

corntalk

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- Study finds promise in combining hybrid, FFV technology
- U.S. corn, ethanol exports increase


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Case against emissions standards detailed



The federal government should use multiple technologies, including ethanol, to reduce emissions, MCGA says.

A new legal brief explains in greater detail why a federal appeals court should support a Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) backed legal challenge to new federal vehicle emissions standards. Finalized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) this spring, the standards rely on the inaccurate premise that electric vehicles (EVs) have zero greenhouse gas emissions, even when running on electricity generated by carbon-emitting sources. Considering that faulty assumption and the stringency of the standards, they will effectively restructure the American vehicle market, requiring automakers to produce mostly EVs by 2032.

The brief, filed on Sept. 6 in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit, outlines multiple reasons why the standards should be struck down. It says that federal agencies must have clear congressional authorization to enact policies with such vast economic and political significance, which the EPA does not have in this case. In fact, it notes that Congress has already considered and explicitly rejected a wholesale shift to EVs.

The brief also says that the EPA effectively tries to have it both ways by incorporating the faulty assumption that EVs produce zero emissions. If that were indeed the case, the brief notes, then the EPA couldn't include EVs at all in its standards. That's because the Clean Air Act only allows the agency to set standards for vehicles that contribute to air pollution.

The EPA "cannot manipulate the averages by treating electric vehicles as having zero emissions and 'averaging' in all those zeros to reach the share of electric vehicles that [it] wants to see," the brief says.

To that end, the brief also says the standards must be struck down because they don't accurately account for the lifecycle emissions of EVs. And, it says, the EPA's

cost-benefit analysis of the standards was flawed, since it included implausibly low costs for developing and implementing expensive and novel EV technology.

The brief also notes how the EPA irrationally failed to consider better alternatives to EVs such as higher-octane gasoline and biofuels. "EPA arbitrarily ignored this option too, on its drive toward electrification."

Lawsuit background

In June, MCGA, 12 other state corn grower associations, and several other organizations sued the EPA in federal court to prevent implementation of the standards. The groups argued that the standards were arbitrary, capricious, and not in accordance with federal law.

The lawsuit was one of eight filed against the standards. Over 80 parties are involved in the lawsuits, including 26 states, the National Corn Growers Association, American Farm Bureau Federation, National Farmers Union, Renewable Fuels Association, and trade groups representing auto dealers and energy producers. The eight cases have been consolidated into one case, known as Kentucky vs. EPA.

NCGA President Harold Wolle said the vehicle emissions and fuel economy standards ignore the proven benefits of corn ethanol in combating climate change, noting that ethanol is an effective climate solution that's available now.

MCGA President Dana Allen-Tully said ethanol blends offer optimal convenience and affordability while providing an immediate and practical alternative to achieving meaningful greenhouse gas emissions reductions.

"The federal government should embrace a suite of technologies to reduce emissions, including proven and reliable solutions like ethanol, instead of relying on a one-size-fits-all approach," Allen-Tully said. "We are disappointed the EPA did not take this type of technology-neutral approach when setting its vehicle emissions standards and are hopeful our lawsuit will lead to a more workable solution."

The Sept. 6 brief was filed by 50-plus non-state entities suing the EPA, including MCGA. The EPA's response to the brief is due by Nov. 26, according to the Renewable Fuels Association. MCGA will continue to update members on the lawsuit as it progresses. 🙌

Farm Bill passage is critical, MCGA president tells U.S. House Ag Committee



MCGA President Dana Allen-Tully testifies to the U.S. House Agriculture Committee on July 23 in Washington, D.C.

Passage of a new Farm Bill in 2024 that strengthens the farm safety net is critical for farm families, particularly as they face challenging economic and agronomic conditions.

That was the key message delivered by Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) President Dana Allen-Tully to the U.S. House Agriculture Committee during a hearing on financial conditions in farm country in July.

Allen-Tully, who operates a crop and dairy farm in Eyota, said natural disasters, high production costs, plummeting crop prices, doubling interest rates, and tightening credit are hampering farmers this year.

Improving crop insurance and the Farm Bill's commodity title would go a long way to helping farm families, she said, praising provisions of the Farm, Food, and National Security Act of 2024 passed by the House Ag Committee in May. In particular, she noted the proposed increase of the corn reference price under the Price Loss Coverage and Agricultural Risk Coverage programs and the doubling of funding for the Market Access and Foreign Market Development programs.

"The Commodity Title and crop insurance provisions in the House Farm Bill are excellent and would go a long way in helping all farm families, regions, and commodities," she said.

In addition to offering prepared remarks, Allen-Tully answered questions from committee members, providing an opportunity to dive a little deeper into the financial challenges facing corn farmers. Allen-Tully also reiterated the value farms bring not only to the family farmers who operate them, but also to the larger rural communities across the country. She told committee members that passage of a Farm Bill with

a strengthened safety net could bring certainty to farmers across the country who are faced with significant economic challenges this year.

In addition to advocating for a Farm Bill, Allen-Tully also highlighted other topics of interest to farm families, including the U.S. trade deficit and the need to promote lower-cost, environmentally friendly biofuels.

She noted how American farm and ranch families are part of the solution to solving global hunger issues, which could become more severe in coming years as the world's population increases.

"We need good policies to help us," she said. "We need Washington to make the right decision to help producers defeat hunger—both at home and abroad."

Advocacy during Corn Congress

Allen-Tully's testimony was part of a multi-pronged effort this summer by MCGA farmer-leaders to advocate for a new Farm Bill. Another part of the effort included advocating for passage of the legislation during visits to Capitol Hill as part of Corn Congress in July. Although Congress was in recess during the event for the Republican National Convention, the visits were a great opportunity for farmer-leaders to connect with congressional staff and federal agency personnel.

In meetings, farmer-leaders noted that low crop prices, high input costs, rising interest rates, tightening credit, natural disasters, and other factors are hurting farm families, necessitating improvements to federal crop insurance and the Farm Bill's commodity title.

