

# corn talk

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## Inside:

- COVID-19 presents a new challenge for Minnesota agriculture
- Federal, state legislative efforts shift to address impact of pandemic
- Corn farmers statewide step up to help their communities through today's challenges

# COVID-19 Resources for Corn Farmers

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is impacting our state's ag sector as Minnesotans join the rest of the nation in taking the necessary steps to prevent spreading of the disease. The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) would like to alert producers to resources, as they enter this year's growing season under never-before-seen circumstances.

At [info.mncorn.org/covid19](http://info.mncorn.org/covid19), farmers can find state and federal resources, mental health assistance, guidance documents to manage COVID-19, distance learning materials for kids at home and more. Visitors can also fill out a form detailing concerns they have on the farm related to COVID-19, which will help inform MCGA as we work to help farmers during this challenging time.



Find COVID-19 resources at [info.mncorn.org/covid19](http://info.mncorn.org/covid19).

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# A new challenge for all Minnesotans



**T**his edition of Corn Talk hits your mailbox during an especially trying time in agriculture. We are no stranger to battling through the typical headwinds—weather, lost markets, low prices—but navigating the impacts of a worldwide pandemic is uncharted territory.

We hope you and your family are taking the necessary steps to stay safe as the country comes together to slow down the spread of COVID-19. We know these measures are difficult; they impact not only our daily lives, but also our livelihood as the economic slowdown hits nearly every industry.

We recently asked our members to inform us of their concerns on the farm related to COVID-19. It came as no surprise the state of the markets is keeping us all up at night, as the crisis has taken its toll on the ethanol and livestock markets, as well as slowed trade activity.

## Mental health resources available to farmers

**T**he COVID-19 crisis has further elevated the stress levels of many farmers, making mental health resources essential over the coming months.

The Farm & Rural Helpline, available at 833-600-2670, is answered 24/7 by staff who are trained to help farmers who are struggling with stress or depression. The confidential helpline connects callers to financial help, mental health counselors, legal assistance and more.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture also launched **MinnesotaFarmStress.com**. It's a quick way to find people and organizations that can help Minnesota farmers and farm families with unique challenges on the farm. ▀

**833-600-2670**

Farm & Rural Helpline  
answered 24/7

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) is hard at work with its national partners to bring relief to farmers during this challenging time while we take the steps to hit the ground running once the economy returns to pre-COVID-19 levels. The following pages will outline a variety of resources available to corn farmers. Perhaps one of the most important, the Farm & Rural Helpline is available 24/7 at 833-600-2670 to farmers interested in confidential counseling to manage on-farm stress.

We also encourage you to stay connected to MCGA, as guidance and resources are continually evolving. You can subscribe to our free weekly e-newsletter at [mncorn.org/LeaderUpdate](http://mncorn.org/LeaderUpdate) or follow us on Facebook (@MinnesotaCorn) and Twitter (@mncorn) for the latest.

With that being said, business will continue, albeit far from normal. We know you are hard at work in the field, continuing to provide feed, fuel and food to the world. At MCGA, we are continuing to work on your behalf promoting and identifying opportunities for corn farmers while building connections with the non-farming public.

We hope you enjoy the articles outside of the COVID-19 news in this issue. Farmer-led research returns through the Innovation Grant Program, two talented future ag leaders received our MCGA scholarship, county corn organizations continue to do great work in their communities and more Minnesotans are learning about the importance of corn.

We wish you a safe and productive growing season, and we can't wait until we can all get together again. ▀

Les Anderson, President  
Minnesota Corn Growers Association

Scott Winslow, Chairman  
Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council

Adam Birr, Ph. D., Executive Director  
Minnesota Corn Growers Association  
Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council

# Federal, state legislation provides COVID-19 relief to farmers

**M**innesota's ag sector has certainly felt the impacts of a COVID-19 pandemic that has brought the country to a standstill as we take the necessary steps to prevent spread of the virus. Both state and federal policy makers acted quickly to bring much-needed relief to farmers and ranchers nationwide.

For more information on each relief option below, visit [info.mncorn.org/covid19](http://info.mncorn.org/covid19).

## Federal relief helps, but more needed

The first round of relief came in mid-April when the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) launched the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Emergency Injury Disaster Loan Program (EIDL). The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) worked with its national partners to ensure both programs bring assistance to farmers.

Eligible recipients can receive a PPP loan for up to two months of average payroll plus an additional 25 percent of that amount, capped at \$10 million. For farmers, the program included guidance determining the amount provided to a sole proprietor, based on net profit amount, limited to \$100,000 per individual. PPP also accommodated seasonal employees, based on payroll costs incurred during the 2019 year.

