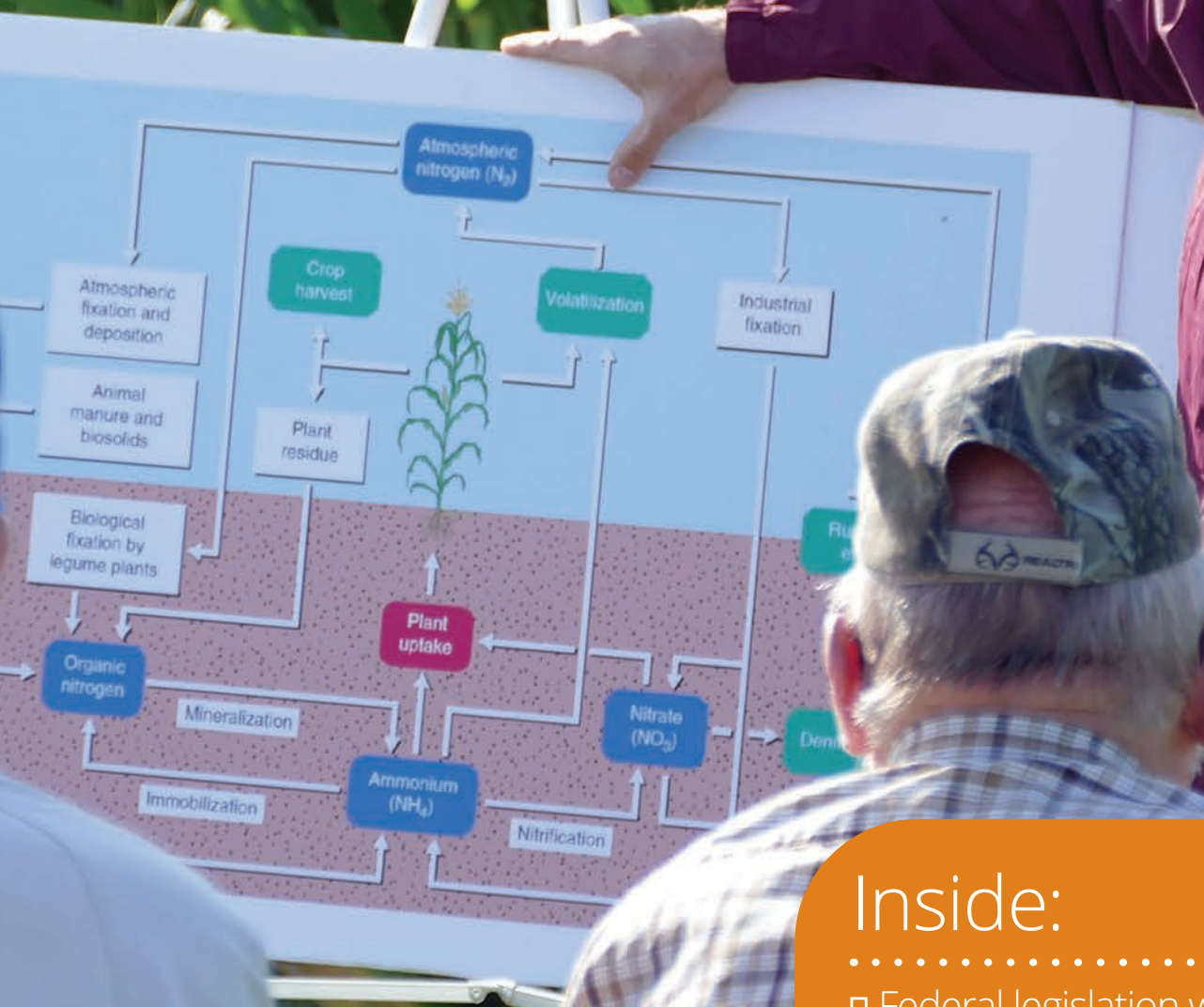


# corn talk

Official Publication of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association • September 2021



## Inside:

- Federal legislation would ensure year-round E15
- Corn exports on track for all-time record
- Corn farmers invest in innovation

# Your corn check-off at work



**T**he Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC) was established to direct Minnesota corn farmers' investment in the corn check-off. Check-off funds are used to identify and promote opportunities for the state's corn farmers, while increasing profitability and quality of life.

Working alongside the Minnesota Corn Growers Association, MCR&PC invests corn check-off funds into promotion, research and outreach efforts. For example, MCR&PC invests more than \$2 million annually in research that helps to improve on-farm practices and identify new markets.

This issue of Corn Talk goes in depth on research projects funded by MCR&PC in 2021. These projects range from an effort by University of Minnesota researchers to develop sturdier corn-based plastics to a private-sector project to create a diesel engine that utilizes ethanol.

Minnesota Corn will begin accepting proposals for 2022 research projects later this fall. For more information on research efforts and opportunities, visit [mncorn.org/research](https://mncorn.org/research).

*Fabian Fernandez (pictured on the cover) and Dan Kaiser (pictured above) are among the researchers utilizing corn check-off funds for projects that help improve on-farm practices and identify new markets.*

Look for this sticker to learn about research, promotion and outreach efforts fueled by farmers' investment in the Minnesota corn check-off.



Official Publication of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association

Published six times a year from the state MCGA/MCR&PC office:

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September 2021

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# New legislation would ensure year-round E15

**Y**ear-round sales of E15, a cleaner-burning, lower-cost fuel containing 15% ethanol, would be permanently maintained nationwide under new federal legislation.

The Year-Round Fuel Choice Act, introduced in July by a bipartisan group of 12 senators and 24 representatives, would remove outdated regulatory barriers that could prevent future year-round sales.

Minnesota Rep. Angie Craig is the lead sponsor of the bill in the House. Cosponsors are Reps. Jim Hagedorn and Michelle Fischbach and Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith.

The bill would codify the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to grant waivers allowing for summertime sales of E15 and higher-blend biofuels.

A 2019 EPA rule had allowed for the waivers. But earlier this summer, in response to a lawsuit filed by oil refineries, a federal appeals court ruled the EPA could not grant the waivers under existing law.

