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Photo taken at the farm of Big Stone County MFU members Anne and Peter Schwagerl, Prairie Point Farm.
MFU HOSTS FIELD DAYS

In August, Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) held two field days to highlight new crops and practices we hear farmers talking about.

On Aug. 11, MFU held a Water Quality and Healthy Soils Field Day in southeastern Minnesota. The day started at the People's Energy Co-op in Oronoco with presentations from Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Deputy Commissioner Matt Wohlman on the Ag Water Quality Certification Program and Anna Henderson, Water Policy Advisor to Gov. Dayton on his initiative to improve water quality in Minnesota 25 percent by the year 2025. The final speaker was Professor Don Wyse from the University of Minnesota who gave a presentation on the Forever Green Initiative, which is working to develop new perennial crops such as intermediate wheatgrass and pennycress that will improve water quality and build soil health.

In the afternoon, the group took a tour of the Sommerfield Farm near Mazeppa where MFU members Rod Sommerfield and his son Rick demonstrated what they call “regenerative agriculture” practices on their farm. Tour attendees were shown methods of tillage and cover crops that can over time increase organic matter that will contribute to soil health and yield goals. The Sommerfields also showed off their conservation pond, filter strips, wildlife and pollinator plots on their farm. The tour also featured experts from the NRCS, local SWCD, MDA and others.

On Aug. 14, MFU sponsored an Industrial Hemp Field Day near Erskine at the Tersteeg farm to show farmers firsthand a large planting of organic industrial hemp. John Strofus from Minnesota Hemp Farms joined farmer Scott Tersteeg in talking about challenges and opportunities of growing hemp for the first time. Questions farmers asked about hemp included; cost of seed per acre, yield per acre, controlling pests, harvest times and techniques and more.

MFU was pleased to have Minnesota Rep. Deb Kiel, R-Crookston, and Sen. Paul Utke, R-Park Rapids, as well as representatives from U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson, D-Minn., and U.S. Sens. Franken and Klobuchar’s offices attend the event and hear legislative issues that need to be addressed for the hemp industry. MDA Assistant Commissioner Andrea Vaubel reminded farmers who are interested in growing hemp or have questions to contact MDA.

Do you like to use Facebook, Twitter or Instagram to keep up with news you care about? You’ll find us there, too. Follow Minnesota Farmers Union on social media to find out about events, policy happenings, photos and more.

Facebook: Minnesota Farmers Union
Instagram: mnfarmersunion
Twitter: @mnfarmersunion
Tag us in posts we should see and we’ll like and share them.
Attendees said what they felt was needed in the Farm Bill, one at a time, while the committee listened and took notes. In my remarks, I told the committee that the Farm Bill needs to maintain a strong safety net, keep the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) coupled with it and come to a bipartisan solution on health care. I also said that all 12 titles of the Farm Bill are important, from rural infrastructure funding to renewable energy. The Farm Bill is the most important piece of legislation for rural America. It needs to meet the needs of farmers and rural citizens, not be cut.

Several media outlets stopped by our Farmfest hoop barn, including Joe Gill of KASM Radio, Mark Dorenkamp of Brownfield Ag News and Dustin Hoffmann of KLGR. I also spoke with Michelle Rook of WNAX and several personalities from KNUJ and Ingstad Radio Network. We appreciate the media coverage – the more ways we can spread MFU’s message, the better. Look for news from us in your newspaper, or tune into your farm radio station.

We would like to thank St. Paul-based Big River Pizza for their widely popular wood-fired pizza at our location.

Hearing from the Secretary
I had the chance to speak to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue at the beginning of August during his Midwest tour. He hosted a listening session at the farm of Kevin Paap, which I attended. I reminded the secretary in my statement that America’s farmers are struggling with low profits right now and need the help of the Farm Bill to get through the crisis.