The latest relief package also clarified EIDL now applies to agricultural business, including cooperatives, up to 500 employees in size. The program provides eligible small businesses with working capital loans of up to \$2 million, with a loan advance of up to \$10,000.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced its first round of relief for farmers and ranchers in late April. The \$19 billion aid package directs \$3 billion in food product purchases by USDA and \$16 billion in direct assistance to farmers.

The first round of relief allocated \$3.9 billion for row crop producers, with the majority of funding directed toward livestock producers experiencing significant processing challenges due to COVID-19. MCGA will continue working with its national partners to advocate for additional relief directed to row crop producers and an ethanol industry decimated by reduced demand.

At the time of publication, additional details related to specific rates per commodity and calculation methodology had not been released.

## Minnesota Legislature offers ag sector relief

Like in Washington, D.C., the arrival of COVID-19 drastically shifted priorities in the Minnesota Legislature, as policy makers worked together to focus on providing relief to Minnesotans impacted by the pandemic. A \$200 million COVID-19 relief fund was quickly established in March to help state agencies respond, with additional bills passed in the coming weeks providing necessary funds.

The Rural Finance Authority was authorized to participate in loans to farmers to offset lost revenue due to COVID-19, as well as loans to help farmers replace infrastructure and purchase inputs. Previously, these loans were only available when damage was caused from wind, hail, tornado, etc.

Farmer-lender mediations were also extended by 60 days for pending and new cases to enable the opportunity to meet face-to-face. And seasonal commercial drivers' licenses were allowed to be issued using alternative certification methods.

Recognizing the impact of COVID-19 will continue through the growing season and beyond, MCGA will continue advocating for relief on both the federal and state level. Stay connected to the latest news by subscribing to Leader Update, the official e-newsletter of MCGA, at [mncorn.org/LeaderUpdate](http://mncorn.org/LeaderUpdate). ■



Farmers received some relief ahead of hitting the field for planting.



Former MCGA board member Bruce Peterson testified on behalf of MCGA during a pre-COVID-19 hearing on the E15 standard.

## Legislative session shifts focus during pandemic

Entering the 2020 legislative session, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) focused on increasing the state's biofuel standard while bringing tax relief and conformity to farmers. By the end of March, priorities at the Capitol shifted drastically with the arrival of COVID-19.

### E15 legislation on hold

The Better Fuel Initiative was launched in a multi-faceted effort to grow the use of biofuels in Minnesota, with increasing the state's biofuel standard to 15 percent a central goal. Bills introduced in the House and Senate successfully passed multiple committees, but both were halted due to COVID-19.

While the legislation will stall in 2020, the progress made to date brought to the surface concerns and opposition from stakeholders. This information will prove pivotal as MCGA plans outreach for the rest of the year and prepares factual responses for next year's legislative session.

MCGA did work with both the House and Senate to include a report on biofuels in the omnibus ag policy bill directing the commissioner of agriculture to outline Minnesota's ability to reduce its reliance on petroleum and reduce greenhouse gas emissions with biofuels. As directed in the bill, the report will recommend specific policies, identify biofuel infrastructure needs, and identify cost-effective incentives to expedite higher blends of biofuels.

And while biofuel progress has been halted in the legislature, the Governor's Council on Biofuels has continued to work with the goal to produce recommendations that would be included in the aforementioned report. MCGA Chairman Brian Thalmann is a member of the council, along with a number of other biofuel leaders, and their progress made to date has been positive for corn farmers and biofuel advocates.

### Further fallout from COVID-19

COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on the state's budget over the course of the 2020 session. What began as a \$1.5 billion surplus at the beginning of session is now projected to be a \$2.4 billion deficit. With the state's budget now in the red, policy makers will need to address the current biennium's financial commitments, as the state will likely face a budget shortfall when the legislature convenes the 2021 session next January.

In the final days of the 2020 legislative session, House and Senate committees have been working together to craft both a policy and a finance bill. Grain bin safety has been a top priority for the House and Senate, and both finance bills include grant funding for grain bin safety equipment.

Both committees have also worked to address issues that have risen during COVID-19, including extending the farmer-lender mediation negotiation time table and increasing funding to buy surplus agricultural products for food shelves. The House and Senate budget bills also include grants for safety equipment at grocery stores and grants to cover the cost of origination fees for farm restructuring loans.

And while both the House and Senate have various full and partial Section 179 conformity proposals, their inclusion in final legislation remains to be seen. The state's budget projection will certainly impact the final tax bill, budget bills and a bonding bill, as the legislature moves forward. ■

# Uplifting rural communities in trying times

**T**he impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is being felt across Minnesota, affecting Greater Minnesota communities and the Twin Cities alike. Restaurants are empty, Main Street businesses are closed, and countless industries are slowed to a halt. Farmers can work business as usual, but their largest customers are not, raising stress levels throughout the ag sector.

