

# corn talk

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- ▣ MCGA's 2022 legislative priorities
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- ▣ Minnesota Corn-supported technology is purchased

# Stay connected with Minnesota Corn



## About the cover

A snapshot of spring planting in southern Minnesota from a previous growing season. The start of spring means the 2022 planting season is nearly underway.

To keep corn farmers updated on its many research investments, grassroots advocacy efforts and sustainability initiatives, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) offers multiple modes of outreach.

Each Tuesday, the Leader Update e-newsletter brings farmers the latest news on MCGA research, educational programming, new-uses projects and more. Visit [mncorn.org/LeaderUpdate](http://mncorn.org/LeaderUpdate) to sign up for Leader Update. In addition, the Minnesota Corn Twitter (@mncorn), Facebook (@MinnesotaCorn) and Instagram (@MinnesotaCorn) accounts provide daily updates on the latest MCGA events and programs.

To participate in calls to action around policy in Minnesota and Washington, D.C., text "MCGA" to 50457\*. We appreciate the support of our 6,500 members and are proud to keep you updated on the hard work of our dedicated grower-leaders.

\*Standard message rates apply.



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

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# MCGA urges reversal of Limbo Creek ruling

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) has joined the fight against a court ruling that could increase barriers on drainage ditch projects and have far-reaching implications for agricultural land in Minnesota.

In February, MCGA submitted an amicus brief urging the Minnesota Supreme Court to reverse the decision designating the upper portion of Limbo Creek, which is located in Renville County, a public water. Joining MCGA in submitting the brief were Minnesota Farm Bureau, the Minnesota Farmers Union and the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association.

"Farmers deserve consistent, reasonable regulatory processes that are fairly applied and allow room for economic development," MCGA President Bryan Biegler said. "Limbo Creek is a classic case of judicial overreach, and we are hopeful the state Supreme Court will reverse course."

The Limbo Creek case stems from a 2016 request by a group of landowners to improve Renville County Ditch 77, which flows into the upper portion of the creek.

In 2019, before the project received county approval, a special-interest environmental group petitioned the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to designate the upper portion of Limbo Creek as a public water. Given the scope of the drainage improvements, such a designation would force the landowners to complete an environmental assessment worksheet and could force dramatic changes to the project.

The environmental group argued that the upper portion of Limbo Creek meets the statutory definition of a public water and, therefore, should be added to the state's official Public Waters Inventory (PWI). But Minnesota

state law does not allow for changes to the PWI, which was developed after an exhaustive process in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

When the public water petition went before the Renville County Board in November 2020, it was correctly rejected. But later that year, the environmental group sued, and, unfortunately, the state Court of Appeals ruled in its favor.

MCGA's amicus brief notes that the DNR does not have the authority to change the PWI and that the ruling could cause uncertainty for all future drainage projects. If the environmental group wants to change or add to the PWI, it explains, the appropriate course of action would be to advocate for new legislation.

Furthermore, the ruling could jeopardize the constitutionality of the state's 2015 buffer law, which relies on the PWI to determine what water bodies in Minnesota need buffer strips. If landowners do not have a defined list of water bodies subject to buffering, the buffer law will be unconstitutionally vague.

The Limbo Creek case could be heard by the Minnesota Supreme Court later this spring or early in the summer. MCGA will continue to follow the case and keep members apprised throughout the process. To learn more, visit [mncorn.org](http://mncorn.org). ■



If upheld, a state appeals court ruling could cause uncertainty for future drainage projects.

## MCGA, NCGA push back against fertilizer tariffs

This winter, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) and the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) have been pushing back against tariffs that will further increase already high fertilizer prices.

In January, MCGA and NCGA amplified a new Texas A&M University economic analysis showing that a 10% tariff on urea ammonium nitrate (UAN) could increase prices by over \$100 per ton. That would translate into an additional \$12.78-per-acre cost for farmers. MCGA and 20 other state corn grower associations supported the study.

Meanwhile, this past fall, NCGA and four other ag groups submitted an amicus brief urging the U.S. Court of International Trade to rescind tariffs on imported phosphate fertilizers from Morocco and Russia. The tariffs were implemented last March after a petition from the Mosaic Company, which has a near monopoly over the U.S. phosphate fertilizer market. The tariffs have resulted in critical sources of imported phosphate being shut out of the U.S., increasing costs for corn farmers.

"Mosaic's posture to date has been a masterpiece of irresponsible corporate social responsibility," NCGA wrote in a December letter signed by 23 state corn grower association presidents, including MCGA's Bryan Biegler.

MCGA supported NCGA in submitting the amicus brief and will continue to closely monitor the case, which could be decided this year.

MCGA and NCGA also have been encouraging CF Industries to drop a petition seeking tariffs on UAN imports from Russia and Trinidad and Tobago. The tariffs, which have been recommended by the U.S. Commerce Department, would effectively raise the price of nitrogen for farmers. The Texas A&M study provides a strong argument why CF Industries needs to drop its tariff petition and not further exacerbate rising fertilizer prices.

Additionally, in November, NCGA expressed concern to the Treasury Department that sanctions on potash were resulting in fertilizer shortages. The department agreed to provide a reprieve through April on sanctions on potash fertilizers imported to the U.S. from Belarus.

Still, tariffs could further raise prices for farmers at a time when they're already struggling to procure enough fertilizer.

NCGA reported that the financial impact of tariffs have dimmed planting forecasts for 2022. Fertilizer costs between 2021 and 2022 are projected to lower net incomes by 34% in Illinois, according to estimates from economists at the University of Illinois. Farmers say the forecast in Illinois is illustrative of what's happening across the country.

