

corntalk

Official Publication of Minnesota Corn • Winter 2024

Inside

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- U.S. corn proves more efficient in two-year study

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Minnesota Corn thanks all growers across the state for their continued support of the Minnesota corn check-off. Thanks to your investment, Minnesota Corn has continued to invest check-off funds in research, promotion, and outreach efforts that benefit all corn growers across the state.

But just because you receive Corn Talk and pay into the check-off doesn't mean you are automatically a member of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA). Fortunately, it's easy to join. All you need to do is visit **mncorn.org/join** or call the Minnesota Corn office at 952-233-0333.

A one-year MCGA membership is \$75, but if you sold at least 7,500 bushels of corn in the past year and paid into the Minnesota corn check-off, you may qualify for a no-cost membership. If you sold 20,000 bushels and paid into the check-off, you may qualify for a three-year membership at no cost. 🙋



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

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Executive Director's message



Adam Birr, Executive Director and CEO

this year's crop was in short supply. By the end of August, significant portions of the corn growing areas of Minnesota had received less than 50% of the normal precipitation for the growing season. As we entered the harvest, I started getting texts from many of you surprised at the numbers appearing on yield monitors.

The November USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service report substantiated those texts with a forecasted yield of 181 bushels per acre statewide average for Minnesota. Certainly, a wide range of yields were realized across the state and many experienced below average harvests, but it's astonishing when you consider how little rain we received throughout the growing season.

The fact that we can maintain productivity despite challenging growing conditions is a testament to timely rains but also the evolution of seed technology and agronomic practices. As we enter a new legislative session, many of the tools farmers use to maintain this productivity will be scrutinized. Part of the challenge is that fewer people know a farmer or are familiar with agriculture. In fact, a recent survey that Minnesota Corn commissioned found that just 37% of Minnesota residents across the state know a farmer. It's incumbent on us to tell our story to both Minnesota residents and legislators alike.

Minnesota's farmers have a great story to tell that includes the use of technology like precision agriculture that ensures efficient use of all crop inputs including seed, fertilizer, and pesticides. Minnesota Corn's leaders recently underwent a third-party assessment of their farming practices and quantified the impacts on soil, water, and carbon. The assessments provided a benchmark and demonstrated that Minnesota's corn farmers have made significant advances in

Minnesota Corn wraps up busy 2023

As we reflect on another growing season, a theme that emerges for me is the wonders of innovation and technology in agriculture. As we were preparing budgets in September prior to harvest, optimism about

sustainability. In the coming year Minnesota Corn hopes to gather more data to assist in demonstrating to legislators and residents the importance of agronomic tools both for on-farm productivity but also for protecting soil and water resources.

Not only are Minnesota's corn farmers utilizing innovation on the farm, but also in the products derived from corn used downstream. Through the check-off, the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council is investing in the research and development of new products derived from corn such as biofuels and sustainable polymers that will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Minnesota Corn is excited to become part of a new initiative called the Minnesota Sustainable Aviation Fuel Hub being facilitated by the Greater MSP Partnership. Though there are many policy, technology, and infrastructure hurdles to overcome, SAF represents a tremendous opportunity for Minnesota's corn farmers to help deliver millions of gallons of biofuel for use at MSP International Airport.

Minnesota's corn farmers have a history of using innovation and technology from the field to the food, fiber, and fuel that is used by all Minnesotans. We look forward to working with you in the coming year to add to that story. We thank you for your support and wish you and your family and safe and happy holiday season. 🙋



Programs like Discovery Farms are used to measure the sustainability of Minnesota's corn farmers.

MCGA prepares for 2024 legislative session

This fall, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) continued to develop its advocacy strategy for the 2024 state legislative session, which begins in February.

Throughout the fall, grassroots grower-leaders hosted state legislators on their family corn farms, highlighting key policy priorities for policymakers. (See page 8 for more information.) Meanwhile, MCGA leadership and staff closely followed important policy discussions both in St. Paul and Washington, D.C.. MCGA staff, for example, participated in the state’s drainage and Clean Transportation Standard work groups, urging consensus around common-sense policies that allow farmers to improve productivity and sustainability.

In late November, MCGA began the process of updating its resolutions book—which guides advocacy activities for the year when delegates from MCGA’s 52 county organizations met virtually for the annual pre-resolutions session.

The pre-resolutions session is just one opportunity MCGA’s grassroots members have to identify and address the major issues affecting corn farmers in Minnesota. MCGA members can also participate in the organization’s delegate session Jan. 18 at MN Ag Expo in Mankato just prior to MCGA’s annual meeting. Members will finalize MCGA’s 2024 resolutions book during the session.



Once the legislative session begins, MCGA will keep members informed about bills that would affect family corn farmers with regular updates on the news section of the Minnesota Corn website, mncorn.org/news. Additionally, grower-leaders will continue grassroots advocacy to ensure that lawmakers understand how proposals would affect family farmers and agriculture more broadly.

In late February, MCGA grower-leaders will meet with state policymakers to advocate for bills that would benefit corn farmers during the organization’s annual Day on the Hill. Grower-leaders will also testify and provide feedback to lawmakers on key bills.

To learn more about MCGA’s advocacy work, visit mncorn.org/advocacy.

Passage of comprehensive Farm Bill urged

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) continues advocating for its Farm Bill priorities, even after Congress approved a one-year extension for the legislation in November.

