to help grow the next generation of agricultural leaders. Emelia Smith and Abigail Stumpner are the 2019 recipients.

The current president of the school's FFA chapter, Smith will attend the University of Minnesota where she will pursue a career as a veterinarian. Stumpner, who is also an FFA officer, will be pursuing a degree in pharmaceuticals or medical imaging.

"Congratulations to Emelia and Abigail on receiving the MCGA scholarship, and best of luck in the next chapter of your education," said MCGA Executive Director Adam Birr. "Minnesota's corn growers are proud to partner with AFSA High School in its mission to educate the next generation of agricultural leaders."

Based in Vadnais Heights, AFSA focuses on teaching students the many different careers available in both science and agriculture fields. MCGA launched the scholarship program for AFSA students in 2015 to help grow awareness of opportunities in Minnesota's ag sector. ■



AFSA High School was founded in 2001 with the purpose of providing agricultural literacy.

4-H Science of Ag Challenge showcases next-level thinking in youth

Haley Mouser, Theresa Gustafson and Lily Krona are farm kids and 4-H'ers from the Bemidji area. For the past two years, they have participated in the Minnesota 4-H Science of Agriculture Challenge, an annual event that challenges school-aged children to come up with problem solving ideas in ag. Team Future Generation came away with the top prize in 2019 and received scholarships toward a post-secondary school of their choice.



(From the left) Haley Mouser, Theresa Gustafson and Lily Krona talk about their project with Minnesota State 4-H Director Jennifer Skuza.

The group devised a curriculum to teach kids in third, fourth and fifth grades about GMOs and gene editing. The received wisdom is that kids that young aren't ready to learn about such sophisticated matters. But this trio decided to find out for themselves, hypothesizing that if kids can learn about these important 21st century tools in agricultural science, they will, at the very least, be educated consumers.

"We wanted to put agricultural science into a STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) curriculum, and get STEM into the elementary setting," Mouser explained their choice of subject.

The trio taught upwards of 130 kids in a number of elementary classrooms. One key to connecting with the young students was creating a positive emotional connection with both farming and genetic technology.

For example, the group explained that the instant they focus on pigs, the kids are ready to hear more—call it the "Babe/Charlotte's Web" factor. When the kids hear that gene editing can help prevent pigs from dying from African Swine Fever, they have an appetite for learning more about gene editing.

What takes Science of Agriculture Challenge beyond the realm of a typical school science fair is that each team pairs up with an industry mentor who lends real-world information and insight to the teams. Team Future Generation worked with Natasha Mortenson, communications director for Riverview LLP, a beef and dairy company with operations in Minnesota.

"Theresa, Lily, and Haley are dedicated to giving others an experience to connect the science of agriculture with their food," said Mortenson. "The girls put a tremendous amount of dedication into learning about genetics and science advancement so they could portray to others the safety and facts of technology relating to food and farming."

The Minnesota 4-H Science of Agriculture Challenge is available to 4-H members in all 87 counties of the state, and the program is supported by many in agriculture, including the Minnesota Corn Growers Association. ■

Visit Minnesota Corn at Farmfest 2019



The Minnesota Corn Growers Association tent will once again be located at the corner of Seed Road and Seventh Street.

Farmfest returns to Gilfillan Estates near Morgan Aug. 6-8, and the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) will again be a can't-miss stop in Tent 702.

MCGA is excited to share the many ways our corn growers are building a sustainable future for the state's ag sector and all Minnesotans. From exciting research developments to important advocacy efforts, the last year has been a busy one in the world of corn. Stop by the MCGA tent located at the corner of Seed Road and Seventh Street to catch up on the latest by chatting with an MCGA grower leader.

MCGA will be partnering with WCCO Radio once again to bring the statewide radio station to Farmfest. On the Wednesday of Farmfest,

WCCO Radio's Dave Lee in the Morning will be broadcasting live from the MCGA tent. Be sure to tune in to AM-830 from 6 to 9 a.m. to hear from MCGA grower leaders and others from the state's ag sector. MCGA will also sponsor the Fluence Forum in the Wick Building on Farmfest grounds.

A tasty bonus: Samples of delicious sweet corn ice cream will again be available to attendees. Provided by the University of Minnesota, the ice cream has always been one of the best ways to cool off under the hot August sun.

For all Farmfest-related announcements, check out our blog at mncorn.org/blog. ■

Minnesota Corn partners with podcast, "Beers with Blois"

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) partnered with a new podcast titled, "Beers with Blois," hosted by Fluence Media founder Blois Olson. In each episode, Olson holds candid conversations with Minnesota political leaders, which have already included Gov. Tim Walz, Minnesota Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka, Sen. Tom Bakk, Rep. Kurt Daudt and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey.

As a supporter of the podcast, MCGA is featured at the start of each podcast, as well as included in future newsletters and marketing. The partnership is a great opportunity to share information on the important impact of corn, and the contributions of Minnesota corn farmers and their families to our state.



"Beers with Blois" is available on iTunes and Android. ■

MCGA brings corn-focused entertainment to Minnesota State Fair

Friday, Aug. 23, is "A-Maize-ing" Corn Day at the Minnesota State Fair this year. Sponsored by the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA), A-Maize-ing Corn Day is a celebration of all things corn.