To learn more about MCGA's efforts to combat fertilizer tariffs, visit [mncorn.org](http://mncorn.org). ■



# MCGA urges robust ethanol-blending requirements

This winter, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) has been urging the Biden administration to scrap its proposed retroactive cuts to the 2020 ethanol-blending requirement under the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS).



Richard Syverson

In January, MCGA Vice President Richard Syverson urged officials to drop the proposed 2020 cuts. He said that the 2020 and 2021 proposals could harm farmers and rural communities, and hamper efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

MCGA echoed those comments in a February letter to EPA officials. The letter said the proposed cuts would hamper the Biden administration's own climate goals and advance the interests of the oil industry at the expense of farmers and rural communities.

In a statement, National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) President Chris Edgington urged the EPA to move quickly to finalize the strong 2022 RFS proposal and said the proposed 2020 cuts would undermine the 2022 proposal.

The Biden administration's proposal would retroactively reduce the 2020 blending requirement, which was previously finalized in December 2019, from 15 billion gallons to 12.5 billion gallons for corn ethanol. It's the first time officials have proposed retroactively reducing a finalized blending requirement.

Meanwhile, for 2021, the blending requirement would be 13.3 billion gallons for corn ethanol. The requirement would return to 15 billion gallons for corn ethanol in 2022.

The administration has also proposed denying all 65 pending small-refinery exemptions, which allow certain refiners to forgo blending requirements if they would cause disproportionate economic hardship.

MCGA will closely monitor the rulemaking process before the final 2020-22 blending requirements are finalized and will continue to work with our congressional champions on policies that support farmers, rural economies and the environment. Learn more at [mncorn.org](https://mncorn.org).

## Unleaded 88 sales in MN set record in 2021

Sales of Unleaded 88, an ethanol-blended fuel that has been the focus of Minnesota Corn's ethanol-promotion campaigns in recent years, have reached record levels in the state.

According to the state Department of Commerce, 86.7 million gallons of Unleaded 88, also known as E15, were sold in Minnesota in 2021. Previously, the single-year sales record for Unleaded 88 in Minnesota was 78.9 million gallons. That was set in 2019.

Additionally, 12 million gallons of E85, which contains up to 85% ethanol, were sold in Minnesota in 2021. That compares to 11.4 million gallons in 2020.

"We have known for years that Unleaded 88 and other higher-blend biofuels are better for air quality, boost octane and cost less," Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council Chair Brandon Fast said. "It's gratifying to see consumers responding by making that choice at the pump."

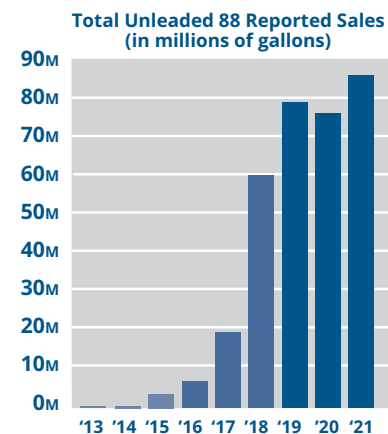
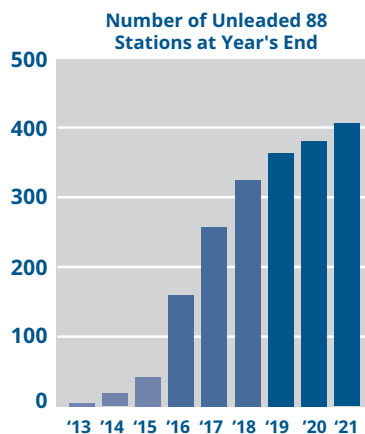
Unleaded 88 has been available to Minnesota consumers since 2013. The fuel, which derives its name from its 88 octane rating, is approved for use by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in all model year 2001 and newer vehicles. It burns cleaner than regular unleaded and is typically offered at a lower price.

In recent years, the number of fueling stations offering Unleaded 88 and the number of gallons of Unleaded 88 sold in Minnesota have increased exponentially. That's due, in part, to the Better Fuel Initiative, which has reached consumers across the state with a positive message about the benefits of ethanol-blended fuels.

It's also due to a 2015 state biofuel infrastructure grant program that was created with the help of an \$8 million federal grant and a \$1.1 million contribution from Minnesota Corn.

Additionally, grassroots advocacy to preserve the Renewable Fuel Standard and efforts by Minnesota Corn to push back against misconceptions about ethanol have also contributed to the strong numbers.

As part of its mission to promote opportunities for corn farmers, Minnesota Corn has invested over \$30 million in ethanol infrastructure, research, education, promotion and more since 2008. To learn about these efforts, visit [mncorn.org](https://mncorn.org). To learn more about the benefits of ethanol blended fuels and to find a station near you, visit [betterfuel.org](https://betterfuel.org).



Source: Minnesota Department of Commerce

# MN Corn continues comprehensive ethanol promotion

**M**innesota Corn is continuing to extensively promote ethanol to consumers statewide in 2022. But the effort, known as the Better Fuel Initiative, has gotten a fresh look.

Since February, new advertisements touting the benefits of Unleaded 88, which contains up to 15% ethanol, and other ethanol-blended fuels have been playing on radio and TV stations across Minnesota. Additionally, new ads have been featured on billboards, truck sides and GSTV (a network of on-screen entertainment found at pumps across the state).

Like in 2021, the ads feature KFAN's Chris Hawkey, a proud ethanol advocate whose support for biofuels stems from his upbringing in the

rural Midwest. But new this year, the ads feature the real-life Hawkey, in addition to an animated version of him. Minnesota Corn worked with Hawkey and a local advertising agency to produce the new spots earlier this winter.

"We're confident the ads will make an impact in boosting awareness and, ultimately, sales of ethanol-blended fuels," said D.J. VanKlomben, a Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) board member.

