

Corn Talk

Inside:

- Buffer property tax fairness, biofuels, and SAF top MCGA state legislative agenda
- Corn farmers continue to urge year-round E15 access
- County corn organizations have active winter

Official Publication of Minnesota Corn



35 years of the Minnesota corn checkoff!

In February, the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council marked 35 years since the passage of the Minnesota corn checkoff. Approved by Minnesota's grassroots corn farmers in 1990—and increased by farmers in 2009—the checkoff has for years increased opportunities for farmers and agricultural economies while improving quality of life for all Minnesotans.

Research, promotion, and outreach have been the focus of the Minnesota corn checkoff since its start. Funds have gone to increasing market demand for ethanol, delivering new and expanded uses for corn, research into improving crop productivity, and supporting

livestock markets, outreach, and education.

The Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council thanks the state's corn farmers for

their continued support of the checkoff. You can learn more about how the checkoff delivers opportunities for farmers at checkoffdelivers.org.



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

Minnesota Corn approves 2025 research projects

In February, Minnesota Corn approved the slate of research projects it will fund in 2025 through the Minnesota corn checkoff. Thirty-three projects studying everything from the viability of converting corn to methanol to the impact of nitrogen rates on economic returns and environmental losses will receive funding this year.

Most of the projects—28 of the 33—have been funded before by Minnesota Corn. Five are new projects. About two-thirds of the projects are led by University of Minnesota researchers. Several others are on-farm studies led by growers and funded through Minnesota

Corn's Innovation Grants program.

Each year, as part of its mission to develop market opportunities for corn farmers and increase the productivity and efficiency of corn farming, Minnesota Corn allocates approximately \$2.3 million in checkoff funding to research projects. The organization solicits research proposals from farmers and university-level researchers, and it evaluates proposals on the extent to which they could benefit corn farmers and rural economies.

Minnesota Corn typically funds projects for multiple years,



Research findings are discussed at a field day in northwestern Minnesota at the farm of Vance Johnson

though researchers must submit updated project proposals each year. Results of projects are published on the Minnesota Corn research webpage, mncorn.org/research.

You can learn more about how Minnesota corn checkoff-supported research has benefited corn farmers at checkoffdelivers.org.

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Winter by the numbers

33

Research projects approved for funding in 2025 by the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council in February.

142.8 million

Gallons of Unleaded 88/E15 sold in Minnesota in 2024, a new state record.

24

Number of \$5,000 college scholarships Minnesota Corn has awarded since 2019, including four announced in early March.

About the cover: Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council member Jordan Goblisch and his wife, Anna, pose for a portrait with their four kids on their family farm in Vesta.

Minnesota Corn wraps up another successful Ag Expo

It was another successful Ag Expo for Minnesota Corn and Minnesota Soybean this year at the Mayo Clinic Health System Event Center in Mankato! Farmers from across the state enjoyed two days of education sessions, networking, demonstrations, a tradeshow and more.

A centerpiece of the event was once again the annual meetings for the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) and the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association (MSGA). MCGA held its resolution session and annual meeting on the first day of the event, and MSGA held its annual meeting on the second day.

MCGA began the gathering with its resolution session, during which delegates discussed the organization's policy priorities and finalized the 2025 resolutions book. At the annual meeting, delegates re-elected Dana Allen-Tully, Jim Kanten, and D.J. VanKlomburg to the MCGA board. Delegates also elected James Johnstad, Gregg Muehler, and Nathan Serbus to the board for the first time.

Also at its annual meeting, MCGA recognized several leaders for their contributions to agriculture. Allen-Tully was presented with the Gavel Award in recognition of her service as MCGA president in 2024. Kent Thiesse received the Friend of Agriculture Award, and longtime MCGA board member Tom Haag was presented with the Golden Kernel Award. Minnesota Corn also recognized Public Policy Manager Alex Trunnell for reaching five years with the organization.

On the tradeshow floor, Minnesota Corn farmer-leaders were on hand to highlight the latest in MCGA advocacy and Minnesota corn checkoff-funded research and activities. Farmer-leaders also handed out special MN Ag Expo giveaway items to attendees, including a special prize for farmers who filled out a short survey. Near the Minnesota Corn booth, farmers and scientists whose work is funded through the checkoff were also on hand to present their projects.

Other highlights of MN Ag Expo included a series of panel



The Minnesota Corn booth was once again a can't-miss stop on the trade show floor at MN Ag Expo.

discussions and keynote speeches. Day one featured a discussion on grain marketing and a panel with leaders from the state Departments of Agriculture and Natural Resources along with Minnesota Pollution Control Agency Commissioner Katrina Kessler. There was also a panel discussion on sustainable aviation fuel featuring Delta Air Lines Vice President for State and Local Government Affairs Jeff Davidman, MCGA board member Richard Syverson, and MSGA President Darin Johnson. At night, Rob Sharkey (aka the Shark Farmer) and his wife, Emily, gave the dinner keynote speech, talking about his journey to becoming a nationally recognized TV and radio personality. Additionally, day one included the annual MCGA auction and reception.

Day two featured discussions on grain markets and a trade policy panel featuring Virginia Houston of the American Soybean Association, Kaytlin Bemis of NCGA, MSGA farmer-leader Joel Schreurs, and Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC) member Chad Willis, who is also a U.S. Grains Council past chairman. It also included a panel on farmer mental health featuring MSGA's Bob Worth and MCR&PC Chair Duane Epland and a lunchtime keynote address by Machinery Pete.

Minnesota Corn thanks all MN Ag Expo attendees for another great MN AG Expo. Learn more about upcoming events at mncorn.org/events.



MSGA President Darin Johnson speaks during an SAF panel at MN Ag Expo. Also on stage were MCGA board member Richard Syverson (left) and Delta Airlines Vice President for State and Local Government Affairs Jeff Davidman.



Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council Chair Duane Epland speaks during MCGA's annual meeting.



Graduate student Mason Currie explains his Minnesota corn checkoff-funded research project to an attendee of MN Ag Expo.

