

Corn Talk

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Official Publication of Minnesota Corn

MCGA mourns the loss of Speaker Emerita Hortman and husband

The Minnesota Corn Growers Association joins the rest of our state and nation in mourning the loss of Minnesota Speaker Emerita Melissa Hortman and her husband, Mark. Speaker Hortman was a passionate and dedicated leader, one who was fair, open-minded, determined, and gracious with her time. She was a great supporter of farm families and will be missed tremendously. MCGA sends our thoughts and prayers to Speaker Hortman's family during this unimaginable time. We also send our prayers to Senator John Hoffman and his wife, Yvette, and wish them a speedy recovery. We pray that all Minnesotans can find peace and healing in the days, weeks, and months ahead.



Speaker Emerita Melissa Hortman was a longtime partner of Minnesota's corn farmers. Here she's seen shaking hands with Minnesota Corn farmer-leaders at Farmfest and speaking at a MCGA breakfast in Mankato.

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Spring by the numbers

16

Years since the founding of the University of Minnesota's Center for Sustainable Polymers, a longtime Minnesota Corn partner.

15.8 billion

Projected corn bushel production in the U.S. in 2025.

\$10.1 billion

Total economic output generated by corn farming in Minnesota in 2024.

About the cover: Minnesota Corn creates opportunities for family farmers like Tim Waibel of Courtland, whose corn is pictured here. Read more about those efforts throughout this issue of Corn Talk.



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

Help document Unleaded 88 price spreads this summer

Every day, Unleaded 88 is priced anywhere from 5 cents to 40 cents lower than regular unleaded at the 518 Minnesota fuel stations offering the blend. Now, drivers could win a \$150 fuel card by documenting those price spreads, thanks to a new promotion from the Minnesota Bio-Fuels Association (MBA).

Between now and Aug. 31, drivers can enter the contest by taking a picture of a fuel price sign showing the spread between Unleaded 88 and regular unleaded and emailing it to promotions@mnbiofuels.org. The email must include the

sender's name, the date the photo was taken, and the fuel station name and city. (Only photos taken at Minnesota stations are eligible to win.) Drivers can submit as many entries as they want.

Find an Unleaded 88 station near you at mnfuels.com.

Send your Unleaded 88 spread photos to promotions@mnbiofuels.org by Aug. 31 for a chance to win a \$150 gas card from the Minnesota Bio-Fuels Association.



How USDA will distribute disaster relief funds

Included in the December 2024 continuing resolution was \$30 billion in funding directed to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to administer economic and disaster recovery assistance to farmers and ranchers. The Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA) supported providing this level of assistance due to the economic conditions across farm country.

Of the total funding approved, \$10 billion was specifically for economic assistance. USDA has been implementing the Emergency Commodity Assistance Program (ECAP) since March 2025, when eligible farmers could sign up for the program. According to the USDA ECAP dashboard, nearly \$8 billion in payments

have been made as of late June with corn farmers receiving \$3.14 billion in assistance so far. Minnesota farmers have received \$521 million in assistance across all covered commodities, with corn farmers receiving \$295 million in program payments. ECAP sign up ends August 15, 2025, and depending on remaining available funds, farmers could receive the other twenty percent of the total payment that was withheld to ensure enough funding for all eligible farmers across all covered commodities. The goal of the ECAP program was to help farmers withstand the current economic conditions and maintain operations.

USDA is in the process of administering the \$20 billion

in disaster recovery assistance. That process began in May with the Emergency Livestock Relief Program (ELRP) for drought and wildfire and is helping for losses due to drought and wildfires in 2023 and 2024. At the end of May, USDA published the ELRP rule in the Federal Register and set a target date of May 30 for Farm Service Agency offices to sign and certify payments. USDA will make available an ELRP for flooding later this summer.

For Minnesota corn farmers anxious to address losses due to revenue, quality or production of crops due to weather related events in 2023 and 2024, USDA launched sign-ups for the Supplemental Disaster Relief Program on July 10. USDA will be sending prefilled applications

to eligible farmers in addition to offering sign-up at the local FSA office. There is \$16 billion in available assistance through the Supplemental Disaster Relief Program (SDRP). Assistance will be offered in two stages. The first is open to farmers with eligible crop losses that received indemnification under crop insurance or the Non-insured Crop Disaster Assistance Program during 2023 and 2024. SDRP stage two sign-ups for eligible shallow or uncovered losses will begin in early fall. It is important to note that there is a 35% payment factor, which limits the total amount of assistance available to an individual farmer to no more than 35%. The payment factor helps to ensure all eligible farmers receive some level of assistance.

Women are a force in Minnesota Ag: They came to the state Capitol to share their stories

by Jonathan Eisenthal

“There are 35,623 women in farming in Minnesota, according to the most recent Census of Agriculture,” U of M Extension Educator Susanne Hinrichs told the Minnesota Senate Agriculture, Broadband and Rural Development committee.

The second annual Women In Ag at the Capitol Day took place Monday, March 24, and brought dozens of farm women to meet Minnesota public officials, including a half dozen who testified for the committee.

“We have 26,000 women farmers who are leaders on their farm — that’s 75% of the women working in Minnesota farms making decisions and running the

farm by them-selves or with someone else,” Hinrichs said.

According to Hinrichs, the reality behind these numbers is that women are a force in agriculture in Minnesota.

Farmer, and MCGA member, Gail Donkers, who serves as chair on the Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council, and who works for Minnesota Farmers Union, told the committee, our priorities are “passing the Farm Bill and funding (Minnesota’s) agriculture programs, ensuring affordable and accessible health care, promoting land ownership and access, supporting cooperatives, and ensuring fair markets.”

The \$3 million state program that supports biofuels infrastructure is very important to the farm economy, she said, and the potential growth of the Sustainable Aviation Fuels market is a bright spot for Minnesota farmers.

Donkers reported the financial distress impacting many farmers today. Estimates show negative cash flows for both corn and soybean production for many farmers, which makes financing farm operations difficult.