For years, Minnesota Corn has broadly promoted ethanol's clean-air benefits, higher octane rating and lower cost, as part of its efforts to increase opportunities for the state's corn farmers. In early 2020, Minnesota Corn rebranded the ethanol-promotion efforts as the Better Fuel Initiative. The launch of the new outreach campaign coincided with a push by MCGA to generate momentum for a statewide E15 standard at the state Legislature, an effort that continues in 2022. (See page 6.)

In 2021, Minnesota Corn elevated the Better Fuel Initiative, bringing on Hawkey as a celebrity spokesman and featuring him in ads that

played statewide. Minnesota Corn also continued to partner with Twin Cities Road Crew (TCRC) and the American Lung Association (ALA) in Minnesota on fuel-promotion events at fueling stations around the state.

Additionally, Minnesota Corn partnered with ALA and TCRC in the fall to create six social media videos that provide key facts on Unleaded 88 and higher-blend biofuels.

Overall, the efforts appear to have moved the needle when it comes to sales of ethanol-blended fuels in Minnesota. In 2021, the state set a record for Unleaded 88 sales, and sales of E85 rebounded in 2021 after dipping in 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. (See page 4.)

To learn more about the Better Fuel Initiative, visit [betterfuel.org](https://betterfuel.org).



A scene from a new Unleaded 88 advertisement featuring KFAN's Chris Hawkey. Minnesota Corn is continuing to comprehensively promote ethanol in 2022.

## Biofuel infrastructure grant program opens

**T**he state of Minnesota's new biofuel infrastructure grant program, which is supported, in part, by Minnesota Corn, began accepting applications from retailers in late January.

Through March 17, the online application for the Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) Biofuels Infrastructure Grant Program is open. Retailers will learn whether they will receive grants in May, and fund distribution is expected to begin in June and July.

"This milestone means that more Minnesota drivers than ever are closer to being able to realize the benefits of higher ethanol blends at the pump," Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) President Bryan Biegler said. Those benefits, he noted, include improved air quality and engine performance, reduced greenhouse gas emissions and a lower cost.

"Once consumers see these benefits, we're confident they'll want to fill up with higher ethanol blends," Biegler said. "We appreciate the work of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to get this program up and running and look forward to seeing the results."

The AGRI program will provide funds to offset retailers' cost of fuel dispensers, storage tanks and other equipment needed to sell higher ethanol blends. The program is open to Minnesota retailers with 10 or fewer locations, and retailers must provide at least 35% of the total project funding. Up to \$6.6 million will be distributed.

"Encouraging stations to offer higher biofuels blends to customers is an immediate step we can take to lower carbon emissions," Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen said in a statement. "It not only will help us meet Minnesota's climate goals, but also strengthens our agricultural and rural economies, and the state's as a whole."

The AGRI program passed the state Legislature in 2021, thanks to MCGA's grassroots advocacy. Minnesota Corn also provided a \$1 million contribution to the program. In total, the program could result in about 125 additional fueling stations offering Unleaded 88, increasing sales by over 45 million gallons annually.

To learn more about the program, visit [www.bit.ly/agrigrant](https://www.bit.ly/agrigrant).



feature story .....

# Corn at the Capitol

**T**he Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) works hard each year to achieve public policy outcomes that increase opportunities and resiliency for corn farmers. At the state level, that work primarily occurs during the legislative session, which this year began Jan. 31.

Guided by resolutions approved during MCGA's annual delegate session, grower-leaders have been advocating for proposals that would increase sustainability and strengthen family farms and rural communities. MCGA has been heartened by the reception many of these proposals have received so far and continues working to advance them.

The following provides a brief overview of MCGA's policy positions and state advocacy efforts. For the latest updates on legislation affecting Minnesota's corn farmers, visit [mncorn.org](http://mncorn.org).

## Renewable fuels

**MCGA's position:** Ethanol and other renewable fuels create new market opportunities for corn producers and decrease U.S. dependence on foreign oil. They also reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase levels of engine-boosting octane and lower costs for consumers at the pump. Because of that, MCGA supports policies that expand consumer access to ethanol-blended fuels.

**State efforts:** Since 2020, MCGA has urged the adoption of legislation that would create a statewide E15 standard for unleaded gasoline. In 2022, MCGA has been working with Rep. Mike Sundin (DFL-Esko) and Sen. Torrey Westrom (R-Elbow Lake) to introduce the statewide E15 bill.

Additionally, MCGA has been advocating for legislation that would assist retailers in replacing old equipment, allowing higher blends to be sold. MCGA also has been advocating to maintain state funds that were appropriated in 2021 for biofuel infrastructure grants.

Another MCGA-supported bill would provide retailers with income tax credits, based on the amount of ethanol-blended fuel they sell.

**Latest news:** MCGA looks forward to the introduction of the statewide E15 bill and it being heard by the House and Senate commerce committees. We thank lawmakers for their support of cleaner-burning biofuels.

## Conservation

**MCGA's position:** Farmers live on the land they work and recognize the value of protecting the quality of soil, water and air resources. As such, MCGA supports a proactive, farmer-led approach to concerns about environmentally sound farming practices that provides growers and localities with the flexibility to implement efforts that work best for them.

**State efforts:** MCGA has been advocating for a bill that would require the creation of a state-funded soil health management practices grant program. It would also require the creation of a soil health management plan and the setting of goals for practice implementation. To receive funding, projects would need to meet at least one of six criteria. Those include increasing the quantity of organic carbon in soil, integrating perennial vegetation and increasing use of precision agricultural practices.