The next day, I traveled to Des Moines, Iowa, for the Iowa Ag Summit. Perdue was the keynote speaker, while I represented NFU on a Farm Bill discussion panel. I reiterated what we’ve heard from farmers at the Rural Voices Discussions: You cannot balance the budget on the backs of farmers. The Farm Bill represents only about 2 percent of the federal budget, so cutting anything in it won’t make a huge difference in the grand scheme of federal spending.

I was happy to hear Perdue mention that President Donald Trump’s proposed infrastructure bill will include funding for increased rural broadband service. Many of our members have told us they can’t access high-speed internet where they are. That makes it difficult for many who want to farm to continue to work at off-farm jobs while working into their families’ operations. It’s been a top legislative priority for us, and we’re glad government officials are paying attention.

County conventions
Many of our county chapters held their county conventions throughout August, and many more are scheduled in September. I encourage you to attend yours – it’s a great opportunity to engage yourself with MFU’s activities. You are welcome to present resolutions that may become part of MFU’s overall policy, which is presented to state and federal legislators. You can also get elected as a delegate to the state convention in November, if you would like to.

I look forward to seeing you at a county convention. You’ll get a postcard in the mail telling you when and where yours is. There’s also a schedule included in Minnesota Agriculture. (See page 13.)
I would like to start off saying how much I enjoy representing Minnesota Farmers Union. We recently finished up Farmfest, and by the time you read this, my first time representing MFU at the State Fair will have wrapped up. This time of year also brings many county conventions and picnics. While my wish was to get to all of them this year, it simply wasn’t possible. I appreciate the relationships that I have formed over the last several months, and if I could not connect with you, hopefully we will in the near future.

**B20 in Minnesota**

One of the more exciting things that happened over the course of the last month was an announcement from the Governor’s Office in regards to biodiesel in Minnesota. I have always been a strong supporter of renewable fuels and am proud that our state has consistently been a leader in our nation in this area and I am hopeful other states are soon to follow.

As we are all aware, we have a fairly serious farm economic crisis occurring across the country. Renewable fuels brought us our last economic surge, and hopefully under the leadership of Gov. Dayton, renewable fuels can help lead us toward some economic recovery. At Farmfest, we attended a press conference where an exciting announcement regarding biodiesel fuel was made. Gov. Dayton was unable to attend due to illness, so Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Dave Frederickson made the announcement.

In 2002, the State Legislature passed a law requiring that diesel fuel sold in Minnesota contain at least 2 percent biodiesel (B2) (Minnesota Statutes 239.77). The law was implemented on Sept. 29, 2005, with a few exceptions for certain engines including railroad locomotives, off-road taconite and copper mining equipment and heating equipment motors located at nuclear power plants. Currently, 10 percent biodiesel (B10) is required to be blended with #2 diesel fuel from April 1 to Sept. 30 each year, with the blend lowered to B5 for October through March.

The statute now reads that the requirement will move to B20 on May 1, 2018. Implementation of the B10 mandate was delayed until July 1, 2014 due to inadequate blending infrastructure in the southwestern area of the state and inadequate regulatory protocol for Minnesota Weights and Measures enforcement. Both of those obstacles were determined to have been overcome in the summer of 2013, and B10 was implemented in 2014.

According to state statute, the requirements for B10 and B20 are only effective during the summer months (April through September). In winter, the mandate will revert back to 5 percent unless state officials and technical experts determine that accepted federal standards deem certain higher blends as suitable for year-round use in Minnesota.

In addition, before implementing blending requirements of B10 and B20, state officials must ensure that a variety of conditions are met, including sufficient fuel and/or feedstock supply, adequate blending infrastructure and the existence of federal standards for mandated blends. There are three biodiesel plants in Minnesota: in Albert Lea, Brewster and Isanti.

As summer of 2017 comes to an end, I hope everyone had a safe summer and got to enjoy our beautiful Minnesota weather. As fall is upon us, so brings the busy fall harvest. I encourage everyone to make certain safety is at the top of your farm’s priority list.