Jeanne Anderson of Montevideo and her husband took their passion for food and started a farm to produce beef, pork,



Whitney Place of University of Minnesota Extension holds a gubernatorial proclamation declaring March 24, 2025, Women in Agriculture Day.

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Legislative Update: How MCGA's state legislative priorities fared in 2025

It was another busy state legislative session in 2025 for the Minnesota Corn Growers Association (MCGA), with farmer-leaders advancing several of the organization's policy priorities. Below is a recap of the key issues for which MCGA advocated during the 2025 session. You can read more about the organization's policy priorities and efforts to advocate on behalf of corn farmers at mncorn.org/advocacy.

Biofuel infrastructure grants

Status: Funding passed in the omnibus ag bill

Lawmakers allocated \$5.5 million to the state's Biofuels Infrastructure Grant Program, which provides fuel retailers grants of up to \$199,000 to upgrade their equipment and begin offering E15 and other biofuel blends. To date, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture has awarded almost \$9.5 million in grants to 60 projects across the state. Thanks in part to the program, Minnesota continues to set sales records for E15, which is often marketed at the pump as Unleaded 88.

Environmental permitting

Status: Technical changes included in the omnibus environment bill

Going forward, public petition signatures for an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) must be from the county where

the proposed action is taking place or an adjoining county. A project will also not have to complete an EAW if the project falls within a mandatory Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) category. The other permitting change to note is that permit applicants will be given five business days to remedy any deficiencies to the permit application before the commissioner can decide if the permit is complete or incomplete. In the past, permit applications sometimes had to

At a glance: 2025 state legislative session

The main priority for the closely divided State Legislature during the 2025 session was passing a two-year state budget. Governor Walz, the Senate DFL leader, and the House DFL and GOP caucus leaders did not reach agreement on an overall budget framework until less than a week remained in the regular legislative session. They passed a handful of budget bills, including the agriculture bill, in the final days of the regular session, but many of the budget bills were completed during a one-day special session in early June.

Read more about the specifics of the omnibus agriculture bill at mncorn.org/news.

start the process over to correct application deficiencies.

Soil health grants, BMP loans

Status: Funding included in multiple bills

Thanks in part to advocacy by MCGA, lawmakers allocated an additional \$4.78 million to the state's Soil Health Financial

Assistance Grant Program, which helps farmers offset the cost of purchasing and/or retrofitting soil health equipment. That included \$1.3 million in general funds to the program through the agriculture budget bill and \$3.5 million via the Clean Water Fund through the Legacy Amendment budget bill.

Also via the Clean Water Fund, lawmakers also allocated \$4 million to the state's Ag BMP loan program and \$3.2 million for technical assistance and research, some of which supports the Discovery Farms Minnesota program. Additionally, they allocated \$2.3 million to expand the state's weather stations and soil temperature networks.



Farmer-leaders meet with State Sen. Bill Weber (center) during MCGA's Day on the Hill event in February.

Tax credits: Beginning farmers, buffers, and SAF

Status: Received hearings but did not make final omnibus tax bill

MCGA supported bipartisan legislation that would reduce property taxes on state-mandated buffer acres, 99.8% of which comply with the state's buffer law. The organization also supported bipartisan legislation to increase funding for the state's SAF tax credit and extend the credit to 2035. Additionally, MCGA supported a bill to remove the statutory cap on the state's beginning farmer tax credit to ensure all producers who qualify can access it.

All three of these bills received hearings, but unfortunately, none were included in the final omnibus tax bill. The bill does include a technical change ensuring that funding appropriated for the SAF tax credit in 2023 will be available in future years.



Protecting public health requires science-based regulation, not just a MAHA moment

By Lesly McNitt

As a mom, my number one priority is keeping my daughter safe. I want her to be protected on every front, from diseases to environmental hazards. As a professional who advocates on behalf of the nation's corn growers, I want a sensible regulatory system that is efficient and science based. And just like I have a choice about what food I buy at the grocery store, I want farmers to continue to have the ability to make an informed choice about the production tools and practices that they use on their farms.

But as an advocate and a mom, I have been concerned with the work of the Make America Healthy Again Commission, also known as MAHA, which released its initial report in May. I am troubled by the fact that the commission – established by presidential executive order at the behest of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. – is undermining and in some cases duplicating work that has already been done by regulatory bodies like the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and is doing so by calling into question the science or previous regulatory reviews.

I am also troubled that the report is selectively amplifying claims and concerns from activists, some who have long held extreme, fringe and, in



some cases, profit-driven views on pesticides, vaccines and life-saving medications. That outlook on pesticides, specifically glyphosate and atrazine, no doubt helped shape the draft report, which raised pointed questions about the safe use of these products despite substantial evidence to the contrary. The policy implications could cause additional problems for farmers without providing any additional protection for my daughter or other children.

While the draft report does not call for an outright ban on pesticides, it suggests that the existing body of science is insufficient and signals that the administration may be eyeing an additional layer of regulatory action outside of the process that Congress designed for EPA. At the state level, we see the MAHA movement pushing state policymakers to pass a patchwork of state legislation that could ban or label these tools as harmful.

What MAHA fails to recognize is that commonly used pesticides have stood up to rigorous scientific scrutiny for many years, as glyphosate has been registered as a pesticide in the United States since 1974 and atrazine has been registered as a pesticide since 1958. Since then, EPA, as well as other regulatory agencies around the world, has reviewed and reassessed each product's safety and use multiple times.

Yet here we are facing calls for more studies by folks who are moving the goalposts on what constitutes science to try to achieve their preferred outcome. And the stakes for you and other growers couldn't be higher. Estimates show that without pesticides, like atrazine and glyphosate, growers could lose up to 70% of their crops each year. That would be a devastating development not only for farmers and rural economies but also for the nation's fuel and food supply.

But don't worry. Corn grower leaders are meeting the moment.