From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., find MCGA mascot Maizey and the Twin Cities Road Crew at the Christensen Farms stage where attendees will learn about the work of the state's nearly 24,000 corn growers in an entertaining performance. Near the stage, MCGA will also have a tent full of activities, games and more.

You also won't want to miss the State's Fair newest attraction, the Minnesota Corn Fairstalk. Located near the fair's north entrance, the beautiful sculpture will feature video that helps share the importance of our state's corn sector to the millions attending the fair. ■



Corn hole is one of the activities available at "A-Maize-Ing" Corn Day.

Resources available to all experiencing on-farm stress

Spring 2019 brought its fair share of challenges to Minnesota farmers who continue to endure difficult economic times on the farm. To help families navigate those common stressors, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture launched MinnesotaFarmStress.com.

At MinnesotaFarmStress.com, visitors can learn more about the Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline (833-600-2670). Trained to discuss the unique stresses in agriculture, counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

While each will be prepared to discuss ag-specific sources of stress, counselors are also trained to help connect farmers to other resources, whether that is legal help, a medical physician or other forms of assistance. Callers are not required to provide any personal information.

MinnesotaFarmStress.com is also available to provide farmers with resources to help navigate financial, emotional and family issues, and other challenges on the farm. ■



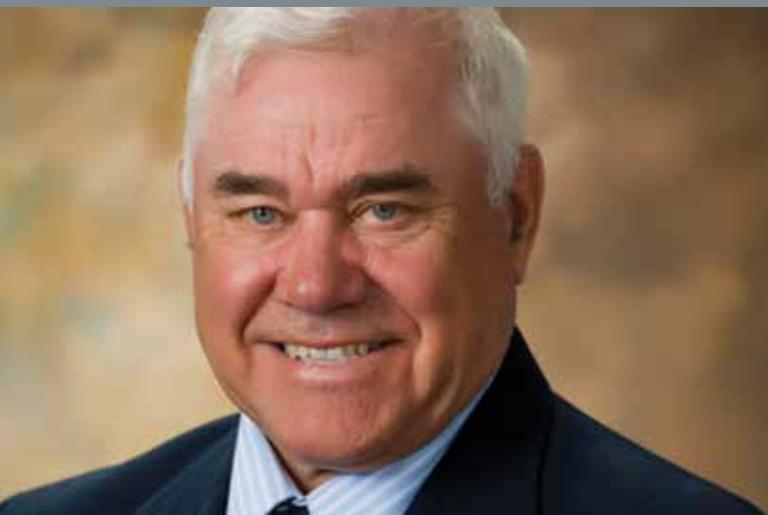
Farmers experiencing stress are encouraged to dial 833-600-2670.

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In addition to the Farm & Rural Helpline at 833-600-2670, additional resources, including financial assistance, are available to farmers at MinnesotaFarmStress.com.
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Former MCGA director Dale Tolfison remembered

Longtime Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) director Dale Tolfison, who farmed near Benson, passed away in April at the age of 73. A lifelong advocate for corn farmers, Tolfison will be dearly missed for both his kindness and his tremendous contributions to Minnesota's ag sector.

Tolfison served on the MCGA board from 2009-2018, and was also a board member of the Swift County Corn and Soybean Growers Association. During his time in both leadership positions, he was well respected by his peers as someone who brought a wealth of experience and knowledge to each meeting, said MCGA director Richard Syverson.



Tolfison served as a tremendous advocate for corn growers and the ethanol industry throughout his career.

Syverson worked with Tolfison as a past MCGA regional representative and also as a shareholder in the Chippewa Valley Ethanol Cooperative, where Tolfison was a founding member, past chairman and board member. Tolfison was a strong advocate for ethanol, including through the American Coalition for Ethanol (ACE). His experience was a valuable asset to his county and the MCGA board.

"Dale would travel all over the country for the renewable fuel industry and report back to the local corn growers on what he had learned," Syverson said. "It was helpful for corn board members to know it is more than just grinding corn, it is about marketing the fuel as well. He was pivotal in bringing the bigger picture of ethanol to the group."

Tolfison's contributions to renewable fuels were recognized by ACE last year when it presented the Grassroots Award to Tolfison at its annual meeting. In honoring his "behind the scenes" efforts, ACE CEO Brian Jennings cited Tolfison's skill and determination to build a market for ethanol.

"Dale has played an instrumental role in making sure the priorities of ACE and MCGA are aligned and ensuring communication between our organizations," Jennings said. "But most importantly, Dale's grassroots leadership and support of ethanol epitomizes the grit and determination it takes to enable farmers to succeed in taking market share from the most profitable companies in the world."

Syverson said that drive came from a simple goal for Tolfison, and that is to do what he could to improve the lives of corn farmers in Minnesota.