The court ruling had nothing to do with the quality, safety and environmental benefits of E15 as a fuel.

Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) President Tim Waibel, a farmer in Courtland, thanked the legislators for introducing the bill, which would permanently ensure the availability of higher-octane, lower-carbon biofuel blends that benefit all Minnesotans.

"MCGA is proud to support policies that promote the use of cleaner-burning, economic fuel options that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality," he said. "We appreciate the efforts of these bipartisan legislators and look forward to working with them on a long-term solution that will allow for continued market access and clarity for rural economies."

Rep. Craig led the introduction of the bill with Nebraska Republican Rep. Adrian Smith. She said E15 and higher biofuel blends expand markets for family farmers and cut down on dangerous air pollutants.

"It's long past time that the year-round sale of these renewable fuels was made permanent, expanding the market for lower-cost, lower-carbon fuel choices all across America," she said in a statement. "I'm proud to work with Representative Smith on this critical legislation to support our biofuels producers and family farmers, while expanding options at the pump for consumers across the country."

Sen. Klobuchar said in a statement that work must be done to diversify the fuel supply and invest in affordable, environmentally friendly solutions for consumers.

"For the past three years, we've seen that making E15 gasoline accessible to drivers year-round is good for drivers, farmers and the environment," she said. "It's critical that we pass this bipartisan legislation to continue this progress and stay on the path to a greener future."

These federal developments follow a Minnesota state legislative session in which — thanks to the grassroots advocacy efforts of MCGA — legislators committed \$6 million to a biofuel-infrastructure program this biennium. Legislators also have called for allocating \$6 million to the program in fiscal years 2024 and 2025, which would bring the total state investment to \$12 million over four years.

E15, approved for use in passenger vehicles model year 2001 or newer, is offered at more than 380 fueling stations in Minnesota. Commonly known as Unleaded 88 at the pump, E15 reduces harmful greenhouse gas emissions by nearly half compared to regular gasoline.

To learn more about E15 and to find a station near you, visit [BetterFuel.org](https://BetterFuel.org). ■



Rep. Angie Craig, who represents Minnesota's Second Congressional District, is the lead sponsor in the U.S. House of Representatives of a bill that would ensure year-round E15 sales.

## Next Generation Fuels Act reintroduced

**B**eginning in the mid-2020s, new vehicles could be certified to use fuel with more than 15% ethanol. It's a move that could spur billions of additional gallons of ethanol demand annually.

Sponsored by Illinois Congresswoman Cheri Bustos, the Next Generation Fuels Act would require that, beginning in model year 2026, all new gas-powered vehicles be certified to use E25. By model year 2031, all new gas-powered vehicles would need certification to use E30.

Currently, only flex fuel vehicles are certified to use fuels containing more than 15% ethanol.

In August, Bustos reintroduced the bill to the House of Representatives, where it was referred to the House Energy and Commerce Committee and the House Ways and Means Committee. The bill has 10 bipartisan cosponsors as of early September.

The bill would also require vehicles, beginning in model year 2026, to be certified to use fuels with higher octane levels. Typically, either ethanol or harmful aromatics are added to gasoline to increase octane.

Under the bill, octane-boosting additives would need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40% compared to gasoline. Ethanol reduces greenhouse gas emissions by nearly half compared to gasoline.

The bill would also set limits on blending aromatics into gasoline.

To spur the use of fuels containing more than 15% ethanol, the bill would require all new refueling infrastructure to be compatible with higher ethanol blends starting in 2024. Beginning in 2025, gas stations could be required to offer higher-octane fuel, depending upon their size and sales.

The bill would also remove the outdated regulatory barrier implemented by a federal appeals court that could limit year-round E15 sales.

The National Corn Growers Association (NCGA), as well as the Minnesota Corn Growers Association, has welcomed the legislation's reintroduction. In a statement, NCGA said the bill would help meet future needs of more advanced vehicles by taking advantage of higher ethanol blends.

More information on the benefits of low-carbon, high-octane fuels and NCGA's support for a low-carbon octane standard can be found at [ncga.com/octane](https://ncga.com/octane). ■

# Corn exports on track for all-time record



The U.S. was expected to export a record amount of corn in 2020-21. Through the corn check-off, Minnesota's corn organizations advance efforts to develop international markets for Minnesota-grown corn and ethanol.

**C**hina has rapidly been rebuilding its hog herd after the country lost 50% of its hog population during a devastating bout of African swine fever in 2018 and 2019. That, combined with a new U.S.-China trade deal and expected reductions in the availability of Brazilian grain, has driven Chinese demand for U.S. corn.

China isn't the only export market with a growing appetite for U.S. grain. In fact, U.S. farmers were on track to export 2.85 billion bushels of corn in 2020-21, according to USDA projections. That would be an all-time record.

Cary Sifferath, senior director of global programs at the U.S. Grains Council (USGC), said Chinese corn purchases dramatically began increasing around September 2020. He said China was projected to purchase 918.5 million bushels of U.S. corn in 2020-21, which would be a record for a single country.

Mexico had been the largest U.S. corn export market for the past several years and was on pace to make its largest-ever purchase in 2020-21, at 585.8 million bushels. Japan, another top market for U.S. corn, was projected to purchase 416.7 million bushels in 2020-21.



Meanwhile, Latin American and Caribbean countries were expected to purchase 300 million bushels of corn in 2020-21. Other notable buyers include South Korea, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

USGC is a nonprofit membership organization devoted to developing overseas markets for U.S. grain. Through farmers' investment in the corn check-off, Minnesota Corn partners with organizations like USGC to build markets abroad for Minnesota-grown corn and ethanol.

Visit [grains.org](https://grains.org) to learn more about USGC. ▀

## MN corn farmer recognized with "Ag-cademy Award"

**T**ake a bow, Jim O'Connor!

Earlier this summer, O'Connor, the immediate past chairman of the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council, was honored for his role in a video created for a virtual trade summit held in October 2020.