National Corn Growers Association leaders and staff are working closely with our allies on Capitol Hill and meeting with our contacts in the Trump administration to share the science and farmer perspective on this issue. And our allies in Congress, like

Sens. Chuck Grassley and Cindy Hyde-Smith, have asked tough questions of RFK Jr. and other officials about the report's treatment of pesticides.

Our efforts are being recognized by the White House and the media. According to Politico, which cited our advocacy efforts in recent weeks, the White House is beginning to hold private stakeholder meetings with agricultural and other affected groups before the final report drops in August.

As our advocacy efforts continue, we will need your help, so please sign up for our advocacy alerts.

At the end of the day, crowdsourcing public health and safety or carrying out our regulatory processes in the court of public opinion won't make Americans healthier. As an advocate for corn farmers, and as a mom, I have skin in the game, and I want to ensure that the game is not rigged. NCGA will continue to push the MAHA Commission to be open and transparent, inclusive of farmer perspectives and to rely on risk-based, peer-reviewed, science, rather than Tik Tok science, as the basis for regulating product safety.

McNitt is vice president of public policy at the National Corn Growers Association.

Study highlights advantage of U.S. corn in feed milling



A recently completed study by the Minnesota Corn-supported U.S. Grains Council (USGC) gives U.S. grain marketers another point to highlight when comparing American corn to South American varieties.

U.S. corn takes approximately 5% less energy to mill than Argentinian varieties and 10% less energy to mill than Brazilian varieties, according to the research, which was conducted at the Fargo-based Northern Crops Institute (NCI). An analysis by USGC found that this efficiency could translate into tens of thousands of dollars in energy savings for a large feed mill.

Alexander Grabois, USGC's Manager of Global Strategies and Trade, said U.S. corn is more efficient to mill because it has a higher proportion of soft endosperm.

All corn kernels contain endosperm, an assemblage of cells surrounding the embryo, or the portion of the kernel that grows into a new plant. Primarily comprised of starch molecules but also containing protein and trace amounts of oil and minerals, the endosperm provides a growing plant with energy and minerals until its roots and leaves are established.

Cell texture varies within the endosperm. Dent corn varieties, for example, contain a higher proportion of soft

and floury endosperm, while flint corn varieties, which are commonly grown in South American, contain a harder endosperm. (The reason dent corn kernels develop their dents on the top is because the soft endosperm in the central core of the kernel collapses during drying.)

A higher proportion of soft endosperm means milling equipment can grind corn with less energy, which can also have an impact on equipment maintenance and longevity, Grabois said. "It's a component that not everyone thinks about," he said.

In addition to milling the Argentinian, Brazilian, and U.S. corn samples, NCI also used them to produce a pelleted swine feed containing 80% milled corn by volume. The institute then ran the finished pellets through tumbling cans to determine their durability.

Producing pellets from U.S. corn required slightly more energy than producing pellets from South American varieties, the study found. But the U.S. pellets were slightly more durable—they broke apart slightly less when ran through a tumbling can. That could be slightly advantageous for swine feeding operations since a higher proportion of intact pellets tends to correlate with better animal performance and feed conversion ratios, USGC says.

As a next step, USGC hopes to analyze milling performance, energy usage, and pellet durability using data from working commercial feed mills. It would eventually like to conduct a commercial trial in partnership with the Colombian mill from which it procured the samples for the study.

Changing perceptions of U.S. corn

The feed milling study is part of a broader effort by USGC to highlight the performance advantages of U.S. corn, which can be less cost competitive and visually appealing than South American varieties.

Paradoxically, that stems from U.S. corn's higher proportion of soft endosperm. Because U.S. corn is softer, it can be more susceptible to breakage during transportation. This can lead to perceptions among buyers that U.S. corn is of a lower quality, when, in reality, it performs better than corn from other origins. These benefits can have significant impacts on outputs and profits of end-users worldwide.

In a 2024 webinar Kurt Shultz, USGC's Senior Director of Global Strategies, said the council continues to stress the many advantages of U.S. corn to international buyers. Those include the reliability of supply, the availability of independent corn quality data, the diversity

of products available from U.S. producers, and customer service offered by USGC.

But he also said there needs to be a persistent and systematic approach to addressing perceptions about corn quality, noting that the feed industry, for example, does not reward risk-taking behavior.

"We have to give them a reason to take that risk and a justification for that risk," he said.

He said shifting those perceptions won't be easy and will take a company-by-company, rather than country-by-country, approach in some cases. And he stressed that it's important for U.S. exporters to clearly articulate the financial benefits of U.S. corn to international buyers.

"We have to get the finances down so we can get their attention to reevaluate their existing operations," he said. "Otherwise I think they'll just say, 'well, that's nice. That sounds great. But I don't see an incentive to change.'"

Additional studies

In addition to the feed milling study, USGC also worked with the University of Illinois to wet-mill samples of corn from various origins. That study found that while the starch content of U.S. corn is comparable to international varieties, U.S. corn yields higher amounts of

starch during wet milling due to genetic and compositional factors. The higher yields could increase profitability for wet milling plants to the tune of \$1 million annually for each 1% starch yield increase at a 1,000-metric-ton-per-day plant. The Council has conducted commercial trials in wet milling plants in Latin America and in the North Africa region and has seen results that show that U.S. corn starch yields are over 2% higher than that of other origins.

Additionally, the council partnered with Auburn University to conduct poultry feeding trials with corn from various origins. That study found that U.S. corn allows birds to gain weight faster than Argentinian or Brazilian corn, creating cost savings for poultry operations. USGC is now conducting a feeding trial in Morocco.

Additionally, the council is partnering with Spanish ethanol plants on a trial to compare ethanol yields when corn from various origins is used, which has also shown higher yields using U.S. corn. USGC has also partnered with Purdue University to study ways to improve grain storage practices in tropical climates, focusing on Mexico.

Learn more about USGC's efforts to change perceptions of U.S. corn at grains.org.

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Study at Wabasso farm explores impact of cover crops on nitrates



by Jonathan Eisenthal

Cover crops reduced nitrate levels in tile drainage lines by about 25 percent, a Discovery Farms study found at the farm of Curt Trost in Wabasso, Minnesota.