First and foremost, MCGA urges lawmakers to protect and increase the affordability of crop insurance and boost funding for the Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development Program (FMD). MAP is designed to encourage development, maintenance, and expansion of commercial markets for U.S. agricultural exports. FMD is a joint government/agriculture industry effort to develop markets by acquainting potential foreign customers with U.S. farm products.

Other asks of MCGA include:

- Increasing the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) county maximum payment rate above 10% and the ARC county coverage level above 86% and strengthening the Price Loss Coverage (PLC) effective reference price “escalator.”
- MCGA opposes lowering ARC/PLC payment limits and adjusted gross income limits below current levels.
- Creating a USDA initiative that uses conservation programming to reduce development of weed resistance and protect the viability of conservation tillage and cover cropping practices.



- Creating a USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) grant program to cover total costs of retaining a full-time coordinator for farmer-led collaborative watershed projects aimed at reducing nutrient losses.

To urge your members of Congress to support these bipartisan priorities, go to mncorn.org/takeaction.

2024 state legislative session at a glance

Overview: The 2024 state legislative session runs Feb. 12-May 20. The DFL will maintain narrow control of the state House (70-64) and Senate (34-33).

Session focus: Lawmakers will prioritize policy and capital projects legislation and could also entertain a supplemental budget bill, after passing a two-year state budget in 2023.

Potential MCGA focus areas: MCGA will continue its overarching focus on policies that ensure the productivity and success of family corn farmers and rural communities. The organization’s specific policy focuses will be determined by the MCGA farmer-leaders, grassroots feedback on policy priorities, and MCGA’s 2024 resolutions book. MCGA focus areas could include:

- **Sustainability:** MCGA will highlight its goal of proactively protecting natural resources,

including drinking water. The organization will work on reasonable proposals that ensure the productivity and sustainability of corn farming while maintaining the availability of important crop-protection tools.

- **Market development:** MCGA will work with partners on policies that maintain and develop markets for ethanol and sustainable aviation fuel.
- **Agriculture and rural communities:** MCGA will support partner organizations working to ensure the prosperity of family farmers and rural communities. The organization will support efforts that boost rural communities, such as funding for road and bridge infrastructure, broadband funding, and environmental permitting reform.

MCGA highlights proactive nitrogen efforts

In light of a recent letter by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) continues to remind the public of the many ways corn growers are proactively addressing nitrogen management.

In November, MCGA published a statement reiterating that corn farmers share the goal of protecting the state’s drinking water. The statement also noted how corn farmers invest their own funds into research, technology, tools, and best management practices aimed at decreasing input use while increasing productivity.

“Minnesota Corn believes that solutions will be achieved faster and with better outcomes if interested parties work together,” the statement said. “An effective partnership needs to involve farmers, policymakers and regulators, advocacy groups, and public and private entities that finance and scale practices.”

Each year, Minnesota corn farmers invest about \$2 million of their own dollars in university-led nitrogen-management research conducted both on and off farms. This includes projects that evaluate nitrogen rate, timing, placement, and treatment.

Additionally, MCGA actively helped develop the state’s 2015 Nitrogen Fertilizer Management Plan aimed at protecting vulnerable groundwater resources. The plan was foundational to the Groundwater Protection Rule that went into effect in June 2019.

Minnesota Corn also partners with University of Minnesota Extension on educational programs for growers, including Nitrogen Smart. (See page 12 for more information.)

To learn more about how Minnesota Corn is working to protect drinking water while improving the sustainability and productivity of corn farming, visit mncorn.org.

Phosphate fertilizer duty rate lowered

Thanks in part to grassroots advocacy by corn growers in Minnesota, a federal agency has removed a potential barrier to reducing phosphate fertilizer prices.

In November, the U.S. Department of Commerce lowered the duty rate on Moroccan phosphate fertilizers from 19.97% to 2.12%. The duty had been imposed in March 2021 at the request of the Mosaic Company, which has a near monopoly over the U.S. phosphate fertilizer market. It contributed to an over 230% increase in phosphate fertilizer prices between 2020 and 2022.

If Moroccan fertilizer companies decide to start exporting phosphate fertilizer to the U.S., the decision could reduce prices for U.S. farmers.

“The decision is very meaningful to us,” Minnesota farmer and National Corn Growers Association President Harold Wolle said in a statement. “Farmers were already facing rate hikes on inputs and the duties were making the situation worse. This decision gives us a lot of hope.”

In Minnesota and across the U.S., family corn growers urged Mosaic to rescind its duty requests and asked the Commerce Department to reconsider its decision. In



October 2023, for example, grower organizations sent Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo a letter outlining a thorough reconsideration of the tariff rates. The letter signed by the Minnesota Corn Growers Association and dozens of other agriculture groups, came a month after a judge on the U.S. Court of International Trade ordered a reexamination of the decision.

“American agriculture must have market access to compete globally, and a major impediment like a fertilizer duty only undermines the ability to establish and expand markets,” the letter said. 🙌

Concerns raised with changes to disaster relief program

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) has joined the growing list of farm groups raising concerns about how the USDA will distribute aid to growers impacted by natural disasters in 2022.

In November, MCGA was among the 140 commodity groups that sent a letter to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack with concerns about USDA’s Emergency Relief Program (ERP).