The Blooming Prairie farmer won an "Ag-cademy Award" from the U.S. Grains Council (USGC), which hosted the summit, in the category of "most heartwarming moment." He shared the award with Terry Wehlander of the North Dakota Corn Utilization Council.

The "Ag-cademy Awards", new this year, honored farmers and agriculture groups that created videos for the virtual summit, which aimed to continue USGC's efforts to develop markets and enable trade. USGC typically holds the event in person but pivoted to a virtual event in 2020 because of the pandemic.

Minnesota's corn organizations produced four videos for the summit and were nominated for four "Ag-cademy Awards". Former Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) President Les Anderson was nominated for best actor, and O'Connor and his family were nominated in the "featured cast" category. As an organization, MCGA was nominated for best documentary.

Visit [YouTube.com/mncornvids](https://YouTube.com/mncornvids) to watch the videos. ▀



Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council member Jim O'Connor was recognized with an "Ag-cademy Award".



# 'Backups and backlogs' in shipping discussed on recent Minnesota Corn Podcast

Livestock feed accounts for a significant portion of U.S. corn use. Unfortunately, the lack of available shipping containers is slowing exports for poultry-related products.

That was among the topics discussed recently on the Minnesota Corn Podcast, which is hosted by reporter Mark Dorenkamp of Brownfield Ag News.

Shippers are returning empty containers to China instead of loading them with agricultural products, said podcast guest Shelby Watson, manager of allied industry relations for the USA Poultry & Egg Export Council (USAPEEC).

The reason they are returning empty is to expedite shipments of clothing and other goods that can be sold faster and at a higher profit, Watson said.

"I think really, more than anything, it just causes a headache," she said. "When you've got products sitting in cold storage and there's no real definite timeline of when you're going to get a container to get that product out, it ... makes for backups and backlogs."

Still, she said export numbers from the past year have kept pace with previous years' levels.

Minnesota Corn is a member of USAPEEC, which aims to promote exports of U.S. poultry and eggs around the world. Watson said support from commodity organizations allows USAPEEC to conduct programming worldwide.

"We definitely appreciate our relationship with all of our commodity groups," she said.

Subscribe to the podcast at [info.mncorn.org/podcast](https://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. ■



Subscribe to the Minnesota Corn Podcast at [info.mncorn.org/podcast](https://info.mncorn.org/podcast).

## MCGA resources address carbon markets

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) is providing key information to stakeholders on programs that may create a potential revenue opportunity for farmers implementing practices that capture and store carbon in the soil.

At Farmfest, MCGA debuted a new publication, "Carbon Markets 101." The publication shares helpful background on carbon sequestering, carbon markets, and offers key questions that farmers might consider before participating.

MCGA also has a new webinar available, called "Carbon Accounting: Potential of Soil Carbon Sequestration," that delves more deeply into carbon markets.

Many programs have emerged in recent years, as the increasing number of companies pledging to become carbon neutral seek to offset emissions that can't practically be eliminated.

Agricultural land is a target for such programs because conservation practices, such as cover crops and no-till farming, put more solid carbon in the soil and slow the loss of carbon back into the atmosphere.

Without a national carbon-market policy to establish standards, it's incumbent upon farmers to research the types of programs available and the expertise and experience behind them. Farmers may want to consider consulting an attorney to review contracts and help understand their rights and obligations before signing agreements.

Visit [mncorn.org/publications](https://mncorn.org/publications) to download the "Carbon Markets 101" brochure and [youtube.com/mncornvids](https://youtube.com/mncornvids) to watch the webinar. ■



"Carbon Markets 101" provides basic information intended to help farmers better understand the topic and the opportunities that may exist in a quickly changing carbon market landscape.

# Corn farmers investing in innovation

*Through corn farmers investment in the Minnesota corn check-off, Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC) invests more than \$2 million annually in research that improves on-farm practices while identifying new markets for the state's corn crop. The following provides a brief overview of ongoing projects and initiatives led by university researchers and other experts.*

*To learn more about farmer-led research through the Minnesota Corn Innovation Grant Program, or to read final reports from completed research projects, visit [mncorn.org/research](http://mncorn.org/research).*

## Funding the Minnesota Agricultural Water Resource Center (MAWRC)

**Project lead:** Warren Formo, MAWRC

**Project overview:** Funding from the MCR&PC helps MAWRC provide information to farmers on nutrient management and water-related issues. MAWRC also shares relevant information with the general public to further build awareness and a better understanding of the conservation efforts farmers implement.

**Why it matters:** Information on nutrient management and water-related issues can help farmers identify and address environmental risks, and help others better understand farm practices.

## Funding a water-quality educator at University of Minnesota Extension

**Project lead:** University of Minnesota Extension

**Project overview:** This grant helps to support a full-time educator position at University of Minnesota Extension. The position is held by soil scientist Brad Carlson, who oversees the Nitrogen Smart educational program, which teaches producers fundamentals for maximizing economic return on nitrogen investments while minimizing nitrogen losses.

**Why it matters:** Farmers are always working toward continuous improvement, and an Extension educator dedicated to water quality topics will assist farmers in adopting nutrient management best practices.

## Evaluating the prevalence of corn pests in Minnesota

**Project lead:** Bruce Potter, University of Minnesota

**Project overview:** Potter and his team are developing a statewide network of traps for key corn pests, such as the European corn borer and corn rootworm. They also plan to evaluate yield loss at several locations due to a fungal pathogen and conduct a fall survey of corn diseases and European corn borer larvae.

**Why it matters:** Getting a broader look at the status of various corn pests across Minnesota could help farmers make better pest-control decisions.

## Developing a third Advanced Nitrogen Smart course

**Project lead:** Brad Carlson, University of Minnesota Extension

**Project overview:** Carlson is working to develop an Advanced Nitrogen Smart course highlighting the impacts that changing weather and climate patterns have on nitrogen management.

**Why it matters:** Developing this course could help farmers adapt to climate change.

## Developing corn-based bioplastics

**Project lead:** Marc Hillmyer, Center for Sustainable Polymers, University of Minnesota

**Project overview:** Hillmyer's research aims to replace petroleum as the raw material from which plastics are made with renewable sources like corn.