Legislative Update:

Buffer property tax fairness, biofuels, and SAF top MCGA state legislative agenda

by Jonathan Eisenthal

Minnesota Corn Grower Association (MCGA) leaders hope that 2025 will be the year that taxes are no longer levied on the 460,000 acres of farmland that have been placed in buffers as a water quality protection measure. It has been ten years since the Minnesota buffer mandate became law. The law requires a 50-foot perennial vegetation on public watercourses and 16.5-foot buffer on public drainage ditches.

And yet that land has remained on local tax rolls, with farmers footing the bill as if the land were still producing crops. Farmers pay approximately \$12 million in taxes on that land. MCGA and other farmer groups are not asking for compensation for the lost income from those acres, but only to not have to pay taxes on the land as if it were still producing a crop.

“This is a tax fairness issue in eliminating those taxes on mandated buffer land,” said Amanda Bilek, Senior Public Policy Director for Minnesota Corn. A bill has been introduced in the Minnesota Senate and House of Representatives. Later in the legislative session, this issue could be folded into a larger piece of tax legislation to ensure its passage.

Without any cost-share from local or state government, farmers have created and maintained buffers. According to the Board of Water and Soil Resources, 99.8 percent of required land has been placed in buffers. Farmers created the buffers with no compensation

of any kind. At the same time, local government units have received over \$95 million in state money since 2017 to enforce the buffer requirement.

“That number really stands out—and because of the money that state has already spent, we feel it is past time to address the tax issue,” Bilek said.

Senator Aric Putnam (DFL-St. Cloud) is lead author of the buffer tax exemption bill in the Senate. Senator Bill Weber (R-Luverne) is a co-author along with Senator Rob Kupec (DFL-Moorhead) and Senator Torrey Westrom (R-Elbow Lake). Representative Greg Davids (R-Preston) plans to lead the bill in the House.

Sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) promises to be another value-added market for corn and other farm producers, with a number of airlines including Delta (which has a hub in Minnesota) pledging to utilize it when it becomes available. To that end, MCGA, other farm groups, Delta Airlines, and the Minnesota SAF Hub are looking to increase funding for a state tax credit that will encourage the build-out of SAF production facilities in Minnesota.

MCGA also supports bipartisan environmental permitting efficiency improvements that can help establish SAF production facilities and also improve the regulatory environment for a variety of agriculture commodity processing businesses and spur economic development.

Another state policy focus for MCGA is the maintenance of base-level funding in some highly successful programs at the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. That includes the Biofuel Infrastructure Grant Program, currently funded at \$3 million annually, which has assisted gas stations with equipment conversions necessary to offer E15 and higher ethanol

Looking at the federal government, the top priority is passage of a new Farm Bill that protects crop insurance and strengthens the farm safety net. Extensions and emergency payment programs have been a helpful bridge, but the Farm Bill is now two years overdue.

Also an item of great concern and close attention are tariffs



MCGA Senior Public Policy Director Amanda Bilek testifies in February in support of a bill that would increase the state's SAF tax credit.

blends. Thanks in part to the program, Minnesota now has a nation-leading 600 stations offering E15 and higher biofuel blends. It also includes the successful Soil Health Equipment Financial Assistance Program, which helps farmers invest in the equipment and technical resources to improve soil health. The program receives \$630,000 annually from the general state budget, with an additional \$3.5 million in Clean Water Funds, and has awarded 100 grants since it began as a pilot in 2022.

proposed by the Trump Administration to be levied on goods from Mexico, Canada and China, among other global trading partners. Retaliatory tariffs could disrupt overseas markets for American farm goods.

The 2025 Minnesota legislative session is scheduled to run through May 19. Throughout the final weeks of session, look for updates from MCGA's policy staff on our website, mncorn.org. If you are interested in participating in future MCGA calls to action, visit mncorn.org/advocacy.



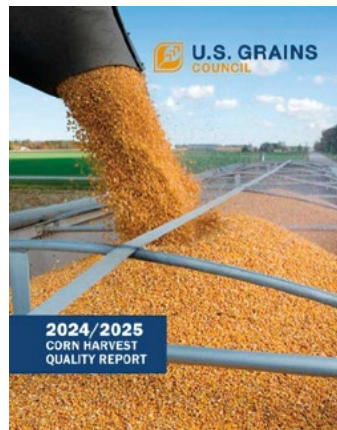
MN farmer-leaders present corn quality report abroad

Two Minnesota Corn farmer-leaders participated in U.S. Grains Council (USGC) events this winter highlighting the 2024 U.S. corn crop to grain buyers in key export markets.

Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council members Scott Winslow and Jim O'Connor joined USGC's 2024/2025 Corn Harvest Quality Report events in Mexico and South Korea/Taiwan, respectively. During seminars in the respective markets, they spoke to grain buyers about the quality, applications, and availability of the U.S. corn crop.

Each year since 2012, USGC has produced the Corn Harvest Quality Report to give foreign customers a detailed look at the year's corn crop as it enters domestic purchasing channels. The report is based on hundreds of grain samples collected at elevators in top corn-producing states. It provides a detailed

overview of the grade factors, chemical composition, physical factors, and mycotoxins in the year's corn crop. A second



The U.S. Grains Council rolled out the results of its Corn Harvest Quality Report to international buyers through a series of promotional programs.

report from USGC, the Export Cargo Report, gives an overview of the U.S. corn crop based on samples from shipping points.

To highlight the reports to international buyers, USGC conducts in-person and virtual promotional programs in key markets around the world, such as India, Japan, Korea, Latin America, Mexico, and Southeast Asia. The council typically includes farmer-leaders in these events, which helps grain buyers build personal connections with the people who grow their food.

"These rollout events communicate to buyers that they can trust U.S. producers and the Council is a reliable partner to facilitate trade in international markets," USGC chairwoman Verity Ulibarri said in a statement. "International customers recognize and appreciate the commitment made by U.S. farmers to produce the highest quality crops and the Council's efforts to offer precise data so they can understand the product before they buy it."

