

corn talk

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Inside:

- New state budget includes \$12 million for biofuel infrastructure
- Grower-leader Tom Haag elected to national leadership
- Reflections on a pandemic year

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State legislative session wraps up with agreements on agriculture, biofuel infrastructure

In a June special session, legislators reached agreements on a multitude of two-year state-budget bills, thereby averting a government shutdown.

Below are highlights of key bills and how they could affect you.

Agriculture

The agriculture finance bill, approved in June, includes \$6 million in fiscal years 2022 and 2023 for biofuel-infrastructure grants to retailers that offer higher ethanol blends. Another \$6 million for such grants was included in the base budget for fiscal years 2024 and 2025.

The Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC) has committed \$1 million to the grant program.

The program could lead to an additional 125 Minnesota stations offering E15. Based on the most recent sales data, that means E15 sales could increase 52% compared to 2020. That is equivalent to an increase of 39 million gallons of E15 pumped per year.

Although the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) is disappointed we were unable to advance the E15 standard this year, the state's commitment to infrastructure investments for E15 and higher ethanol blends set up the policy for future success.

MCGA is also pleased to see ongoing funding for the University of Minnesota's Agricultural, Research, Education and Extension Tech Transfer Program (AGREET).

The policy-only agriculture bill, passed in May, makes changes to the state Board of Animal Health and allows Minnesota's cottage food producers to increase sales without a license.

Several proposals opposed by MCGA were not included in the agriculture bill. That includes ones that would have increased the fee on gross sales for agriculture pesticides, added a new label for treated seed sold in Minnesota and stipulated that treated seed can't be used for ethanol production. (No ethanol plants in Minnesota use treated seed to produce ethanol.)

The state has pledged \$12 million toward a biofuel-infrastructure grant program over the next four years, a major policy priority win for corn farmers.

Taxes

The final tax bill includes over \$900 million in one-time and ongoing relief and forgives state taxes on Paycheck Protection Program loans. It also includes fixes to Section 179, with language to eliminate the state addition for Section 179 carryovers for property placed into service prior to tax year 2020.

Buffer property tax relief, an MCGA priority for several years, did not make the final bill.

Environment

The approved environment budget, which funds several state agencies, does not change or delay adoption of a final rule on vehicle emission standards, known as Clean Cars Minnesota.

Proposals to ban certain crop-protection tools on state-owned lands, direct the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to conduct rulemaking on treated-seed disposal, and allow cities to adopt pesticide ordinances were not adopted.

The bill does allocate some funding to soil health, water-quality-practice adoption and water-storage projects in the Minnesota River and Lower Mississippi River basins. The Legislature also approved a two-year Legacy bill, which includes Clean Water Fund projects.



Rep. Mike Sundin (pictured left) and Sen. Torrey Westrom (pictured right), chairs of the House and Senate agriculture committees, respectively, brokered an agreement on an omnibus agriculture and broadband bill that includes \$6 million next biennium for biofuel infrastructure. (Photos by Andrew VonBank/House Public Information Services and A.J. Olmscheid/Senate Media Services)

One MCGA-supported provision included in the bill makes a common-sense change to recently updated MPCA feedlot-permit rules. The provision, also supported by MCGA's livestock partners, bars the agency from requiring implementation of best-management practices as a condition of allowing the application of manure in October, unless expressly prohibited by the Environmental Protection Agency.

MCGA would like to thank the agriculture committee chairs, Sen. Torrey Westrom and Rep. Mike Sundin, for their work and advocacy on several MCGA priorities, in addition to other important investments and provisions for Minnesota agriculture.

MCGA would also like to extend our thanks to Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen and his team for their work on the agriculture bill. We look forward to working with the Department of Agriculture to implement a robust biofuel-infrastructure grant program and expand consumer access to ethanol blends across Minnesota. ■

Federal legislation targets biofuels, carbon markets

In recent months, there has been a flurry of activity at the federal level when it comes to agriculture-related issues, from court decisions on refinery waivers to proposals to modify the stepped-up basis.

Here is a brief rundown of several of the most notable developments. Visit mncorn.org/blog to stay up to date with all of the latest policy topics.

Ethanol

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) is frustrated with a July 2 federal appeals court decision striking down a 2019 Environmental Protection Agency rule allowing year-round E15 sales.

MCGA is also frustrated with continued efforts by big oil, which brought this legal challenge, to undermine consumer access to cleaner fuel options.

Still, it's important to note that the court ruling cannot go into effect for at least 45 days, meaning there will not be an immediate impact on E15 sales and availability.



MCGA and the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) are pursuing all available options and will work with the Biden administration and our congressional champions to ensure a solution is in place before the 2022 summer driving season.

MCGA is also disappointed with the June 25 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that small oil refineries that have not been receiving continuous, uninterrupted waivers under the Renewable Fuel Standard's ethanol-blending requirements can still receive them.

We are heartened that Rep. Angie Craig, who represents Minnesota's Second Congressional District, and Iowa Rep. Randy Feenstra have introduced a bill to prevent future Renewable Fuel Standard waiver abuse.

Craig has also introduced the bipartisan Renewable Fuel Standard Integrity Act of 2021, which would bring much-needed transparency and predictability to the waiver process.