**Why it matters:** Creating stronger and more durable corn-based plastics could drastically reduce the environmental impacts of plastic and create new markets for corn growers.

## Finding value in dried distillers grains with solubles (DDGS)

**Project lead:** Padmanaban Krishnan, South Dakota State University

**Project overview:** Krishnan and his team are working to refine DDGS, which are byproducts of ethanol production, to make them fit for human consumption. They are also working to determine which components of DDGS offer the best value in order to extract them from the grain.

**Why it matters:** Identifying additional uses for DDGS could create new markets for corn byproducts.

## Creating an ethanol-powered electric vehicle (EV) range extender

**Project lead:** Will Northrop, University of Minnesota

**Project overview:** Northrop and his team are working to create a system in which an E85-powered internal combustion engine not connected to a vehicle's wheels would charge an in-use EV, furthering its range. Ethanol is the ideal fuel for this process because it can more efficiently be made into hydrogen and carbon monoxide than standard unleaded gasoline.

**Why it matters:** As electric vehicles grow in popularity, an ethanol-powered range extender could help create a new market for the biofuel.



This ethanol-powered engine is being tested by University of Minnesota professor Will Northrop as an electric vehicle range extender.

## Stopping the spread of plant disease with an enzyme

**Project lead:** Mikael Elias, University of Minnesota

**Project overview:** Elias' team is building an enzyme that doesn't allow the bacteria that causes diseases like Goss's Wilt to communicate with one another. Without that ability to communicate, such bacteria do not reproduce and have a harder time spreading.

**Why it matters:** Reducing diseases that dramatically reduce crop yield increases profitability for farmers and their overall sustainability efforts.





University of Minnesota professor Candice Hirsch is working to help farmers maximize yields in different areas of their plots, using drones to collect data.

**Project overview:** Researchers are measuring the ratios of different clays found in Minnesota soils which vary in their potassium (K) holding capacity, therefore their ability to supply K to the corn crop.

**Why it matters:** A better understanding of the mineral content of soil in a given area could help a farmer more efficiently apply fertilizers.

## Using drones to evaluate crops

**Project lead:** Candice Hirsch, University of Minnesota

**Project overview:** Hirsch and her team are using drones to collect data on crops, with the goal of helping farmers in detecting and understanding non-visible early symptoms for earlier management interventions.

**Why it matters:** Having a better grasp of the microenvironments within a given field could help farmers understand the specific mechanisms plants use to respond to their environment and also will lead to development of more resilient plants for the future.

## Mapping the mineral content of Minnesota's soils

**Project lead:** Dan Kaiser, University of Minnesota

## Helping farmers reduce nitrogen emissions

**Project lead:** Tim Griffis, University of Minnesota

**Project overview:** Using indoor growing chambers, Griffis is testing how nitrogen emissions from farm fields in the form of the gas nitrous oxide are impacted by warmer and wetter weather conditions. He also is looking into "designer" soil microbes that can fix nitrogen out of the atmosphere.

**Why it matters:** By utilizing microbes that can fix atmospheric nitrogen, farmers could potentially use less fertilizer, thereby lowering nitrous oxide emissions and nitrogen runoff into groundwater.

## Developing best-management practices for cover crops and manure integration

**Project lead:** Melissa Wilson, University of Minnesota

**Project overview:** Wilson is experimenting with cover crops and liquid manure application, assessing whether such practices affect soil health and corn and soybean yields.

**Why it matters:** This system has potential to give farmers more flexibility for manure application, and provides soil health benefits.

## Evaluating irrigation-management tools

**Project lead:** Vasudha Sharma, University of Minnesota Extension

**Project overview:** Sharma is evaluating the impact of four irrigation water management strategies that differ in their complexity on corn yield and nitrate leaching.

**Why it matters:** By more precisely watering crops, farmer could save water and improve yields.

## Measuring how nitrogen rates affect environmental factors

**Project lead:** Fabian Fernandez, University of Minnesota

**Project overview:** Fernandez and his team are applying different amounts of nitrogen on corn fields to determine how application rates affect grain yields, and water and air pollution.

**Why it matters:** A better understanding of how different nitrogen-application rates affect the environment could help farmers more efficiently use fertilizers.

## Working to create ethanol-powered diesel engines

**Project lead:** ClearFlame Engine Technologies

**Project overview:** ClearFlame is working to develop an ethanol-powered engine that can be used in long-haul trucking.

**Why it matters:** Using ethanol instead of conventional fuels in trucking would have environmental benefits and positively impact farmers and rural communities.

## Creating a corn-based acrylic acid

**Project lead:** Lakril Technologies

**Project overview:** Lakril is working to create an acrylic acid made from corn instead of petroleum.

**Why it matters:** A corn-derived acrylic acid could reduce carbon dioxide emissions by nearly one-third, compared to the traditional product. ■



Postdoctoral associate Alexander Frie has been working with University of Minnesota Professor Tim Griffis on his research to determine the impact of climate change on agricultural nitrogen emissions.



# Minnesota Corn enjoys successful Farmfest 2021

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) was once again a can't-miss stop at Farmfest, which returned to Gilfillan Estates near Morgan in early August.

Scores of farmers, families and agriculture stakeholders visited the MCGA tent during the three-day event to talk with grower-leaders, take pictures in a camper-turned-photo booth and grab sweet corn ice cream samples.

The MCGA tent was also a popular spot for state and federal policymakers, who learned about the many ways corn growers are building a sustainable future for the state's agriculture sector and all Minnesotans.

## Day one

MCGA grower-leaders and staff were up early to scoop ice cream and chat with political leaders, farmers and the larger ag community about topics vital to rural Minnesota and farming. Grower-leaders also conducted the first of many radio, print and TV interviews with outlets throughout the state and Upper Midwest.

Almost immediately, the photo booth, which was new to the MCGA tent this year, proved to be a hit. Visitors enjoyed posing with fun hats, sunglasses and corn-themed props, as they shared their photos (and support for Minnesota agriculture) on social media.