They urged support for narrowing deductibles under crop insurance and ensuring quality coverage for all farmers, regions, and commodities. This should be achieved, they said, through greater premium support at higher coverage levels under individual, area-wide, and novel aggregate-risk policies.

In addition to meeting with policymakers, Allen-Tully published an opinion article in July in Agri-Pulse urging action on the Farm Bill. Also in July, National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) President Harold Wolle published an article in RealClearPolicy, a national outlet, urging action on the bill. Additionally, more than 100 farm groups from across the country, including MCGA and NCGA, sent a letter to congressional leaders urging swift action on the Farm Bill.



Patrick Carr (left) of the office of U.S. Representative Betty McCollum meets with Minnesota Corn farmer-leaders during Corn Congress in July.



U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota smiles with NCGA President Harold Wolle after accepting the NCGA President's Award at Farmfest in August.

NCGA leaders from MN recognized

Corn Congress also gave farmers the opportunity to recognize grower-leaders from across the country who have made significant contributions to NCGA. From Minnesota, that included NCGA President Wolle of Madelia, NCGA Past President and Chairman Tom Haag of Eden Valley, and NCGA board member Brian Thalmann of Plato.

Wolle, Haag, and Thalmann are also members of the MCGA Board of Directors. Wolle, who has served on the NCGA board since 2018, will become chairman this fall, while Haag and Thalmann will retire from the board. Haag has served on the board since 2016 and was president in 2022-23, and Thalmann has served on the board since 2020.

Additionally, farmer-leaders voted on updates to NCGA's policy platform, which guides the organization's grassroots advocacy, approving resolutions covering tax policy among other topics.

Klobuchar recognized with NCGA President's Award

Also during Corn Congress, NCGA recognized U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota with its prestigious President's Award. The award, one of NCGA's highest honors, is given each year to a recipient chosen by the organization's board president.

Klobuchar has spent years in the Senate pushing for legislation important to corn growers and other farmers. In recent years she has promoted legislation that would allow consumers greater access to higher blends of ethanol. She has also been a forceful advocate for eliminating trade barriers that negatively impact farmers, and she has been working to pass a Farm Bill that will reflect corn grower priorities.



Farmer-leaders smile with U.S. Chief Agricultural Negotiator Doug McKalip.

"Senator Klobuchar is a tireless advocate for corn growers," said Wolle, who has worked with Klobuchar for years on corn grower policy and legislation. "She thoroughly understands the agricultural community and rural America and is always at the forefront championing our issues. It is my pleasure and distinct honor to recognize the senator and fellow Minnesotan with this award." 🙌

Flexibility urged in calculating impact of climate-smart ag practices

When determining how climate-smart farming practices affect greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from cropland, policymakers should consider the merits of individual practices, not whether farmers adhere to a prescriptive, one-size-fits-all conservation program.

That was among the key messages delivered by Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) President Dana Allen-Tully to USDA in comments submitted in July.

USDA should develop tools that allow for the efficient calculation of a crop's carbon intensity (CI) and accurately account for the impacts of individual climate-smart practices, Allen-Tully wrote. Furthermore, the agency should verify CI scores by using qualified third parties, Allen-Tully said.



Dana Allen-Tully

Allen-Tully's letter was in response to a USDA request for public input issued in June. The request sought input on procedures for quantifying GHG emissions reductions from climate-smart farming practices associated with the production of crops used as biofuel feedstocks.

USDA's request came several months after the U.S. Department of the Treasury announced its guidelines for the 40B Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) Tax Credit. Passed as part of the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, the credit is available to SAF blended in 2023 and 2024 with a CI reduction at least 50% below that of petroleum-based jet fuel. The public input request also comes prior to Treasury issuing a draft rule for the 45Z Clean Fuel Tax Credit, which is available beginning January 1, 2025.

For 40B, the Treasury Department will use a modified version of the Argonne National Laboratory Greenhouse Gases, Regulated Emissions, and Energy use in Transportation (GREET) model to determine the CI score of SAF. Unfortunately, the modified model for 40B doesn't allow for nuance in calculating the impact of a broader array of climate-smart agriculture practices on a fuel's CI score. It says that the only way for corn-based SAF to receive credit for the use of climate-smart agriculture practices is for farmers to adopt a specific set of practices—a bundle of cover crops, conservation tillage, and enhanced efficiency nitrogen fertilizer.

In her letter, Allen-Tully thanked the federal government for including climate-smart ag practices in the 40B guidance. But she said the proposed approach would limit the ability of Minnesota corn farmers to participate in the SAF market and could hinder the ability of participation in other low-carbon fuel market opportunities. She also said the practices selected for 40B do not recognize the tremendous uncertainty that agricultural producers face in any given growing season.

"Any low carbon biofuel program or market opportunity should recognize that there are many available avenues to reduce the CI of a crop, and farmers should be allowed to explore and innovate various means to lower the CI," Allen-Tully wrote. "Setting a target CI score per crop type and allowing growers the agronomic flexibility to work toward that score is the most logical approach to maximizing the broad availability of feedstock for low carbon fuel production."

Allen-Tully also highlighted MCGA's support of extensive comments submitted separately by the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA), which include important technical suggestions for consideration. NCGA offered a full suite of climate-smart agriculture practices that USDA could include in a climate-smart agriculture program as well as detailed suggestions for modeling the impact of those practices. The organization also provided input on procedures for practice verification, recordkeeping, and reporting and ensuring any administrative duties aren't burdensome for corn farmers.

"Ethanol has played a critical role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in cars and trucks, and we can do the same for the airline industry," NCGA President Harold Wolle said. "But we need a level playing field that allows farmers to meet emission requirements using environmentally smart practices that will work on their farms."