Discovery Farms Minnesota, administered by the Minnesota Agricultural Water Resources Center (supported by Minnesota Corn) and with technical assistance from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, studies the effects of conservation farming methods on real, working commercial farm operations. Starting more than a decade ago, the program began installing monitoring devices that measure runoff and outflow from tile drainage, and looking at the nutrients nitrate and phosphorous, as well as the amount of soil carried by these water flows.

Curt Trost became interested in Discovery Farms Minnesota by reading the newsletter of Soil Scientist George Rehm, a professor in the University of Minnesota Department of Soil, Water and Climate, who served as the program's first coordinator.

Trost's curiosity and urge to solve a pressing agronomic problem drove his interest.

He had a draw at one end of a field that developed gullies every year. About a decade ago Trost decided to try a combination of limited tillage and cover crops to try to solve the problem of soil erosion. He was also very curious about how much of his fall-placed nitrogen was leaving the field through tile drainage and runoff.

Discovery Farms came in 2017 and set up monitoring stations at two positions, one in each of two adjacent fields; one ten acres, the other twelve. For the first four seasons Trost kept management on the two fields the same, to create a baseline. Nitrate flow in his tile lines was very similar in both fields. Then, starting in crop year 2021 and continuing today, Trost has used winter rye following soybeans and a cover crop mixture following corn. Unfortunately, drought set in in 2021. Under those conditions, the nitrate

"I'm actually adding soil, building organic matter, with this change, and the soil conditions are excellent."

levels were almost identical. But in years 2022 through 2024 (most recent available), the cover crop fields showed a dramatic reduction. In 2022, the cover crop field had a concentration of 14.3 milligrams per liter, compared to 18.1 milligrams per liter in the field without cover crops—a 21% reduction. The difference was even more dramatic in 2023, a more than 47% reduction.

"I've been very happy with the yields through this whole process of reducing tillage and using covers," said Trost. "One of the things we have found in the study is that I'm actually adding soil, building organic matter, with this change, and the soil conditions are excellent."

Trost walked in the field and thrust a hand into the soil



Discovery Farm participant Curt Trost demonstrates how minimal tillage and a rye cover crop have improved planting conditions. Photo by Jonathan Eisenthal

to demonstrate that it was pillowy, and not at all hard-packed, making an excellent condition for planting—totally without cultivation. His son-in-law, Justin Morin, was air-seeding soybeans into this test field, just wrapping up planting for the year at their operation, on May 7. They plant right into the rye cover crop, but terminate it with glyphosate prior to the emergence of the crop.

The Discovery Farms monitoring stations, powered by solar energy, require no management by Trost. Hydrologists Scott Matteson and Katie Rassmussen process data from the water samples collected from both a surface flume and an uptake pipe connected to Trost's tile drainage system. Using a relatively new technology that accesses a cellular network, Trost can see nitrate levels in real time.

"Curt Trost's study was one of the first Discovery Farms Minnesota has undertaken to assess specific practices," noted Tim Radatz, the current program director. "When Discovery Farms first started,

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Låkril Raises \$3.1 million to take its Corn-Based Chemicals to Next Phase

by Jonathan Eisenthal

With the help of bio-economy companies with venture capital divisions, Låkril Technologies has raised \$3.1 million, which will enable the Chicago-based company to take its process to “kilogram scale,” a key stage in the commercialization of its material, bioacrylic acid—an acrylic acid derived from corn.

BioAA will drop into existing use cases within the coatings, adsorbents, and superabsorbent polymers industries, enabling a transition to sustainable, bio-based products without added cost. The pioneering research that led to the discovery of Låkril’s BioAA process began at the University of Minnesota’s Center for Sustainable Polymers. This research center has received significant support from Minnesota Corn. The Center for Sustainable Polymers is part of the effort by new generation companies to replace fossil-derived materials with farm-produced renewable products.

“With the funds from the Seed Round, we will now be able to make a kilogram of on-spec acrylic acid in a work shift, in a

fully continuous, end-to-end process” said Chris Nicholas, CEO of Låkril. Not only will this provide samples to potential buyers that they can take and use to test in their own processes and products, but it will give these potential buyers confidence that the process can be scaled up to full commercial production. Låkril’s business model is to license the BioAA technology to manufacturers who will build their own production facilities for sale to customers who employ it as a component of such finished products as paints, adhesives and diapers, Nicholas said.

This successful financing round follows directly from Låkril’s success in a 2024 competition, culminating in winning the 2024 Radicle Corn Value Chain Challenge in November. The Radicle Challenge, which drew investors and capital to promising AgTech, Chemical and Material Startups and Growth companies, was sponsored by U.S. corn farmers from 9 states and NCGA. Radicle Growth is a California-based platform that promotes investment in the bio-economy. Radicle joined GC Ventures America, the



Låkril Technologies Co-Founder and President Chris Nicholas



corporate venture arm of PTT Global Chemical PLC (GC), and the two entities co-led the fundraising round for Låkril.

“GC Ventures own a coatings company called Allnex, and what they’re looking for is a bio-based acrylic acid available in the market that they can put into their coatings formulations,” Nicolas said.

Others who have invested in Låkril include Evergreen Climate Innovations, the University of Minnesota Discovery Capital, and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity through its INVENT program, Iowa Corn Growers Association and Kentucky Corn Growers Association.

“Investors place their money in projects they believe can succeed— this strong investor support for Låkril is a strong validation and further fuels our ability to scale our technology and complete the necessary

steps to license our technology,” Nicholas said.

Låkril was launched in 2021 and is on track to meet its original plan of licensing the production of BioAA during 2026, Nicholas said. Altogether, the market for agricultural goods to be used in the production of new, sustainable products like Låkril’s BioAA could create new revenue for farmers and agribusinesses.