Visitors also eagerly grabbed samples of sweet corn ice cream, which is produced by the University of Minnesota exclusively for the MCGA tent at Farmfest. MCGA brought 39 gallons of ice cream to the event's first day; they were gone by that afternoon.

Meanwhile, MCGA grower-leaders were hard at work renewing memberships and signing up new members. As a thank you, new and renewing members received a free five-gallon MCGA-branded bucket for signing up at Farmfest. Over the course of the three days, MCGA eclipsed the previous Farmfest record, with more than 100 new and renewed memberships.

Throughout the first day, a smattering of elected officials visited the MCGA tent. They included former Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka, Sen. Michelle Benson, Sen. Gary Dahms, former Sen. Scott Jensen and House Agriculture Committee Chairman Mike Sundin, and former Rep. Jeanne Poppe.

Congressman Tom Emmer and Congresswomen Angie Craig and Michelle Fischbach also visited the MCGA tent to hear from farmers about the critical issues impacting their farms.



Congresswoman Angie Craig, who represents Minnesota's Second Congressional District, talks with MCGA board member Harold Wolle.



Gov. Tim Walz (center) talks with Minnesota Corn grower-leaders and staff inside MCGA's Farmfest tent.



KFAN "Power Trip" morning show host and Unleaded 88 fan Chris Hawkey held a meet-and-greet with fans inside MCGA's Farmfest tent.



Congresswoman Michelle Fischbach (right), who represents Minnesota's Seventh Congressional District, greets MCGA grower-leaders during Farmfest.



MCGA President Tim Waibel talks with former Minnesota Senate Majority Leader Paul Gazelka (right) inside the Farmfest tent.



## Day two

The second day of Farmfest started just after sunrise for MCGA President Tim Waibel, who was interviewed live by Blois Olson on the WCCO Radio Morning Show. MCGA is the official radio broadcast partner for WCCO's live Farmfest coverage, bringing agriculture issues to a statewide listening audience.

Later that morning, Craig returned to the MCGA tent, and former U.S. House Agriculture Committee Chairman Collin Peterson also stopped by. Gov. Tim Walz visited with farmer leaders in the MCGA tent alongside multiple state commissioners, including Thom Petersen (agriculture),

Roslyn Robertson (labor and industry) and Sarah Strommen (natural resources). Also in the tent were Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman, Reps. Kaohly Vang Her, Ginny Klevorn, Nathan Nelson, Paul Torkelson and Dan Wolgamott, and Sens. Erin Murphy and Melisa Franzen, who became an MCGA member. Also visiting that morning was the 2021-22 Minnesota FFA student board.

Waibel and MCGA board member Tom Haag were among the farmers and agriculture leaders who participated in Farmfest panels that day in the Wick Building.

## Day three

While fewer people appeared to be in attendance on the final day, per usual, the photo booth and ice cream remained just as popular.

A steady line of kids and adults alike took pictures in the photo booth. And the last of the 100-plus gallons of ice cream MCGA offered at the event were gone by early afternoon.

Dignitaries visiting the MCGA tent that day included University of Minnesota President Joan Gabel; Brian Buhr, dean of the university's College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences; and Beverly Durgan, dean of the university's Extension Center for Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. State Reps. Tony Albright, Tony Jurgens and Kristin Robbins also stopped by. The day also featured a visit to the tent from KFAN "Power Trip" morning show host and Unleaded 88 fan Chris Hawkey, who greeted and took pictures with fans.

To read more about MCGA's presence at Farmfest or to view photos from inside the Minnesota Corn tent, visit [mncorn.org/blog](https://mncorn.org/blog). 🍌



Tanner Sanborn, a district field manager with MCGA, talks with the 2021-22 Minnesota FFA student board about his career in agriculture.

# Farmfest panels feature MN Corn leaders

This year, Minnesota Corn grower-leaders again were among the agriculture stakeholders featured in Farmfest's panel discussions. They covered everything from policy to carbon sequestration.

Tom Haag, a current Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) board member and vice president of the National Corn Growers Association, sat on a panel about the farm bill, which is due for renewal in 2023.

Haag, who farms in Eden Valley, said crop insurance is one safety net that farmers need in their toolbox.

"For instance, this past year we had 7.7 million acres of corn covered, and that represents 96% of producers in Minnesota," he said. "Nationally, there's 92% participation."

Meanwhile, MCGA President Tim Waibel spoke on a panel about farmers' energy needs and the role farm-based energy plays in U.S. transportation. He said the top energy-related agenda item for corn producers is restoring the year-round E15 waiver and positioning E15 to become the standard fuel in Minnesota and nationwide.

E15, which contains 15% ethanol, is approved for use in passenger vehicles model year 2001 or newer. Making E15 the nation's standard fuel would have the equivalent effect of taking 4 million vehicles off the road annually.

Waibel, who farms and raises hogs in Nicollet, also urged leaders to be mindful of rural electricity needs when considering proposals to spur electric vehicle usage.

For full-length recaps of the panel discussions, visit [mncorn.org/blog](https://mncorn.org/blog). 🍌



Minnesota Corn Growers Association President Tim Waibel (third from right) was among the speakers featured on panels at Farmfest.

# Earlier harvest and decreased yields are expected

**W**ith the state's corn crop more rapidly reaching maturity because of the drought, Minnesota's corn farmers have been preparing for an earlier-than-usual harvest and smaller yields.

Just 34% of Minnesota's corn crop was in good or excellent condition as of late August, according to the USDA. For comparison, in late August 2020, 82% of the crop was in good or excellent condition. In late August 2019, 55% of the crop was in good or excellent condition.

"Everybody is in the drought in Minnesota," said Redwood County farmer Brad Neumann. As of mid-August, he had received about 5 inches of rainfall during the growing season. Over the previous 10 growing seasons, he had averaged between 13 and 14 inches of rainfall through mid-August.

Dave Vipond farms in northwestern Minnesota, which arguably has seen the most severe drought of any part of the state. He guesses that he will be able to harvest just half of his corn crop and that he will finish the harvest before September ends. Typically, Minnesota's corn harvest doesn't start until late September. In some years, it goes well into November.

In southern Minnesota, farmers have fared a bit better, thanks to pockets of adequate rain and heavy soils that have retained moisture.