On my farm we have a yearly tradition everyone enjoys called Prime Rib Day. During harvest one of us is put in charge of preparing a huge prime rib and whatever I can talk my mom into for sides. When it is ready, all the equipment is shut down and we gather in the field. It is really fun to see the kids running around the field, and possibly a couple that haven’t seen each other for a week or two. Take a couple of hours and just enjoy a moment. Be safe, take a little time for the special people in your life and enjoy the harvest. Remember, it’s supposed to be fun!
Organic family farmers deserve strong standards and enforcement

The American family farmers and ranchers who grow and raise organic foods and goods for our nation adhere to strict standards – set by the National Organic Program under guidance of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) – that protect the integrity of the industry. When major producers and importers of organic products fail to comply with these standards, it puts organic family farmers and ranchers at a major disadvantage.

National Farmers Union (NFU) President Roger Johnson highlighted the importance of strong U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) enforcement of the NOSB standards in a letter to Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue.

“While the U.S. farm economy continues to cause stress in rural America, one bright spot remains: organic agriculture;” said Johnson. “Critical to the success of organic family farming is the integrity of the organic seal. Recently, the integrity of the organic label has been publicly challenged.”

Johnson pointed to two major examples of behavior that has challenged the integrity of the organic label. The first addressed longstanding concerns that the nation’s largest organic milk producer, Aurora Organic Dairy, has not complied with the Organic Access to Pasture rule.

“This rule attempted to create consistency across the standards applied to organic dairy operations both out of fairness to the organic producers and transparency to consumers,” said Johnson. “Unfortunately, a rule or regulation is only as good as its enforcement. In this instance, enforcement of the regulations for the largest organic milk producer failed. This is harmful not only to the reputation of the organic program, but also to the farmers who played by the rules.”

Johnson also cited recent imports of corn and soybeans from Eastern Europe that were fraudulently labeled “organic.” “U.S. farmers have entered into organic production to capture added value on their farms using a management-intensive method of production,” he said. “The fraudulent imports caused a drastic reduction in prices of organic grain and caused consumers to have suspicion in the veracity of the program. U.S. farmers cannot compete with these unfair trade practices.”

Johnson recognized the challenges facing USDA’s National Organic Program and its ability to police the industry. Organic agriculture has exploded in popularity in recent years, and additional resources for auditing and enforcement have not been made available.

“However, NFU urges USDA to act swiftly and decisively to address both of these issues,” said Johnson. “Family farmers and ranchers depend on USDA and the accredited certifying agents to enforce the organic program’s rigorous, NOSB-driven standards. NFU stands ready to assist USDA in maintaining the strong standards and enforcement associated with the National Organic Program.”

County Conventions
Schedule your meeting now!

Counties are eligible for a $200 early bird bonus if they hold conventions by Oct. 1, 2017 and submit all paperwork to the MFU state office by Oct. 15, 2017.
Contact Laura Sherar at 651-288-4060 or laura@mfu.org to schedule your annual county convention.
Minnesota Farmers Union
Standing for Agriculture, Fighting for Farmers

RURAL VOICES DISCUSSIONS

Just before Farmfest in August, Minnesota Farmers Union organized two sessions called Rural Voices Discussions focused on the next Farm Bill. We set out to find out what people think is essential to include in the Farm Bill as Congress takes it up before it expires next year. Nearly 100 people showed up to contribute their ideas in Mankato and Willmar.

The format we used matched the 14 sessions we conducted at the end of the Minnesota Legislature’s session. MFU President Gary Wertish opened the meetings, made brief remarks and introduced the panel that would be hearing what people said. Our special guests in Mankato were Assistant Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Andrea Vaubel and National Farmers Union Sr. Vice President of Public Policy and Communication Rob Larew. In Willmar, President Wertish and Larew were joined by Whitney Place, Director of Government Relations for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

After remarks from the listening panel, we moved into hearing what attendees had to say. I moderated the discussion, while staff members Michelle Medina and Laura Sherar took extensive notes. It was an opportunity for farmers to say what was on their minds, rather than listening to someone else talk to them for a long time.