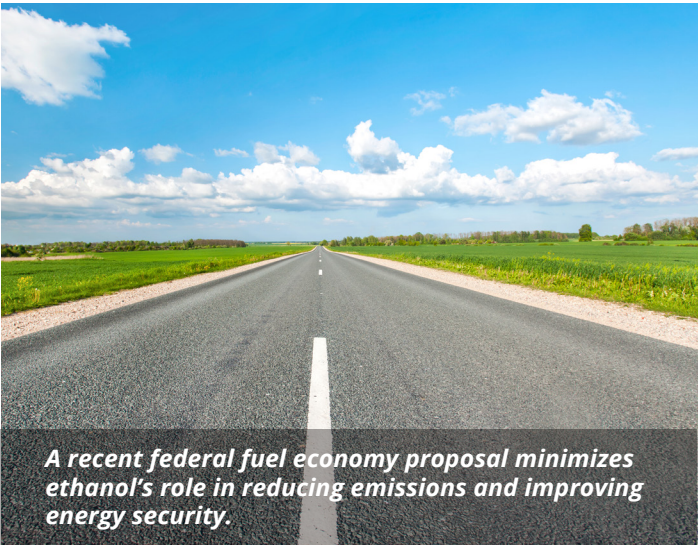
The groups stressed that they appreciate how the federal government allocated \$3.7 billion to the program to assist producers impacted by natural disasters in 2022. But, they said, recent program changes are problematic, including a new “progressive factor” that reduces the disaster assistance for many eligible growers based on the size of losses.

“While we appreciate the funding restraints under which ERP 2022 was developed, we believe that USDA should instead aim to provide more equitable support for losses of all magnitudes,” the letter said.

Growers with questions about the Emergency Relief Program should visit their local Farm Service Agency office for more information. The firm Combest, Sell & Associates wrote a detailed blog post about the program for Minnesota corn growers that’s available on the Minnesota Corn website at bit.ly/ERP-blog. 🙌

—Adapted from the National Corn Growers Association

Pushback against federal pro-EV policies continues



The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) continues to push back against federal proposals that favor electric vehicles (EVs) over proven and reliable emissions-reductions solutions like ethanol. In October, MCGA submitted comments to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) detailing concerns about its proposed updates to federal fuel economy standards that would affect new vehicles starting in January 2026.

Additionally, 421 Minnesota growers sent messages to NHTSA outlining concerns with the proposal through a National Corn Growers Association call-to-action campaign.

Under the federal Energy Policy and Conservation Act, NHTSA is required to set annual fuel efficiency standards for passenger vehicles, light trucks, and heavy-duty pickups and vans.

For passenger vehicles and light trucks, NHTSA must set standards based on how much automakers can practically increase the collective fuel economy of their gasoline-powered vehicles. EVs are irrelevant to the calculations, no matter how much—or little—they affect the collective fuel efficiency of an automaker’s fleet.

In its comments, MCGA said the proposed standards for passenger vehicles and light trucks are invalid because NHTSA based them on how much automakers could increase fuel efficiency for both gas-powered vehicles and EVs. That effectively amounts to an EV mandate, since the only way automakers would be able to meet the proposed standards given available technology would be to increase EV production.

There are policies that would allow automakers to significantly increase the efficiency of their gasoline-powered vehicles, notably the Next Generation Fuels Act. The bill would require higher octane fuels, which would allow automakers to take advantage of advanced engine technologies. MCGA thanks the members of Congress from both parties who have supported the bill and continues to advocate for its passage.

Furthermore, NHTSA would be overlooking key energy-security issues by mandating increases in EV production, MCGA said. Specifically, the agency failed to explain how automakers would ensure a steady supply of the critical minerals needed to produce EVs. A typical EV requires six times more critical minerals than a gas-powered car, MCGA said.

In its comments to the agency, MCGA wrote: “NHTSA has acknowledged that critical minerals pose national security concerns and that national security concerns are a factor it must consider when setting fuel economy standards.”

Instead of setting fuel economy standards at a level that would effectively mandate increased EV production, MCGA encouraged NHTSA to hold its standards steady. The organization also encouraged NHTSA to work with the EPA and reinstitute a policy recognizing that flex fuel vehicles—which can operate on the 85% ethanol/15% gasoline blend E85—use less gasoline than conventional vehicles.

The pushback by Minnesota’s family corn farmers on NHTSA’s proposal follows their grassroots action in response to the EPA’s tailpipe standards proposal that was released this past spring. This past summer, MCGA sent the EPA a letter outlining its concerns with the proposal.

MCGA continues to closely follow policy proposals that would affect the transportation fuel market and family corn farmers to ensure parity for emissions-reducing technologies and fuels, including ethanol. To learn more about the organization’s efforts, and to stay up to date on the latest calls-to-action, visit mncorn.org/advocacy. 🙌

Engaging through farm visits



A Latin American ethanol trade delegation visits the family farm of Minnesota Corn Growers Association board member Ellyn Oelfke (second from right).

Engaging with international markets, policymakers, family farmers, and the non-farming public is key to Minnesota Corn's work. Each year, as part of its mission to create opportunities for corn farmers while improving quality of life, Minnesota Corn hosts trade delegations, gives farm tours to policymakers, informs the non-farming public about corn farming, and more.

Fall is typically a busy time for these efforts, as Minnesota Corn highlights the many ways the corn crop is critical to our state. This year was no exception. Read on to learn how Minnesota Corn engaged with key audiences this fall.

International markets are critical to Minnesota's family corn farmers. Each year, exports of corn, ethanol,



MCGA Past President Richard Syverson (back row, fourth from left) was among the participants in a recent ag trade mission to Japan.

ethanol co-products, and corn-fed meat products add billions of dollars to the state's economy, accounting for thousands of jobs, according to a U.S. Grains Council (USGC) analysis.