Minnesota Corn has supported Låkril as part of our mission of creating new markets for corn farmers while increasing sustainability and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Minnesota Corn also invests corn checkoff funds in other new uses projects like the Center for Sustainable Polymers that aim to develop future generations of corn-based plastics. To learn more about how Minnesota Corn is working to increase opportunities for corn farmers through new-uses projects, visit mncorn.org/utilization.

New Study Shows Corn Farming is a Major Engine for U.S. Economy

The United States is the world’s largest producer and exporter of corn, and corn farmers are bolstering the U.S. economy and building strong communities, according to a new study released by the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA). Corn grower leaders say they could make an even bigger

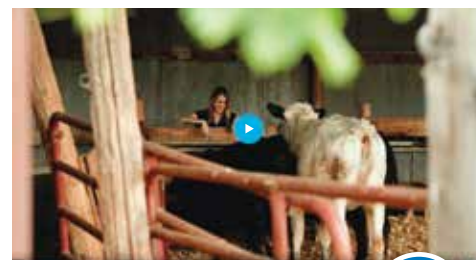
contribution to the U.S. economy through increased sales of ethanol and the cultivation of new foreign markets.

The study, entitled *The Economic Value of Corn Farming in the United States for 2024*, noted the contribution of corn farming and its upstream

linkages extended across 506 different industry sectors in all 50 states, generating an estimated \$123 billion in total economic output in 2024.

The report also shows that corn farming supported over 440,000 jobs and provided \$29 billion in wages, strengthening

communities in rural America and across the entire nation. In Minnesota, corn farming generated an estimated \$10.1 billion in total economic output in 2024 while supporting over 32,000 jobs and providing \$2.3 billion in wages, according to the report. Read the report at ncga.com.



Through blog posts, social media, videos and online events, CommonGround Minnesota builds understanding, trust, and long-term support for agriculture.



Beyond the Farm: How CommonGround's Digital Content Reaches Minnesota Families

When it comes to conversations about food and farming, the gap between farmers and consumers isn't just physical, it's digital too. While CommonGround's farm dinners and other events work to bring consumers to the farm, the gap between most consumers and agriculture remains huge. That's where CommonGround Minnesota's digital presence steps in.

Funded by farmers like you through the corn checkoff, CommonGround uses social media, blogs, videos, and virtual events to meet consumers where they are: online. These tools are not just communication strategies—they're bridges that connect modern farming to Minnesota families' kitchen tables.

Turning Online Curiosity into Understanding

Every day, thousands of Minnesotans turn to the internet to ask questions like:

- "Are organic foods more nutritious?"
- "What is the environmental impact of farms?"
- "What is a GMO?"

CommonGround volunteers—real Minnesota women who farm—use the CommonGround

platform to answer these questions with honesty, warmth, and firsthand experience. Their blog posts and Instagram posts relate to consumers and their lives. And that's what makes the message stick.

Take, for example, a recent blog post from a new mom explaining why beef is a great food choice she can't wait to share with her baby. Or a video showing a volunteer doing chores with her children on her 5th-generation family farm. These aren't just educational, they're relatable, visual proof that farmers care about the same things consumers do.

Digital Trust Is Real Trust

People may never set foot on a farm or attend a CommonGround event, but they do spend hours every day on their phones. In fact, studies show that trust in food sources is increasingly shaped by what consumers see and hear online. Research has shown that consumers are actually more trusting of "people who are like me" than industry experts! That's why CommonGround's digital work is so important. It not only informs, but also builds trust through personal, consistent storytelling and connection.

It also means your voice is heard. The women of CommonGround aren't paid influencers or spokespeople. They are your neighbors, your fellow farmers, your family, you. When they share their stories online, they're sharing yours too.

Your Support Makes This Possible

As a farmer who contributes to the checkoff, you make these connections possible. Every Instagram post, every blog article, every video is an opportunity to get our voice in front of consumers. And the return on that investment is more than clicks or likes. It's understanding, trust, and long-term support for agriculture.

CommonGround's mission is simple but powerful: real farmers, real conversations. In today's digital world full of noise, your story is exactly what people need to hear.

Interested in seeing the impact for yourself?

Follow CommonGround Minnesota on Instagram (@[commongroundminn](#)) or Facebook (@[CommonGroundMinnesota](#)), check out the latest blog at [commongroundminnesota.com/blog](#), or share a post with

your own community. You are not just growing food- you're growing trust in agriculture.



Upcoming CommonGround Events:

July-August
Book Club- virtual

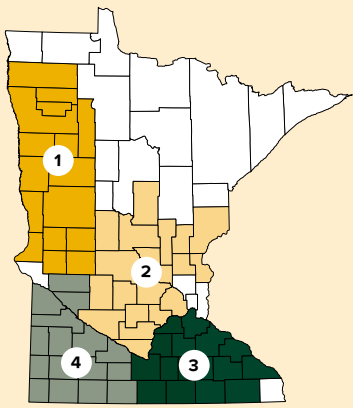
August 5-7
FarmFest- Morgan, MN

August 20
Grow.Harvest.Eat. at Farm at the Arb- Chanhassen, MN

September
Canning Class- Virtual

December 16
Holiday Cookie Bake- Eden Prairie, MN

For more information and details on all of our events, check out our events page on our website at [commongroundminnesota.com/events](#).



County highlights

A busy spring and early summer for county organizations



There's been no shortage of activity so far this summer for Minnesota Corn and its 52 affiliated county organizations, with many holding annual meetings, golf outings, fuel events, and more. Below is a recap of county efforts this spring and early summer from Minnesota Corn's district field managers. Learn more about upcoming events at mncorn.org/events.

District 1—Northwestern Minnesota

Weather was mostly ideal for planting and spraying this spring, allowing many growers to hit the ground running—and still make time for local summer events.

On May 31, members of the Clay/Wilkin County took a break from the field to participate in Breakfast on the Farm in Hawley, where more than 3,000 attendees enjoyed pancakes and a wide range of ag-related activities. Just a few weeks later, on June 17, Norman County hosted Dinner with a Farmer to kick off their county fair. With over 320 people served, there were few leftovers—but no one left hungry.