In the Senate, Minnesota's Amy Klobuchar has introduced bipartisan bills that would help expand the use of higher ethanol blends in the marketplace.

One bill, cosponsored by Iowa Sen. Joni Ernst, would authorize a higher biofuel blends infrastructure-grant program through the USDA. Another bill, also cosponsored by Ernst, would re-establish CAFE/GHG credits for flex-fuel vehicles (FFVs) and establish a \$200 per-vehicle refundable tax credit for manufacturers for the production of FFVs.

The third bill, cosponsored by South Dakota Sen. John Thune, would establish a 5-cent-per-gallon tax credit for sales of 15% ethanol blends and a 10-cent-per-gallon tax credit for sales of blends greater than 15%. The credit would be fully refundable.

MCGA President Tim Waibel commended Klobuchar for her continued leadership on policies to expand the use of homegrown ethanol.

"MCGA supports the bipartisan legislation recently introduced in the U.S. Senate that would provide incentives for the production of flex fuel vehicles and expand consumer access to higher blends of ethanol by assisting fuel retailers to update refueling infrastructure," he said.

Additionally, legislation is in the works that would amend the Clean Air Act to allow for the year-round sale of E15 and provide a legislative fix to the appeals court decision on the E15 rule.

Infrastructure

On June 24, President Biden and a bipartisan group of senators announced a deal on an infrastructure plan that includes \$579 billion in new spending. On July 1, the U.S. House passed a broader, \$715 billion infrastructure bill, largely along party lines.

Meanwhile, Democrats, who have narrow majorities in both houses of Congress, appear interested in passing an even larger and party-line infrastructure bill through a process called reconciliation.

Taxes

As part of the American Families Plan, the Biden administration has proposed eliminating the stepped-up basis for gains in excess of \$1 million, or \$2.5 million per couple. The administration says the plan wouldn't affect farms that remain within a family, but NCGA and MCGA are closely monitoring the proposal. Also on the radar is proposed legislation making changes to estate taxes that would negatively impact corn farmers.

Waters of the United States

The Biden administration is moving to re-implement a more stringent Waters of the United States rule that would re-extend regulatory requirements for additional bodies of water. MCGA supports the Trump administration's Navigable Waters Protection Rule and will be closely monitoring any new developments.

Carbon markets

On June 24, a bipartisan bill that could help farmers with technical assistance on carbon markets passed the U.S. Senate on a 92-8 vote. It awaits action by the U.S. House. ■

Farmer-owned ethanol plants reach the 25-year mark

Minnesota's ethanol plants work together and learn from each other. It may seem like the obvious thing to do now, but 25 years ago, when the first generation of Minnesota ethanol plants were getting their start, it took a little work to put cooperation at the top of the agenda.

Cooperative business models in Minnesota's ag world were the first thing that struck Randy Doyal. He arrived in 1996, a veteran of New Mexico's ethanol industry, hired to be general manager of the brand-new Al-Corn ethanol cooperative in Claremont, Minnesota.

For more than a century, farmer cooperatives had helped members get the best deal on seed and fertilizer. With ethanol production, the cooperative

structure was being used to share something new: risk. Big Oil, the heavily subsidized, century-old monopoly in the U.S. transportation fuel market, made ethanol look like a pipe dream.

Uncertainty and crisis loomed in the mid-1990s ag economy. What got Benson-area farmers Richard and Vicki Syverson to put their money on the line? Chippewa Valley Ethanol Company (CVEC) wasn't yet a production facility in Benson. It was only a prospectus brochure that the Syversons' neighbors were bringing around, talking to people about in their kitchens and living rooms. They bought 5,000 shares at \$2 apiece. The purchase came with a commitment to deliver a bushel of corn for every share.

"I knew the reputation of the board," Richard Syverson said. "They weren't people outside the community. It was a couple of bankers, the manager of the local electric co-op, and there were some really good, solid farmers who made their livings here. I realized that there was more to it than just growing another bushel. This was about opportunities beyond the farm gate, and I appreciated that perspective."

To read more about the origins of Al-Corn and CVEC, go to mncorn.org/blog. ▀



Al-Corn (pictured here) and Chippewa Valley Ethanol Cooperative each turn 25 this year.

E15: A 'right-here, right-now' solution

America is hitting the road this summer for the first time in more than a year. Along with this return to normalcy is a return to other concerns around the world, and at the top of the list for many is climate change. The need for immediate action is clear.

Among the options for reducing carbon intensity, E15 is the "right-here, right-now" solution, said Mackenzie Boubin, biofuels and industry relations director for the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA). Commonly labeled by its octane rating, unleaded 88, this blend raises the ethanol level in the gasoline from the current Minnesota standard of 10% to 15%.

As a renewable energy source, ethanol cycles carbon, while fossil fuel unearths additional carbon and releases it into the atmosphere. By raising ethanol levels in fuel, greenhouse gas emissions are reduced. In fact, a recent Harvard University study found that using corn-derived ethanol helps reduce harmful greenhouse gas emissions by 46% compared to gasoline.

But that's not the only win for consumers. In addition to climate and clean-air benefits, another advantage is price.