**Latest news:** The introduction of the soil health grant bill is pending in the state Senate.

## Get involved

There are many ways to become involved with MCGA's grassroots advocacy efforts. Easily participate in calls-to-action voice heard. Or become involved with your local county corn growers association and take part in MCGA's grassroots these and other opportunities.

Photo courtesy Minnesota House  
Public Information Services



## Governance and regulation

**MCGA's position:** Fair, unambiguous and consistently applied policies and regulations developed with community input ensure that growers can sustainably and efficiently maintain their operations. MCGA supports reasonable regulation that balances environmental protection with the needs of farmers, and allows for local control.

**State efforts:** MCGA is continuing to work to ensure farmers have ample access to crop-protection tools used to produce a successful corn crop



each year. Throughout the session, we will also look for opportunities to ease project permitting and regulatory burdens, which can stifle development and expansion of agriculture-related business and processing across the state.

**Latest news:** While neither a prime farmland exclusion bill nor any crop-protection changes have been introduced yet, MCGA is remaining vigilant about policies that could affect farmers. ■

## 2022 state legislative session at a glance

After passing a two-year budget in 2021, lawmakers have been focused on addressing crime, developing a capital spending plan and replenishing the depleted unemployment insurance fund. Other priorities have included tax cuts, bonus pay for frontline workers, education and affordable housing.

The state's projected \$7.7 billion surplus could be used to pay for some of these priorities.

Gov. Tim Walz, a Democrat, has proposed spending \$7.6 billion of the surplus. His plan calls for \$700 million in one-time tax rebates and \$2.7 billion to replenish the unemployment trust fund. (If the state doesn't act soon to replenish the fund, a tax increase on businesses would take effect.) Additionally, Walz has proposed a \$2.7 billion borrowing plan for capital projects and spending \$1.1 billion in remaining American Rescue Plan funds on bonuses for frontline workers.

As part of Walz's spending plan, the state's two-year agriculture budget would be increased by nearly 50%. That would include new funding for drought relief, grants for small and medium meat processors and a soil health program.

In the Democratic-controlled House, leaders share many of Walz's priorities, but also want to pass paid family leave and earned sick and safe time. Meanwhile, the Republican-controlled Senate wants to permanently lower tax rates and address public safety concerns by funding more police officers and increasing penalties for violent crimes.

A task lawmakers were unable to complete before a Feb. 15 deadline was reaching agreement on a new statewide legislative map that reflects population changes, as measured by the 2020 census. Instead, a court-drawn map will dictate legislative boundaries for the next 10 years.

## Timeline of 2022 state legislative session

March 25: First committee deadline

April 1: Second committee deadline

April 8: Third committee deadline  
(this deadline is specifically for major appropriation and finance bills)

April 9-18: Easter/Passover break

May 23: Legislature adjourns

by texting "MCGA" to 50457, and get text alerts to make your resolutions process. Visit [mncorn.org](https://mncorn.org) for more information on



# Farmers learn about check-off-funded research

To boost profitability and sustainability among corn farmers, Minnesota Corn invests corn check-off funds in research to improve on-farm practices and identify new markets. At MN Ag EXPO, check-off-funded researchers, including those featured below, were on hand to give the latest updates on their projects. To learn more about Minnesota

Corn-funded research projects, visit [mncorn.org/research](http://mncorn.org/research).

## Sustainable polymers from corn as tomorrow's plastics

A readily available toughening agent can make corn-derived plastic film just as tough as its conventional plastic competitors. Food packaging is just one of the large markets that could use corn-based plastics.

"There is no barrier to doing this commercially tomorrow. [Commercial food manufacturers] just have to implement this additive into their process," said Dr. Chris Ellison, a University of Minnesota professor of chemical engineering and materials science.

Polylactide, or PLA, has been produced since 2002, and is compostable in industrial facilities. Meanwhile, conventional plastic, which is made from petroleum, is a growing source of pollution.

"In an industrial composter, PLA degrades within about 60 days," post-doctoral student Boran Zhao said. "PLA can be turned into fertilizer, carbon dioxide and water."



## Integrating cover crops and liquid-injected manure

About one-third of Minnesota's farm acres benefit from the use of manure as a nutrient source. University of Minnesota Assistant Professor Dr. Melissa Wilson wants to make sure farmers get the best crop yield results, while preventing this useful resource from escaping the field. Her check-off-funded research looked at whether a vegetative cover crop during the cold season can help achieve this goal.

"Corn yield following late manure applications (into cover crops) was comparable or better in both rotations compared with spring fertilizer," said Manuel Sabbagh, a graduate student on the project.

The research took place at the University of Minnesota Southern Research and Outreach Center in Waseca. It looked at two different crop rotations (field corn following soybeans, and field corn following sweet corn), several different mixes of cover crops (as well as control plots with no cover crops), and three different nutrient treatments. Those were: injecting manure in September, injecting manure in late fall (after soil temperatures fall below 50 degrees) and using no manure, but rather broadcasting commercial urea fertilizer in the spring, before planting the cash crop.

Wilson anticipates gaining valuable insights from the full analysis of soil testing on these plots, to assess the uptake of nutrients, organic matter levels and other measures of soil health. ■

# Conference highlights nutrient stewardship

As part of its mission to help corn growers become better stewards of our state's natural resources, Minnesota Corn sponsors multiple farmer-education programs, including the annual Nutrient Management Conference. The conference is organized by University of Minnesota Extension, with the support of the Minnesota Agricultural Water Resource Center and a host of farm organizations.

This year's Nutrient Management Conference was held Feb. 8 in Mankato. Below is a rundown of a presentation given by University of Illinois ag economist Gary Schnitkey during the conference. The talk was titled, "Managing Fertilizers for Optimal Profits and Risks." To learn more about Minnesota Corn-supported farmer-education programs, visit [mncorn.org](http://mncorn.org).