Looking ahead, the Pennington/Red Lake County was

set to host a “shade and free cold-water retreat” at the Pennington County Fair, July 16–20, offering a cool place for fairgoers to relax and learn about local corn and soybean farming.

Douglas County has a full summer schedule with two fuel promotions, participation in several local parades, and a Tillage Demo Day planned for August 19. Pope County will hold its annual plot day on September 2, while Traverse County is preparing for its annual meeting at the end of August.

Across District 1, county associations will be represented in more than 20 parades throughout the summer showcasing local support for agriculture and their communities.

District 2—Central Minnesota

District 2 corn growers are making the most of the summer by staying active with a variety of events and outreach opportunities across Central Minnesota. Renville County kicked things off by hosting a fuel promotion event in Renville, aligning with the town's celebration. It was a great opportunity to highlight the benefits of ethanol while engaging with the local community. Benton/Sherburne held their second annual member appreciation night which brought together growers for an evening of connection. Members enjoyed a delicious supper provided by a local food truck, fun giveaways and good company!

Also this summer, many District 2 counties are participating in local parades and county fairs, proudly representing corn farmers across the state. Other additional summer events include golf outings, fuel promotion events, member picnics, field days and annual meetings.

In August, be sure to catch Kandiyohi County at Rockin' Robbins in Willmar, where they'll be handing out sweet corn flavored ice cream! This is a fun and flavorful way to engage with families and individuals who may not be familiar with farming. Morrison/Crow Wing will be hosting two field days for their irrigated and non-irrigated plots. These plot days offer a hands-on look at local research and growing practices. It is a great opportunity for growers to share insights and production strategies for the upcoming season.

District 2 county events aim to strengthen relationships, promote the value of farming and create connections between growers and the public.

To stay up to date with all the exciting happenings in District 2 this summer, check out the Minnesota Corn calendar!



Above: More than 3,000 people attended the annual Breakfast on the Farm event in Hawley on May 31.



Left: The Norman County Corn and Soybean Growers Association hosted the annual dinner with the farmer event before the county fair.



Renville County board members Carlton Gustafson (second from left) and Doug Toreen (right) talk with a couple at the pump during a fuel promotion event.

District 3—Southeastern Minnesota

Things are heating up in District 3 this summer with many events on the calendar. Starting off strong in June, Goodhue and Faribault counties held their annual meetings. Attendees heard updates from state board and council members and had a chance to network with fellow growers. Also in June, Waseca County participated in Taste of the Farm at the Waseca County Fairgrounds where they set up an educational scavenger hunt for attendees.

July marks another month full of exciting events for District 3. On July 18 Olmsted/Wabasha is sponsoring a Rochester Honkers baseball game. The first 1,000 people at the stadium will receive branded drawstring bags filled with additional swag.

A summer highlight in Southeast Minnesota is Tasseldega Nights, which will be held on Saturday July 19 at Deer Creek Speedway. Sponsored by Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Goodhue, Mower, and Olmsted/Wabasha counties, the event is free admission and fun for all. Be sure to arrive early to snag

some giveaways from the corn growers booth and learn about ethanol.

On July 31, Dakota/Rice will be participating in Passport to Agriculture at the Rice County Fairgrounds. Passport to Agriculture is a free, hands-on event, open to all ages to explore the different areas of agriculture.

This August, four counties will be hosting golf events, which are great fundraisers for their county scholarship programs. Both Dodge and Dakota/Rice counties will be holding fuel promotion events, offering discounts on Unleaded 88 and E85. Many counties will also be sponsoring programs at their county fairs, participating in parades, and much more throughout the summer.

Looking ahead to September, several counties will be hosting plot days as well. The county corn grower boards in Southeast Minnesota strive to serve their members and put together engaging activities for their communities. Come join us at some of these great events!



Left: Farmington FFA student Logan helped build Dakota/Rice's corn go-cart for his SAE project. Dakota/Rice uses the go-cart for parades and the local county fairs.

Below: Northfield FFA students help work the Dakota/Rice food trailer at the Dakota County Jackpot Cattle show in Farmington.



District 4—Southwestern Minnesota

It will be a busy summer in District 4, with county organizations across the region holding events to celebrate agriculture and farming.

On June 29, the Cottonwood, Faribault, Jackson, Martin, and Watonwan county organizations partnered with Fairmont Raceway on the Salute to Ag Night event, allowing the track to offer free admission into the grandstands.

On July 12, Martin County held a fuel promotion event at Trimont Town Center, highlighting the benefits of ethanol-blended fuels to drivers. The county will hold its golf outing and annual on July 22, offering attendees the chance to win door prizes such as Minnesota Twins tickets. On July 17, Pipestone County will hold its golf outing and annual meeting.

MCR&PC chair joins grain export mission to Canada



MCR&PC Chair Duane Epland (center back) was among the farmer-leaders and Grains Council staff to participate in the Grain Export Mission to Canada.



In June, Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council (MCR&PC) Chair Duane Epland, who farms in Twin Lakes, joined the U.S. Grains Council's Grain Export Mission to Toronto and Ottawa. He joined farmer-leaders from other states and USGC staff to meet with key end-users, council partners, trading company representatives, and U.S. and local government officials.

The mission began with a visit to a feed mill followed by a visit to the Ontario Agribusiness Association, which represents the province's crop input, grain, and feed industry. The next day, the group met with representatives of Canada's department of natural resources and agriculture and agri-food.

On the final day of the mission, the group met with staff from the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service in Ottawa, two Canadian senators, and representatives of Canada's department of environment and climate change.

Canada is a major export destination for U.S. ethanol and other feed grains due to the USMCA trade agreement and its proximity to northern U.S. states. In the 2023-24 marketing year, the U.S. exported \$1.5 billion worth of ethanol, \$517 million worth of corn, and \$183 million worth of DDGS to Canada.

Learn more about USGC's efforts in Canada at [grains.org](https://www.usgc.org).