"The consumers are winning by keeping more dollars in their wallets," Boubin said. "Depending on the station, the discount can be 5 cents, up to as much as 40 cents, compared to regular 87-octane gasoline. The difference adds up over time. If you are the average driver, driving 10,000 to 12,000 miles a year, you are saving almost a hundred bucks by choosing E15."

E15 is not a new choice in Minnesota. Beginning in 2019, it was approved for year-round sales. It can be used in any passenger vehicle model year 2001 or later and is offered at more than 380 fueling stations in Minnesota.

That availability could increase even more in the coming years, thanks to a biofuels infrastructure grant program approved by the Minnesota legislature (see page 3), to which the Minnesota Corn Research and Promotion Council (MCR&PC) has pledged \$1 million.

Though the pandemic meant many people stopped or drastically reduced their driving, E15 maintained its market position as the second most popular fueling choice in Minnesota, after E10. Because E10 consistently outsells conventional midgrade gasoline, station owners who have replaced those pumps with E15 have come out ahead, according to Boubin.

"We're optimistic that sales will climb and continue to grow as our economy recovers," she said. "This is a right-here, right-now solution to reducing our carbon footprint. Especially when we see that our state's transportation sector is not meeting our greenhouse gas-reduction goals, set in 2007 under Gov. Tim Pawlenty, to reach a 30% reduction by 2025. Ethanol can be used today to get us to our reduction goals."

To learn more about the benefits of higher blends of ethanol, or to find a station near you, visit BetterFuel.org. ▀

Lessons Learned, Growing Together

We all know the past 15 months have been like no other for our fellow Minnesotans, and people across the world.

Now, as life returns to normal, Minnesota Corn checked in with farmer leaders, the next generation in agriculture, and MCGA staff as we acknowledge the past and look to the future.

At the onset of the pandemic, I would say that one word sums it up: fear. Fear for not only our own health, but also wondering, "What the heck is going to happen, and how is it all going to turn out?"

We raise finishing pigs, as well as corn and soybeans. Back in March 2020, just the luck of the timing, we had actually [delivered all of our pigs], and our barns were emptied, waiting for the next bunch. Then, the packing houses shut down because the virus was spreading among the workers. It was unclear how long they would be down. There were friends and neighbors in the business [with nowhere to send their pigs] who were really hurting, and they're hurting to this day. We went without payment for a month, but when things picked up, the honor and integrity of the people we work with — they made up for what we missed. We were made whole.

Looking back over the course of the pandemic, I see how fear turned to concern, and the concern turned to awareness. We had never dealt with anything like that in our lifetimes. I was thinking about the polio outbreaks past generations dealt with, and I think — just like then — "Thank God for the vaccine."

"We had never dealt with anything like that in our lifetimes."

Jim O'Connor,
Farmer and Past Chairman,
MCR&PC



I have an elderly mother. She was under quarantine in Arizona. She remembers as a little girl how her mother had gotten scarlet fever and she was quarantined to her bedroom. Their house was quarantined, but not the entire neighborhood, so it's been hard for my mother to get her mind around COVID, with everyone needing to stay socially distant.

My son and my son-in-law and some employees, we all work together on the farm. At the outset of this, I sat everyone down, and I gave everybody the option. I said, "We are going to talk about this. We are going to deal with this as a group." And we talked about limiting our (social) circles, our exposure. "If any of us are feeling sick, for God's sake, don't get the rest of us sick," I said. "We have a crop to put in, but this thing is serious, and so we are going to take it seriously. What you do in your personal lives can and will affect us."

I involved the employees and family members in every decision along the way. I wanted their input. The one guy summed it up really well. He said, "I didn't come to work here so I could sit at home."

We were able to socially distance ourselves in tractor cabs, and we got the crop planted, and in the fall we harvested.

"I think everybody learned to adapt."

Tim Waibel,
Farmer and President,
MCGA



When I flew out to Washington, D.C., on a Sunday early in March 2020 [to meet with congressional leaders], COVID was in the news, but it wasn't a big deal. By Wednesday, it was like everybody had that fear in their eyes as to the uncertainty of what this was. When we flew back on Thursday, it was just a totally different experience at the airport, as far as people trying to distance.

On the farm, although COVID probably changed the structure of going to meetings, going out to eat and visiting with friends, things had to continue. We had livestock, and they needed to be taken care of every day. From that perspective, it didn't change at all. Although for the first time in my life, I didn't have to watch for traffic when I drove onto Highway 14. I've lived right on the highway for decades, and I have never seen traffic that light.

When traffic levels fell like they did, ethanol production declined, and that had me a little scared. China came into the market [in summer 2020] and started buying grain. But I think a lot of people, myself included, didn't think we would sell for these elevated prices, with the demand being lost for ethanol. It just goes to show how important it is that we continue to work on trade issues. Transportation is also part of the trade issue, because we still need infrastructure to get the product to market.

With Zoom meetings, it's kind of funny: by the time we get somewhat comfortable with it, we're moving back to in-person meetings. The one thing about having in-person meetings that's nice is you can judge a lot of other peoples' feelings based on facial expression. You can't judge that by Zoom.