Learn more about Minnesota Corn's sustainability efforts and read our inaugural Sustainability Report on our sustainability resources webpage, mncorn.org/corn-topics/sustainability. 🙌

Webinar examined SAF tax credits


Sustainable Aviation Fuel

Biden Administration SAF Grand Challenge

- 3 billion gallons of SAF per year by 2030
- 35 billions gallons of SAF per year by 2050

Delta Airlines

- Use 250 million gallons of jet fuel per year at MSP
- Goal to use 10% SAF fleetwide by 2035



MCGA Senior Public Policy Director Amanda Bilek gives an overview of the SAF market during the “Clean Fuel Tax Credits” webinar in June.

Written by Jonathan Eisenthal

Two biofuel tax credits passed as part of the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, 40B and 45Z, are key to boosting America’s nascent sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) sector. But the recently published guidance upon which 40B is based—and upon which 45Z could rely—needs improvement to ensure that corn-based ethanol can play a role in reducing aviation-related greenhouse gas emissions.

Those were among the key messages highlighted during “Clean Fuel Tax Credits,” a webinar covering 40B and 45Z hosted in June by the Minnesota Farmers Union, the Minnesota Biofuels Association, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA), and the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association. Presenters included MCGA Senior Public Policy Director Amanda Bilek, Minnesota Farmers Union Climate and Working Lands Program Director Ariel Kagan, Minnesota Soybean Growers Association Executive Director Joe Smentek, and Minnesota Biofuels Association Executive Director Brian Werner.

Available in 2023 and 2024, 40B provides a tax credit to SAF that reduces lifecycle greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 50% compared to petroleum-based jet fuel. Meanwhile, 45Z will provide a tax credit in 2025, 2026, and 2027 to clean fuels, including SAF with a carbon intensity score below 50 kilograms of carbon dioxide equivalent per million British thermal units. The credits will go to the producers and blenders of the fuel.

40B and 45Z serve as financial incentives to help meet the Sustainable Aviation Fuel Grand Challenge, which envisions reaching 3 billion gallons of SAF consumption by 2030 and 35 billion gallons by 2050. Such goals make clear the massive potential market for any feedstocks needed to blend SAF.

Delta Airlines, which utilizes the Minneapolis-St. Paul Airport as one of its hubs, has set a goal to use SAF for 10 percent of its fuel consumption by the end of the decade. That would be 25 million gallons of SAF jet fuel in Minnesota.

The guidance released in April dictates how the U.S. Department of the Treasury will measure lifecycle GHG emissions for 40B and could serve as the base for the yet-to-be released 45Z guidance.

During the webinar, speakers said they were pleased that the Treasury Department is using the Argonne Greenhouse gases, Regulated Emissions, and Energy use in Transportation (GREET) model for 40B. Developed by scientists at the Department of Energy Argonne National Laboratory, GREET is the gold standard for evaluating lifecycle emissions of various transportation fuels on a level playing field.

Speakers also said they are pleased that the updated GREET model for the first time incorporates the lifecycle emissions reductions provided by climate smart farming practices. But they urged the Treasury Department to have more nuance in accounting for the emissions reductions provided by these practices.

For example, Bilek urged the department to unbundle the use of no-till, cover crops, and enhance efficiency fertilizers and provide less burdensome tracking and verification processes. From the ethanol plant perspective, the Minnesota Biofuels Association’s Brian Werner also urged the department to broaden the number of practices and technologies that ethanol plants can get recognized for on their way to lowering their carbon intensity scores. For instance, plants can get credit for wind-generated electricity but not solar-generated electricity. They can utilize renewable natural gas but not gas created through anaerobic digestion.

Speakers during the webinar also noted how the short timeline built into the credits could be challenging, especially in Minnesota, where obtaining the air permits is a slow, cumbersome process. A recent Minnesota Chamber of Commerce study found that obtaining an air permit in Minnesota takes 1.5 to six times longer than other similarly sized states.

Watch “Clean Fuel Tax Credits” online at bit.ly/SAFwebinarMN. 🙌

Ethanol letter to the editor submitted

In September, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) responded to a Minnesota Star Tribune column inaccurately claiming that ethanol is worse for the environment than gasoline.

Ethanol positively impacts greater Minnesota, offering well-paying jobs and a valuable market for locally grown corn, MCGA Government Relations Committee Chairman Richard Syverson wrote in a letter to the editor. Additionally, corn farmers have become more efficient in the past 20 years, Syverson said, increasing yield while keeping the number of acres planted to corn relatively flat.

Syverson also noted how the farm safety net accounts for just 0.2% of the federal budget while helping ensure an affordable and abundant food supply. He highlighted how ethanol is better for human health than gasoline since it replaces aromatic compounds and reduces cancer-causing emissions, according to research from the Hormel Institute.

"Minnesota's agriculture sector constantly strives to develop and use best management practices that help us feed and fuel the world," he wrote. "I invite the columnist to visit with me for the real implications of corn farming and ethanol production on greater Minnesota."

Leaders of two Minnesota Corn partner organizations, the Minnesota Bio-Fuels Association (MBA) and the Renewable Fuels Association (RFA), also submitted a joint letter to the editor in response to the column. MBA Executive Director Brian Werner and RFA President and CEO Geoff Cooper wrote that the column was

full of myths, misinformation, and half-truths about ethanol. They said there is no "food versus fuel" conflict with ethanol and that food security—domestically and globally—has improved during the biofuels era.

Additionally, Werner and Cooper noted how the one study that calls ethanol an environmentally worse alternative to gasoline has been debunked and that reputable studies have concluded that ethanol reduces greenhouse gas emissions compared to gasoline. They also noted that carbon capture and sequestration technologies have significant potential to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the ethanol industry.

"Next time, we hope [the columnist] visits with some of the 20,914 Minnesotans employed in the state's ethanol industry," they wrote. "They not only know the difference between field corn and sweet corn, but they also know we can simultaneously feed and fuel Minnesota with environmentally friendly ethanol and nutritious co-products."