Report analyzes financial position of MN farms



Editor's note: As part of its mission to identify opportunities for farmers while improving quality of life, Minnesota Corn is committed to increasing public understanding of the state's agriculture economy. The organization does this through targeted public outreach and educational efforts.

A critical component of agriculture is farm finances. For many family farmers, 2024 was a challenging year. The following story summarizes the financial picture for the state's family farmers. Look for additional information about farm finances on our website in the coming weeks.

For Minnesota farms, 2024 was their least profitable year in decades, and it was a particularly bad year for crop producers, according to a University of Minnesota analysis.

Farms have robust—though declining—levels of working capital to meet short-term obligations, according to the analysis, which was conducted by the Center for Farm Financial Management. (Working capital is considered cash and assets such as grain, inputs, and accounts receivable that can easily be converted to cash without losing their value.) Farms also generally have adequate levels of assets to meet long-term obligations, the analysis found.

Pauline Van Nurden, a University of Minnesota Extension economist and coauthor of the analysis, said the report shows that farms are relatively well positioned to withstand another potentially challenging year in 2025.

But Van Nurden also said she thinks this past winter was a difficult one for many farmers as they sought operating loans and that 2025 will present financial challenges for growers.

Precipitous income drop

Each year, the Center for Farm Management conducts the analysis utilizing data from Minnesota farms enrolled in a farm business management education program. For 2024, the analysis incorporated data from 2,349 operations, including 1,359 crop farms.

The median income for farms in the dataset was \$21,964 in 2024, down 51% year over year and at the lowest level since at least 2000. For crop farms, the drop in median income was even more precipitous at 95%—down to just \$2,371. For comparison, the median net farm income for crop producers just two years prior was \$236,508.

The analysis attributed the dramatic decline in crop farm profitability to lower crop prices, difficulties in grain marketing, and widespread yield issues from a very wet spring and late summer drought. For example, the average corn yield of farms in the database was down 6% year over year, and corn prices received dropped 26%.

The analysis also notes that without payments from the American Relief Act, crop farms would have lost money in 2024. (The analysis counts American Relief Act payments as 2024 income, even though they won't be received until 2025.)

Livestock farms fared better, given that commodity prices rose and costs, especially feed costs, declined, according to the analysis. The median net dairy farm income rose over 300% to \$126,897, according to the analysis, and the median net hog operation income increased to \$101,079 in 2024. (The median hog operation lost \$33,041 in 2023.)

For beef operations, the median net farm income fell from \$46,172 in 2023 to \$29,282 in 2024.

In total, the median farm in the dataset finished the year with over \$383,000 in working capital, down 16% from 2023. Still, given median gross revenue, and median operating expenses, that was considered a strong amount of working capital, according to the analysis.

Meanwhile, the median net worth of farms in the dataset

was nearly \$2.9 million, up \$150,000 from 2023. That was considered adequate, according to the analysis, given levels of debt and median equity in an operation.

Family living expenses benchmarked

The analysis also benchmarks family expenses for farm operations in the dataset. For 2024, it included expenses from 364 operations, with the average farm family spending \$74,078 on living expenses, including

over \$11,400 on food and meals and \$10,200 on medical care and health insurance. The average farm also spent \$25,791 on income and social security taxes, and \$13,763 on non-farm real estate, household items, and personal vehicles.

In total, a farm needed over \$113,000 to cover family consumption and taxes, the analysis found. Farms partially offset these costs with nonfarm income—the median nonfarm income among the 364 operations was \$47,992. But for

the median crop farm, working capital was likely required to cover tens of thousands of dollars in family expenses.

About the Center for Farm Financial Management

Operated out of the University of Minnesota's Department of Applied Economics, the Center for Farm Financial Management develops applications and educational programs that provide educators, lenders, and farmers resources to manage

their operations. That includes FINPACK, the center's flagship software product.

The center maintains a database of aggregate farm finances drawn from farm business management programs throughout the country that use FINPACK. The database is known as FINBIN.

Learn more about FINBIN at finbin.umn.edu.

Thanks to Brian, Adam Thalmann for hosting teacher tour!

Minnesota Corn thanks former farmer-leader Brian Thalmann and his son Adam for hosting a group of teachers from across the country for a tour of their farm on June 24. The teachers toured the Thalmann's farm as part of the National Agriculture in the Classroom conference, which was held last month in Minneapolis. Minnesota Corn was proud to sponsor the conference as part of its mission of reaching the nonfarming public with positive information about agriculture. Read a recap of the event on our website.



Brian Thalmann explains the seed business during a teacher tour on June 24.



Adam Thalmann shows the teachers a component of his planter.



A teacher takes a selfie in front of the sprayer in the Thalmann's equipment shop.

Waibel rejoins MCGA board of directors

by Jonathan Eisenthal

Tim Waibel, a Courtland, Minnesota, crops and livestock producer, has rejoined Minnesota Corn Growers Association Board of Directors, to represent District 2 in southern Minnesota. He fills the remainder of the term for director Elyn Oelfke.

This is not Waibel's first turn as a farmer-leader. He previously served on the MCGA board for nine years, and then cycled off, per the organization bylaws.

He returns with a sense of mission and eagerness to help lead the discussion of policy at the state level. Chief among his concerns are land use issues. In particular, the state purchase and permanent removal of land from agricultural use is problematic at a number of levels, Waibel believes. He approves of programs like CRP and EQIP, which support farmers' decisions to retire ecologically sensitive land, through the use of non-permanent easements. Because the easements are not permanent, these programs build in appropriate flexibility in the approach to land use.

But Waibel sees programs where government and private



Tim Waibel

organizations work together to permanently retire arable land as an approach that causes problems for both the food production system and the tax revenues of local units of government.

"The state of Minnesota is purchasing a lot of farmland and people are unaware of that," Waibel said. "We're not talking just farmland with a small wetland on it. We're talking large tracts of land, in many cases hundreds acres of very good farmland. For a lifelong farmer, it's hard for me to watch that."