In the discussions, we heard that the new Farm Bill must be written to meet the needs of farmers and rural communities, not to meet proposed budget cut goals. We heard that Congress should maintain financial and program support for current safety net provisions and look at expanding safety net programs. The budget should not be balanced on the backs of hard working family farmers and rural residents.

Health care was heavy on people’s minds, too. Many called for using the Farm Bill to solve the issue of health care availability and affordability if we are serious about keeping families on farms. We also heard people state the need to keep nutrition and agriculture together in the Farm Bill. Many said that passing a Food and Farm Bill is the moral thing to do so that people can afford to eat.

Infrastructure is also critical for rural Minnesota. That includes ensuring that rural development and broadband internet access programs are properly funded and implemented.

Finally, we heard the belief that Congress needs to get out and listen and talk to family farmers and rural residents when writing the Farm Bill through further listening sessions. We were grateful to have staff members from several Minnesota lawmakers present at the discussions, including from U.S. Reps. Collin Peterson and Tim Walz and Sens. Amy Klobuchar and Al Franken. We also had some state legislators in attendance.

We’re proud to have organized these Rural Voices Discussions on the 2018 Farm Bill. We were able to use the messages we heard when the House Agriculture Committee, with 11 members of Congress present, conducted a listening session at Farmfest. We made sure we carried these messages to them and met with several of them, before their session and after, to make sure they really heard what we had to say.

You can find a copy of the final report at www.mfu.org/files/2121.pdf.

Attendees gather in Mankato for the Rural Voices Discussion.

President Wertish, Larew and Vaubel on the listening panel.
Transition Incentives Program for retiring CRP participants

Working with Minnesota farmers on a daily basis, one of the most frequently mentioned concerns is access to cropland. This concern is even more prevalent among new and beginning farmers.

Access to land can be a great challenge for farmers in the first 10 years in the industry. One program available through FSA has the potential to connect retiring producers and new and beginning farmers to remedy this common issue. The Transition Incentives Program (TIP), administered by the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), assists with the transition of expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land from a retired or retiring owner or operator to a beginning, veteran or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher to return land to production for sustainable grazing or crop production.

CRP is a voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive agricultural land is not farmed or ranted, but instead used for conservation benefits. In return, FSA provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. Continuous sign-up contracts are 10 to 15 years long. Because CRP acreage is placed in long term conservation practices, expiring contracts may be eligible for organic status.

Only land enrolled in an expiring CRP contract is eligible. TIP enrollment is on a continuous basis and may occur up to one year before a contract is set to expire. The retired or retiring owner or operator must agree to sell, have a contract to sell, or agree to lease long-term (at least 5 years) the land enrolled in an expiring CRP contract to a beginning, veteran or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher. A beginning farmer is defined as a person or entity who has not been engaged in farming or ranching for more than 10 years. The TIP program defines a veteran farmer or rancher as person who served in the armed forces and has not operated a farm for more than 10 years. A socially disadvantaged farmer is defined as a member of a group whose members have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice.

The retired or retiring owner or operator must agree to permit the beginning, veteran or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher to make conservation and land improvements according to an approved conservation plan. Beginning or socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers participating in TIP may also re-enroll otherwise eligible land under CRP’s continuous signup provisions, including the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), if eligible.

Retired or retiring owners or operators participating in TIP may receive up to two additional annual rental payments after their CRP contract expires provided the beginning or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher is not a family member. A retiring owner or operator is defined as a CRP contract holder who has ended active labor in farming operations or expects to do so within five years of the CRP contract modification.