The 2024/2025 Corn Harvest Quality Report showed that the 2024 U.S. corn crop experienced limited stress throughout its development due to favorable growing season conditions. Warm and dry conditions in September and October permitted an effective drydown and timely harvest, contributing to good grain quality and the highest average yield on record.

According to the report, the average aggregate quality of the representative samples tested was better than the grade factor requirements for U.S. No. 1 grade. The report also showed 89.2% of the samples met the grade factor requirements for U.S. No. 1 grade, and 96.2% met the grade factor requirements for U.S. No. 2.

Read the 2024/2025 *Corn Harvest Quality Report* at grains.org.



Left: Farmer-leader Scott Winslow (center) joins a trade team visiting with a broker in Torreón, Mexico.

Right: Farmer-leader Jim O'Connor (top right) participates in a meeting at the Taiwan Ministry of Agriculture.



MPCA finalizes changes to feedlot general permits

In January, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) finalized changes to the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and State Disposal System (SDS) feedlot general permits. The finalization came after a public comment period over the summer and subsequent revision by the agency.

Like the draft permits, the finalized permits require farms that accept transferred manure from permitted facilities to follow the same land application and reporting requirements as permittees. That includes adhering to the MPCA's list of nitrogen best management practices (BMPs)—practices that vary depending on the time of year and whether a farm is located in a vulnerable groundwater area. Notably, in vulnerable groundwater areas, the only allowable nitrogen BMP from Oct. 1-14 is application to a growing perennial or row crop or planting a cover crop prior to or within 14 days of application.

Farms that accept transferred manure from permitted facilities also must provide the permit-holder with manure application records that include crop information, total nutrients applied, and soil test results. They must also adhere to the same visual inspection requirements mandated for permitted facilities.

In comments this summer, MCGA's agriculture partners urged the agency to reconsider allowing only cover crops as a nitrogen BMP from Oct. 1-14 in vulnerable groundwater areas. They noted research showing that later-planted cover crops have much less potential to reduce nitrate leaching in Minnesota due to the state's shorter growing season. In a four-year, replicated study at the University of Minnesota Southern Research and Outreach Center, for example, weather permitted adequate cover crop

yield and potentially increase nitrate leaching. For example, an unintended consequence of spring application is soil compaction which could create nutrient runoff rather than allowing nutrients to soak into the soil. Additionally, limiting fall applications would require livestock farmers to increase manure storage capacity to buffer against weather delays that disrupt application plans, which would require significant investment that might not be feasible for all producers.

units to obtain an SDS permit, while federal law requires 1,000-plus-animal-unit feedlots that discharge into waters of the U.S. to obtain an NPDES permit. In Minnesota, the NPDES permit can serve as a stand-in for the SDS permit. That's the route taken by about 80% of the state's 1,000 permitted facilities. (In total, there are about 17,000 feedlots in Minnesota.)

The new state SDS general permit will become effective on June 1, 2025, and the new federal NPDES general permit on Feb. 1, 2026. As part of the new permits, the MPCA will also require applications to use a new online Nutrient Management Tool to develop manure management plans (MMP) and submit MMPs electronically to them as part of the application process.

Learn more about the new permit requirements at bit.ly/MPCAFeedlotPermits.

Corn farmers who accept transferred manure from NPDES- and SDS-permitted feedlots must follow the same nitrogen BMPs as permitted facilities under the state's new feedlot permits.

growth to allow for a significant reduction in nitrates in only one year. Other research has shown that the lack of precipitation for more than a week after cover crop seeding often results in their poor establishment.

MCGA's ag partners also noted how narrowing the window of available days for manure applications could also lead to negative management outcomes due to poor early crop growth due to soil compaction and the inability to avoid runoff-inducing rainfall events, which could all lead to a loss of

MCGA's ag partners also noted how the MPCA does not have the authority through the permit process to extend its reach to recipients of transferred manure. They said the permit does not cover a purchaser of manure and that the new rule places an undue burden on permitholders to collect information that's beyond their purview.

About MN's feedlot permitting program

State law requires all feedlots with more than 1,000 animal

Hear farmer-leaders interviewed by the Linder Farm Network on the impact of the permits.



Can cover crops and no-till work on irrigated land?

by Jonathan Eisenthal

Farmers across the Central Sands region of Minnesota are reacting with eager anticipation at the news that University of Minnesota Prof. Vasu Sharma is researching the use of cover crops and reduced tillage in an irrigation regimen. Will cover crops “steal” water from the cash crop in dry years, or preserve moisture? Will it reduce or prevent nitrate leaching? How will the change in cultivation impact yield? Will it prevent erosion of precious topsoil that lies atop the coarse, sandy soils typical of the central part of Minnesota?

The project is underwritten by funds from the Minnesota corn checkoff.

Sharma and her team planted cereal rye over field plots that offer side-by-side comparison of conventional and limited till methods.

They will get their first data in a three-year project following harvest in 2025.

“I have discussed this with many irrigators and they are very excited about it,” Sharma reports. “In fact, the Irrigators Association of Minnesota provided me with a letter (to help expand the project to a second location)...this research idea was proposed in Extension meetings I attended, because they don’t have any data on cover crop management in irrigated soils.”

Some growers in the Central Sands region tried cover crops in 2021, which then turned out to be the first in a series of drought years.

“Does the water used by cover crops have an impact on the development of the cash crop? So that was a big question back then,” Sharma said. “If so, what is that number? Or should we be growing cover crops in dry years, or not growing, or growing them only in wet years? So that’s why I came up with this idea. In our project, we have four irrigation scenarios, or



University of Minnesota Extension Irrigation Specialist Vasu Sharma explains a research project during a field day event.

we can say four climate scenarios, where we can put more water than what crop needs, we can put less water, we can put optimum water, or we can put no water. We will mimic those climate scenarios and see how these cover crops and no-till practices impact our crop yield, irrigation requirement, and nitrate leaching.”