"Whether it was ethanol or through Minnesota Corn, Dale's goal was always to improve the life of the guy getting out of bed, doing chores and heading out to the field. His intentions were always clear, honest and direct," Syverson said. ■

county highlights

County corn organizations fuel the grassroots advocacy efforts of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA), while helping promote the importance of corn farming in Minnesota. Throughout the year, county organizations host events that raise awareness of agriculture in their local communities, engage area youth with educational and scholarship opportunities, meet local legislators to discuss issues important to corn farming, and much more.

To shine a light on these initiatives throughout the year, MCGA is highlighting the counties' many successes in each issue of Corn Talk.



Zach Johnson (right) hosts the podcast with Mitchell Hora. (Photo credit: National Public Radio)

Pope County Corn and Soybean Growers

Zach Johnson, who is a board member for the Pope County Corn and Soybean Growers Association, teamed up with Iowa farmer Mitchell Hora to host the Field Work podcast. Broadcasted through National Public Radio, Field Work focuses on the challenges and opportunities in sustainable, production agriculture.

Johnson, who is known to many through his MN Millennial Farmer YouTube page, teams up with Hora to discuss conservation practices with a wide variety of ag professionals. Guests have included Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) board member and Lake Wilson farmer Bryan Biegler and his wife, Lauren, as well as University of Minnesota Extension Nitrogen Smart program director Brad Carlson and representatives from the Soil Health Partnership.

The podcast is a great opportunity to discuss modern conservation practices with the farming and non-farming public. Download the latest podcast at FieldWorkTalk.org.

Murray County Corn and Soybean Growers

The Murray County Corn and Soybean Growers hosted "Salute to Ag" night at Murray County Speedway in Slayton. The event had free admission and featured promotions for ethanol-blended fuels. A race car that runs on ethanol was available for viewing in front of the grandstand, and free food and beverages were available to attendees who stopped by.



Youth, ages 14-15, attended the farm safety event held in early June.

Polk and Pennington/Red Lake County Corn and Soybean Growers

Both county organizations sponsored separate Youth Tractor and Farm Safety programs organized through University of Minnesota Extension in June and July. By supporting the event, county members helped provide youth the opportunity to learn how to safely work with full-sized tractors. Young attendees also received training in basic farm-related first aid and heard from members in their community who are experienced in ag safety.

Meeker County Corn Growers

Meeker County Corn Grower board member Steve Schmitt participated in Kimball Ag Day in May where he spoke with elementary students in the area about corn bi-products and their many uses. Among the highlights of the day was the look on students' faces when they learned corn is used to make tennis shoes. The event was a great opportunity to discuss with students of all ages the importance of corn farming in the area. ■



Young students from Kimball enjoyed learning about the many uses for corn.

Have an event that you would like featured in County Highlights? Contact your local district field manager at mncorn.org/staff.

Become a Young Adult Member of MCGA today

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) Young Adult Membership, available to ages 16-24, was launched last year as a means for future agricultural leaders to participate in grassroots advocacy today.



"Growing up, I was told to always get involved and be part of great organizations that I was passionate about. I believe that the MCGA Young Adult Membership Program has given me that opportunity to get a jump start on being more connected to the Minnesota farm community. The membership has already helped me become a more knowledgeable agricultural advocate."

Carson Kahler, Sherburn ■

Along with reduced member dues, Young Adult Members will stay up to date on the latest in Minnesota's corn sector and have access to great networking and leadership opportunities.

Hear from a Young Adult Member on why he chose to be part of MCGA:

Join MCGA today
at mncorn.org/join.

Women in ag, metro moms unite for evening of cooking and conversation

CommonGround Minnesota once again partnered with Twin Cities Moms Blog for an evening of cooking and conversation with women in agriculture and Twin Cities metro moms. The event, held at Cooks of Crocus Hill in St. Paul, was an opportunity to connect with an influential metro audience to discuss modern farming and food production.

The sold-out event began with a meet-and-greet between CommonGround volunteers, who traveled to the Twin Cities from farms and rural communities located across Greater Minnesota, and members of the Twin Cities Moms Blog network. From there, attendees and volunteers

teamed up to cook a delicious meal at the Cooks of Crocus Hill kitchen, followed by a family style dinner.

The evening was filled with questions, conversation and an opportunity to build relationships. Overall, the event was the perfect setting for CommonGround volunteers and Twin Cities moms to connect, and for the farm women volunteers to share personal experiences and information about how food is grown and raised in our state. ■



CommonGround volunteers teamed up with attendees to make a family style dinner.

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calendar of events

august

4

MCGA Night with the Minnesota United
St. Paul

august

6-8

Farmfest
Morgan

august

23

A-Maize-Ing Corn Day at the State Fair
St. Paul

august

30

MCGA Night with the St. Paul Saints
St. Paul

september

2

MCGA Offices Closed for Labor Day

september

10-12

Big Iron Farm Show
Fargo

september

11

MCGA/MCR&PC Joint Board Meeting
Shakopee

Don't toss it out - pass it along!

When you're finished reading Corn Talk, why not pass it along to a friend, colleague or neighbor. This publication is one of the best ways to stay up to date with the news that is important to the state's corn growers, whether it is related to policy, research or outreach to all Minnesotans.

Know someone who should be on the Corn Talk mailing list or notice an error with your subscription? Please contact us at 952-233-0333.