[As MCGA], we always did a good job during COVID advocating up at the State Capitol. When you take away that in-person meeting, you can't

have that one-on-one time, which presented its challenges. But I felt luckier than some, knowing that I've been with Minnesota Corn for nine-plus years and have gotten to know some folks up at the Capitol.

Overall, never in my lifetime did I think I would experience something like this. All in all, farmers have to adapt to the weather and a lot of things brought forward every year. COVID was just a little bit bigger, but I think everybody learned to adapt.

As far as our experience with COVID, [my family] was really lucky. We were exposed to one of the first confirmed cases in Minnesota. Someone that we do farm business with, we went into his office to talk through purchasing supplies. A few days later, we got a text from him saying he wasn't feeling very well. And then a few days after that, we spoke with him and he said, "Yes, I got tested, and I am positive." Nobody in our family got sick from that contact. In the middle of this winter, both my brother and his fiancée got COVID, but it was not a terribly serious case. Out of our whole family, that was it.

Our day-to-day life didn't change much. With a family farm, it's a small number of us, and we see each other every day, so we just kind of went about our normal activities there.

I went back to college in the fall [at South Dakota State University], and even though we were in person, we were still required to wear a mask and to social distance when possible. [We had classes] in the big auditoriums where there were rows that kind of went up like a staircase. Between each level, there was a layer of Plexiglas. The kids at the very back of the room had to look through six layers of Plexiglas to see the projector screen at the front of the room.

Probably the hardest part was that a lot of our professors like to build student interaction into the lecture session. "Talk with a partner," they say. When your partner is sitting halfway across the room, it doesn't work very well.

"Our day-to-day life didn't change much."

**Carson Kahler,
Student,
MCGA Young Adult Member**



I am going to be vice president of our Ag Systems Technology Club, and we're hoping to bring back activities, such as speakers who work at the big ag corporations. It's an important way to make industry contacts for your career. When COVID hit, all these companies put in policies that they couldn't send people, and we couldn't tour their facilities.

When [COVID-19] first started and nobody really knew anything, I was definitely worried for my grandparents. Grandpa would call and say, "Hey, I want to come over," and we would say, "Sorry, we don't want you to come over, grandpa. We don't want to accidentally expose you to the virus." For my grandparents' safety, we haven't had any holiday celebrations since Christmas 2019. I haven't seen my cousins. My aunt works at the hospital, so she never wanted to come down, and she's

with all my cousins, so they never wanted to come down and possibly expose Grandma and Grandpa. We are really looking forward to being able to see each other again.

"It's a joy to be back working in person."

**Adam Birr,
CEO and Executive Director,
MCGA**



When you talk to the grower-leaders, their day-to-day really wasn't impacted [by the pandemic], because so much of what they do is isolated. Where they were impacted was when the markets were fluctuating early on, particularly with the livestock crunch. Organizationally is where we probably felt the impact the most. Agriculture is so much about relationships and networking, and that was severely disrupted. But I think we adapted really quickly and really well, too.

During the pandemic, as executive director, you feel a little bit of the weight of being responsible for the well-being of the staff, both financially but also just their overall well-being. There's a responsibility I think that comes with being a leader of an organization. You want to also be a caretaker for everybody involved, and I know that's important to the grower-leaders as well. The relationships that were there before the pandemic just got us through those crisis moments.

With the market fluctuating as it was in spring 2020, you focus on the things that you can control. You really up the communication. I think that provides assurance to the membership, to the board and to the staff that you're actively working on these things. Also, you look at things that show some promise, highlighting the continued work we're doing around new uses and finding new markets. Even now, we don't let up on the gas of continuing to find long-term markets.

Not seeing my colleagues from other states and from other commodity organizations in Minnesota was challenging, because we share a lot of the same experiences, just in terms of the nature of the job. We did calls and some virtual happy hours with the state corn execs, which was nice. It was good to hear that even those of us who have been doing this for 20-plus years were dealing with some of the same struggles as those of us who are newer.

From a staff perspective, with the new staff that we have, it's a joy to be back working in person. Not that we weren't working together before, but boy, I'm just really enjoying the camaraderie and being back working together. I've enjoyed seeing people and the things you get outside of the business meetings and so forth.

I'm proud that we not only just got through the pandemic, but we really did, I think, thrive. We picked up some things that will serve us well into the future. Not that I'm looking to endure it again, but there were a lot of good things to take away from it, too. ■

Minnesota grower-leader Haag elected to NCGA leadership

For the next three years, leadership of the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) Board of Directors will include at least one Minnesota grower-leader.

Tom Haag, a fourth-generation family farmer in Eden Valley, has been named NCGA's first vice president for the 2021-22 fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1. He will become NCGA president during the 2022-23 fiscal year and chairman during the 2023-24 fiscal year.

"It's an honor, and it's going to be a pleasure," Haag said. "It's going to be work, but it's going to be also fun work."

Haag, who grows corn and soybeans with his son Nathan on more than 1,700 acres, has farmed since the early 1970s. He became a member of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) in 1985 and an officer on his county corn growers board in 1994.

In 2010, he was elected to the MCGA statewide board. He was the organization's president in 2012-13 and was elected to the NCGA board in 2016.