The project will compare the use of a 12-inch ripper for conventional tillage, versus no-till. They will follow a corn-soybean rotation throughout the three years of the project. A key issue for growers who use irrigation is that their fields are not always a single soil texture. There may

be areas of clay soil amongst fields with sandy soil. Many of these growers already balance the application of irrigation water with the potential for ponding when water runs to low spots with denser clay soils. They are eager to see if cover crops can help.

Sharma believes this area of investigation will continue and grow beyond the scope of this first project, because of the potential for conservation techniques to solve problems that irrigation users encounter in their quest to grow the most food they can, with the lowest environmental impact.

Corn farmers continue to urge year-round E15 access

After a proposal to lift the outdated ban on summertime E15 sales nearly passed in the continuing resolution approved by Congress in December, efforts to remove the restriction continued this winter.

In February, corn farmers in Minnesota and across the U.S. applauded the introduction of the Nationwide Consumer and Fuel Retailer Choice Act of 2025, which would lift the ban. The bill is sponsored in the U.S. House by Reps.

Adrian Smith (R-Neb.), Angie Craig (D-Minn.), Dusty Johnson (R-S.D.), Nikki Budzinski (D-Ill.), and Mariannette Miller-Meeke (R-Iowa). In the U.S. Senate, it is sponsored by Sens. Deb Fischer (R-Neb.) and Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.). The bill also has cosponsors that include Reps. Brad Finstad and Michelle Fischbach of Minnesota and Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Tina Smith of Minnesota.

Meanwhile, in early March, nearly 8,800 corn farmers and

their allies—including 1,100 from Minnesota—signed a letter by the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) to congressional leaders urging the removal of the ban. Lifting the ban has no cost and would provide critical support to the U.S. energy sector, overdue relief to families, and economic security to rural communities during uncertain times, the letter said.

“Corn growers need a market-centric solution to overcome this bleak economic outlook,

and year-round E15 sales would provide an opportunity to curb the weakening farm economy,” the letter said.

Allowing for permanent, year-round E15 sales is a common-sense step that would provide certainty to drivers and all U.S. residents and eliminate patchwork solutions to outdated E15 summertime restrictions.

You can learn more about E15, and find an E15 station near you, at mnfuels.com.

MARL continues engaging ag and rural leaders



It's been an active and eventful six months for the Minnesota Agriculture & Rural Leadership (MARL) program, the state's dynamic leadership program for engaged adult agricultural and rural leaders. Since Class 13 was announced in August, class members have participated in classroom leadership training, taken ag industry tours, heard from guest speakers, and more. Minnesota Corn has been a proud supporter of MARL since the program's inception and continues to support the program to help develop the skills of the state's agricultural and rural leaders so they maximize their impact and effectiveness.

Class 13 held its first seminar at Itasca State Park in September, getting to know one another, building community, walking around the park, touring a wild rice farm, and more. The class had its second seminar in Austin in December, learning about effective communication, touring the SPAM Museum, a processing plant, an ethanol plant, and more.

In the coming months, Class 13 members will participate in seminars focused on other leadership topics and travel Washington, D.C., and a yet-to-be-announced international destination country before graduating in April 2026.

Class 13 member Rachel Arneson said she heard about MARL a few years back and had been interested for a while in participating. She said she's hoping to develop her network and build her

communication skills to become a more effective leader.

Arneson said the first seminar was great practice for her in trusting her gut, and she said the group is very supportive of one another. She said the program is already beyond what she expected and that she's excited to learn more about herself and grow with her peers across the state.

Fellow class member Jennifer Athmann said she'd heard from past MARL participants that the program helps you learn more about yourself than you thought possible. She said the exposure will expand your personal knowledge and help with future growth.

"I am only in year one and I can tell you that what past participants have said is true. MARL pushes you out of your comfort zone and you will be amazed at what you can accomplish," Athmann said.

Over 380 participants to date

Since MARL held its first class in 2000, 382 agriculture and rural leaders have participated in the program, including 199 farmers. Support from Minnesota Corn and other funding partners have supported those leaders in their development.

MARL won't begin accepting applications for Class 14 until next January, but it's not too early to begin thinking about it! More information about the program can be found at marlprogram.org.



MARL Class 13 members Dustin Johnson, Emily Alm, and Emily Dehn participate in a visioning exercise during a seminar at Itasca State Park.



MARL Class 13 members tour the Absolute Energy ethanol plant.



Class 13 members Andrew Karau and Melissa Holtz participate in a communication exercise.

Speaking the language of bacteria

Researcher treats plant disease with biological control



by Jonathan Eisenthal

American farmers lose nearly 13 million bushels of corn every year to Goss' Wilt, a bacterial infection. Currently, there's no satisfactory treatment for the disease. Often, farmers are forced to destroy part or all of a field's crop in order to prevent the spread of the infection.

In research funded by the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council, University of Minnesota Scientist Mikael Elias has found a means to blur/interfere with the "the language" of bacteria in a way that disrupts their behavior without the need for chemical controls. This will allow the bacteria to continue to live normally in the environment but prevent them from becoming pathogenic.



Dr. Mikael Elias is investigating a way to disrupt the bacteria that causes Goss's Wilt without chemical controls.

"Our solution involves a protein called lactonase," Elias said. "This name comes from its ability to degrade lactones, which are molecules bacteria use to

communicate. Lactonase will bind those lactones and break them down into a product that is now chemically different. And this product is now not recognized by bacteria as a signaling molecule."

Lactones and lactonase are both completely natural.

"This technology does not kill the bacteria," Elias said. "It's a very important aspect—the bacteria are still there and they're still growing normally. The only thing that is being altered by this enzyme is their ability to communicate. So, their behavior changes... bacteria become pathogenic because they need to survive. And as part of the survival response, they will

produce those virulence factors that are in general nothing less than scavengers of resources."

Thinking ahead to the application, Elias believes this protein could be used as an additive, complementary to existing operations and plant treatments.