To develop and maintain international markets, Minnesota Corn invests in organizations like USGC, the U.S. Meat Export Federation, and the USA Poultry & Egg Export Council. Minnesota Corn also partners with the organizations on key events and initiatives.

For example, in October, Minnesota Corn partnered with USGC to host a Latin American ethanol trade team in Minnesota following the council's Global Ethanol Summit in Washington, D.C. Ethanol stakeholders from five Latin American countries toured the family farm of Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) board member Ellyn Oelfke. They also toured the Heartland Corn Products ethanol plant and a fuel station and met with leaders in Minnesota's ag industry, among other activities.

Additionally, to support market-development efforts, then-MCGA President Richard Syverson participated in a Minnesota Department of Agriculture-led trade mission to Japan this past fall. Syverson passed the role of MCGA president to Dana Allen-Tully in October.

While in Japan, Syverson met with a food starch producer that processes 40,000 bushels of corn a day. He encouraged the company to consider sourcing its corn from the Pacific Northwest—where significant

amounts of Minnesota corn are shipped—noting it could save the company money. "I think that it could be a higher quality product, too," he told the company.

To develop relationships with policymakers and ensure they are well versed in the priorities of family corn farmers, MCGA hosts lawmakers for farm visits



Grower-leader John Mages and House Minority Leader Lisa Demuth (R-Cold Spring)

throughout the year. These efforts help ensure that elected officials understand how their work impacts family farmers.

This fall, MCGA hosted multiple lawmakers for farm visits across the state. In September, MCGA board member Blair Hoseth hosted State Sen. Rob Kupec



From left to right: MCGA board member Nick Peterson, legislative assistant Jacqueline Borromeo, Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Aric Putnam (DFL-St. Cloud), Senate Agriculture Committee administrator Hunter Pederson, and corn farmer Ryan Peterson.

(DFL-Moorhead), vice chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, for a farm visit. In October, Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Aric Putnam (DFL-St. Cloud) visited the family farm of MCGA board member Nick Peterson, and House Minority Leader Lisa Demuth (R-Cold Spring) visited the family farm of grower-leader John Mages.

Additionally, Rep. Samantha Sencer-Mura, a member of the House Agriculture Committee, joined the Latin American ethanol trade delegation for their tour of the Heartland ethanol plant.

Minnesota Corn in September also coordinated an event during which state legislators and government staffers learned about corn check-off-funded University of Minnesota research into nitrous oxide emissions.

The group included Rep. Patty Acomb (DFL-Minnetonka), who chairs the House climate and energy committee, and Rep. Robert Bierman (DFL-Apply Valley), a member of the committee. It also included Gov. Tim Walz's agriculture policy advisory, a House GOP research consultant, and staff from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Putnam's office, the office of Sen. Heather Gustafson (DFL-Vadnais Heights). The group learned about the efforts by Dr. Tim Griffis and his team to reduce nitrous oxide emissions from cropland and toured the lab in which the researchers work.



Legislators and government staffers visit the University of Minnesota lab of Dr. Tim Griffis.

Partnership brings Gophers football, Better Fuel together

As growers harvested their crop this fall, Minnesota Corn's district field managers traveled across the state to provide support and help plan for county events this winter. (See pages 18-19 for more information.)

Additionally, Minnesota Corn continued its comprehensive efforts to reach the non-farming public with factual, positive information on corn, ethanol, and corn farming.

Continued on page 17

How the MN Corn scholarship has helped students



MN Corn checks in with past recipients

Written by Jonathan Eisenthal

Each year since 2019, as part of its mission to increase opportunities while enhancing quality of life, Minnesota Corn has awarded \$5,000 scholarships to young-adult members pursuing careers and degrees in agriculture. Additionally, some of Minnesota's 52 county corn grower associations award scholarships to students.

In total, Minnesota Corn has awarded \$80,000 in scholarships to 16 students, and county grower associations have awarded thousands more to scores of students.

As 2024 scholarship deadlines approach, we briefly checked in with three past state and county scholarship recipients to see what they're up to now. Read more about past scholarship recipients at mncorn.org/news.

Luke Carr



Luke Carr, a 2020 Minnesota Corn scholarship recipient, recently graduated from South Dakota State University with a bachelor's degree in agriculture business and a minor in ag marketing. He said the scholarship was a huge help for him.

After graduating, Carr began a career as a grain originator with StateLine Cooperative near Blue Earth. Grain originators purchase grain from farmers to sell to commodity markets, making them a key link between farmers and end users.

Carr has been a part of his family farm operation since a young age and plans to continue farming alongside his family while originating grain for StateLine Cooperative.

Heidi Hoffman Hauser

Heidi Hoffman Hauser, a 2022 Minnesota Corn scholarship recipient, recently graduated from the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities with a bachelor's degree in animal science and agricultural communications and marketing and a minor in agriculture business. She also received a scholarship from the Brown County Corn & Soybean Growers Association during college.

She said the Minnesota Corn scholarship gave her more freedom to focus on networking and interviewing for jobs during her final months of college. "It was such a large financial burden lifted off my shoulders," she said.

Hauser currently works as a digital advertising operations specialist for Farm Journal's Precision Reach online advertising program, which specializes in connecting advertisers with target audiences.