Additionally, the beginning, veteran or socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher may be eligible for enrollment in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) or the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), provided all eligibility requirements are met. The TIP has the potential to connect new, socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers with new land and ease the transition of retiring owners and operators. If you are interested in TIP and would like more information, please contact your local FSA office or visit www.fsa.usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer and lender. To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users).
MEMBER HAPPENINGS

MFU talks workforce issues with Untiedts, Latino Council

Minnesota Farmers Union staff visited the fruit and vegetable farm of MFU member Jerry Untiedt on July 25, along with Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs Executive Director Henry Jimenez and Legislative and Policy Liaison Eric Armacanqui, for a luncheon with the farm's workers.

Untiedt is the owner of one of Minnesota's largest organic produce CSAs, Untiedt's Vegetable Farm, Inc. He grows about 50 varieties of produce, using beneficial insects to keep pests away. He talked with us about some of the labor issues he and other produce growers have faced. We were grateful to hear so many different perspectives on the issue.

MFU supports a policy that will bring a solution to the struggles many farmers have faced in maintaining an adequate labor supply.

Lunch at Untiedt's Vegetable Farm with workers

Hoese Dairy Farm honored for Water Quality Certification

Scott Hoese, Carver County Farmers Union President, recently got his dairy farm certified under the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP).

MFU staff visited the Hoese Dairy Farm in Mayer on July 25, along with Minnesota Department of Agriculture Deputy Commissioner Matt Wohlman and other MDA staff, as well as representatives from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District. The Hoeses gave a tour of their dairy barns and talked about the certification process, as well as some of the issues they face in the dairy industry.

Hoese, who farms with son Eric, the Vice President of Carver County Farmers Union, said it didn't take a huge amount of work to meet the certification standards. The 600-acre, 130-cow Century Farm is now part of the approximately 250,000 certified acres in the state, according to Wohlman. The Hoeses use minimum tillage, leave 30 percent crop residue and use a triticale and pea cover crop. For the last four years, they have been grid sampling their soil to get the most accurate numbers on how much fertilizer they need.

Certification under MAWQCP is one of the six alternative practices for compliance with the new buffer law. It involves meeting with a certifying agent and completing an assessment, which will identify how your farm may be affecting water quality. It is a farm-specific program, as the agent conducts a comprehensive field review. Once a farm is certified, it is deemed to be in compliance with any new water quality regulations passed within the 10-year period following.
Notice is hereby given that the 76th annual convention of the Minnesota Farmers Union will begin with registration at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 18, 2017 at the Ramada Plaza Minneapolis and continue through Sunday, Nov. 19, or until all business has been concluded. Business to be conducted at the state convention will include election of delegates to the national convention and discussion and passage of resolutions into MFU policy.

The basis of representation at the Minnesota Farmers Union state convention, as provided by the constitution and bylaws, shall be one delegate from each local union who will represent as many as ten regular dues-paying members and one additional delegate who will represent each additional ten dues-paying members or a major fraction thereof.

Credentials blanks will be mailed to county presidents and should be returned prior to the convention to: Minnesota Farmers Union, 305 Roselawn Ave. E, Ste. 200, St. Paul, MN 55117. If county or local units are unable to submit credentials in advance, they must be brought to the convention by the delegate and submitted at the time of registration.

Hunter Cardinal has been going to MFU camps since 2007 and is the son of Marc and Alisa Cardinal of Crookston, Minn. While on NYAC, Hunter is most looking forward to learning more about Farmers Union and being able to make a difference for his fellow campers.

The second MFU youth elected to NYAC is Kirsten VanDerPol. Kirsten has been attending MFU camps since 2009 and is the daughter of Josh and Cindy VanDerPol of Kerkhoven, Minn.

“When I ran for NYAC I never thought I would actually get on, but I’m so excited that I did. I’m so happy to be given this opportunity to meet so many new people and learn from them. I’m honored to be able to help plan camp for this upcoming year. This will be my first time flying and traveling to D.C. and going to Kansas City, so I’m very excited for that,” said Kirsten.