"Talking with farmers, we know that there is typically treatment for other things applied to corn plants at around V4, V5 stage," Elias said. "We hope that this compound can be used at that time—so that it's user friendly and requires no specific training to use."

Learn more about the project at mncorn.org/research.

Valerian to commercialize its corn-based monomer

by Jonathan Eisenthal

Advanced materials firm Valerian Materials is creating a new molecule that will be used to make recyclable plastic derived from corn. The young company has taken a significant step towards commercialization, following a pilot plant scale production run funded by a grant from Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council.

The grant allowed Valerian to conduct test production runs in a facility in Augusta, Georgia, where they made use of 300-liter fermentation tanks—a major scale up from earlier bench lab tests made using 5-liter vessels.

Valerian CEO Mike Arbeiter said the company has just concluded an investment round and is ready "to begin producing material at demo scale for

customers that are seeking sample material from us."

He anticipates commercial revenue to flow in from sales in 2026, and he credits the Minnesota Corn investment for helping Valerian assess cost factors and begin to plan their scale-up, so they can be fully competitive with fossil fuel-sourced plastics.

Nuvone, the proprietary monomer innovated by Valerian, could serve as the basic building block for anything from foam used in products like yoga mats and seat cushions, elastomers in things like rubber bands and leggings, the polymers used in plastic cups, or material for athletic shoe soles. Nuvone is derived through a fermentation process using

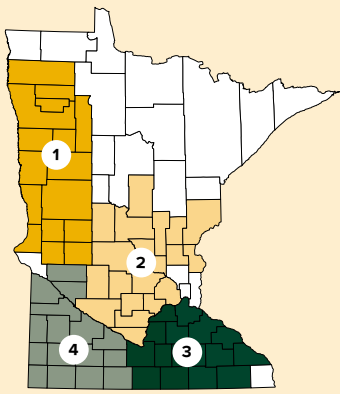
corn. Beyond being recyclable and compostable, one of Nuvone's most appealing characteristics is that it is regenerative. For instance, when the athletic shoe is worn out, the sole can be chemically recycled to capture back the original Nuvone monomer, for re-use over and over again. There are tremendous implications for the reduction of fossil fuel use, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Scientists Dr. Marc Hillmyer, Dr. Frank Bates, and Dr. Kechun Zhang founded Valerian Materials, based upon research discoveries they made at the University of Minnesota Center for Sustainable Polymers, which has been a recipient of support over the course of its



Valerian used 300-liter fermentation tanks (shown above) to produce its proprietary monomer as part of a Minnesota Corn-supported project.

first decade from the Minnesota corn checkoff fund. Valerian and other commercial enterprises represent the ongoing effort to create new markets for corn produced in Minnesota.



County highlights

County organizations have an active winter

It was a busy winter of events and activities for Minnesota Corn and its 52 affiliated county organizations, with many holding annual meetings, meetings with elected officials, and much more. Below is a recap of county efforts this winter from Minnesota Corn's four district field managers. Learn more about upcoming events at mncorn.org/events.

District 1—Northwestern Minnesota

by Luke Haggerty

This winter, District 1 county organizations in Northwest Minnesota actively hosted meetings to plan for the upcoming spring and summer seasons. From organizing field days and fuel promotional events to selecting scholarship recipients, our local leaders are looking forward to a successful year ahead.

One of the season's highlights was the Small Grains meetings held from January 7–10, which traveled to six different locations. These meetings covered various topics on corn, soybeans, and wheat, drawing crowds at all stops. A presentation was given by Minnesota Corn's very own Dr. Maciej Kazula, titled "Your Corn Check-off at Work in Research," which reported on

research efforts that have made a significant impact on the corn industry. During this circuit, annual meetings were also held for Norman, Polk, and Clay/Wilkin counties.

On February 20th, Douglas County hosted its annual meeting, attracting over 100 attendees, including several FFA officers from area schools. The event was a great success, featuring local grower Erica Sawatzke's achievements and speeches from FFA students.

As we look forward, counties are planning an exciting lineup of events, including fuel promotions, field days, and more opportunities to connect with community members. We appreciate the dedication of our local associations and the continued support of our members.



Above: A scene from the Douglas County Corn and Soybean Growers annual meeting.



Left: Erica Sawatzke talks to local FFA students during the Douglas County annual meeting.

District 2—Central Minnesota

by Emily Burns

This winter, District 2 actively engaged in various events and initiatives to support corn farmers across central Minnesota. During the month of January, four counties in District 2 hosted annual meetings. Each group had a great turnout and provided valuable opportunities for farmers to stay informed, network and share their support of local corn grower associations. Benton/Sherburne corn growers gathered for a morning of speakers including a panel of local agronomists, proper well maintenance advice from Traut Companies, and the "Changing Dynamics of the U.S Ag Industry" with Kent Thiesse. Morrison/Crow Wing and Meeker County corn grower associations hosted evenings of engagement and insightful discussions for their members. A highlight of McLeod County's banquet was Machinery Pete recounting his

background and involvement with auctions!

District 2 had four more annual meetings slated for March, hosted in Wright/Hennepin, Renville, Todd and Nicollet/Sibley counties. These meetings serve as gatherings for farmers to exchange knowledge and hear updates on research and policy developments. Nicollet/Sibley's annual meeting was a casino night, and they were excited to bring in a new crowd of members. Wright/Hennepin and Todd County will be holding fuel events in April before the planting season begins.

Many county boards are already in the process of planning summer engagement activities. These events continue to serve as a spotlight to District 2's dedication to supporting local farmers, and we hope to see you there!



From left to right: McLeod County Board members Bryce Lindeman, Jerry Paumen, Mandy Dammann, David Cohrs, Ryan Zimmerman, Matt Miller, Matt Fitzgerald, and Jay Mackedanz with Kayla Visser (center), one of their scholarship recipients of the year.