Anna Prchal

Anna Prchal, who grew up on a multi-generation family farm in New Prague, also received the Minnesota Corn scholarship in 2020. She recently graduated from South Dakota State University with a bachelor's degree in agricultural and bio systems engineering with an emphasis in natural resources engineering and a minor in sustainability.

After graduating, Prchal began working as a water resources technician for the worldwide engineering consulting company Stantec.



"I look at best management practices to make sure that soil and water is being properly managed," she said. She added that she believes the job will be a steppingstone to a career focused on engineering projects in the agricultural sphere.

Deadline for 2024 MN Corn scholarship approaches

The deadline to apply for the 2024 Minnesota Corn scholarship is Jan. 5. Four \$5,000 scholarships are available to students pursuing degrees and careers in agriculture.

To qualify, applicants must be members of the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA). A young adult membership is \$20.

To apply, students should visit mncorn.org/scholarships. Incomplete applications will not be considered. Scholarship decisions will be announced on or before March 1.

MCGA First Vice President Jim Kanten said he's consistently impressed with Minnesota Corn's scholarship applicants, noting that many are actively involved in their communities and in school activities. "That really gives me a good feeling about the future of rural life and agriculture," he said.

Minnesota Corn is one of several corn grower organizations to offer college scholarships. The National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) and many county corn grower associations also offer them.

NCGA offers specific scholarships for undergraduate students, technical school/ community college students, and graduate students. The deadline for NCGA's 2024 scholarship is Jan. 31. Learn more and apply at ncga.com/scholarships.

The list of county grower associations that offer scholarships and the deadlines for those programs is available at mncorn.org/scholarships. Be sure to check that page throughout the winter or contact the Minnesota Corn district field manager (DFM) in your area for the latest information. You can see which DFM covers your county and get their contact information at mncorn.org/contact/staff.

U.S. corn proves more efficient in two-year study

A U.S. Grains Council (USGC) study partially funded by Minnesota Corn aimed at changing perceptions about the quality of U.S. corn among international buyers yielded positive results.

Working with Auburn University, USGC repeated a study of the efficiency of Argentinian, Brazilian, and U.S. corn as broiler chicken feed sources. The experiment aimed to dispel the notion that U.S. corn is dustier and less valuable than South American corn. That perception arises because U.S. corn isn't as hard and tends to break apart more during transit.

Corn is an important ingredient in poultry diets because of its digestibility and nutritional advantages compared to other grains, according to USGC.

The U.S. is the largest producer of corn and exports several billion bushels each year to foreign countries. But the U.S. faces competition from other countries in corn markets, including from Brazil and Argentina, which are the world's third- and fifth-biggest corn producers, respectively.

In year one of the experiment, researchers found that Argentinian corn was a less efficient feed source than U.S. and Brazilian corn. After shipping, U.S. and Argentinian corn are roughly equal in efficiency, the researchers found, though locally sourced U.S. corn is a more efficient feed source than imported Argentinian corn.

In year two, the results of which were published in November, researchers found that U.S. corn is a more efficient broiler feed source than Brazilian corn, even after shipping. Specifically, broilers need less U.S. corn than Brazilian corn to gain a kilogram of body weight, a fact that can translate into less feed use and, ultimately, cost savings.

In a statement, Kurt Shultz, USGC's senior director for global strategies, said U.S. corn outperforms corn from other countries in terms of digestible starch despite its fragility.

"These benefits are not immediately apparent in an individual chicken," he said, "but when you look across a flock of millions of birds per year, which is typical in commercial poultry operations, it leads to hundreds of thousands of dollars of additional profitability against South American corn."



Going forward, USGC plans to conduct commercial trials with two or three international feed companies. The council will also conduct milling trials to benchmark the energy and milling costs of corn from various origins and their performance in commercial poultry operations. Ultimately, the study will highlight the performance benefits of U.S. corn and how it improves the competitive advantage and profitability of customers in an increasingly competitive environment.

Each year, as part of its mission to develop and maintain international markets for corn, ethanol, and ethanol co-products, Minnesota Corn invests corn check-off funds in the USGC. Thanks in part to these investments, grain and grain product exports account for billions of dollars in economic output in Minnesota each year.

For example, a recent USGC analysis found that the value of Minnesota's grain and grain product exports in 2021 was nearly \$2.6 billion. The exports created ripple effects throughout the economy, supporting 21,704 jobs and \$5.6 billion in economic output.

Learn more about grain exports on the U.S. Grains Council's website, grains.org.



Spotlight on AFREC

MN Corn supports the fertilizer research, education organization



Agricultural Fertilizer Research & Education Council

Each year, as part of its mission to increase the productivity and sustainability of corn farming, Minnesota Corn supports the Agricultural Fertilizer Research & Education Council (AFREC). Founded in 2007, AFREC is tasked with improving fertilizer efficiency and farm profitability through education, technology development, and soil fertility research, efforts that help improve environmental outcomes for agriculture.

AFREC is comprised of farmers and crop advisors from the state's major agricultural groups, including Minnesota Corn, which is represented on the council by Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council member Rodney Moe. Each year, the council funds research projects focused on nutrient management, soil health, water quality, and more.

Most AFREC-funded research projects are conducted at the University of Minnesota, though farmers, crop advisors, and others can also apply for grants. In addition to funding research, AFREC also supports educational programming so that Minnesota growers can understand how to apply researchers' findings and recommendations to their farms.