The oft-repeated mantra “We’re in this together” is especially true for Minnesotans, as people throughout the state help their local communities. The county corn organizations that fuel the grassroots efforts of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) have answered the call to help during this challenging time.

## Murray

### Murray County Corn and Soybean Growers

Due to COVID-19, Murray County Corn and Soybean board members were forced to cancel this year’s annual meeting, so they came up with a new way to thank their supporters that also gave local businesses a boost.

The farmers who sit on the board worked with local restaurants to organize a free lunch for supporters of the county organization and essential workers during COVID-19. The effort would not only show appreciation, but also support local restaurants severely impacted by Minnesota’s “stay-at-home” order.

“It really is a win-win,” Stoel said. “We can walk into a local cafe with hundreds of dollars to buy these lunches, which helps those guys out, and then bring a free lunch voucher or lunch to someone who is really under some stress and isn’t expecting it.”



Travis Stoel (left) hands a voucher to Derek Krosschell, owner of Chandler Feed, an essential business assisting ag producers during the pandemic.

## Marshall

### Marshall County Corn and Soybean Growers

Farmers who sit on the board of the Marshall County Corn and Soybean Growers met prior to planting to identify ways they could help their community, specifically those serving on the frontlines of the pandemic and the businesses closing because of it.

Board chair Todd Bjorgaard said farmers started calling local restaurants to purchase gift cards that will provide much-needed revenue during the “Stay at Home” order. They then distributed those gift cards to essential employees, including first responders and others hard at work to keep their community safe. The county organization also made a donation to their local food bank to help stock the shelves.



The opportunity to help healthcare workers was one area farmers could not pass up.

## Freeborn

### Freeborn County Corn and Soybean Growers

Freeborn County Corn and Soybean Growers made a \$3,000 donation to three food shelves in Albert Lea and Alden. Recognizing the financial hardship many families are under due to COVID-19, Freeborn County board member Cole Pestorius said they were eager to help the food shelves experiencing increased traffic.

“Speaking to someone from Alden, he said you couldn’t believe the number of cars lined up at the food shelf,” Pestorius explained. “We wanted to contribute to winning the fight against this virus, and this was one of the better ways we could.”

## Yellow Medicine

### Yellow Medicine County Corn Growers

To give back to a community that has long supported them, board members of the Yellow Medicine County Corn Growers purchased hundreds of cloth masks from a local retailer, Clarkfield Outdoors, to distribute throughout the county to people in need.

Board members dropped off a box of masks at agronomy centers, where spring planting traffic would be high, and asked employees to hand out masks to customers. Yellow Medicine corn farmers also focused on helping essential employees who continue to work with the general public, by delivering masks to implement dealers for their technicians, in addition to seed dealers and local co-ops.

Board members also dropped off hundreds of masks at the Yellow Medicine County food shelf, along with a \$1,000 donation to stock the shelves during the pandemic.

“Overall, it really was a great situation to be able to help the county with something they might not be able to easily get their hands on,” said Doug Albin, a county board member and Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council member.



Doug Albin (right) delivered masks to a local agronomy center to give to farmers as they come in during spring planting.

## Statewide Support

In addition to supporting the many efforts by county corn organizations, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) also stepped up to help families facing hunger during COVID-19.

Twin Cities radio stations Go 95.3 and Go 96.3 held a 12-hour radio telethon on April 30. Listeners could make a donation to Twin Cities food bank Second Harvest Heartland, then text their receipt to either station to have their song of choice played.

MCGA sponsored an hour of the telethon and matched the amount raised during that hour, up to a pre-determined amount. MCGA board member Harold Wolle also participated in interviews throughout the hour on both stations to discuss corn farming in Minnesota.



MCGA joined other Minnesota organizations and businesses to support Second Harvest Heartland.

# 10th Circuit upholds ruling limiting EPA refinery waivers

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit struck down three small refinery exemptions (SREs) issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in January, deciding the refineries did not sufficiently display economic hardship. The decision was a major win for corn farmers and an ethanol industry deeply impacted by the EPA's reckless issuing of SREs.

While the decision addressed three specific exemptions, the Tenth Circuit decision would restrict the EPA's ability to issue SREs moving forward by forcing refineries to meet clear requirements for exemption. Since 2018, SREs issued by the EPA have removed more than 4 billion ethanol-equivalent gallons from the nation's fuel supply.

The nation's corn farmers learned in March the Trump Administration would be considering an appeal of the Tenth Circuit decision. The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) worked with its national partners, including the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA), to express the extreme disappointment of corn farmers nationwide if an appeal is filed.

MCGA launched a call-to-action to its members to contact President Trump and ask he not appeal the decision. In less than a week, more than 350 farmers participated. In the end, the deadline to appeal passed without one being filed. MCGA appreciates the passionate response from its members emphasizing the importance of this decision.