Mankato-area farmer Angela Guentzel said the minimal rain in her area has been coming "at all the right times." Still, she said, this year's crop "won't be a bumper crop by any means."

Southwestern Minnesota farmer Paul Henning said that, because of wind and heat, what little moisture was in the soil at the beginning of the year has dried out. He also said some of his crops rapidly have been deteriorating and that he likely will start chopping his crop for silage, if the dry weather continues.

The drought could also impact next year's crop, since soil moisture is not being replenished. Eighty-four percent of Minnesota farmland has a short to very short stock of moisture in the topsoil and the subsoil. That is compared to a 10-year average of 22%.

"This thing could have a long tail to it," Vipond said.

Neumann said dry soil also impacts fall field work, because anhydrous ammonia can be tough to apply when soils are particularly dry.

Even farmers whose crops are under irrigation have been challenged by the weather conditions.

For example, Jocelyn Schlichting, who grows corn, kidney beans and potatoes under irrigation on a family farm in Rice, Minnesota, has been forced to water her crops more frequently. Running the irrigators more often has increased electricity and equipment-repair bills.

"Our poor guys are running ragged, just trying to keep up with everything," she said. ■



Drought has stressed the corn crop in Minnesota, leading farmers to prepare for earlier harvests and decreased yields.

## 'Farm at the Arb' enters third year

**T**he interpretive farm at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum in Chaska, which is sponsored, in part, by Minnesota Corn, launched its third year of programming in 2021.

Opened in 2019, the 'Farm at the Arb' was the arboretum's largest addition in more than 40 years. The site includes: interactive exhibits;

pollinator and vegetable gardens; plots of corn, soybeans, wheat and other crops; a restored barn; an education center; a seasonal outdoor kitchen; gathering lawns, and more.

Through farmers' investment in the corn check-off, Minnesota Corn supported the creation of the 'Farm at the Arb' as part of its mission to reach the non-farming public.



New this year, Minnesota Corn is sponsoring an interactive online 'Farm at the Arb' map that includes exhibit and planting locations and information on agriculture. Visitors who take photos at all of the stops receive a Minnesota Corn-themed prize.

Minnesota Corn was also a sponsor of "Corn is Everywhere" weekend at 'Farm at the Arb' in September. Participants learned about the process of growing and harvesting corn and were able to make corn-seed necklaces, practice corn shucking, thank farmers, participate in a corn hole tournament, and more.

Minnesota Corn grower-leaders look forward to continuing their work with arboretum leaders to make the farm site a preeminent destination for agriculture education.

"Helping the non-farming public learn more about agriculture is critical to our mission," said Jim Kanten, a Minnesota Corn Growers Association board member. "We appreciate the arboretum's efforts to elevate such great learning opportunities and are proud to partner with them on innovative agricultural programming."

To learn more about the 'Farm at the Arb', visit [tinyurl.com/farmarb](https://tinyurl.com/farmarb). ■



Minnesota Corn is sponsoring two new programs this year at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum's 'Farm at the Arb'.



# Farmamerica hits milestone in capital campaign

**A** Minnesota Corn-supported capital campaign at Farmamerica, a Waseca-based agriculture interpretive center, has reached a key milestone.

Over half of the \$850,000 needed for the expansion and renovation project at Farmamerica, also known as the Minnesota Agricultural Interpretive Center, has been raised, the organization announced earlier this summer.

Through farmers' investment in the corn check-off, Minnesota's corn organizations have long been supporters of Farmamerica's mission to better connect youth and adults to agriculture. This recent capital campaign offered an opportunity to make a significant impact in helping to share the story of modern agriculture.

Now, with the halfway point reached, Farmamerica will begin the public phase of the capital campaign. It has also begun renovations and remodeling at its welcome center.

Executive Director Jessica Rollins said Farmamerica is humbled by the support from Minnesota's corn growers.

"We're honored that you have that faith in us," she said. "Thank you for being a believer in our mission to connect people with the evolving story of Minnesota agriculture."

The expansion and renovation project will include upgrading classroom space, adding year-round ag-literacy opportunities, and remodeling the welcome center with interactive exhibits and experiences, including a new "Ag Around You" discovery center.

Farmamerica also plans to add an inclusive outdoor playground and convert its feed mill into a three-season classroom and exhibit space. It will showcase feed manufacturing and innovations in ag engineering.

The project will allow Farmamerica to offer year-round educational programming starting in 2022 and to better serve the thousands of

school-age children who visit each year. With the upgraded facilities, Farmamerica expects to draw more visitors from the southern Twin Cities metro and for visitor attendance and student engagement to increase by at least 50% in the first year.



Rollins said the project will help visitors feel more connected to Minnesota farmers and the state's agricultural community.

Established by the state Legislature in 1978 to preserve, celebrate and promote Minnesota's connection to agriculture, Farmamerica has grown from a few acres into a 360-acre educational site. Visitors can walk a milelong trail lined with historic buildings, including an interpretive center, an 1850s settlement, a country church, a one-room schoolhouse, a blacksmith shop and a 1930s farmstead.

Farmamerica also offers special events like summer camps, goat yoga and a fall festival, and during the pandemic, it has offered virtual field trips and career-exploration programming.

Thanks, in part, to the grassroots efforts of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA), the renovation project received an additional \$250,000 from the Legislature in the 2022 fiscal year.

Grower-leaders said it's critical to support opportunities for the public to learn about modern agriculture, given that fewer Minnesota residents than ever are connected to a farm.

"We are proud to support Farmamerica's efforts to create meaningful and hands-on learning opportunities for young people and the non-farming public," said Angela Guentzel, an MCGA board member. "Agriculture is critical to our state's economy, and as part of our continued partnership with Farmamerica, we look forward to strengthening the connection that all Minnesotans have to this important field."

To learn more about Farmamerica and its capital campaign, visit [farmamerica.org](https://farmamerica.org). ■



In July, Farmamerica reached the halfway mark in its "Rooted & Growing" capital campaign, which is supported, in part, by Minnesota Corn.