As first vice president, Haag said he wants to ensure NCGA continues to be led by its grassroots membership and that it has a voice in shaping national policy.

"Whatever the hot topic is, we want to make sure we're at the table talking about it," he said, adding that it's critical for the organization to continue engaging younger farmers.

Haag also said his experience on the MCGA board and serving on NCGA action teams has been critical in preparing him to assume national leadership.

In a statement, NCGA President John Linder said Haag has demonstrated "unwavering dedication to working on behalf of all of his fellow farmers."

"As he steps into this new role, I look forward to the work, collaboration and growth that will help further our mission under his leadership," Linder said.



Tom Haag

Founded in 1957, NCGA represents nearly 40,000 dues-paying corn farmers nationwide and the interests of more than 300,000 growers who contribute through corn check-off programs in their states. NCGA and its affiliated state organizations, including MCGA, work together to create and increase opportunities for corn growers.

Learn more at [NCGA.com](https://www.ncga.com).

MCGA offers a hearty congratulations to Tom as he prepares to ascend into the new role. We look forward to seeing the positive impact he has on corn farmers across the U.S., just as he has done in Minnesota. ■

MCR&PC leadership elected

The Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC), the entity responsible for effectively managing the state's corn check-off, has elected its executive leadership for 2021-22.

Brandon Fast, a 25-year corn and soybean farmer from Mountain Lake who was MCR&PC vice chairman during 2020-21, has been elected chairman.

Meanwhile, Doug Albin, who was treasurer in 2020-21, and who has held leadership roles with MCR&PC and the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) since 2000, has been elected vice chairman.

Former MCR&PC chairman Gary Prescher, who was secretary during 2020-21, has been elected treasurer, and Duane Epland, who has been on the council since 2018, has been elected secretary.

Executive leadership elections were held during the MCR&PC's June meeting. The new slate of leaders began their positions July 1.

Also on July 1, newly elected MCR&PC member John Mages began his three-year term. Mages succeeds longtime grower-leader Mickey Peterson, who retired after 28 years on the board and council.

The MCR&PC is comprised of 11 corn farmers throughout Minnesota who are elected by their peers to serve three-year terms.

To learn more about the MCR&PC, visit [mncorn.org/about](https://www.mncorn.org/about). ■



Brandon Fast



Doug Albin



Gary Prescher



Duane Epland

Hello Minnesota Corn community!

My name is Nate Gotlieb, and I am the new public relations manager for the Minnesota Corn Growers Association. I am very excited to get started in the new role and just want to take a moment to introduce myself.

To start, here's a bit about me: I am a lifelong Minnesotan who has lived in the Twin Cities for all but one year, when I worked at the Mankato Free Press. Specifically, I spent most of my childhood and young adulthood living with my family in Minnetonka, before attending the University of Minnesota to earn a journalism degree.

Since graduating from the U in 2014, I have worked as a freelance reporter and in digital content at Fox Sports North and Fox Sports Wisconsin, in addition to writing for the Mankato Free Press. From 2016-2020, I was a reporter at the Southwest Journal community newspaper in Minneapolis, and this past winter/spring, I worked for the state House of Representatives Public Information Office, writing about various committees, including agriculture.

I am really excited to be working for an organization doing such vital work for the farming community and the entire state, and I'm ready to learn much more about agriculture. While my experience in the field has so far been limited to a few story assignments, I have always enjoyed my time covering the farming community and can't wait to be part of it. I especially value finding and telling the stories of the people and communities I serve.

In the meantime, I hope to see you around at farm tours, meetings and other events this summer. It's been great meeting my colleagues at Minnesota Corn, and I am excited to connect with the broader corn community. ■



Nate Gotlieb

Longtime board and council member Mickey Peterson retires

One of the longest-serving Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) and Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC) grower-leaders has retired.

Myron "Mickey" Peterson, who grows corn and soybeans in Sacred Heart, stepped down from the MCR&PC in June, after nearly 20 years on the council.

Peterson also spent 8.5 years on the MCGA board in the 1990s and early 2000s.

"It's been a great ride, and I've enjoyed it thoroughly," he said.

Peterson began farming with his father and one of his brothers in 1962. With their father's passing in 1970, a third brother joined the operation, and they officially became a family farm partnership. Two other brothers joined the partnership in 1974.

Peterson said his interest in joining the MCGA board was spurred by a 1990 amendment to the Clean Air Act that required gasoline to include oxygenates. He said he



Mickey Peterson

figured that could lead to a new market for corn.

Throughout his time on both the board and council, Peterson was active in recruiting new members to MCGA. When he started on the board, he said there were roughly 2,500 to 3,000 members. Today, MCGA has around 6,500 members.

Peterson, a 2005 inductee into the National Corn Growers Association Recruiter Hall of Fame, said he always carries membership forms with him.

"It's part of the way I work," he said.

Peterson said he was planning to retire about three years ago but was encouraged to stay on for one more term. He said his favorite part of being a leader at Minnesota Corn has been the camaraderie among the board, council and staff.

Doug Albin, a 20-plus-year board and council member who farms in Clarkfield, said Peterson has a unique style of leadership and has been an outstanding recruiter.