The Tenth Circuit decision faced one more round of opposition when refiners HollyFrontier and CVR filed to have the case reheard. In April, the court denied the petition, clearing the way for the EPA to apply the court's decision nationally.

At the time of publication, MCGA continues to work with NCGA and its biofuel partners to have the decision applied nationally. With a number of SRE requests filed for the 2019 compliance year, applying the decision would lead to the rightful denial of many of these requests. The application of the decision will be a top priority for ethanol advocates in the months ahead. ■



The decision finally reined in the issuing of EPA waivers destroying ethanol demand.

# Trade developments produce optimism for farmers

Ryan LeGrand, CEO of the U.S. Grains Council, has a firm understanding of COVID-19's international impact, as he navigates the pandemic to continue to grow markets abroad while keeping his employees safe. LeGrand remains focused on strengthening the momentum established prior to the world turning to address the crisis.

Over the last 10 years, ethanol has been the fastest growing agricultural export. Enter COVID-19, and the production of ethanol plummeted stateside in response to declining oil prices and reduced demand around the world. LeGrand expects the historical price relationship between ethanol and oil to resume following the pandemic, and at that point, the benefits of ethanol will once again prevail with international customers.

"We know eventually the price relationship and driving habits will return to normal," LeGrand said. "At that time, the benefits of ethanol are clear when it comes to greenhouse gases and emissions. It is going to come back, but it may take a while."

For grain, purchasing activity has ebbed and flowed as buyers look to take advantage of dips in the market. A major bright spot for corn farmers has been China's involvement. The country has emerged as the fifth largest buyer of American corn over the last year, barely trailing South Korea. China also trails only Mexico in the purchasing of new crop.

While LeGrand holds some cautious optimism until shipments arrive, the development is welcomed.

"There is a lot to be said in terms of our overall relationship with China, but right now, as far as corn and sorghum goes, China is really stepping up to the plate."

In addition to China, LeGrand sees Southeast Asia as emerging markets for corn and value-added products from corn. Vietnam, for example, is one of the largest corn importers in the world, and there is great market share potential for America if a free trade agreement is reached. Indonesia also has tremendous potential for ethanol, which, for the first time, has been included in its international tender.

Further out on the horizon, Africa has great potential for America's corn farmers, as economic vitality improves in its nations, according to LeGrand. The Office of the United States Trade Representative has begun trade negotiations with Kenya, which could serve as a road map for future negotiations with African countries. ■



Ryan LeGrand

# Keeping children safe on the farm

**C**OVID-19 has moved schools to online learning throughout the state and limited access to daycare. With that, more kids are on the farm this growing season than perhaps in the past, increasing the risk for child accidents.

The National Children's Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety (NCCRAHS) launched CultivateSafety.org to share resources and information with parents to help keep children safe on the farm. The website is especially helpful today, according to Marsha Salzwedel, project scientist with NCCRAHS.

At CultivateSafety.org, information is organized into resources related to kids safely working, playing and preventing accidents on the farm. Salzwedel recommends parents with smaller children read literature on creating a safe play area, including fencing in kids. For parents with older kids, CultivateSafety.org has an interactive feature to help parents decide what on-farm jobs are age appropriate.

Salzwedel also recommends keep children out of the tractor and all farm equipment that does not have a designated second seat with a seatbelt. Falling out of a tractor remains the top source of injury for younger children. Overall, keeping children out of the work site, whether that is an active planter, filling a grain wagon or cleaning a grain bin, is very much advised by Salzwedel.



CultivateSafety.org has resources for parents with school-aged children.

## Ethanol plants step up to fill need for hand sanitizer

**T**he demand for sanitizer outpaced our nation's supply in March and April as Americans focused on stopping the spread of the Coronavirus. Seeing a chance to help, a number of ethanol plants in Minnesota and beyond stepped up to the plate and used their resources to help fill the need.

Some ethanol plants in Minnesota have adapted their manufacturing process to create ethanol for sanitizer instead of fuel. The opportunity to play a role in providing a much-needed product during today's efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19 has not been taken lightly, according to Ken Colombini, communications director for the Renewable Fuels Association.

"Our ethanol plants want to serve, and they want to do it in a way that gives back to the community," Colombini said. "And no better way for them than to take a product that is good for our air to help stop the spread of the Coronavirus."

Ethanol production for sanitizer has also provided plants with another market as demand for ethanol fuel has sharply declined due to drivers

staying home. Colombini said production of ethanol for sanitizer could prevent some plants from closing during the downturn; however, it does not provide a revenue center that will uplift the industry.

"It could help some plants individually. I would not consider it a panacea for the entire industry," Colombini said.

Significant barriers also exist for some ethanol plants to enter the sanitizer industry.