District 3—Southeastern Minnesota

by Kaylee Wendt

The county boards in District 3 stayed busy over the winter by holding meetings and planning for various events and sponsorships. In January the Olmsted/Wabasha board held their annual meeting and had great attendance. Mower, Le Sueur/Scott, Dakota/Rice, and Dodge County boards all hosted their annual meetings in March. Also, in March was Promoting Modern Agriculture (PMA), an event sponsored in part by the Winona County Corn Growers. PMA is a great event that fundraises to give out scholarships to local students. Additionally, the Waseca board will be holding their annual meeting on April 7th. The local MCGA board members spoke at several of the annual meetings and gave legislative updates.

Over the past few months Dakota/Rice, Dodge, Faribault, Fillmore, and Freeborn County boards all offered scholarship opportunities for students in their communities. Back in February the Dodge County board held a membership mailing to connect with lapsed members. Then in March the Olmsted/Wabasha board hosted a First Aid Course taught by local EMTs and attendants received free first aid kits. This winter/spring both Dakota/Rice and Waseca County boards participated in their local Ag in the Classroom programs. The county boards in District 3 have also stayed busy sponsoring and participating in local events throughout the winter. They look forward to a packed full summer, with many more events on the horizon!



Above: Olmsted-Wabasha board members Tim Sanborn and Judy Kahn with Plainview-Elgin-Millville FFA students. Olmsted-Wabasha sponsors the students' Blue Jackets.



Left: Dodge County board members Pete Henslin, Brennen Toquam, Zach VonRuden prepare mailings to send to lapsed members.

District 4—Southwestern Minnesota

by Macy Kahler

District 4 has been busy this winter with annual meetings. Lincoln County celebrated 25 years! They held their annual meeting and scholarship auction in early February and raised over \$26,000. All the money raised will go directly back to helping the students in Lincoln County financially as they attend college.

Watonwan, Lyon, Yellow Medicine and Swift counties also held their annual meetings where the members in attendance were able to hear corn updates from our state board and council members on what

their checkoff money is doing for them, as well as hear from other speakers.

There have been many regular county meetings as well for planning summer events and activities. This summer, you can look forward to golf outings, parades, tractor pulls and many other events and activities throughout District 4, that the counties will be involved in. Stay up to date on our events page on the website (mncorn.org/events) and join us at these events.



The Lyon County Corn & Soybean Growers poses for a photo at its annual meeting in February.



MCGA and NCGA board member Harold Wolle gives an update at the Watonwan County meeting.

MN Corn featured at Soil Management Summit

In January, Minnesota Corn was proud to sponsor the 20th Soil Management Summit, the annual farmer-oriented event hosted by University of Minnesota Extension dedicated to practical soil management. Once again, this year's event featured experienced farmers,

researchers, and consultants speaking on a variety of soil management topics such as cover crops, tillage, nutrient management, and soil health economics.

New this year, Extension hosted a panel about how farmers can work with policymakers and

other stakeholders on effective public policies. MCGA Past President/Board Chair Dana Allen-Tully represented Minnesota Corn on the panel, highlighting the organization's work in developing the state's Soil Health Financial Assistance Grant Program.

Minnesota Corn sponsors the Soil Management Summit as part of its mission to increase the efficiency and productivity of corn farming. You can learn more about upcoming Extension educational opportunities at blog-crop-news.extension.umn.edu.

Report: MN's Unleaded 88 sales were strong in 2024



Reported sales reach new record; more stations offering the fuel

Minnesota had another strong year in Unleaded 88 sales in 2024, according to a year-end report released by the state Department of Commerce this past February. Also known as E15 in a nod to its 15% ethanol concentration, Unleaded 88 is a lower-cost, cleaner-burning fuel approved for use in cars, trucks, and SUVs model year 2001 and newer. The fuel derives its name from its 88 octane rating.

Collectively, Minnesota's fuel stations that sell Unleaded 88 reported 142.8 million in Unleaded 88 sales to the Commerce Department. That was up 11.9% from 2023, when the state's fuel stations that sell Unleaded 88 reported 127.9 million gallons in sales, and 35.3% from 2022, when they reported 105.5 million gallons in sales.

In accordance with a 2023 state law, each month, Minnesota fuel stations that sell Unleaded 88 report sales of the blend to the Commerce Department—along with the average price per gallon.

Not all stations that sell Unleaded 88 report data. In 2024, each month on average, about 82% of fuel stations that sold Unleaded 88 reported their sales and price data. Still, the sales reports serve as a snapshot of consumer trends.

"They're not a perfect indicator, but they give a general sense of how drivers are feeling about Unleaded 88 and higher biofuel blends," MCGA President Jim Kanten said. "And what they show is promising—namely, that fuel stations are moving significant quantities of Unleaded 88 each month."

Increasing market share

Approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in June 2011 and first offered

for sale in 2012, Unleaded 88 reduces emissions, increases consumer choice, and lowers consumer fuel costs. The Minnesota Department of Commerce reports indicate that Unleaded 88 costs consumers on average about 18 cents less per gallon than standard 87 octane fuel. The fuel contains about five percentage points more ethanol by volume than standard 87 octane fuel, which typically contains 10% ethanol by volume.

In Minnesota, where more than 500 fuel stations offer Unleaded 88, efforts to increase the fuel's availability have been aided by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Higher Blends Infrastructure Incentive Program. Established during the 2021 state legislative session with support from MCGA, the program provides small fuel retailers with cost-share grants to install equipment certified with E25 or higher blends. To date, the department has awarded almost \$9.5 million in grants to 60 projects across the state, including \$1 million from the Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council.