These efforts include:

- University of Minnesota Extension's annual nitrogen and nutrient management conferences(see page 14 for information on the 2024 conferences)
- The AFREC website, mnsoilfertility.com.
- Minnesota Crop News blog posts, which are available at blog-crop-news.extension.umn.edu.
- Monthly episodes of the Nutrient Management Podcast
- U of M Extension videos

AFREC's funding comes from a 40-cent-per-ton fee on bulk fertilizer sales in Minnesota. On a per-acre basis, that means Minnesota farmers invest about 5 cents per cropland acre each year in the council. In total, the tonnage fee raises around \$1 million annually.

Learn more about AFREC at mnsoilfertility.com.



Moving toward sustainable aviation fuel



Minnesota Corn announced it has joined the Minnesota Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) Hub at a meeting in late November. The organization joins Greater MSP, Delta, Ecolab, Xcel Energy, Bank of America, Cargill, and several other organizations in its mission to create a model for scalable SAF.

Delta uses about 250 million gallons of jet fuel each year at the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport and has set incremental goals to use more than 50% SAF by 2035. "While they can electrify some on-ground functions, 98% of an airline's carbon footprint is in the air," said Jeff Davidman, vice president, state and local government affairs at Delta.

Davidman said joining the Minnesota SAF Hub was a no-brainer for Delta. "Minnesota is taking a nationwide lead on this endeavor. We looked around the world to see where SAF made sense and where it can lead.

Minnesota, time and time again, jumped to the top of the page."

Davidman cited three key reasons why Minnesota is the right fit for being a leader in SAF development, research, and production:

- Corn is growing and is available in Minnesota
- There is a strong history of biofuel production in Minnesota
- Delta's second-largest hub is MSP

"We really look forward to moving ahead with everyone," said Gary Prescher, chair of the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council. "We realize this is a long-term project and there's really good opportunity for us to be part of getting the ball rolling here."

Dates for education events announced



University of Minnesota Extension offers a series of nutrient education events for growers each winter.

Dates have been set for two Minnesota Corn-sponsored University of Minnesota Extension nutrient education conferences this winter, though registration for the events had yet to open as this edition of Corn Talk went to press.

Meanwhile, 2024 dates for another Minnesota Corn-sponsored Extension nutrient education program have yet to be announced.

Extension will hold the Nitrogen: Minnesota's Grand Challenge and Compelling Opportunity Conference Feb. 13 in St. Cloud and the Nutrient Management Conference Feb. 20 in Mankato. Check the respective event websites (bit.ly/nitrogen-conference and bit.ly/nutrient-conference) for the latest registration information this winter.

Extension will also hold in-person Nitrogen Smart classes—which teach producers fundamentals for maximizing return on nitrogen investments while minimizing nitrogen losses—this winter, though dates have not yet been announced. Check the Nitrogen Smart website (bit.ly/nitrogen-smart) for the latest information.

Each year, as part of its mission to increase on-farm productivity and sustainability, Minnesota Corn invests corn check-off funds in programs that provide growers with the latest information on nutrient management. In total, the organization has invested over \$6.5 million since 2008 in nutrient management education.

Both the nitrogen and nutrient management conferences are organized in partnership with the Minnesota Corn-supported Minnesota Agricultural Water Resource Center. The conferences bring together experts to talk about multiple aspects of nitrogen and nutrient management.

Last year, the events covered everything from the economics of fertilizers to nitrogen management in the

context of soil health and biological inoculation with nitrogen-fixing bacteria.

Extension developed Nitrogen Smart in partnership with Minnesota Corn, first offering the classes in 2016. Over 1,000 Minnesota growers have been certified through the program over the past seven years. Nitrogen Smart certification is valid for three years after completion of the fundamentals course.

Each year, Extension holds in-person Nitrogen Smart classes at locations across the state. One course focuses on the fundamentals of nitrogen management, including sources of the nutrient, how it's lost to the environment, and how growers can reduce losses. Other courses focus on advanced topics, such as how climate conditions impact nitrogen and how growers can prevent nitrate losses to water.

Additionally, thanks to Minnesota Corn, Extension offers several free online Nitrogen Smart classes that can be taken at any time. This includes the fundamentals course and advanced courses covering manure management and the 4Rs of nitrogen—rate, source, timing, and placement.

In addition to the two conferences and Nitrogen Smart, Minnesota Corn sponsors Extension's annual Soil Management Summit, which covers key soil health practices that growers can implement. This winter's event was held Dec. 7-8 in Alexandria. 🙋

More resources

Minnesota Crop News blog:
blog-crop-news.extension.umn.edu

Minnesota CropCast Podcast:
mncrocast.transistor.fm

UMN Extension crop production website:
extension.umn.edu/crop-production

If you go:

Nitrogen: Minnesota's Grand Challenge and Compelling Opportunity Conference

Feb. 13, St. Cloud

Nutrient Management Conference

Feb. 20, Mankato

Join MN Corn at MN Ag Expo



MN Ag EXPO returns to Mankato Jan. 17-18.

Registration remains open for this winter's edition of MN Ag Expo, the annual event hosted by Minnesota Corn and the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association (MSGA). MN Ag Expo 2024 is set for Jan. 17-18 at the Mayo Clinic Health System Event Center in Mankato.

Growers can register online at mnagexpo.com for the free event. Online registration is encouraged to ensure enough boxed lunches are available for all attendees. Lunches are distributed to attendees of both days of the event at no cost.