"He's actively engaged without being self-serving," Albin said. "He more or less makes the argument, and he's open to the decision-making process. ... If he says he's going to be some place or do something, he'll do it."

Longtime former board and council member Richard Peterson, a retired farmer in Mountain Lake who is unrelated to Mickey Peterson, said Mickey took time to meet with growers.

"When it comes to membership, he's done a great job. He was sold on the Corn Growers."

In addition to his work with Minnesota Corn, Mickey Peterson has been a supervisor on the Hawk Creek Township board for over 40 years and has served on U.S. Grains Council advisory teams. He twice served as chairman of MCR&PC, and during his 2009 term, he traveled to Brazil on a trade mission with then-Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

The Minnesota Corn grower-leaders and staff thank Mickey for his years of service and tireless advocacy on behalf of Minnesota's corn farmers. We wish him happiness and good health in his retirement. ■

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (Booth 702) will again be located at the corner of Seed Row and Seventh Street.



Visit Minnesota Corn at Farmfest 2021

Farmfest returns to Gilfillan Estate near Morgan from Aug. 3-5, and the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) will again be a can't-miss stop in Booth 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 Row and Seventh Street to catch up on the latest by chatting with an MCGA grower-leader.

Connect with old friends, look for premium giveaways, learn about the ways your corn check-off funds are working for you and explore the benefits of membership at the MCGA tent. 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 and follow Minnesota Corn on Twitter (@[mncorn](https://twitter.com/mncorn)) and Facebook (@[Minnesota Corn](https://www.facebook.com/MinnesotaCorn)). 🍷

Look for Minnesota Corn at State Fair, Big Iron

After last year's hiatus, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) will make its presence felt at the Minnesota State Fair in St. Paul and the Big Iron Farm Show in Fargo, N.D.

At the State Fair, which runs Aug. 26 to Labor Day, Sept. 6, MCGA will continue its sponsorship of Kemps Little Farm Hands. Tailored to kids ages 3-10, the free educational exhibit gives children and their families the chance to experience Minnesota agriculture in a fun and interactive space.

Don't miss the Minnesota Corn Fairstalk at the State Fair's North End. The 24-foot-tall installation features giant LED screens that display news from the fair and fun facts about corn and farming.

At the Big Iron Farm Show slated for Sept. 14-16, Minnesota Corn will also be on hand to talk with attendees about the latest from the world of corn.

Visitors can learn about the many ways Minnesota's corn farmers are driving growth in the state. That includes record-setting sales of ethanol-

blended fuels, research investments building a more sustainable future on the farm, and advocacy around issues impacting rural Minnesotans. The booth will also be the place to sign up or renew your MCGA membership.

For updates on these and other Minnesota Corn events, visit mncorn.org throughout the summer. 🍷



Look for the Minnesota Corn Fairstalk at the State Fair's North End during the Great Minnesota Get-Together, which runs Aug. 26 to Labor Day, Sept. 6.

Craft distillers competition features corn-based whiskey

Corn farmers are once again helping small distilleries in Minnesota generate visibility for their spirits through a national whiskey-tasting competition. The 2021 Heartland Whiskey Competition is the third consecutive time the biennial competition has been supported by state corn organizations from across the country, including Minnesota.

Craft spirits is one of the fastest-growing industries in the U.S., and whiskey is one of the most popular products. Many distilleries that produce craft products are family-owned and rely on farmers for a reliable supply of corn to make the mash from which spirits are distilled.

This July in Louisville, KY., the American Craft Spirits Association (ACSA) will conduct the 2021 Heartland Whiskey Competition that will judge multiple whiskey categories and award a “best of state” trophy to the top-rated whiskey from each sponsored state. While the competition

is limited to only those whiskeys that use corn as an ingredient, most U.S. craft whiskey falls within these guidelines.

Support from organizations, including Minnesota Corn, help make the state competitions possible by providing funds for the two-day blind judging and the awards for state winners, which include gold, silver and bronze medals in multiple whiskey categories. In previous competitions, Minnesota craft distillers have fared well, earning several coveted medals against a national pool of competitors.

The awards are important for distillers to attract customers and also the distributors who legally market and sell spirits to retailers. The competition will take place late July and winners will be announced in early August. ■

Several Minnesota distilleries have participated in the Heartland Whiskey Competition, including J. Carver Distillery in Waconia (pictured).



CommonGround Minnesota events are back

From races featuring thousands of participants to blogger gatherings at local wineries, CommonGround Minnesota is returning to in-person events this summer and fall.

CommonGround will partner with Twin Cities in Motion (TCM) for its Women Run the Cities race events in late July and Medtronic Twin Cities Marathon Weekend race events held in early October. TCM running events have long been popular with both professional athletes and beginners. The many thousands of runners and spectators on hand will have the opportunity to learn more about the food that fuels them and how it is produced right here in our state.

In September, CommonGround will host two field-to-fork-themed events. At one, guests can learn more about Minnesota agriculture, meet local farmers, and enjoy delicious food and drinks at Schram Winery in Waconia. At the other, CommonGround will partner with the Twin Cities Mom Collective to host a blogger event at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum’s Farm at the Arb. Attendees will be invited to explore the crop plots and learn more about modern agricultural technology, as well as visit the iconic red barn.