## Strategies to deal with high fertilizer prices

Given sky-high fertilizer prices, 2022 might be the year more farmers reduce application rates, Schnitkey predicted. In addition, some farmers might choose to follow the Maximum Return to Nitrogen (MRTN), a nitrogen-application-rate formula that incorporates fertilizer prices. Schnitkey said that following the MRTN could help row-crop farmers counter the impact of fertilizer costs, which are often their biggest line item. He believes it's possible that fertilizer prices will drop again, but not before the coming growing season.

Many farmers apply around 1.2 pounds of nitrogen for each bushel they hope to produce, Schnitkey said. The MRTN generally calls for less than one pound per bushel, though that could drop.

In addition to saving farmers money, following the MRTN rate can reduce nutrient runoff.

Schnitkey reported that, though applying more fertilizer can produce more bushels, doing so can actually reduce per-acre profits. For example, one study found that using a per-acre fertilizer-application rate 20 pounds above the MRTN rate reduced per-acre profits by \$20, compared to following the baseline MRTN rate.

The study also found that producers who applied fertilizer in the spring before planting or side dressed fertilizer into a growing crop had the highest profits. Reducing the number of passes in the field is the most direct way to reduce fertilizer costs, Schnitkey noted.

He also suggested that farmers consider split applying nitrogen or switching to a different form of it, such as anhydrous ammonia.

Schnitkey doesn't advise switching the crop rotation and planting more soybean acres just to reduce the need for fertilizer. Higher profits from corn compared to soybeans will negate any gains from using less fertilizer.

"Plus, then you have all the problems that come with changing your rotation," he concluded. ■

Crop production and environmental stewardship were among the topics covered at this year's Nutrient Management Conference.





# Technip Energies purchases Iowa Corn's monoethylene glycol technology

In January, Technip Energies and the Iowa Corn Promotion Board (ICPB) announced an Asset Purchase Agreement whereby Technip Energies will acquire ICPB's patents, technology, and rights for the process technology to produce monoethylene glycol (MEG) from surplus corn plant-based feedstocks. Technip Energies is a multinational engineering and technology company.



The multinational company Technip Energies has purchased a technology funded, in part, by Minnesota Corn.

and operate a pilot plant to commercialize the technology, and make it available for licensing.

As part of its mission to develop new uses for corn and expand markets for the state's corn growers, Minnesota Corn invested in ICPB's MEG project from 2018-2020.

Since 2013, ICPB has invested check-off funds to develop the technology and to create new demand for corn-based products. Corn-based MEG is used to produce renewable plastics. Technip Energies will advance the technology development, construct

"This project will give consumers another slate of renewable products to choose from, and we're excited to see it reach this milestone," said Brandon Fast, chair of the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council. "We appreciate the work of the Iowa Corn Promotion Board on this technology and look forward to seeing it scaled up in coming years."



In a statement, ICPB Business Development Committee Chair Stan Nelson said expanding the market for corn-based oil alternatives will allow for the creation of more renewable materials and the reduction of environmental footprints.

"With the sale of MEG technology to Technip Energies, work will continue to explore other uses for corn such as propylene glycol," he said.

Corn-based MEG is a drop-in replacement for current fossil fuel-based MEG and a base chemical for products like antifreeze, pop and water bottles, and polyester clothing. Over 70 billion pounds of MEG is used in the world annually, with the yearly growth in the market equal to nearly 100 million bushels of corn.

To learn more about MEG and the purchase by Technip Energies, visit [iowacorn.org/corn-uses](http://iowacorn.org/corn-uses). Learn more about Minnesota Corn-supported new-uses projects at [mncorn.org](http://mncorn.org).

## Minnesota farmers travel world to maintain corn export markets

American farmers feed the world. To do that, they travel the globe to meet face to face with buyers and make the case for American farm products.

This past fall and winter, four Minnesota Corn grower-leaders traveled abroad as part of those efforts. In his capacity as U.S. Grains Council (USGC) chairman, Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC) member Chad Willis traveled to South Korea and Dubai. Meanwhile, MCR&PC member Jim O'Connor, as leader of the USGC Western Hemisphere Advisory Team, traveled to Colombia. Additionally, Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) President Bryan Biegler and past president Brian Thalmann promoted homegrown corn and ethanol on a trade mission to London and Finland led by Gov. Tim Walz.

The Dubai and Colombia trips included presentations of USGC's Corn Quality Rollout Report, which assures customers that U.S. corn is reliable and will perform for them in their feedlots.

"They like to meet the American producers. They want to see and talk with the folks that grow what they are buying," Willis said. "They just want to be in the loop. It's vital that we get out and visit with end users around the world."

USGC staff in Colombia also presented to O'Connor and another U.S. farmer a report called "Colombia: 2040." The report is based on interviews with the country's livestock producers and food wholesale and retail businesses, and predicts a growing market opportunity. Colombia is already a very important market for U.S. farm goods.

"The trade between our countries is worth \$8 billion annually," O'Connor said. "Colombia is the fifth-largest export destination for U.S. corn."

In South Korea, Willis met with representatives of the country's top-three feed grain buying organizations, which represent the great majority of the country's livestock industry. In Dubai, 40 regional importers, feed manufacturers and feed users from across the Middle East heard Willis' presentation about how he grows corn on his farm.



U.S. Grains Council Chairman Chad Willis (back center) receives a market briefing during a recent visit to South Korea.

Biegler and Thalmann were among 70 participants in the state trade mission in November. Fourteen of them represented the food and ag sector, and Biegler and Thalmann were the two farmers on the team.