MN Ag Expo includes a trade show with over 100 booths, learning sessions, networking opportunities, keynote speakers, and more. MSGA will hold its annual meeting on the first day of the event, and the MCGA will hold its resolution session and annual meeting on the event's second day.

MN Ag Expo attendees looking to stay overnight in Mankato are encouraged to book lodging as soon as possible. Multiple Mankato hotels offer discounted MN Ag Expo rates, and two of them—the Hilton Garden Inn and the Mankato City Center Hotel—are attached via skyway to the event center.

To learn more or to register for MN Ag Expo, visit mnagexpo.com. 🙋

Record number of research proposals submitted



Minnesota Corn has begun evaluating the record 51 proposals for the program that funds university-level research focused on increasing the productivity, profitability, and sustainability of corn farming.

Submissions to Minnesota Corn's Primary Research Program for 2024 were due Nov. 22, and the organization will announce funding decisions by March 1. As in past years, Minnesota Corn will allocate approximately \$2 million to research projects through the program, which is open to university-level researchers and scientists.

For decades, as part of its mission to increase opportunities for corn farmers while improving quality of life, Minnesota Corn has allocated corn check-off funds to professional research projects.

To receive funding, projects must focus on production stewardship or new uses for corn, ethanol, and ethanol co-products, including as dried distillers grains with solubles. Projects can cover multiple years, though researchers must apply for funding each year for a given project.

In 2023 alone, Minnesota Corn allocated funding to over 15 projects through the Primary Research Program. These included research into new corn-based plastics and polymers, variable rate irrigation, correlations between enhanced efficiency fertilizers and nitrogen losses, and more.

Projects are evaluated by Minnesota Corn's Discovery & Development Team. The team includes members of the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council and Minnesota Corn Growers Association Board of Directors.

To learn more about Minnesota Corn's research program and get updates on Minnesota Corn-funded research projects, visit mncorn.org/research. You can also learn more about research projects by listening to the Minnesota Corn Podcast. Visit mncorn.org/minnesota-corn-podcast to listen to past episodes.

If you have additional questions about Minnesota Corn's research program, contact Minnesota Corn's research director, Dr. Maciej Kazula, at mkazula@mncorn.org. 🙋

Local distiller earns honors



10,000 Drops Craft Distillers owners Rob Kruchoski (second from left), Pat Jacobs (center), and Jake Hvistendahl (second from right) with Kenyon farmers Andrea and Mike Kasper (left and right, respectively).

The single-barrel bourbon from Faribault-based 10,000 Drops Craft Distillers won Best of Minnesota honors. First released in 2022, the single-barrel bourbon is aged for four years before it's served. 10,000 Drops co-founder Jake Hvistendahl said corn comprises about 60% of the bourbon's mash bill, adding that corn for the spirit comes from Kenyon, Minnesota, farmers Mike and Andrea Kasper

He said the Kaspers collect the distillery's spent solids and feed them to their heritage breeds of cattle and pigs, composting any leftovers.

Hvistendahl opened 10,000 Drops with longtime best friends Pat Jacobs and Rob Kruchoski in 2018. The distillery has a cocktail room, and it distributes spirits to stores around the state. Find a map of stores that carry 10,000 Drops products at 10000drops.com/find-it.

Learn more about the Heartland Whiskey Competition at heartlandwhiskeycompetition.com.

To highlight the many uses of corn, Minnesota Corn in 2023 once again sponsored the Heartland Whiskey Competition, a national biennial craft whiskey competition. Recently, the contest announced its award-winning whiskeys, including the winner of the Best of Minnesota award.

Minnesota Corn welcomes new staff

Minnesota Corn has filled the staff position responsible for grassroots grower outreach in south-central and southeast Minnesota and a new staff position responsible for special events and state- and county-level grassroots member activities.

In October, Kaylee Wendt began as Minnesota Corn's new district field manager (DFM) for District 3, which covers 16 south-central and southeast Minnesota counties. In December, Kelly Susa began as Minnesota Corn's new program manager.

Wendt grew up on a family farm in Eyota and earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural business from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. She began her career with agronomy internships at CHS and All-American Co-op before working as a sales process coordinator for Hormel Foods in Austin.

Wendt is one of Minnesota Corn's four DFMs. DFMs support the county corn grower associations in their respective regions, create awareness of the Minnesota corn check-off, and promote Minnesota Corn Growers Association membership, among other activities.

Susa has a bachelor's degree in agricultural education and a minor in sustainable agriculture from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls. She previously worked as an agriculture instructor and FFA advisor. Her most recent role was at Cleveland Public School, where she helped found a new agriculture department and FFA chapter and grow it to include two teachers, 26 course offerings, and 65 FFA members.

To learn more about Minnesota Corn's staff and grower outreach efforts, visit mncorn.org.



Kelly Susa



Kaylee Wendt

Engaging through farm visits

Continued from page 9



A key element of this work was a new set of Better Fuel Initiative advertisements featuring Minnesota Gophers tight end Brevyn Spann-Ford. In the ads, Spann-Ford highlights his appreciation for Unleaded 88 and encourages Minnesota drivers to fill up with the lower-cost biofuel.

In addition to the new advertisement, Minnesota Corn reached drivers with positive message about Unleaded 88 at fuel-promotion events throughout the state.

To reach the non-farming public with positive messages about corn and corn farming, Minnesota Corn continued its investments in the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum's Farm at the Arb and Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom. Additionally, the organization unveiled its new online video series called "Nate on the Farm."