In Minnesota, many farmers struggle to put together enough farmland to maintain an economically sustainable farm. Reducing the supply of land drives up land prices, which hits beginning farmers particularly hard. Another local

concern is the fact that cities, counties and school districts in greater Minnesota already face fiscal challenges. Removing land from production through state government auspices can mean a loss of revenue to these government units.

From a larger perspective, the world's stock of productive farmland is already shrinking while at the same time world population is growing. Retir-

ing productive farmland under these circumstances is misguided, according to Waibel.

"You know, I can see retiring land in certain areas where it's beneficial to everybody," Waibel said. "But when we start taking bigger tracts of land out of farming and this is being done without transparency and without attention to long-term consequences, it may be causing unintended harms."

Thanks to Duane Epland, John Mages!



Duane Epland (left) hands the MCR&PC chair's gavel to John Mages.

Minnesota Corn would like to thank to Duane Epland and John Mages for their ongoing efforts on behalf of Minnesota corn farmers! Duane served as Minnesota Corn Research & Promotion Council chair in 2024-25, and John started his term as chair on July 1. You can learn more about the council on our website, mncorn.org.

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Woman in Ag

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lamb, chicken, seasonal produce, and other farm products. In addition, she has been a local, part-time ag educator. She was eager to convey to realities — the joys and the challenges — of farming in Minnesota.

According to Anderson getting adequate health-care insurance coverage and finding day-care for children are challenges for rural women that very much go together and in fact amplify the challenges in both areas, because farm women (and many male farmers, too), work off the farm in order to obtain health

insurance, and that extra jobs (sometimes two or three jobs) means paying professionals to take care of the children.

“Can your self-employed business, agriculture or not, even make enough to pay for your family's health insurance?” Anderson said this is a question facing many rural families.

Anderson described another of farming's most challenging aspects, and something those outside agriculture may not appreciate: the lack of certainty when it comes to revenue and expenses on the farm.

“There's no guarantees in your expense budget,” Anderson said. “You try really hard.

You're at the start of the year, and this (budget) is what you're going to follow. Well, the tractor didn't listen, and the tractor broke down, and so now you have to put money into that. Can't farm without a tractor. Maybe you've replaced every single wheel on that hay rig, and it's still not doing its job. Time for a new-to-you hay rig.”

The thing that has carried the Andersons and kept them in business has been the suite of state and federal programs that provide grants for farmers like them.

Anderson made a plea for lawmakers to do what they can to preserve those programs, because they really make a difference.

Women in Ag Day at the Capitol was organized by Susanne Hinrichs, Agricultural Business Management Extension Educator, University of Minnesota Extension, and by Whitney Place, director of Government Relations & Agriculture Outreach, University of Minnesota Extension. Women in Ag at the Capitol is hosted by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and University of Minnesota Extension.

Hinrichs summed up the goal of offering a Women In Ag Day at the Capitol: “We want to work with legislators and other leaders to help inspire more women to pursue dreams of farming or other ag-related work.”

Wabasso Farm

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we were focused on capturing and establishing levels of soil and nutrient loss across the state for farms and practices that were common to the area. This approach established a baseline of data from real world farms, tracking these concerns across different weather conditions and regional differences. The baseline data showed the need to look more closely at nitrate loss in tile drainage. Cover crops have been promoted to address many water issues

in the last decade or so. We wanted to test out that practice to see what was happening as there hasn't been much data collected on real, working farms. Curt's farm, and this study design using paired basins of equal size and similar productivity, was the perfect situation to get some data on cover crops in a corn/soybean situation in Minnesota.”

Trost takes a pragmatic approach, remaining skeptical of split applications of fertilizer for his operation, while finding that reduced tillage works very well.

His approach to cover crops has evolved. Attempts at flying on seed mixtures didn't result in as much biomass as he wanted, so he switched over to planting winter rye after harvest. While it didn't make much headway in the fall, it produced hundreds of pounds of surface biomass per acre in the spring—helping in the spring months when excessive rainfall can cause erosion and nutrient loss.

“The main challenge with cover crops in Minnesota on corn and soybean farms is getting them established in the fall

because there is not much of a time period for germination and growth,” Radatz observed. “Compared to other parts of the country or other farms that harvest crops earlier in the year (think corn silage), this is a huge challenge. I was very curious with the limited cover crop growth in the spring at Curt's farm how it would impact water quality and we have been pleasantly surprised that the impacts are this good.”

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Thanks to our allied partners





Farmers sign up for MCGA membership inside the Minnesota Corn Farmfest tent.

Join Minnesota Corn at Farmfest 2025!

Minnesota will once again have an active presence at Farmfest, the annual agricultural show held at Gilfillan Estate near Morgan. This year's event will be Aug. 5-7.

Stop by the Minnesota Corn tent at the corner of Seed Row and Seventh Street to learn about the many ways corn growers are driving innovation, supporting rural communities, and ensuring a prosperous future for farmers and their families. That includes through

investments in the Minnesota corn checkoff program that are delivering opportunities for homegrown ethanol, building export markets, and researching new uses for corn.

Renew or sign up for Minnesota Corn Growers Association membership during Farmfest to earn a special reward. Catch up with old friends and, of course, don't forget to grab a free sample of the famous sweet corn ice cream. Made by the University of Minnesota, this

delicious ice cream is the perfect snack to beat the summer heat!

Each year, Farmfest aims to bring together the best in agri-business from Minnesota and across the U.S. Visitors can network with over 500 exhibitors and vendors showcasing the latest in agriculture; participate in political forums and debates; see displays that include farm machinery, livestock equipment and thousands of ag products and services to assist your farm operation; and much more.

Minnesota Corn is proud to be present at Farmfest each year as part of our mission to engage and support corn farmers and rural communities across the state. We look forward to another successful Farmfest and can't wait to see you there!

For all Farmfest-related announcements, check out our website mncorn.org and follow Minnesota Corn on X (@mncorn) and Facebook (@Minnesota Corn).