As part of their shared mission to develop markets for Minnesota's corn farmers, MCGA and MCR&PC support a variety of organizations that promote U.S. corn abroad. To learn more about these partnerships, visit [mncorn.org](http://mncorn.org).

# MCGA renews support for “Let’s Kick Hunger Day”

For a second straight year, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) joined a group of Minnesota companies to support an annual WCCO Radio event that raises funds for Second Harvest Heartland.



The 13th annual “Let’s Kick Hunger Day” Radiothon was Feb. 2. MCGA was proud to sponsor the event as part of our mission to strengthen Minnesota communities, while enabling a safe and healthy quality of life for non-farmers.

Over \$467,000 was raised during this year’s event. Since the event’s inception, nearly \$3 million has been raised for Second Harvest Heartland.

According to Second Harvest Heartland, hunger in our region has grown since the pandemic took hold. More than 500,000 Minnesotans, including nearly 200,000 kids, are facing hunger right now, and Second Harvest Heartland’s food shelf partners are seeing 28% more visitors than before the pandemic. Seniors are the fastest-growing segment of food shelf visitors.

Second Harvest Heartland partners with nearly 1,000 food shelves, meal programs, shelters, senior programs and more throughout a 59-county area of Minnesota and western Wisconsin. All donations made to the organization during the radiothon are going toward meals for local families.

To learn more about Second Harvest Heartland, visit [2harvest.org](https://2harvest.org). ▀



Volunteers at the annual “Let’s Kick Hunger Day” Radiothon helped raise \$467,523 for Second Harvest Heartland.

## CommonGround gears up for eventful spring

CommonGround Minnesota (CGMN), a volunteer initiative that builds relationships between women who farm and those who do not, is off to a running start in 2022.



This spring, CommonGround Minnesota is partnering with three social media influencers on brand ambassadorships, as part of its effort to highlight agriculture topics with online audiences.

Last fall, CGMN hosted several social media influencers during events at Schram Vineyards Winery and Brewery and the ‘Farm at the Arb’ located at the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum. CGMN continues to cultivate those relationships and is partnering with three influencers for CGMN brand ambassadorships. Jamie (@sohappyyoulikedit), Jess (@ilovebeerfromhere.travels.mn), and Antonia (@knead.to.roam) are sharing content that not only fits their own brand voice and followers’ interests, but also highlights CGMN and agriculture with an engaged online audience.



In addition to brand ambassadorships, CGMN is partnering with Twin Cities in Motion (TCM) for several of their race events in 2022. First up, CGMN presents The Hot Dash on Saturday, March 19, in Minneapolis. This race includes a variety of different promotional opportunities prior to the event and on-site.

CGMN will also have a presence at the Minnesota Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MAND) Conference on April 11-12. More than 200 nutrition professionals attend the MAND Conference, which will be held in the Twin Cities this year. CGMN will have the opportunity to share information during the lunch session and offer attendees the opportunity to stay connected with volunteers and other program resources following the conference.

Then, later in the spring, CGMN will have an even larger presence at the Women Run the Cities race on May 21. Nearly 4,000 runners participate in this annual race event, which aims to empower and celebrate women and girls. CGMN volunteers will also be featured in the TCM monthly e-newsletter, “The Connection,” reaching a health-conscious and active audience on a regular basis online.

To learn more about CommonGround Minnesota, visit [commongroundminnesota.com](https://commongroundminnesota.com) or follow CommonGround Minnesota on Facebook ([CommonGround Minnesota](https://www.facebook.com/CommonGroundMinnesota)) and Instagram ([@commongroundminn](https://www.instagram.com/commongroundminn)). ▀



# Farm Camp connects students to ag careers

**O**n a bright, sunny October day, as Redwood County farmer Bruce Tiffany harvested his corn crop, over 200 sixth-graders from 13 southern Minnesota schools rode along in the cab.

The students learned how farmers use satellites, GPS and other technology, and they asked Tiffany questions such as how much his combine costs. One of the more surprising facts they learned is that Tiffany, 64, started farming when he was 11 – the age of many of the students themselves.

Of course, the students weren't physically in the cab, but rather watching live by video over the internet. Their virtual visit was part of Farm Camp, a program of Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom (MAITC). The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) is proud to support Farm Camp and its effort to generate excitement about careers in agriculture among students.

MCGA board member Todd Wentzel, a farmer in Murdock, says there's a lot to like about Farm Camp.

"Farm Camp gets involved directly with the teachers so they can incorporate information about agriculture into the lessons," he said. "I think that's going to have a lasting effect."

Farm Camp, which is for grades 5–12, is free to schools. In 2021, 53 classrooms took part in 12 Farm Camp experiences. The program has mostly been virtual during the pandemic.

The typical Farm Camp experience involves a single classroom. Usually, Farm Camp Program Director Ann Vote and the teacher partner to develop a three-day learning experience.

"We like to make the connection to the educators first," Vote said. "We get them excited to create an ag experience for their classroom. Then we make all the connections."



Each Farm Camp wraps up with a presentation on careers in agriculture. Hearing that educators want more visual resources, Vote's next venture will be the production of eight "career chain" videos, each 10 to 15 minutes long. The videos will show all the people who are involved in agriculture.

That's a long list in many cases, according to Tiffany, who's a proud MCGA member.

In 2022, MAITC plans to continue offering Farm Camp to schools across Minnesota. The goal is to continue providing students with meaningful chances to learn about agriculture and related career opportunities.

"It is never too early to make connections and bring careers into conversations with students," said Ann Marie Ward, executive director of the MAITC Foundation. "We are very proud of what Farm Camp brings to the classroom."

As part of its mission to enhance quality of life for corn farmers, rural communities and all Minnesotans, Minnesota Corn is proud to support a variety of ag-related educational initiatives across the state. To learn more about these investments, visit [mncorn.org](http://mncorn.org).