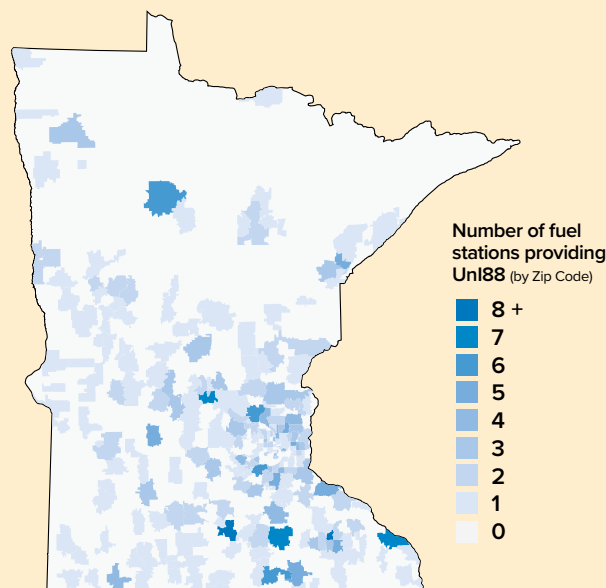
Another key to increasing sales of Unleaded 88 is to increase consumer awareness of the fuel. A variety of ethanol trade organizations and commodity groups have worked to increase that awareness in recent years through advertising campaigns and other initiatives.

For example, the "Unleaded88: Engine Smart. Earth Kind" campaign on the Big Ten Network, which is supported in part by Minnesota Corn, highlights the benefits of Unleaded 88 to college sports fans.

Learn more about how Minnesota Corn is developing markets for Unleaded 88 at mncorn.org/utilization.

At a glance: Unleaded 88's widespread availability in Minnesota

More than 500 Minnesota fuel stations offer Unleaded 88, including stations in all corners of the state. The accompanying map shows the extensive reach of Unleaded 88, an expansion that has been made possible in part because of support by Minnesota Corn.



Bridging the Gap: Why You Should Volunteer with CommonGround Minnesota

Volunteering with CommonGround Minnesota is a great opportunity to tell your story in agriculture.



If you're a woman farmer who is passionate about food, farming, and sharing the story of agriculture, volunteering for CommonGround Minnesota could be the perfect opportunity for you. This organization, made up of women farmers, works to bridge the gap between consumers and agriculture by sharing real, personal stories about food production. Here's why getting involved is a great idea:

1. Make a Meaningful Impact

Consumers today have a growing interest in where their food comes from, but they're often bombarded with information from all sides, and some of it isn't even credible! As a CommonGround volunteer, you can help clarify misconceptions and combine science and your personal experience to provide accurate, firsthand knowledge about modern farming practices.

2. Build Connections and Community

Volunteering allows you to engage in valuable conversations with consumers who have questions about food, sustainability, and agriculture. You'll get to connect with people who live very different lives and get to share and compare your perspective on things. You'll also connect with fellow farmers who share your passion for agriculture and collaborate on initiatives and events that strengthen the bond between rural and urban communities. CommonGround Minnesota works to close the gap from farm to fork, one conversation at a time.

3. Develop Your Skills

Through public speaking, networking events, and social media engagement, volunteers gain valuable communication skills. Our annual conference provides professional training on a variety of communication topics and an opportunity to

practice these skills as well. These experiences not only enhance personal growth but also empower you to be a confident voice for agriculture.

4. Share Your Story

Every farmer has a unique story, and consumers want to hear it. By sharing your experiences, you help put a face to farming, making agriculture more relatable and trustworthy to the general public. No matter your role in agriculture or what your operation looks like, each farmer perspective is unique. Your personal story contributes to the overall story of agriculture, and CommonGround Minnesota will give you opportunities to share it!

5. Flexibility in Participation

Volunteering can be as involved or low-commitment as you like. We encourage volunteers to participate in at least three events throughout the year. We have in-person and

virtual events and initiatives at a variety of times and dates to accommodate different schedules. Being put on the spot not your thing? Blog for us instead! Not great at technology? We'll see you in person! Aside from your time, we try to keep your material asks to a minimum. We reimburse mileage to and from your home for events, meals during events, and cover hotels and costs associated with our conference!

Get Involved Today

If you're a woman in agriculture looking for a way to advocate for farming, inform consumers, and make a difference, consider volunteering for CommonGround Minnesota. Your story matters, and by sharing your experiences, you can help shape a better understanding of food and farming for future generations.

For more information, visit commongroundminnesota.com or send an email to kstanek@mncorn.org!



By the numbers: Women in agriculture

36%

Percentage of U.S. farmers who are female

31%

Percentage of Minnesota farmers who are female

3.4 million

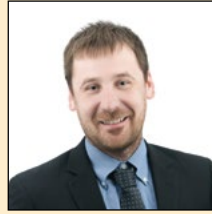
Farmers and ranchers in the U.S.



Dana Allen-Tully



James Johnstad



Jim Kanten



Gregg Muehler



Nathan Serbus



D.J. VanKlombenburg

MCGA elects six to Board of Directors at MN Ag Expo

At MN Ag Expo in Mankato, delegates to the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) annual meeting elected six farmers to the organization's Board of Directors. Dana Allen-Tully, Jim Kanten, and D.J. VanKlombenburg were reelected to the board, and James Johnstad, Gregg Muehler, and Nathan Serbus were elected for the first time.

A member of the MCGA board since 2019, Allen-Tully raises dairy, corn, soybeans, and alfalfa alongside her brother and parents on their family farm in Eyota. She served as MCGA president in 2024 and is serving as chair of the board in 2025. Kanten is a fifth-generation family farmer in Milan, where he raises corn alongside his dad and brother. He has also been on the MCGA board

since 2019 and is serving as MCGA president in 2025. VanKlombenburg raises corn, soybeans, and cattle near Montevideo and has served on the MCGA board since 2019.

Johnstad raises corn, wheat, soybeans, and sugar beets on his family farm in Polk County. He said he joined the MCGA board because he likes getting involved and providing value to his local area, adding that he looks forward to learning about the organization.

Muehler raises corn and soybeans in Traverse County and is a graduate of the National Corn Growers Association's Leadership Academy and a current member of the Minnesota Agriculture & Rural Leadership Program. He said

he ran for the MCGA board to help educate the population at large about corn farming, noting the importance of corn farmers being actively engaged in the legislative process. He added that he wants to hit the ground running as a new board member and delve into policy, biofuels, trade opportunities, and opportunities to market locally produced commodities.