Colombini said the Renewable Fuels Association has been doing what it can to make it easier for plants to begin sanitizer production. For example, it worked alongside others in the ethanol industry to modify a Food and Drug Administration regulation enabling fuel ethanol plants to increase production of the grades of alcohol suitable for hand sanitizer.

Still, Colombini stressed switching over a plant to produce pharmaceutical-grade alcohol is not an overnight process, and some plants may not have the workforce to make the transition. Many ethanol plants also don't have the equipment necessary. And an ethanol plant that may have closed or sharply dialed back production more than likely will not see a large enough benefit in making the transition.

"Some might consider hand sanitizer to be too small of a business to save them. And while many are still going strong, the [ethanol plants] that have closed down are not going to reopen for this," Colombini said. ▀



Al-Corn Clean Fuel in Claremont was one of the ethanol plants providing alcohol for hand sanitizer.

# Innovation Grant Spotlight: Can wide rows give cover crops a better start?

Following years of drowned out fields, Mark Enninga, who farms in Fulda, applied to be part of the 2020 Minnesota Corn Innovation Grant Program to test wider rows and cover crops to improve soil structure and water infiltration.



2020 Innovation Grant Participant Mark Enninga planted wider rows in 2020 as part of his project.

During the 2020 growing season, Enninga will be using a wide-row system: 44-inch rows, the seeds planted closer together along the row to keep the plant population the same at 35,000 seeds per acre. In the wider inter-row, Enninga will plant a cover crop mix once the corn has reached V4—a healthy head start for the corn, and a much earlier start for the cover crops. He hopes to give the cover crop time to really establish and develop healthy biomass, so his field can reap the soil health benefits.

There will be six different replications along half-mile rows at Enninga's farm. The Innovation Grant provides funds for the purchase and planting of the cover crop seed. The cover crop formula per acre: eight pounds of annual rye, one pound of tillage radish, one pound of purple-top turnips, one pound of rape seed, one pound of buckwheat, and a half-pound of Balansa clover.

Enninga is also collaborating with his local National Resources Conservation Service to help him evaluate the wide rows with cover crops and see their impact on soil health characteristics, particularly water infiltration—the problem that gave rise to Enninga's research project in the first place.

"There is a financial ramification to putting inputs into a spot in the field where, in many years, you essentially get zero yield [due to a drowned out field]," Enninga said. "Yes, last year was an extreme, but the heavy rain events we are experiencing, that's reality. We need to use systems that are resilient to these conditions to protect our soil and profits."

Learn more about Enninga's project and other Innovation Grant participants at [mncorn.org/research](http://mncorn.org/research). ▀

## Innovation Grant Program recognized for its sustainability successes

The Minnesota Corn Innovation Grant Program was inducted into the Success in Stewardship Network, which was jointly launched by the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) and Environmental Defense Fund (EDF) to recognize sustainability successes in the field.

Now in its fifth year, the Innovation Grant Program has invested nearly \$700,000 in 37 grower-led projects identifying practical innovations that Minnesota farmers can replicate.

The network was launched to showcase success stories from the many farmers and state-level programs putting stewardship into practice, with the goal of building an ever-growing network of corn farmers who are also conservation leaders.

NCGA and EDF recognized the Minnesota Corn Innovation Grant Program and the Illinois Corn Precision Conservation Management Program as inaugural inductees for their farmer-supported efforts to deliver clean water, healthy soils and farm profitability.

Moving forward, the Success in Stewardship Network will celebrate and connect the farmers and programs that are already driving change with proven conservation practices. This is not an annual award program, but rather an ongoing recognition initiative for all farmers who meet the criteria.



NCGA President Kevin Ross recognized the Innovation Grant Program as an inductee at Commodity Classic in February.

"Farming practices are rapidly evolving with sustainability in mind. We have reached a tipping point where we have an opportunity to begin recognizing corn farmers more broadly for their efforts to stay productive and profitable, manage the challenges of climate change, all while accelerating sustainable farming practices," said NCGA President Kevin Ross in a release announcing the network. "A regular drumbeat about the value and importance of stewardship and local examples can drive this movement." ▀

# MCGA names 2020 scholarship recipients

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) is excited to announce the recipients of the 2nd Annual Minnesota Corn Growers Association Scholarship. Luke Carr and Anna Prchal both received a \$5,000 scholarship to further their college education as they work toward becoming agricultural leaders.

Applicants were asked to identify what they see as the biggest issues facing agriculture today and how they will make an impact on agriculture in Minnesota and beyond. Carr and Prchal rose above a talented group of students in demonstrating how they will build a brighter future for agriculture.

A graduate of Blue Earth Area High School, Carr will attend South Dakota State University where he will major in ag business and accounting. He aspires to return to the family farm following school where he will work during the growing season and focus on accounting during the winter months.