To learn more about Farm Camp, visit [farmcampminnesota.org](http://farmcampminnesota.org). ■



Students from St. Mary's School in Bird Island carry a jug of sap during a March 2021 visit to the Aekens farm in Olivia as part of the Farm Camp program.



# MN Ag EXPO 2022 is a success

**O**n Jan. 19-20, hundreds of Minnesota farmers returned to the Mayo Clinic Health System Event Center in Mankato for MN Ag EXPO. The annual winter event is sponsored by the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) and the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association (MSGA).

While there, farmers connected with their fellow growers, talked with trade show exhibitors, learned about corn and soybean check-off-funded research projects, and participated in MCGA's and MSGA's annual meetings. They also heard from a handful of speakers, including Gov. Tim Walz.

At MCGA's annual meeting, delegates from the 52 county organizations approved the 2022 resolutions book and awards were presented to several well-deserving ag leaders. Dr. Brian Buhr, Dean of the University of Minnesota College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, received the 2022 Friend of Ag Award. Retired grower-leader Mickey Peterson, who served on both the MCGA board and the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC), received the Golden Kernel Award. MCGA Past President and Chairman of the Board Tim Waibel received the Gavel Plaque Award.

MCGA thanks all of the growers who participated in the annual meeting and MCGA members more broadly for their work on behalf of the state's corn farmers in 2021. We look forward to continuing efforts in 2022 to advance policies and research critical to ensuring the prosperity of corn farmers and rural communities. View more pictures from MN Ag EXPO at [mncorn.org/blog](https://mncorn.org/blog).



(From left to right): MCGA Chairman Tim Waibel, Jo Tumbleson, past MCR&PC member Gerald Tumbleson and MCGA Board Member Harold Wolle enjoyed a lighthearted moment on the trade show floor.



Gov. Tim Walz speaks on the trade show floor.



Ag speaker Amanda Radke, a fifth-generation rancher from South Dakota.



Past Board and Council Member Mickey Peterson receives a standing ovation before accepting the Golden Kernel Award.



MCGA President Bryan Biegler presents Tim Waibel with the Gavel Plaque Award.



State Sen. Nick Frentz (DFL-North Mankato) speaks at the MCGA PAC breakfast.



MCR&PC Chair Brandon Fast.



# Four re-elected to MCGA board at MN Ag EXPO

The four Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) Board of Directors seats that were up for election at MCGA's annual meeting at MN Ag EXPO were filled by incumbents.

Dana Allen-Tully was re-elected to the open District 3 seat, which represents 10 southeastern Minnesota counties, and John Swanson was re-elected to the open District 6 seat, which represents 18 northwestern Minnesota counties. Jim Kanten and David (D.J.) VanKlombenburgh were re-elected to the two open at-large seats.

Allen-Tully, who was first elected to the board in 2019, operates a dairy and crop farm in Eyota in partnership with her family. In 2021-22, she is serving as MCGA's treasurer.

Swanson, who was first elected to the board in 2016, farms in partnership with his son in Mentor. Kanten and VanKlombenburgh were first elected to the board in 2019. Kanten, who is MCGA's secretary, grows corn and soybeans on his farm in Milan, while VanKlombenburgh farms with his father near Montevideo, growing corn and soybeans and operating a 100-head cattle feedlot.

With over 6,500 members, MCGA is one of the largest grassroots agriculture organizations in the U.S. Working in close partnership with

the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council, MCGA strives to create new opportunities for corn farmers and improve their quality of life.

MCGA congratulates Allen-Tully, Kanten, Swanson and VanKlombenburgh on their re-elections and looks forward to seeing their accomplishments over the next three years. ■



Dana Allen-Tully



Jim Kanten



John Swanson



David (D.J.)  
VanKlombenburgh

## MN Corn Podcast covers MN Ag & Rural Leadership Program

To promote its many research and new-uses investments, educational partnerships, ethanol initiatives and more, Minnesota Corn produces the biweekly Minnesota Corn Podcast. The free podcast is hosted by Mark Dorenkamp, a reporter for Brownfield Ag News.

In January, the Minnesota Corn Podcast covered the Minnesota Agriculture & Rural Leadership (MARL) Program, which helps farmers and rural professionals develop leadership skills through a series of seminars around the state. The program is supported, in part, by Minnesota Corn, and runs every two years. Each class can include up to 30 people. In addition to traveling around the state, participants typically take one trip to Washington, D.C., and one international trip.

MARL Executive Director Olga Brouwer told Dorenkamp that the program covers everything from crisis communication to working with media. A particular focus, she said, is personal development and emotional intelligence.

She added that program participants gain confidence in their leadership skills and often become more actively involved in their respective organizations.

Brouwer said MARL has worked to ensure that seminars accommodate the schedules of farmers. She thanked Minnesota Corn for sponsoring the program.

"There are so many success stories that really make agriculture so strong," she said. "It really wouldn't be if it wasn't for the Corn Growers." MARL is a program of Southwest Minnesota State University and the

SMSU Foundation that's operated in partnership with University of Minnesota Extension. The application portal for MARL's 2022-24 class, which will begin in late summer 2022, is open through April 29.

To learn more or apply, visit [marlprogram.org/application](https://marlprogram.org/application). ■



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

# county highlights

County 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.

## County corn organizations host annual meetings

Throughout the winter, many of MCGA's 52 county organizations have held their annual meetings to set their priorities and elect leaders for 2022. County meetings provide a great opportunity for grassroots leaders to socialize and discuss farming practices, and MCGA is proud to support their efforts. We appreciate the hard work by our county leaders and look forward to another great year.



The Rock County Corn & Soybean Growers Association held its annual meeting at Take 16 Brewing Company in Luverne.