Both events will highlight the importance of agriculture in our state while aiming to help build a better understanding of how farmers produce safe, nutritious food and protect our natural resources.

To learn more about CommonGround Minnesota and upcoming events, visit CommonGroundMinnesota.com. ■



CommonGround Minnesota events bring bloggers, foodies and others together for conversations around food and farming.





Subscribe to the Minnesota Corn Podcast at info.mncorn.org/podcast.

Minnesota Corn podcast highlights global trade

The Minnesota Corn Podcast introduces listeners to the individuals building a brighter future on the farm. Each 10-minute episode highlights a different initiative supported through farmers' investment in the Minnesota corn check-off, including exciting research, new markets and outreach to the non-farming public.

Melissa Kessler, director of strategic initiatives and engagement for the U.S. Grains Council, recently joined Brownfield Ag News Reporter Mark Dorenkamp, who hosts the podcast, to discuss global trade. Part of the discussion focused on the interconnected nature of today's agricultural markets.

Subscribe to the podcast at info.mncorn.org/podcast to have each new episode delivered to your inbox, or search for the Minnesota Corn Podcast on Spotify and Apple Podcasts. ▀

Studies could boost appeal of U.S. corn among foreign buyers

A new set of studies, funded in part by Minnesota Corn, could help boost the appeal of U.S. corn among foreign buyers.

Researchers at the Northern Crops Institute (NCI), based in Fargo, N.D., have milled Argentinean, Brazilian and reimported U.S. corn to test pelleting quality and power usage in the milling process. Meanwhile, researchers at South Dakota State University and Auburn University are comparing the feeding efficiency of the products.

The goal of the study is to benchmark the financial and nutritional aspects of each origin's corn and, hopefully, show that U.S. corn performs better than other origin crops, said Mark Jirik, NCI's director.

In a nonpandemic year, NCI brings foreign buyers to the U.S. for courses and trade visits. Often, buyers make comments about U.S. corn looking

different than the corn they get from other countries, such as Argentina or Brazil, Jirik said.

"We want to try and change the narrative and focus on the performance of the grain, not the visuals," he said.

Kurt Shultz, senior director of global strategies for U.S. Grains Council (USGC), which is also partnering on the study, said the project is unique because it looks at grain in the buyer's warehouse and not the field. He, too, said it could help buyers see the financial value of U.S. corn.

NCI hopes to have final results from the studies by the end of the summer.

The institute is also partnering with North Dakota Corn Utilization Council on the research, in addition to Minnesota Corn and USGC. ▀



Ag in the Classroom launches summer teacher tours

Minnesota Ag in the Classroom (MAITC) is bringing teachers to farms across the state, virtually, giving them first-hand insight into where food comes from and how their students might get involved in careers in agriculture. MAITC's Summer Teacher Tour program offers continuing-education credits to teachers and provides educators with lesson plans focused on agriculture and our food supply chain.

Scores of teachers have joined in, making three virtual stops during the first date on June 15, which was devoted to wheat. First, they traced the route from field to fork, seeing farmer Pete Kappes in his 100-acre

field of hard red spring wheat in Ada, Minn. Then, at the Northern Crops Institute, a researcher demonstrated how semolina wheat goes through an extruder and comes out as pasta. Finally, the miller-bakers at Baker's Field in Minneapolis showed how stone milling works to produce whole wheat and rye flours.

Workshops have been held in June and July, with teachers virtually visiting farms across Minnesota.

Minnesota Corn is a proud sponsor of Minnesota Ag in the Classroom and other statewide efforts that encourage agriculture education. To learn more, visit minnesota.agclassroom.org. ▀



Minnesota Ag in the Classroom is hosting virtual tours for teachers this summer.

Nourish the Future initiative reaches national network of teachers

Thanks in part to corn farmers in Minnesota and across the country, U.S. science teachers have the chance to sharpen their agriculture-related teaching skills this summer.

Nourish the Future is an agriculture-education initiative that was developed by the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) and the organization educationprojects.org.

Since June, Nourish the Future has been hosting workshops for educators across the U.S. who are interested in learning more about teaching agriculture. That included a June 17 biotechnology workshop in Fargo, N.D., that was co-sponsored by Minnesota Corn. Teachers learned about plant science, pollination and more.

Robyn Allscheid, director of research and productivity at NCGA, said the workshops help “inspire cutting-edge [science, technology, engineering and math] curricula and, in turn, inspire students to consider careers in ag.”

In addition to the summer workshops, Nourish the Future provides teachers with free professional development, and it has created free, standards-based agriculture lessons on everything from biotechnology to ethanol.

For the past two school years, the initiative has selected a group of middle and high school teachers from across the country for a national professional-development program. Participants network with other educators who teach agriculture, design curriculum and are given access to new educational resources.



Amy Mastin is a middle and high school science teacher in the 295-student Kelliher School District in Beltrami County. She is the first Minnesota teacher to participate in the program.

Mastin teaches two agriculture classes, including one where students raise and manage a small herd of cattle. She appreciates connecting with other teachers who are passionate about agriculture, and she has been able to immediately use lessons the initiative has offered in webinars.