Members of NYAC represent thousands of Farmers Union youth across the country and work at the annual NFU Convention. These young Farmers Union leaders also help plan the next year’s NFU All-States Leadership Camp.

“Farmers Union has a long and effective history of providing young adults with tools and opportunities to lead. For 81 years now, All-States Camp has been the place where our young members from across the country can come to learn more about the organization, the cooperative model and leadership. As a proud former All-States camper myself, I’m encouraged by the enthusiasm and high regard that our young members have for attending the camp each year,” said NFU President Roger Johnson.

Recently, two of Minnesota Farmers Union’s (MFU) veteran campers were elected to the National Youth Advisory Council (NYAC). NYAC is the highest elected position within the Farmers Union youth program.

At All-States, young adults from across the country spend a week in Bailey, Colo., at National Farmers Union (NFU) All-States Leadership Camp. Leaders in the Farmers Union youth program came together at the NFU Education Center to take part in cooperative activities and listen to several inspirational speakers.
MEMBER IN FOCUS

Prairie Point Farm – Schwagerl family

When they first married and moved out of Minnesota, Anne and Peter Schwagerl didn’t know they wanted to be farmers. Living in Florida after graduating from Gustavus Adolphus College, Peter was studying for his Ph.D. and Anne worked in a different field. “Farming was not on either of our radars at the time, but really good food was,” Anne said. Connecting with a rotational grazing farmer in their area got them involved in agriculture. Peter grew up on his family’s farm in Big Stone County, so it was a good fit to work on a pastured pork, grass-fed beef, poultry and egg farm. Anne and Peter both worked at farmers markets for the grazer on weekends. “We found that (Peter and I) liked working together and found it a lot more fulfilling to work with food and have this kind of relationship with customers, a relationship with other producers, than we did with our day jobs,” Anne, who is from New Prague, said. “It was like, ‘Why are we waiting to end up following what had become our dream?’” In summer 2012, the Schwagerls moved back to Minnesota, starting Prairie Point Farm on the land Peter’s parents farmed. Not long afterwards, they joined Minnesota Farmers Union. Now, Anne is in her first term as MFU’s Secretary – and she can already speak to the great impact the organization has had on her life.

How the Schwagerls farm

Anne and Peter raise pastured pork and about 300 acres of non-GMO crops. They butcher about 40 pigs per year and keep breeding hogs around as well. The pigs are on deep-bedded straw on winter and pastured lots in the summer, where cover crops serve as food for them. “We’ve chosen a heritage breed hog that’s bred for slower growing,” Anne said. “There’s a little more marbling of fat in the meat, more traditional look and feel.”

Their meat is mostly sold by direct marketing to customers, although they are working on getting a license to sell to restaurants and farmers markets. About half of their crops are organic or transitioning to organic, and they plan to start transitioning the rest next year. Their soybeans are food-grade, so they can be used for tofu. Their corn is feed for their animals.

Diversification is a major goal for the Schwagerls. They’ve also set up a coop of 12 laying hens. “We started buying our eggs from other local producers, and I decided I wanted to do it myself,” Peter said. “It’s a good starter project for (our daughter) Nora (who is 4).”

Why MFU?

The Schwagerls’ involvement with MFU has progressed from local to national. They joined one day when Field Representative Amanda Rosendahl visited to renew Peter’s father’s membership. Not long afterwards, they attended the Big Stone County Convention and were elected as delegates to the state convention. It was there that Anne realized her passion for policy.

Anne has made a strong push to stay on the forefront of issues that affect younger farmers. She joined the NFU Next Generation Advisory Council in 2015. That group helped inspire her to run for Secretary in 2017, after discussions around leadership transitioning. “This is an organization I believe in and that I want to develop myself further in as a leader,” she said. “I want to give some of my time to help wherever I can.”