Syverson's letter was part of a broader effort by MCGA this summer to ensure corn farmers are adequately represented on issues important to family growers. In June, MCGA President Dana Allen-Tully joined grassroots leaders of other Minnesota commodity and agriculture groups in writing a commentary in the Star Tribune. The piece, entitled "Farmers deserve clarity on regulatory authority," asked tribal and federal courts to strike down tribal regulatory water programs, noting that a lack of clarity could affect family farms.

Read the full letter online at bit.ly/ethanolLTE. 🙌

Wetland Conservation Act updates proposed

During the 2024 Minnesota legislative session, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) brought forward several technical and other changes to the state's Wetland Conservation Act (WCA) statute. Originally passed in 1991, the WCA regulates activities impacting the state's wetlands, such as draining and excavating. The law is one of several impacting wetlands, drainage, and public waters in Minnesota.

Given that complexity, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) is utilizing the services of our general counsel at Gislason & Hunter to represent the organization throughout WCA rulemaking updates. BWSR has not yet proposed rule amendments but has begun the rulemaking process and this summer, asking for early input.

On Aug. 12, Gislason and Hunter submitted comments on behalf of MCGA. As stated in our comments, new rules for the WCA statutory changes have the potential to simplify the WCA regulations for farmers and allow for easier compliance but only if implemented properly. To best represent the interests of our members, we are utilizing our existing relationship with Gislason & Hunter to help untangle the web of overlapping rules and statutes and ensure that our comments help shape the rules in the best interests of corn farmers. We will be taking a deeper dive on this topic and will make sure we keep our members updated as we move through this process. 🙌

Spotlighting Minnesota's Ag Water Quality Certification Program

Voluntary program helps farmers protect water resources

Utilizing remote irrigation sensing equipment, demonstrated here by Clear Lake farmer Nick Peterson, is among the many practices Minnesota farmers can implement to achieve ag water quality certification.



"We had already started conservation till and some cover crop practices at that time," Moe said. "I think it's a good program to show that you are using these conservation best practices to protect soil and water."

Peterson agreed. "This is one of the best programs to showcase the improvements that we as an ag community have been making for the general public to see," he said.

When Nick Peterson returned to his childhood farm in Clear Lake to take over the family business in 2020, he knew he wanted to ensure that his family's legacy would live on for years to come. That is one of the reasons Peterson and other farmers across the state have adopted a number of conservation practices in their operations, including the state's Agriculture Water Quality Certification program.

The program certifies farmers for managing the land within their farm operation in ways that protect water quality. A completely voluntary opportunity, farmers and ag land owners take the lead in moving toward certification.

"We sought out the program since we felt like we were already adopting some good conservation practices and we figured that being a part of this program would help us to stay improvement-driven and to become more involved in that community," said Peterson, who also serves on the Minnesota Corn Growers Association board of directors.

While the length of the certification process can vary slightly, there are some key touch points that are consistent among all applicants. The first stop is connecting with your local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD). You can find names and contact information for your area's specialist on the web page dedicated to details about certifying your farm, mda.state.mn.us/environment-sustainability/certify-your-farm.


Corn farmer and Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council member Rodney Moe, of Waltham, became certified in 2018 and said the SWCD staff were very helpful in moving through the process.

Peterson added that the certification process wasn't difficult and said the program's qualifications are broad enough to allow room for a number of practices to meet the criteria.

"Our reduced tillage was probably the biggest practice for us to qualify," he said. "We do incorporate cover crops on some acres but not as widespread as this. We have a water management endorsement, and we use a variety of remote sensing equipment to make our irrigation more efficient," he said of some of the ways his farm practices qualified.

Peterson and Moe both encouraged other Minnesota corn farmers to look into the certification program and said the first step is reaching out to the local contact to get more information.

"If the certification process results in seeing more corn farms adopt a few more practices to qualify, they should welcome the opportunity to further the sustainability of their operation," Peterson said.

Interested in becoming a water quality certified farm? Find out more on the Minnesota Department of Agriculture program web page, MyLandMyLegacy.com. 

MDA reminds farmers of fall nitrogen fertilizer rules

A Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) news release reminds farmers and commercial fertilizer applicators of fall nitrogen fertilizer restrictions in certain parts of the state. The state's Vulnerable Groundwater Area Map, which was last updated in January 2024, highlights areas where those restrictions are enforced. Generally, fall nitrogen application is restricted in southeastern Minnesota, along with some central and north-central parts of the state. The restrictions begin Sept. 1 each year.

The MDA news release encourages farmers and commercial applicators outside of vulnerable groundwater areas to wait until the average soil temperature is 50 degrees or cooler before applying manure or nitrogen fertilizer. Research shows that delaying fall application helps prevent nitrogen loss, protect water quality, and ensure more nitrogen availability for the next season's crop, the release says.

MDA directs farmers and commercial applicators interested in tracking soil temperature in their area to its online 6-inch soil temperature network map. You can find the current 4- and 6-inch soil temperature at 70 locations across the state and see the past week's soil temperature history.

The fall nitrogen restrictions are part of the Minnesota Groundwater Protection Rule, which minimizes potential sources of nitrate pollution to the state's groundwater. In part one of the rule, MDA prohibits fall nitrogen fertilizer application on areas with vulnerable groundwater and protection areas around a municipal public well that have high nitrate levels. Vulnerable groundwater areas are considered farmland with coarse textured soils, shallow bedrock, and karst geology.

In part two of the rule, MDA outlines steps to reduce the severity of contamination in areas where nitrate is already elevated in public water supply wells.

For more information on the restrictions outlined in the Groundwater Protection Rule, visit mda.state.mn.us/nfr. The University of Minnesota Extension's Nutrient Management Podcast covers fall fertilizer in its latest episode. The full episode can be found at bit.ly/fertilizerpodcast. 🗎

Corn's economic impact measured

Written by Jonathan Eisenthal

For the first time, the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) has measured the contribution of corn production to the U.S. economy and a larger total contribution, including the indirect and induced activity, linked to the industry. The report captured the statistics, state by state, with Minnesota among the top gainers from corn production.