"I have gained a deep appreciation of the things I have and learned not to take anything for granted, especially when I am up early and out until three in the morning to get crops both in and out or help deliver a newborn calf," Carr wrote in his application. "The farm lifestyle has truly shaped who I am today in such a positive way, and for this reason, I plan to continue my education and career in agriculture."

A current attendee of South Dakota State University, Prchal is a 2019 graduate of New Prague High School. She is pursuing a degree in agricultural and biosystems engineering, and plans to focus on soil health in her career to reduce agriculture's carbon footprint and preserve natural habitats. Her passion for the many technological advancements in agriculture has fueled her motivation and excitement about the future.



Luke Carr



Anna Prchal

"Innovation in agriculture means so many things when it comes to my career. Best practices and techniques have changed immensely and will continue to do so at a rapid rate," Prchal wrote in her application. "I am excited to be working toward a degree that could involve many of these innovations."

To qualify for the scholarship, applicants were required to be a Young Adult Member of MCGA. The Young Adult membership, available to ages 16-24, was launched for future agricultural leaders who would like to participate in grassroots advocacy today. Along with reduced member dues, Young Adult Members stay up to date on the latest in Minnesota's corn sector, as well as have access to great networking and leadership opportunities. Join today at [mncorn.org/join](http://mncorn.org/join).

In addition to MCGA's scholarship, county corn organizations also offer a number of scholarships to local students pursuing a degree in agriculture. For more info, visit [mncorn.org/scholarships](http://mncorn.org/scholarships).



Members fuel the grassroots advocacy efforts of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association.

## Become a member today

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) depends on its members to elevate its advocacy efforts while investing in a brighter future on the farm. As MCGA works tirelessly to overcome the challenges brought by the COVID-19 crisis during an already depressed farm economy, our members will drive the grassroots efforts necessary to battle the headwinds of today.

Minnesota corn farmers can invest in an MCGA membership by using their check-off dollars through the Partial Refund Program. Membership dues are paid from the first dollars collected on a farmer's corn check-off at the point of first purchase.

If you have sold and checked off (in Minnesota) a minimum of 7,500 bushels of corn within the last 12 months, you qualify for a one-year membership to MCGA through the Partial Refund Program. Farmers who have sold and checked-off a minimum of 20,000 bushels of their corn at the 1-cent rate within the last 12 months qualify for a three-year MCGA membership.

Join MCGA today  
at [mncorn.org/join](http://mncorn.org/join).

# New opportunities for corn farmers in pet food market

Ingredients from the farm make up nearly half of the ingredients found in pet food today. As a main ingredient or in the form of a value-added meat product, food for our beloved furry family members is an important market for corn farmers. But a recent report suggests it could be the tip of the iceberg.

Nearly half of the food ingredients in pet food come from farm and farm product ingredients, totaling 4 million tons valued at \$1.4 billion, according to a report by the Institute for Feed Education & Research (IFEEDER). With over 1.28 million tons of corn, and nearly 477,000 tons of corn gluten meal, the first and fourth most-used pet food ingredients by weight, corn plays a large role in what is a \$30 billion industry.

Today's pets are considered part of the family more than ever, and that means consumers are evaluating food for their dogs or cats like any other family member. For corn, that mindset opens up potential for increased demand beyond the bowl in the pet food space.

As the marketing around pet food boasts many of the qualities one might associate with human food, pet food packaging is evolving to become more environmentally friendly while preserving the quality of the food.

Corn-based materials, most importantly of the Polyethylene Furanate (PEF) variety, can be made of 100-percent renewable materials and outperform conventional packaging in its ability to create a better barrier to carbon dioxide and improved moisture resistance. The result is a pet food that has maintained its freshness as it makes its way into the dog or cat food bowl.

"We know modified corn starches can extend the properties of paper barriers," said Michael Granche, manager of market development for the National Corn Growers Association. "That means if you have this bag of dog food sitting in the warehouse, these properties can help keep it fresher."

In addition to food quality benefits, corn-based materials would be another opportunity to replace the petroleum-based packaging we see on the food shelves today. That benefit extends to using corn-based

packages for the hundreds of dog waste bags one family may use throughout the year—corn-based materials can be biodegradable and break down, as opposed to building up like petroleum-based plastic bags.



Corn has potential in the pet food market beyond the bowl.

Furthermore, many dog toys made of plastics have a petroleum component. Replacing that with a renewable material like corn would be a much more attractive alternative for pet owners increasingly concerned with what they are giving their pets.

For Minnesota's corn farmers, the state is home to the third most pet food facilities in the nation. A future of growing applications for corn in the pet food space would be a boost for farmers, while providing manufacturers with a reliable product.