“Anytime you can walk away with something from a webinar, that’s a good day,” she said.

Nourish the Future is now accepting applications for its 2022 teacher cohort. To learn more about upcoming Nourish the Future events, visit nourishthefuture.org/events. ■



Throughout the summer, science teachers from across the country are getting the chance to sharpen their agriculture skills, thanks to the Nourish the Future initiative.

Minnesota FFA State Convention (and the year 2021) was “Worth It!”

The Minnesota FFA State Convention featured plenty of hoopla this year, but most of it was virtual.

Still, students across Minnesota mustered enthusiasm and excitement, celebrating accomplishments, awards and milestones in their agricultural education with ceremonies, speeches and workshops that took place over five days.

Minnesota junior and senior high schools currently serve 35,000 agriculture students. Of them, more than 12,000 are active FFA members within the 200-plus chapters across the state. FFA serves communities of all sizes, from small, rural farm towns to the state’s biggest urban areas. Minneapolis plans to start an FFA chapter this fall.

In a typical year, the FFA State Convention would bring 4,000 students to the University of Minnesota’s St. Paul campus to celebrate. But this was not a typical year.

“The state officers chose the theme ‘Worth It,’ because they acknowledge that this is a challenging year, but at the end of the year it was all still worth it,” said Val Aarsvold, executive director of Minnesota FFA Foundation. “The majority of the convention has been accessed in an on-demand format, so that when a group of students gather together, locally or when individual students want, they can watch certain pieces throughout the days.”



The Minnesota Corn Growers Association is a Star Partner of the Minnesota FFA Foundation. Aarsvold said the funds that come in through the Star Partner program help support students’ development and agricultural education advocacy.

To learn more about FFA in Minnesota, visit mnffa.org. ■

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.

Tasseldega Nights back at Deer Creek Speedway



Thanks to generous support from local county corn grower associations, attendees enjoy free admission to Deer Creek Speedway for Tasseldega Nights.

Vroooom! The Freeborn, Dodge, Mower, and Olmsted/Wabasha County Corn Grower Associations are proud to bring racing fans Tasseldega Nights at Deer Creek Speedway this July. The event features great racing, family fun and an excellent opportunity to promote the benefits of homegrown ethanol throughout the evening.



Pennington/Red Lake board member earns water quality certification

Jeremiah Hasnedl, a Pennington/Red Lake County Soybean-Corn Growers Association board member and his family, recently became certified through the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program. Run by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the voluntary program gives participants regulatory certainty and priority for technical assistance. To learn more, visit tinyurl.com/mda-water-quality.

Jeremiah Hasnedl and his family have become certified through the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program.

Little Falls drivers line up for a Better Fuel

More than 100 drivers filled up with higher ethanol blends during a June fueling event at Coborn's in Little Falls sponsored by the Crow Wing-Morrison County Corn & Soybean Growers. Drawn in by fuel discounts, drivers learned about the benefits of unleaded 88 fuel and received free hamburgers and ice cream from local dairy producers.



Nobles County golf event draws a crowd

More than 135 golfers teed it up in June at the Nobles County Corn & Soybean Growers and Rock-Nobles Cattlemen golf outing at Adrian Country Club. Be sure to check in with your county grower association throughout the summer to find out about golf outings and special events.

A recent Little Falls fuel promotion event at Coborn's, sponsored by the Crow Wing-Morrison County Corn & Soybean Growers, drew more than 100 drivers.



County organizations across the state are jumping back into summer and fall in-person events.

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

Join Us

As a grassroots organization, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) is driven by the efforts of corn farmers and local county corn grower associations. MCGA's district field managers (DFMs) provide farmers and county organizations with resources, information and support to be successful.

DFMs cover 52 county organizations around Minnesota, conducting grassroots outreach and engaging growers in the issues that are critical to

them. From county board meetings to fueling events, you can find the DFMs around the state, ready to help you.

In recent months, MCGA has featured the grassroots efforts of county organizations and the DFMs in a series of blog posts. Visit mncorn.org/blog to learn more. To meet and connect with your local DFM, visit mncorn.org/staff.



Marlene Dufault



Kennedy Janssen



Macy Petrowiak



Tanner Sanborn

Are you a MCGA member?

Just because you receive Corn Talk doesn't mean you're a member of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA). To check if you're a member, or to join MCGA, simply call our office at 952-233-0333.

As a grassroots organization, MCGA relies on members in its efforts on behalf of the state's 24,000 corn farmers. We're stronger with you, join us.

- One-Year Membership: \$75
- Three-Year Membership: \$200
- Young Adult Membership: \$20



Did you know...
Federal ID numbers can be used for up to five MCGA memberships.

thanks to our allied partners



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calendar of events

aug
3-5 Farmfest,
Redwood Falls, MN

aug
12-14 National
CommonGround
Conference,
Dallas, TX

aug sept
26-6 Minnesota State Fair,
St. Paul, MN

sept
6 MCGA offices closed
for Labor Day

sept
8 MCGA/MCR&PC Joint
Board Meeting,
Burnsville, MN

sept
11 MCGA Night with
the Saints,
St. Paul, MN

sept
14-16 Big Iron Farm Show,
Fargo, ND