"A study of the Economic Contribution of Corn Farming in the United States for 2023" was prepared by NCGA Lead Economist Krista Swanson using the industry standard modeling software, IMPLAN. The report was published in early July.

Minnesota's corn farmers produced 9.7% of the total sales value of the U.S. corn crop in 2023—almost \$7.2 billion worth of corn, according to the report. As a share

of the total national economic effect, Minnesota corn production in 2023 generated 8.6% of the total value, almost \$13 billion. The corn industry in Minnesota supported 47,461 jobs with total wages of \$2.65 billion in 2023.

"Corn farming is one of the largest sectors in American agriculture," according to the report. "In 2023, corn farmers in the United States grew 15.3 billion bushels of corn for grain valued at \$73.9 billion. For the 2023/24 marketing year, the United States is the world's largest producer and exporter of corn. The nation's corn farmers bolster the economy and help build strong communities as evidenced by the results of the Study of the Economic Contribution of Corn Farming in the United States for 2023."

Read the study online at bit.ly/NCGAeconomicstudy. 🗎

Study finds promise in combining hybrid, FFV technology



RFA's plug-in hybrid flex fuel concept vehicle (pictured below) demonstrates there's more than one way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



Combining hybrid and flex fuel vehicle (FFV) technology is a promising way to reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, according to a new report from the Renewable Fuels Association (RFA).

In 2023, RFA outfitted a new compact crossover SUV—a Ford Escape plug-in hybrid electric vehicle—with a kit that allows the car to run on higher ethanol blends like E85. (E85 contains up to 83% ethanol by volume.) Without the kit, the vehicle can only run on fuel containing up to 15% ethanol by volume.

When running on E85, the Escape reduces per-mile GHG emissions by 36% compared to regular unleaded fuel, according to an analysis by the University of Illinois at Chicago and the firm Life Cycle Associates. Regular unleaded contains up to 10% ethanol by volume. Additionally, the vehicle maintains a similar fuel economy when running on E85 versus regular unleaded, even though the energy density of E85 is about 20% lower, according to RFA. RFA speculated that's because the vehicle's engine technology allows it to take advantage of E85's high-octane and charge-cooling properties.

Operating the Escape on E85 also significantly reduces emissions of criteria pollutants such as nitrogen oxide and particulate matter, according to emissions testing conducted at the University of California Riverside. It also lowers fuel costs, since E85 sells at an average discount of 23% compared to regular unleaded, according to RFA.

RFA says combining hybrid and FFV technology could be a more efficient, cost-effective, and convenient way to reduce GHG emissions than mandating the use of entirely electric vehicles, also known as battery electric vehicles (BEVs). It notes that compact crossover BEVs

can cost 20%-25% more than the Escape plug-in hybrid, have a shorter range, and can be more expensive—and less convenient—to fuel.

On average, operating the Escape entirely on electricity does reduce GHG emissions more than operating on both hybrid and E85 technology, according to the analysis. But those reductions are dependent on the grid from which the vehicle draws its electricity. For example, in an area with a coal-heavy electricity grid, the Escape reduces emissions more by utilizing E85 than running on electricity, according to the analysis.

Additionally, the Escape could offer even greater GHG emissions reductions by utilizing E85 produced from ethanol that takes advantage of carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) and climate-smart agriculture (CSA) practices, the analysis found. The analysis included in its definition of climate-smart ag practices reduced tillage, cover cropping, reduced nitrogen applications, and use of denitrification inhibitors.

The report recommends that lawmakers accurately account for vehicle lifecycle and not just focus on tailpipe emissions when conducting analyses and setting policy. It also recommends additional research into combining hybrid and FFV technology and that federal and state agencies streamline regulations regarding the certification of flex fuel conversion kits. Additionally, it urges automakers to make hybrids flex fuel compatible and policymakers to consider incentives to stimulate increased FFV production.

RFA has shared the report with policymakers while advocating for policies that expand consumer access to higher ethanol blends. For the Minnesota Corn Growers Association, the report reinforces the message farmer-leaders have shared with policymakers: that ethanol offers a here-and-now solution to lowering GHG emissions.

“Our hope is that policymakers look closely at the lessons learned from this study as they consider future action on tailpipe emissions standards and other regulations. Low-carbon, low-cost ethanol has an important role to play—alongside of electrification and other technology-neutral solutions—in decarbonizing our transportation sector,” RFA President and CEO Geoff Cooper said.

The study was funded in part by Minnesota Corn through the Minnesota corn check-off along with other state corn grower associations. You can read the report at ethanolrfa.org.

U.S. corn, ethanol exports increase



It's been a strong year for international sales of U.S. corn, ethanol, and corn co-products, according to the latest U.S. Grains Council (USGC) data, with countries worldwide increasing purchases of American grains.

As of July, U.S. corn exports were up 34.3% year over year during the 2024 marketing year, which ended in August. Meanwhile, ethanol exports were up 42.9% year over year, and dried distillers grains with solubles (DDGS) exports were up 14.8%, according to USGC.

Given the importance of international trade to Minnesota's family corn farmers, and to ensure a robust global food supply, Minnesota Corn invests corn check-off funds in efforts to build markets worldwide. The following is a snapshot of Minnesota Corn's market development efforts in 2024. Learn more about the work at mncorn.org.

Building international markets for corn exports

In partnership with USGC and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), Minnesota Corn provides opportunities for international buyers of feed grains to meet with domestic producers through trade missions and by hosting international trade teams. Trade teams are comprised of buyers, government officials, and other stakeholders, and they visit various segments of the domestic feed grain supply chain.

For example, in October, Minnesota Corn will host a Taiwanese DDGS delegation in partnership with USGC. The team will participate in Export Exchange 2024 and visit ethanol/DDGS plants, corn farms, feed mills, container yards, and port facilities for exporting DDGS and corn. They'll also talk with DDGS traders. The specific goals of the trip are to convince delegates of the capabilities of the U.S. supply chain, educate them on the advantages of U.S. grains, and enhance their confidence in using more U.S. grains and DDGS.