"The pet food world has the opportunity to rethink the role of corn for many different reasons. Corn is a great source of energy for pets that is both abundant and sustainable. It also has application in pet food packaging itself, creating bio-friendly products that perform better," Granche said. "Our farmers across the country grow corn better than anywhere else, providing a high-quality product, consistently." ■

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## MCR&PC election results announced

The Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC) held elections in the spring. Brandon Fast (District 7) and Jim O'Connor (District 8) were re-elected, and David Vipond (Districts 1, 2 and 4) and Rodney Moe (District 9) were newly elected to MCR&PC.

Vipond grows corn and soybeans in Mahanomen. Moe farms in Waltham where he grows corn and soybeans, as well as raising beef cattle. Fast (Mountain Lake) and O'Connor (Blooming Prairie) were re-elected to their second terms with MCR&PC.

The MCR&PC administers the efficient and effective investment of Minnesota's corn check-off, a one-cent fee assessed at the first point of sale for every bushel of corn sold in Minnesota. Check-off dollars are used to help corn farmers create new markets, increase productivity and profitability, improve water quality and environmental stewardship, and build a positive image for corn farming in Minnesota. ■



Brandon Fast



Jim O'Connor

## Road Crew continues corn-themed fun at Twin Cities schools



Maizey was often the star of the assemblies with the younger audience members.

Twin Cities Road Crew once again brought corn-themed fun to elementary schools across the Twin Cities metro this year. Supported by the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA), each event was an opportunity to share information with youth who may not have a connection to the farm.

The Road Crew tour made stops across the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro before the school year was cut short due to COVID-19. At each, a school-wide assembly brings together students of varying ages for an interactive curriculum sharing the importance of corn in a way that is fun for all attendees.

MCGA mascot Maizey attends each program, joined by Road Crew staff who lead "corn-y" dancing, an interactive Q&A, hand out prizes and organize pictures with Maizey—all while promoting the importance of corn to our daily lives.

Facts shared during the assembly include the origin of corn, Minnesota's status as a top producer, the many uses of corn, varieties of corn and the year-round work of farmers.

Students are also sent home with a goody bag that includes more facts about corn that may be of interest to their parents. Teachers are provided information about how they can incorporate agriculture education into their curriculum. ■

## CommonGround MN connects with metro moms

CommonGround Minnesota will once again be teaming up with Twin Cities Mom Collective to sponsor their Farmer's Market Guide for 2020. The partnership is a great opportunity to connect with Minnesota moms to encourage conversation about how our food is grown today.

The partnership includes promotion on the Twin Cities Mom Collective website ([twincitiesmom.com](http://twincitiesmom.com)) and social media platforms, which reach nearly 200,000 women each month. CommonGround will also be featured in the website's e-newsletter to Twin Cities Mom Collective subscribers, in addition to future opportunities for farming-focused content on the website.

The Farmer's Market Guide launched in early May. At the time of publication, farmers markets have been able to operate under specific guidance from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

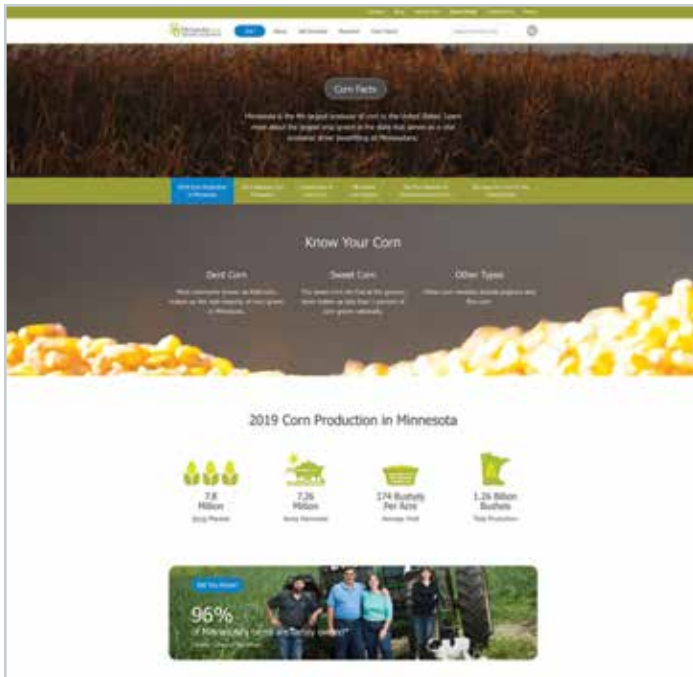
CommonGround's partnership with Twin Cities Mom Collective has provided an opportunity for women in agriculture to connect with Twin Cities moms to discuss modern farming. Last summer, CommonGround hosted a sold-out cooking event in St. Paul where CommonGround volunteers and Twin Cities moms shared personal experiences and information about how food is grown and raised in our state.