Serbus raises corn and soybeans on his third-generation family farm in Renville County. He has been farming with his family since 2018 said he was inspired to run for the MCGA board in part because of past MCGA board member Gerald Mulder, who was his bus driver growing up. Serbus said Mulder would talk with him about his work with MCGA. "Ever since then,

I've always had an interest and wanted to be involved," he said.

Also this winter, Minnesota Corn honored three outgoing MCGA board members for their contributions to the organization. Tom Haag of Eden Valley, John Swanson of Mentor, and Brian Thalmann of Plato each served at least nine years on the board. Tom and Brian also served on the National Corn Growers Association Board of Directors, with Tom serving as NCGA president in 2022-23.

Minnesota Corn congratulates these incoming and outgoing farmer-leaders. Learn more about the MCGA board on our website, mncorn.org.

MCGA Board Members

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/ Chair 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

Blair Hoseth of Mahnommen
701-261-3574

Clayton Johnson of Pipestone
507-215-0427

James Johnstad of Beltrami
218-280-8695

Gregg Muehler of Moorhead
218-443-2561

Brad Neumann of Wabasso
507-822-6951

Nick Peterson of Clear Lake
320-293-5823

Nathan Serbus of Renville
320-522-4828

Richard Syverson of Clontarf
320-760-6719

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

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

*NCGA Board member

MCGA holds annual Day on the Hill event



Farmer-leaders meet with State Sen. Gene Dornink (R-Brownsdale), who is second from left.

In February, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) hosted its annual Day on the Hill event at the State Capitol. Farmer-leaders visited

with over 25 state legislators from both political parties along with Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan and Minnesota Pollution Control

Agency Commissioner Katrina Kessler, Minnesota Department of Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen, and Minnesota Department of Revenue Commissioner Paul Marquart.

Farmer-leaders highlighted the organization's 2025 state policy priorities, including:

- The buffer property tax exemption
- Biofuel infrastructure grant program funding
- Increased funding for the state's sustainable aviation fuel tax credit

- The Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Soil Health Financial Assistance Program;
- Bipartisan legislation to increase environmental permitting efficiency

MCGA thanks state legislators, Lieutenant Governor Flanagan, and the state agency commissioners for their attention to issues affecting family corn farmers. Learn more about MCGA's advocacy in St. Paul at mncorn.org/advocacy.



Top left: From left to right: Farmer-leaders Brandon Fast, Wes Beck, and James Johnstad, Senate Minority Leader Mark Johnson (R-East Grand Forks), and farmer-leader Richard Syverson.

Top right: Farmer-leaders and State Senate Agriculture Committee Chair Aric Putnam (second from left).

Right: Farmer-leaders with Minnesota Department of Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan.



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 Mahnomens
218-556-9780

Chad Willis of Willmar
320-235-4452

Ex-Officio

Thom Petersen
Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture
651-201-6219

Thanks to our allied partners



Minnesota Corn announces 2025 scholarship recipients

Minnesota Corn is excited to announce its 2025 scholarship recipients. Marie Carr of Blue Earth, Natalie Clemenson of Zumbrota, Hannah Highum of Peterson, and Keeley Runge of St. James will each receive a \$5,000 college scholarship this year.

Since 2019, Minnesota Corn has awarded college scholarships to young adult members as part of its mission to strengthen rural communities and support future generations of farmers. Additionally,

some of Minnesota's 52 county corn organizations offer college scholarships.

Learn more about scholarship opportunities offered by Minnesota's corn farmers at mncorn.org/scholarships.

The following is more information on the 2025 Minnesota Corn scholarship recipients.



Marie Carr

Carr grew up on her family's corn, soybean, and beef farm and is a senior at Blue Earth Area High School. In the fall, she will enroll at Mitchell Technical College in Mitchell, South Dakota, where she plans to pursue a degree in agricultural business and agronomy. Her goal after graduating is to work as an agronomist in her hometown while helping on the family farm. In addition to working on her family farm, Carr has worked for a local floral shop and participated in 4-H and FFA, among other activities, and she enjoys her hobbies of horse riding and photography. While in 4-H, she participates in beef and equine projects, and as an active FFA member she has helped coordinate the local chapter's crop plot.



Natalie Clemenson

Clemenson grew up on her family's dairy, crop, and beef farm and wrote in her application that she developed a passion for agriculture at a young age. She's currently a sophomore at University of Wisconsin-River Falls, where she is majoring in dairy science and minoring in agriculture business and Spanish.

Clemenson has been active in 4-H and FFA and has been serving as the Minnesota FFA State Reporter in 2024-25. During college, she has been involved in the UWRF Dairy Club and Rooted in Faith, and this summer, she will work as an agronomy intern with Ag Partners Coop in Goodhue. After graduating, Clemenson hopes to pursue a career as a dairy nutritionist.



Hannah Highum

Highum grew up in southeast Minnesota on a beef farm where her family grows corn, soybeans, and alfalfa. She is currently a sophomore at South Dakota State University (SDSU), where she is majoring in animal science. She plans on working at a veterinary clinic over the summer, and after graduating, she plans to attend veterinary school and hopes that she can one day return to the family farm to raise her own cattle. During college, Highum has been involved in a variety of clubs such as Collegiate Farm Bureau, the Collegiate Cattlemen's Club, and the pre-vet club. She is also on the Booth and Banquets Committee for Little International, SDSU's student-run, two-day agricultural exposition.



Keeley Runge

Runge, who grew up on her family farm, is a senior at St. James Middle/Senior High School. There, she has been a four-sport athlete and captain, served as president of the student council, been a section leader in concert choir and band, and participated in the fall/spring musical and one-act play, among other activities. She has also been highly involved in FFA, serving as both the St. James and Region VI president this year. This fall, Runge will enroll at SDSU, where she plans to study agricultural education and agricultural leadership with a double minor in agribusiness and political science. After graduating, she hopes to teach high school agricultural education and serve as an FFA chapter advisor in southern Minnesota.