Hosting the delegation isn't Minnesota Corn's only effort when it comes to Taiwan. Minnesota Corn also supports MDA's trade representative position in Taiwan, which is aimed at promoting the export of the state's food and agricultural products. Thanks in part to that support, the Taiwan Feed Industry Association pledged in September 2022 to purchase roughly \$600 million in U.S. corn and DDGS.

Overall, U.S. corn exports to Taiwan are up 162.1% year over year in 2024 and ethanol exports are up 207.7%, according to USGC. Taiwan has been the seventh-largest international buyer of U.S. corn during the 2024 marketing year.



A recent trade delegation co-hosted by Minnesota Corn and the U.S. Grains Council visited a host of sites across the state, including Elbow Lake Coop Grain.

In addition to hosting a Taiwanese delegation, this summer, Minnesota Corn hosted an Indian delegation comprised of dairy, feed, and ethanol producers. India continues to import record levels of U.S. ethanol for industrial use, according to USGC, which notes that U.S. ethanol exports to the country are up 237.9% year over year.

Minnesota Corn also participated this summer in a roundtable discussion with United Kingdom agriculture officials. Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) board member Blair Hoseth represented the organization at the meeting. The U.K. continues to increase U.S. ethanol imports and is on track to become the second largest U.S. ethanol importer behind Canada.

Checking in on international markets

Minnesota Corn has also participated in trade missions abroad aimed at providing additional perspective on important international markets. This past January, for example, Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council member Jim O'Connor participated in USGC's presentation of its first-point-of-sale report to grain buyers in South Korea. The country is one of the leading purchasers of U.S. corn, DDGS, and ethanol.

Meanwhile, MCGA President Dana Allen-Tully joined an MDA trade mission to Morocco aimed at promoting Minnesota grains to feed mills in the country. MDA sees opportunities to increase Minnesota's grain exports to Morocco, given its growing feed market and free trade agreement with the U.S.

Read more about Minnesota Corn's efforts to develop and maintain export markets at mncorn.org. 🙌

2024-25 MN Corn leadership announced



Jim Kanten



Duane Epland

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) Board of Directors and the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC) have announced their 2024-25 leadership teams.

Jim Kanten will serve as MCGA president in 2024-25, Wes Beck will serve as first vice president, Todd Wentzel will serve as treasurer, and Rob Tate will serve as secretary. Each will begin his yearlong term on Oct. 1.

Meanwhile, on July 1, Duane Epland began his yearlong term as MCR&PC chair, John Mages became vice chair, Jordan Goblisch became treasurer, and Scott Winslow became secretary.

An MCGA board member since 2019, Kanten grows corn, soybeans, and sugar beets with his dad and brother on his fifth-generation family farm in Milan. Beck, who has been on the MCGA board since 2020, raises corn and soybeans and finishing hogs with his son in St. James. Wentzel, who also joined the MCGA board in 2020, raises corn, soybeans, spring wheat, and black beans with his brother in Murdock. Tate, an MCGA board member since 2021, raises corn, soybeans, cattle, and hay in Cannon Falls.

Meanwhile, Epland, who has farmed for over 40 years, joined the MCR&PC in 2018. He grows corn and soybeans with his brother in Twin Lakes.

Mages farms with his wife and oldest son near Belgrade. He joined the MCR&PC in 2021 after serving on the MCGA board from 2006-15, including a term as president in 2012. Goblisch, who joined the council in 2022, grows corn and soybeans with his dad in Vesta. Winslow, who joined the MCR&PC in 2015, raises corn, soybeans, hogs, and beef cattle on his family farm near Fountain alongside his son, daughter-in-law, and daughter.

Minnesota Corn also thanked outgoing MCR&PC Chair Gary Prescher and outgoing MCGA President Dana Allen-Tully for their ongoing contributions to the organization. Prescher remains a member of the council, and Allen-Tully will become chair of the MCGA board on Oct. 1.

Founded in 1990, the MCR&PC invests Minnesota corn check-off funds in research, promotion, and outreach programs aimed at developing markets for corn, increasing on-farm sustainability, and improving quality of life for corn farmers and all Minnesotans. Learn more about the council at mncorn.org/about/about-mcrpc.

Meanwhile, MCGA is Minnesota's grassroots corn farmer association. Founded in 1978, MCGA advocates on behalf of corn farmers, supports county corn growers associations, and works closely with the council to fund research, promotion, and outreach. Learn more about MCGA at mncorn.org/about/about-mcga. 🌽

Join Minnesota Corn at MN Ag Expo

Registration is 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 2025 is set for Jan. 22-23 at the Mayo Clinic Health System Event Center in Mankato.

Growers can register online at mnaexpo.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. MCGA will hold its resolution session and annual meeting on the first day of the event, and the MSGA will hold its 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 one of them—the Hilton Garden Inn—is attached via skyway to the event center.

To learn more or to register for MN Ag Expo, visit mnaexpo.com. 🌽

Farmfest 2024 is a success for Minnesota Corn!

In August, Minnesota Corn wrapped up another successful Farmfest! It was a great three days of reconnecting with farmers and highlighting issues important to farm families during the show at Gilfillan Estate near Morgan.

People, Planet, Profit was the theme in the Minnesota Corn tent this year, and farmer-leaders spent the three days highlighting the organization's many investments in the sustainability of corn farming. Minnesota Corn Growers Association leaders also advocated for the immediate passage of a new Farm Bill that protects crop insurance and strengthens the farm safety net.

Like in past years, Farmfest featured visits from elected officials of both political parties. MCGA thanks all the elected officials and administration leaders who stopped by the Minnesota Corn tent to catch up. Among them were U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar, U.S. Senator Tina Smith, U.S. Representative Angie Craig, U.S. Representative Tom Emmer, U.S. Representative Brad Finstad, U.S. Representative Michelle Fischbach,

Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Xochitl Torres Small, Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation Robert Bonnie, Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan, and multiple state senators and representatives. Also stopping by the Minnesota Corn tent was new University of Minnesota President Rebecca Cunningham, who learned about corn check-off-funded research and the longstanding partnership between Minnesota Corn and the university.