# GreenSeam helps bolster south-central MN's ag reputation

**W**hat transformed the farmland south of the San Francisco Bay Area into Silicon Valley? What made lower Manhattan's Wall Street the economic heartbeat of the Western world?

These questions can be debated, but what can't is that these regions continuously have attracted top talent, resources and business since they became world-renown hubs of technology and finance, respectively.

The south-central Minnesota and northern Iowa area is a similar type of hub for agriculture, said Sam Ziegler. He has led a multi-year effort to bolster the area's reputation as a center of industry.

Working with the Mankato chamber of commerce, known as Greater Mankato Growth, Ziegler and others dubbed the region "GreenSeam" and built an organization of the same name that works to support and develop agricultural businesses. Ziegler is the organization's director.

Over the past eight years, thanks to research and the work of many agriculture leaders, GreenSeam has helped the region strategically build on and connect its extensive agricultural business assets.

"We already have the economic industry cluster. It's just that nobody has put all the pieces together," Ziegler said. "GreenSeam is putting the pieces together."

Through farmers' investment in the corn check-off, Minnesota's corn organizations support GreenSeam's efforts to develop, attract and retain talent in the region. Ziegler said he appreciates the support of Minnesota's corn farmers, which has allowed GreenSeam to invest time and resources into collaborating with communities and schools.

Working with a two-person staff, Ziegler has four focal points: expanding and retaining business; creating and attracting new business; developing

the depth and talent of the labor pool to support those businesses; and branding the region.

Projects undertaken by the organization have included working with Waseca and ConAgra to rebuild the Birds Eye Foods plant in the city. Ziegler said GreenSeam provided advice, insights, data and information to the city, which helped it decide what kind of package to put together to retain the facility.

GreenSeam hopes the \$200 million project will be ready by next packing season — July 2022. There will be 125 full-time and 75 part-time employees at the facility.

Another success of GreenSeam has been helping to develop an agriculture program in the 8,700-student Mankato School District. The program will include a state-of-the-art, 40-by-60 greenhouse at Mankato East High School, a groundbreaking ceremony for which was held in June.

Ziegler said the district has hired two agriculture teachers, after going years without having any, and that over 400 Mankato students have enrolled in agriculture classes this fall.

To learn more about GreenSeam, visit [greenseam.org](http://greenseam.org).



GreenSeam, which has received support from Minnesota's Corn farmers through investments in the corn check-off, is helping to build a greenhouse at Mankato East High School.

## Ag in the Classroom summer teacher tours wrap up

**M**innesota Ag in the Classroom (MAITC), a statewide agriculture-education organization supported by Minnesota Corn, has completed its second year of a summer program that allows teachers to virtually visit farms.

Eighty-three educators working in schools, museums and historical societies participated in MAITC's 2021 Summer Teacher Tours program,

which included four events and opportunities to earn continuing-education credits. Participants also received resource packages with lesson plans to try at home and had opportunities to interact with farmers and agriculture experts.

MAITC Executive Director Ann Marie Ward said the program creates a core group of people with shared experiences who are eager to learn more about food, fiber and natural resources.

On one tour, dozens of teachers virtually visited 'Sota Grown, a shipping container turned agriculture-research facility at Central Lakes College. The container produces the equivalent of a one-acre crop of kale, which is delivered to Lakewood Health System to feed seniors, school children and people in need.

On another tour, Cleveland, Minn., farmers Emily and Ryan Ponwith, explained how strip tillage reduces their fuel and labor costs and helps them reduce soil compaction.

"With the strip-till machine, we can put the fertilizer exactly where the plant needs it," Emily Ponwith said. "This approach helps with costs across the board, and it helps with the soil to produce a healthier plant."

On a third tour, teachers virtually visited wheat and soybean fields, and virtually toured the Northern Crops Institute in Fargo and the Baker's Field Flour & Bread bakery in Minneapolis. The fourth tour focused on agriculture's global reach. Participants learned that southern Minnesota soybeans generally go to domestic animal operations, while northern Minnesota soybeans generally go to China, Japan and other major Pacific Rim markets.

Minnesota Corn has long supported MAITC because of its ability to reach young people with a positive message about farming and food. To learn more, visit [minnesota.agclassroom.org](http://minnesota.agclassroom.org).



The Minnesota Ag in the Classroom (MAITC) staff, pictured here, wrapped up its second year of virtual farm visits for educators. Minnesota Corn has been a proud sponsor of MAITC for over 30 years.



## MCR&PC member Chad Willis becomes USGC chairman

**C**had Willis, who farms near Willmar with his wife, Krista, is the new chairman of the U.S. Grains Council (USGC) board. His term began at the end of July.

A member of the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC) since 2007, Willis has been on the USGC board since 2017, where he has helped direct strategies to develop new trade markets. He previously was the board's vice president and secretary-treasurer.

As a USGC board member, Willis' priorities have included growing export partners, maintaining healthy relationships with current trade partners, and growing markets for ethanol-related operations.

MCR&PC and the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) have long supported USGC and its mission to develop markets for U.S. producers.

As a USGC member, Minnesota Corn receives access to strategic market information, intelligence from international offices, partnerships in foreign marketplaces and more, all of which helps increase grain exports.



Chad Willis

To learn more about USGC and its work, visit [grains.org](https://grains.org). ■

## Harold Wolle re-elected to NCGA board

**H**arold Wolle, a member of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) board of directors, has been re-elected to the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) Corn Board.



Harold Wolle

Wolle has farmed in Watonwan County for 40 years and has served on the MCGA board since 2011. He was re-elected during Corn Congress, the annual NCGA meeting, earlier this summer in New Orleans. He will begin his new three-year NCGA board term Oct. 1.

The NCGA Corn Board represents the organization on all matters, while directing policy and supervising day-to-day operations.

Board members also represent the federation of state organizations, supervise the affairs and activities of NCGA in partnership with the CEO, and implement NCGA policy established by Corn Congress. Members also act as spokespeople for the NCGA and enhance the organization's public standing on all organizational and policy issues.