The series features the organization's public relations manager, Nate Gotlieb, visiting family corn farms around the state to learn more about corn farming.

Learn more about how Minnesota Corn is reaching the non-farming public at mncorn.org/outreach.

Looking forward

Minnesota Corn engages key stakeholders with comprehensive messages about the value of corn, corn farming, and biofuels to all Minnesotans. The organization will continue to reach relevant parties through a variety of platforms and looks forward to building connections that ensure continued prosperity both on and off the farm.



Ann Marie Ward, executive director of the Minnesota Agriculture in the Classroom Foundation, highlights the organization's programming during a summer teacher tour.

County Highlights

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

To shine a light on these initiatives throughout the year, Minnesota Corn highlights the counties' many successes in each issue of Corn Talk. Below is a recap of county efforts during fall 2023.

County corn board members receive harvest snacks



Lincoln County Corn & Soybean Growers Association board member Jon Johnson



Swift County Corn Growers Association board member Randy Aschman

This fall, MCGA's district field managers continued the tradition of dropping off harvest snacks to members of the state's 52 county corn boards. Thank you, county board members, for everything that you do! We hope you, and all growers, had a safe and plentiful harvest.

Norman County growers honored by 4-H

In November, the Norman County Corn & Soybean Growers Association board received the 'Business Appreciation Award' from Norman County 4-H for its outstanding contribution and support of the program. Norman County 4-H Youth Development Extension Educator Linda Houglum thanked the organization for "all their generosity and support to 4-H and to the community." The banquet also recognized 4-H students for their leadership and achievements in the program.



Norman County Corn & Soybean Growers Association President Corey Hanson receives a plaque from 2024 Norman County 4-H student president Madalynn Crompton at the county's 71st annual 4-H awards banquet.

Nicollet/Sibley growers hold fuel event



From left to right: Nicollet/Sibley County Corn & Soybean Growers Association board members Jamie Seitzer, Dan Widmer, Debra Meyer, and Kelsey Henke and Minnesota Corn district field manager Emily Burns (second from right).

In September, the Nicollet/Sibley Corn & Soybean Growers Association held a successful fuel-promotion event at a Kwik Trip in St. Peter. Volunteers with the group enjoyed talking with customers about biofuel blends like Unleaded 88 and E85, and they handed out goodies. Fuel events are just one way county grower associations help consumers understand the many benefits of ethanol-blended fuels.

McLeod County growers donate to local food shelf



From left to right: McLeod County Corn & Soybean Growers Association board members Mandy Dammann, Ryan Zimmerman, Matt Miller, Chad Hoese, David Cohrs, and Jay Mackedanz.

The McLeod County Corn & Soybean Growers Association held a special fuel event at the Little Dukes fuel station in Glencoe this fall. The group partnered with the station to offer drivers discounts on Unleaded 88 and flex fuels. And, it purchased food items that have corn as an ingredient at the neighboring Coborn's grocery store and donated them to a local food shelf. The event showcased the generosity and entrepreneurial spirit of Minnesota's county grower associations.

County growers prepare for annual meetings



A scene from a past Rock County Corn & Soybean Growers Association annual meeting.

Throughout the winter, many county grower associations will host their annual meetings. County meetings provide a great opportunity for grassroots leaders to socialize and discuss farming practices, and Minnesota Corn is proud to support these efforts. Check with your local district field manager to find out more details about your county's annual meeting. 🙌

We want to hear from you.
Send photos and brief descriptions of your county events to your district field manager.
Find your DFM on our maps at mncorn.org/contact/staff.

thanks to our allied partners



MCGA Board Members

- President**
Dana Allen-Tully of Eyota
507-951-5597
- First Vice President** - Jim Kanten of Milan
320-297-0375
- Treasurer** - Wesley Beck of St. James
507-630-1471
- Secretary** - Todd Wentzel of Murdock
320-760-1347
- Past President/Chairman of the Board**
Richard Syverson of Clontarf
320-760-6719
- Bryan Biegler of Lake Wilson
507-920-8186
- Angela Guentzel of Kasota
507-317-4372
- Tom Haag of Eden Valley*
320-453-7760
- Blair Hoseth of Mahanomen
701-261-3574
- Clayton Johnson of Pipestone
507-215-0427
- Brad Neumann of Wabasso
507-822-6951
- Ellyn Oelfke of Glencoe
507-848-6160
- Nick Peterson of Clear Lake
320-293-5823
- John Swanson of Mentor
612-419-9235
- Rob Tate of Cannon Falls
507-298-0308
- Brian Thalmann of Plato*
320-238-2481
- David (D.J.) VanKlombenburg of Montevideo
320-212-2748
- Harold Wolle Jr. of Madelia*
507-236-2181
- *NCGA Board member

MCR&PC Board Members

- Chair** - Gary Prescher of Delavan
507-525-7671
- Vice Chair** - Duane Epland of Twin Lakes
641-590-0928
- Treasurer** - John Mages of Belgrade
320-248-1908
- Secretary** - Jordan Goblish of Vesta
507-829-1589
- Doug Albin of Clarkfield
320-383-2338
- Brandon Fast of Mountain Lake
507-220-8275
- 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

WINTER 2024

cornstalk

calendar of events

january
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MCGA/MCR&PC joint board meeting,
Burnsville, MN

january
17-18

MN Ag Expo, Mankato, MN

january
18

MCGA resolutions session & annual
meeting, Mankato, MN