Farmfest also featured multiple panel discussions, including a Farm Bill forum featuring Senator Smith and National Corn Growers Association President Harold Wolle. And throughout Farmfest, Minnesota Corn leaders were featured in interviews with farm broadcasters about topics of importance to farm families.

Minnesota Corn thanks all the farmer-leaders who volunteered their time at Farmfest and all MCGA members and attendees for another successful show. Learn more about our outreach efforts at mncorn.org/outreach. 🙌



Summer in photos for Minnesota Corn

It was another busy summer for Minnesota Corn and its partners, including the state's 52 organized county corn and soybean grower associations! Throughout June, July, and August, many held events and outreach activities around the state aimed at promoting corn, biofuels, and corn co-products to consumers, students, and non-farming communities.

The following is a snapshot of those summer events. See the full list of upcoming events for Minnesota Corn and county corn organizations at mncorn.org/events.



Renville County board members hand out towels at a fuel promotion event.



Marshall County board member Mark Blawat (right) presents agriculture-themed books to students at Viking Elementary School.



Martin County board member Lawrence Sukalski speaks at the organization's golf outing and annual meeting.



Dakota/Rice County board members Lorn Manthey (left), Pat Devney (middle), Bruce Peterson (second from right), and Matt Braun (right) pose with a driver at a fuel event.



County board members prepare to engage with attendees during the Tasseldega Nights event at Deer Creek Speedway.



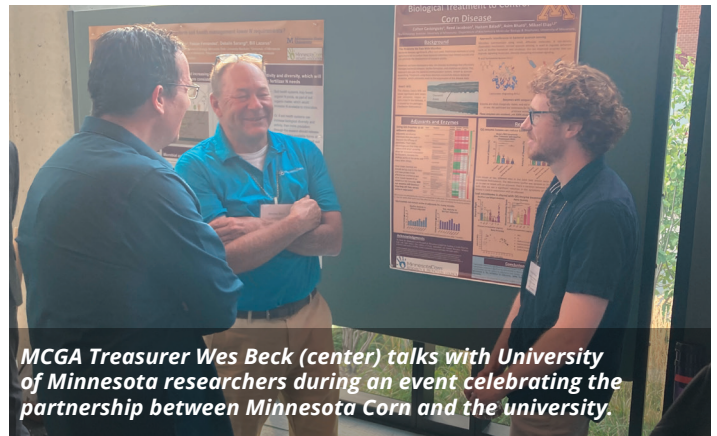
Nobles County board members Joe Henning (left) and Tom Diekmann work the registration table at the organization's golf outing in Adrian.



Chef Ann Kim speaks at the CommonGround Minnesota night out event at her restaurant Young Joni.



Farmers and families enjoy the first-ever Benton/Sherburne County member picnic in June.



MCGA Treasurer Wes Beck (center) talks with University of Minnesota researchers during an event celebrating the partnership between Minnesota Corn and the university.



Actors with Twin Cities Road Crew highlight corn farming in Minnesota during a performance at the Minnesota State Fair.



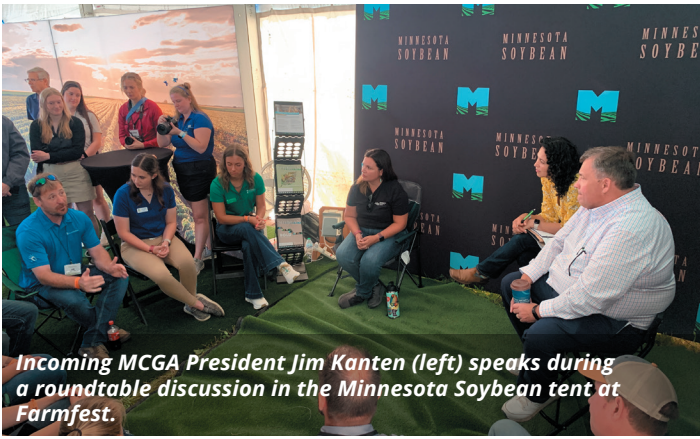
Minnesota 4-H state ambassador Luke M. presents MCR&PC Vice Chair John Mages with an award honoring Minnesota Corn's support of the 4-H Plant Science Program. Also pictured are MCGA board member Nick Peterson (left) and Extension Educator Brian McNeill.



Farmer Haley Ammann-Ekstrom talks with attendees of the CommonGround Minnesota farm dinner in August.



MCGA board member Bryan Biegler shows Minnesota Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Aric Putnam his strip freshener during a farm tour.



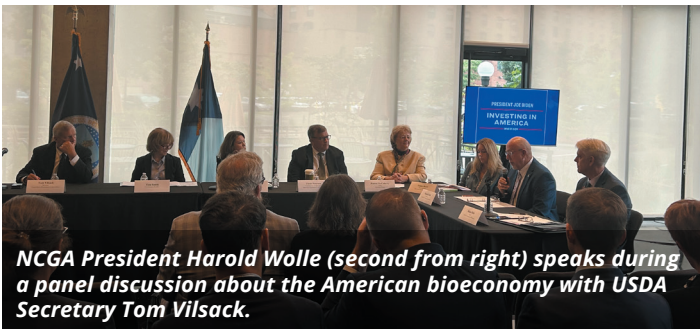
Incoming MCGA President Jim Kanten (left) speaks during a roundtable discussion in the Minnesota Soybean tent at Farmfest.



Past NCGA President Tom Haag and U.S. Rep. Angie Craig smile in September with a plaque recognizing Haag's efforts on behalf of corn farmers.



MCGA President Dana Allen-Tully (second from left) gives a farm tour in June to Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan (right). Joining them are MDA Commissioner Thom Petersen (left), MCR&PC Chair Duane Epland (middle), and Minnesota Milk VP Shelly DePestel (second from right).