Wolle is one of three Minnesota grower-leaders on the 15-member NCGA board. Tom Haag, a fourth-generation family farmer in Eden Valley, has been on the board since 2016 and will be first vice president during the 2021-22 fiscal year. Brian Thalmann, who farms in Plato, has been on the board since 2020.

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

## MCGA welcomes new district field manager

**T**he Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) has filled the staff position responsible for grassroots outreach to growers in 13 western and central Minnesota counties.

Devin Hoffarth has started as the new district field manager (DFM) for District 2, which runs from Minnesota's western border to Stearns County in the east.

Prior to MCGA, Hoffarth worked for seven years at Langdon Implement in Langdon, N.D., where he managed customer accounts, executed precision farming strategies, coordinated customer events and helped build partnerships with other organizations.

Hoffarth also served for a year as the student member of the North Dakota University System State Board of Higher Education.

A native of Langdon, Hoffarth earned his bachelor's degree from Mayville State University and his master's degree in business administration with a project management concentration from the University of Mary. He said he is excited to serve corn farmers in western and central Minnesota and looks forward to advancing the mission of MCGA.

"While I did not grow up around corn, I am intrigued by the endless possibilities corn offers, and I am excited to play a role in its advancement," he said. "I am thrilled to be a part of MCGA and look forward to working with you."



Devin Hoffarth

Since 2017, MCGA has employed five full-time DFMs to help with grassroots outreach and business-development efforts. DFMs travel their districts to empower farmers and county organizations with resources, information and support to be successful.

To learn more about DFMs and their efforts, visit [mncorn.org/staff](https://mncorn.org/staff). ■

# county highlights .....

**C**ounty corn organizations fuel the grassroots advocacy efforts of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA), while helping to 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.

## Clay/Wilkin County growers help purchase rescue auger



From left to right: Clay/Wilkin County Corn & Soybean Growers Association board director Jeremy Tischer, Breckenridge firefighters Nathan Summerville, Jeff Snyder and Rob Jirak, and Breckenridge Fire Chief Tyler Slettedahl.

The Clay/Wilkin County Corn & Soybean Growers Association donated funds to the Breckenridge Fire Department for the purchase of a rescue auger. Grain bin safety has been an MCGA priority, and county organizations are proud to support efforts to ensure farmers stay accident free.

## Kandiyohi County ballpark night is "farmtastic"

In July, the Kandiyohi County Corn & Soybean Growers Association partnered with the Willmar Stingers Northwoods League baseball team to hold "Farmtastic Night" at Bill Taunton Stadium. The event, which had over 300 kids and families in attendance, featured pregame farm activities and information. Thank you to those sponsors who helped financially make the event possible, and the local 4-H clubs that helped at the seven different stations. It was a FARMTASTIC night!



Maizey, the Minnesota Corn mascot, helped the Kandiyohi County Corn & Soybean Growers Association celebrate "Farmtastic Night" at a recent Willmar Stingers baseball game.

**Have an event that you would like featured in County Highlights? Contact your local district field manager at [mncorn.org/staff](http://mncorn.org/staff).**

## Corn boil hosted by Benton/Sherburne County growers

In August, the Benton/Sherburne County Corn Growers Association hosted its annual corn boil at the Benton County Fair, serving 1,000 ears of corn to hungry fairgoers. Across the state, county grower associations welcomed having a presence at in-person county fairs again.

This year's Benton/Sherburne County Corn Growers Association corn boil was a popular attraction at the Benton County Fair.



## Golf hole at Pork Chop Open sponsored by Jackson County growers

The Jackson County Corn & Soybean Growers Association sponsored a golf hole at the Pork Chop Open earlier this summer. It was a great opportunity for the organization to talk with golfers about food, farming and the role of agriculture in the local economy. Golf events have been popular with county grower organizations across the state. Be sure to check with your organization to learn more about upcoming special events.



From left to right: Jackson County Corn & Soybean Growers Association board members Chris Hill, Paul Henning and Gary Rasmussen volunteered at the Pork Chop Open earlier this summer.

## Waseca County growers host community event

The Waseca County Corn & Soybean Growers Association drew dozens of people to a free community event this summer at Half Pint Brewing Company in Waseca. Guardian Energy sponsored free drink tickets for the event's first 50 attendees, and the first 72 attendees received free beer glasses, thanks to Kibble Equipment. The event also included a cornhole tournament.



A cornhole tournament was part of a community event held earlier this summer by the Waseca County Corn & Soybean Growers Association.



# Stalk Shop re-opening this fall!



**S**talk Shop, the official online store of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA), will open in October for the fall shopping season.

For a limited time, get the latest in Minnesota Corn-branded T-shirts, polos, ball caps, sweatshirts and more. Shipping is free for MCGA members.

Fall Stalk Shop orders are expected to ship in time for the holiday season, so be sure to get your stocking stuffer orders in! Subscribe to Leader Update, the official MCGA e-newsletter, for the latest Stalk Shop news. ■

Shop the latest in Minnesota Corn-branded gear in Stalk Shop, the official online store of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association.

## Join MCGA today

**W**hether it's advocating for biofuel infrastructure or driving home the benefits of federal E15 legislation, Minnesota corn growers need to make their voices heard on the issues impacting farms and rural families.

That's why becoming a member of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) is so important. We need our members to fuel the efforts that build a more sustainable future on the farm.

Thankfully, it's easy to join your fellow growers.

Prospective members can visit [mncorn.org/join](http://mncorn.org/join) to learn more about member benefits and how to join, including the benefits of the Partial Refund Program.

Using the program, Minnesota corn farmers can invest in an MCGA membership by using their check-off dollars.

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

We're stronger with you. Join us. ■



thanks to our allied partners



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Join MCGA today at  
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calendar of events

nov  
**19-20** MN Farm Bureau Annual  
Meeting and Convention,  
Bloomington

.....

nov  
**19-21** MN Farmers Union  
Annual Convention

.....

nov  
**24-25** MCGA offices closed for  
Thanksgiving holiday

dec  
**1** MCGA Pre-Resolutions  
Meeting

.....

dec  
**2-4** State Cattlemen's  
Convention, Hinckley

.....