Follow CommonGround Minnesota on Facebook ([@CommonGroundMinnesota](https://www.facebook.com/CommonGroundMinnesota)) and Instagram ([@CommonGroundMinn](https://www.instagram.com/CommonGroundMinn)), or visit the website at [CommonGroundMinnesota.com](http://CommonGroundMinnesota.com). ■



Twin Cities moms and farm women had a night of cooking and conversation last summer.

# MCGA website debuts updated look with corn farming facts



The revamped Corn Facts page features facts about corn farming for the non-farming public.

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) recently unveiled a new homepage on its website, and a revamped Corn Facts page bringing Minnesotans important information about the impact of corn farming in our state.

As you may have seen at [mncorn.org](http://mncorn.org), the new homepage for MCGA better highlights the resources corn farmers and all MCGA members need to stay up to date on Minnesota's corn sector, including new blogs, events, advocacy opportunities and more. The homepage will also be a great resource for those new to MCGA to learn how the state's corn growers are building a brighter future on the farm and for all Minnesotans.

Additionally, the revamped Corn Facts page, available at [mncorn.org/corn-facts](http://mncorn.org/corn-facts), features general information about Minnesota's corn sector, production statistics, trade markets and how the state's corn crop is used.

For the non-farming public, the page will serve as a resource to learn the importance of corn farming as an economic driver for our state. Corn Facts also features background facts about corn farming that might be unfamiliar to most, including the difference between field and sweet corn, how much corn is in a bushel, and the components of dent corn.

Watch for Corn Facts information as it is shared on MCGA social channels, including Facebook (@MinnesotaCorn), Twitter (@mncorn) and Instagram (@minnesotacorn).

## MCGA Podcast spotlights game-changing ag research

Each month, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) Podcast highlights research supported through corn farmers' investment in the check-off. Each episode features researchers discussing projects that identify new uses for corn and improve on-farm practices.

Produced in partnership with Brownfield Ag News and hosted by Brownfield's Mark Dorenkamp, the MCGA Podcast has released five episodes to date, detailing new markets for corn, the evolving role of drones, reducing nitrates with cover crops and nutrient management best practices.

Each podcast features an interview with the researcher leading the projects shaping the future of agriculture. In the 10-minute podcasts, the conversation gets to the heart of why each project is so important to farmers and all Minnesotans.

You can subscribe to the podcast at [info.mncorn.org/podcast](http://info.mncorn.org/podcast) and have each episode delivered to your inbox as it is released. You can also search for "Minnesota Corn Growers Association Podcast" on Spotify and iTunes.



The MCGA Podcast is available at [info.mncorn.org/podcast](http://info.mncorn.org/podcast).

# State's corn farmers to make (delayed) return to the ballpark

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) renewed its partnership with the St. Paul Saints to help bring fun to the ballpark this summer. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 virus will delay corn-themed promotions, along with the rest of the Saints season, until July.

When it is time to take the field, the work of the state's corn farmers will be showcased in unique ways.

The "Moment of Zen" will again offer fans at the ballpark a break from the nonstop action that typically occurs at a Saints game. During the break between innings and continuing into opposing teams' time at the plate, the crowd will be treated to relaxing visuals from the corn field and music, as well as the soothing voice of the CHS Field public address announcer. Yoga and other zen-like poses, demonstrated atop the dugout by the

Saints ever-popular "ushertainers," will only add to these moments of tranquility at each home game throughout the season.

The "Aww-Shucks" moment of the game also returns with MCGA donating \$100 to the University of Minnesota Bee Lab for each error committed to be used for pollinator research and education. The promotion will once again showcase corn farmers' commitment to conservation.

Also, foul poles at CHS Field will again feature the "Minnesota Corn" theme. The corn cob foul poles have been a staple at the St. Paul ballpark since it opened in 2015.

Follow Minnesota Corn on Twitter (@mncorn) and Facebook (@MinnesotaCorn) for announcements related to the Saints and MCGA all season. ■



Fans received MCGA-branded pollinator seeds during a home game last year showcasing efforts to promote pollinator habitat.

thanks to our allied partners



Crop Science



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MCGA offices closed for 4th of July



The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted a number of events and meetings across the state. Follow the Minnesota Corn Growers Association calendar at [mncorn.org](http://mncorn.org) for the latest information.

Stay in the loop on all announcements and news most important to the state's corn farmers:

- Subscribe to Leader Update, the official newsletter of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association, at [mncorn.org/LeaderUpdate](http://mncorn.org/LeaderUpdate)
- Follow us on Twitter (@mncorn), Facebook (@MinnesotaCorn) and Instagram (@MinnesotaCorn)
- Participate in a future call-to-action by texting "MCGA" to 50457

**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.