NCGA President Harold Wolle (second from right) speaks during a panel discussion about the American bioeconomy with USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack.



MCGA board member Blair Hoseth (right) poses with a group that includes U.K. officials and U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar after a roundtable discussion at the State Fair.



MCGA and MDA staff accept an award from the nonprofit Environmental Initiative honoring the state's Soil Health Financial Assistance Program.

Crop scouting event gives students hands-on plant science experience



Written by Jonathan Eisenthal



Students from the Sebeka FFA Chapter pose with Minnesota Corn Research Director Maciej Kazula during the Minnesota 4-H and FFA Crop Scouting Competition.

Standing under a 10-foot-tall stand of corn on the University of Minnesota St. Paul Campus, four high school students from the Sebeka FFA Chapter set about determining the growth stage of the plants.

One student broke an ear off a stalk, peeled back the leaves, and popped a kernel off the cob with his thumb. Clear liquid from the kernel flew into the eyes of another student, who laughed and wiped her eyes. “Blister stage,” she said. “The kernel is filled, but it’s still liquid inside.”

“Very good,” judge Maciej Kazula said, nodding his head and noting the team’s correct answer on his judging form.

The Sebeka team was one of 16 to participate in the 2024 4-H/FFA Crop Scouting Challenge hosted by University of Minnesota Extension on July 26. In total, 70 students participated in the event, which was in its sixth year.

In addition to identifying crop growth stages, students identified pests, forages, cover crops, plant diseases and soil types and were tested on their ability to interpret pesticide labels. The top three teams in each division received prizes, and the top senior team advanced to a multistate crop scouting event set for September.

The contest is part of Extension’s comprehensive 4-H plant sciences program, which began in 2018 with support through the Minnesota corn check-off. Extension also offers a plant science bowl project, crop/plant science kits, and monthly plant science webinars, thanks in part to Minnesota Corn.

“The Corn Growers were instrumental in getting this event going,” 4-H Extension Educator Brian McNeill said. “The experiences keep growing, and that’s because of the support from Minnesota Corn.”

McNeill said the idea for the crop scouting contest came from Iowa. The first Minnesota contest, held in 2019, included just five teams, and the 2020 and 2021 contests were held virtually because of the pandemic.

4-H Extension Educator Anja Johnson said she can feel excitement for the event growing. “It’s reflected in the participation we’re seeing,” she said.

Kazula, who is Minnesota Corn’s research director, has served as a judge for the event for several years. He said the contest serves as excellent training in agriculture, a field that is constantly changing, adding that it exposes students from urban areas to farming.

Students appeared to enjoy the event. Natalie, a member of the Sebeka FFA team, said the skills the students develop for the competition can be used on their own farms. She said she thinks it’d be fun to someday be an agronomist.

“The skills we use here, you can put to work diagnosing your own fields,” she said. “You can see what to fix and see what’s going well.”

Learn more about the 4-H plant sciences program on the University of Minnesota Extension website. [👉](#)



Students identify corn growth stages during the Minnesota 4-H and FFA Crop Scouting Competition.

Video highlights farm sustainability



On a hot summer day, Nick Peterson stood in the shade on his Central Minnesota farm and explained to two actors from Twin Cities Road Crew the voluntary practices corn farmers use to increase sustainability.

“The solutions are never one size fits all,” Peterson said, noting that not all practices are feasible on all farms. “Each farm has different soil and field characteristics, and we’re working to manage those variables.”

The interaction was among several included in a new video made by Twin Cities Road Crew that shows the

conservation practices implemented by Minnesota’s family corn farmers. Peterson also noted how Minnesota Corn supports the next generation of farmers, increases awareness of biofuels, and invests in research and educational opportunities to implement conservation practices.

“Farmers are very innovative,” Peterson said. “I expect we’ll continue to try new practices, new ideas all while trying to improve some of these practices that we’re already using and fine-tuning. The overall goal is to produce more with less.”

The video followed the release of Minnesota Corn’s inaugural Sustainability Report 2024, which details the investments to date in projects and programs that comprise the three pillars of sustainability: People, Planet, Profit. The report establishes a baseline for tracking progress in the years to come. Read the report online at bit.ly/MNCornReport.

Watch the sustainability video online at bit.ly/SustainabilityPracticesMN.

MCGA Board Members

(Beginning Oct. 1)

President

Jim Kanten of Milan
320-297-0375

First Vice President - Wesley Beck of St. James
507-630-1471

Treasurer - Todd Wentzel of Murdock
320-760-1347

Secretary - Rob Tate of Cannon Falls
507-298-0308

Past President/Chairwoman of the Board

Dana Allen-Tully of Eyota
507-951-5597

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

Elynn Oelfke of Glencoe
507-848-6160

Nick Peterson of Clear Lake
320-293-5823

Richard Syverson of Clontarf
320-760-6719

John Swanson of Mentor
612-419-9235

Brian Thalmann of Plato*
320-238-2481

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

Harold Walle Jr. of Madelia*
507-236-2181

*NCGA Board member

MCR&PC Board Members

Chair - Duane Epland of Twin Lakes
641-590-0928

Vice Chair - John Mages of Belgrade
320-248-1908

Treasurer - Jordan Goblisch of Vesta
507-829-1589

Secretary - Scott Winslow of Fountain
507-951-0363

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

Gary Prescher of Delavan
507-525-7671

David Vipond of Mahanomen
218-556-9780

Chad Willis of Willmar
320-235-4452

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

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





cornstalk

calendar of events

nov.
20

MCGA/MCRPC Jt. Board Meeting,
virtual

dec.
4

MCGA Pre-Resolutions Meeting,
virtual

jan.
8

MCGA/MCRPC Jt. Board Meeting,
Burnsville

jan.
22-23

MN Ag Expo, Mankato

jan.
22

MCGA resolutions session & annual
meeting, Mankato