The Lincoln County Corn & Soybean Growers Association raised over \$27,000 for scholarships during an auction at their annual meeting.

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

## Counties seek scholarship applicants

In 2022, over 20 of MCGA's county organizations are providing scholarships to well-deserving college students pursuing degrees and/or careers in agriculture. The deadline has passed for some of these scholarships; many are still open for applications. Visit [mncorn.org/scholarships](https://mncorn.org/scholarships) to see the deadlines and opportunities in your area.

## MCGA annual meeting highlights county grassroots

At MCGA's delegate session and annual meeting, which was held Jan. 20 at MN Ag EXPO in Mankato, dozens of county board members helped shape the 2022 resolutions book. Grassroots discussion and feedback is critical to the process of determining MCGA's annual policy priorities, and we're grateful to all who participated in the process. To learn more about MCGA's 2022 advocacy efforts, visit [mncorn.org/advocacy](https://mncorn.org/advocacy).



Among the growers to participate in MCGA's delegate session were Meeker County Corn Growers Association Board Member Steve Schmitt (left) and Martin County Corn and Soybean Growers Association Board Member Stephan Melson (right).

## Northwestern MN growers learn about new-uses projects

In northwestern Minnesota, county corn organizations heard about corn check-off-funded efforts to develop new uses for field corn during the Small Grains Update Meetings in January. Each year, Minnesota Corn supports new-uses projects as part of its mission to identify and promote opportunities for corn farmers. To learn more about Minnesota Corn-supported new-uses projects, visit [mncorn.org](https://mncorn.org).



MCGA Biofuels and Industry Relations Director Mackenzie Boubin talks about corn check-off-supported new-uses projects during a January presentation in northwestern Minnesota.



# Join MCGA today

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. Growers can also join MCGA by visiting [mncorn.org/join](http://mncorn.org/join).



As a grassroots organization, MCGA's strength stems from its members. Members are pivotal in our work advocating for the interests of corn farmers and their families, and building connections that create opportunities for growers. In short, we need your help to be at our best.

MCGA has one- and three-year memberships available. You can become a member of MCGA using the partial refund program or credit card, check or cash.

For future agricultural leaders, MCGA offers the young-adult membership for individuals ages 16 to 24 who want to participate in grassroots advocacy today. Along with reduced member dues, young-adult members will stay up to date on the latest in Minnesota's corn sector, and gain exclusive access to MCGA scholarship and leadership opportunities. ■

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

## 2021 corn harvest by the numbers

Despite challenging weather conditions, Minnesota's corn farmers worked hard to ensure a productive and bountiful harvest in 2021. USDA's annual crop-production summary, released in January 2022, bears that out.

MCGA thanks Minnesota's corn farmers for their dedication to feeding and fueling the world and wishes growers a safe and healthy 2022 planting season.



**1.4** billion bushels of corn were harvested in 2021 in Minnesota, down 38.9 million bushels from 2020, but up 141.3 million bushels from 2019.

**15.1** billion bushels of corn were harvested nationally in 2021, up 7% from 2020.

**178** average bushel-per-acre corn yield in Minnesota. That was down 13 bushels per acre from 2020, but up five bushels per acre from 2019.

**177** average bushel-per-acre corn yield nationally, a new record.

**7.84** million acres of corn were harvested for grain in 2021 in Minnesota, up 330,000 acres from 2020.

**85.4** million acres of corn were harvested for grain nationally, up 4% from 2020.

thanks to our allied partners



### MCGA Board Members

#### President

Bryan Biegler of Lake Wilson  
507-920-8186

#### First Vice President

Richard Syverson of Clontarf  
320-760-6719

#### Treasurer

Dana Allen-Tully of Eyota  
507-951-5597

#### Secretary

Jim Kanten of Milan  
320-297-0375

#### Past President/ Chairman of the Board

Tim Waibel of Courtland  
507-359-1219

Wesley Beck of St. James  
507-630-1471

Angela Guentzel of Kasota  
507-317-4372

Tom Haag of Eden Valley\*  
320-453-7760

Paul Henning of Okabena  
507-370-1688

Blair Hoseth of Mahanomen  
701-261-3574

Brad Neumann of Wabasso  
507-822-6951

Jocelyn Schlichting of Rice  
320-333-4291

John Swanson of Mentor  
612-419-9235

Rob Tate of Cannon Falls  
507-218-0308

Brian Thalmann of Plato\*  
320-238-2481

David (D.J.) Vanklombenburg of Montevideo  
320-212-2748

Todd Wentzel of Murdock  
320-760-1347

Harold Wolle Jr. of Madelia\*  
507-236-2181

\*NCGA Board member

### MCR&PC Board Members Chair

Brandon Fast of Mountain Lake  
507-220-8275

#### Vice Chair

Doug Albin of Clarkfield  
320-383-2338

#### Treasurer

Gary Prescher of Delavan  
507-525-7671

#### Secretary

Duane Epland of Twin Lakes  
641-590-0928

George Gobligh of Vesta  
507-762-3449

John Mages of Belgrade  
320-248-1908

Rodney Moe of Waltham  
952-237-9808

James O'Connor of Blooming Prairie  
507-456-5330

David Vipond of Mahanomen  
218-556-9780

Chad Willis of Willmar  
320-235-4452

Scott Winslow of Fountain  
507-951-0363

Ex-Officio Thom Petersen  
Minnesota Dept. of Ag  
651-201-6219

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## calendar of events

april

4

MCR&PC election ballots  
postmark date

april

5

MCGA Legislative Reception,  
St. Paul

april

6

MCGA/MCR&PC Joint Board Meeting,  
Burnsville

april

29

MCR&PC election results available