Peter is also planning to participate in the NFU Beginning Farmer Institute, starting this fall.

FARM FAMILIES OF THE YEAR

One of the highlights of Farmfest every year is the selection of families as Minnesota Farm Families of the Year. The program is put on by the University of Minnesota and has been running for nearly 40 years. One family from each county is selected.

Here are the winning farm families who are current members of MFU:

Rick and Marlene Schlichting – Benton County
Dan and Deb Walters – Big Stone County
Teichert Farms – Chippewa County
Charles Johnson Family – Faribault County
Thalmann Seeds – McLeod County
Warren and Rachel Krohn – Nicollet County
Andy Emmert Family – Pope County
Harold Wolle Family – Watonwan County
Giese Family – Yellow Medicine County

Congratulations to all winning families!

The Krohn Family receiving their award at Farmfest.
There are many unique farming operations within Minnesota Farmers Union’s membership.

One of them is Mighty Axe Hops, a budding hops operation with fields in Foley and Ham Lake. MFU member Eric Sannerud has been farming hops with Mighty Axe since 2013.

Benton County Farmers Union held a tour at the Foley location of Mighty Axe on July 27, with about 70 people in attendance. Sannerud led guests into an edge of his field and explained how hops grow, answering a myriad of questions about what kinds of difficulties he faces with weeds and pests.

He said that hops are perennial and need to be harvested on time every year to be usable. His farm is certified under the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program. Thanks to a robust root system, hops use water very efficiently, which helped in the process of getting certified.

The second part of the tour took place in the new harvest facility, which required a multi-million dollar investment to construct. That’s where the hops get prepared to get brewed into beer. Sannerud said that his hops are more likely to be used in contemporary American beers. Hops are the reason why beer tastes bitter, as well as why there are no preservatives in beer.

Benton County Farmers Union partnered with the American Dairy Association chapter of Benton County. ADA provided cheese from local creameries for snacks, which went well with the local beer tasting. Thanks to Benton County Farmers Union President Carol Anderson for coordinating this educational event for MFU members. We look forward to continuing to provide these kinds of opportunities.
MEMBER BENEFITS

Every Minnesota Farmers Union member has access to competitive and value-added benefits provide in conjunction with National Farmers Union. These are benefits that can be enjoyed by Farmers Union members in all or most states, ensuring we can enjoy the best possible value for our dues.

Benefits can be accessed through www.nfu.org by clicking “Member Benefits.”

Health and wellness
• Option to purchase the Wellness Access Card Discount Plan, a non-insurance card that provides discounts on dental, vision, prescriptions, telemedicine and more (www.careington.com/co/nu)
• Easy access to high-quality, full-service, Individual Vision Plans from VSP® Vision Care (www.mynisi.com/farmersunion or 800.785.0699)

Emergency protection
• $80 off of a single or family plan through EA+ (Emergency Assistance Plus) (EmergencyAssistancePlus.com)

Hotel and car rentals
• Up to 10 percent off the lowest public rate when staying at La Quinta Inn & Suites (www.lq.com)
• Up to 80 percent off select products with Office Depot (www.officedepot.com)
• 10 percent off the first year’s service with CSAware (www.csaware.com)
• 10 percent off purchases at Small Farm Central (www.smallfarmercentral.com)
• 25 percent off with Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com)
• Up to 80 percent off select products with Office Depot (www.officedepot.com)

Software and office
• 10 percent off purchases at Small Farm Central (www.smallfarmercentral.com)
• 25 percent off the first year’s service with CSAware (www.csaware.com)
• 10 percent off with Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com)

Low-cost education and leadership programs
Members have access to great leadership development opportunities for youth and adults through NFU and MFU programs. These benefits, together with our Minnesota publication, Minnesota Agriculture, and our core value proposition – incorporating cooperation, education and legislation – delivers a high return on member dues.

Notice is hereby given that filings are open for the office of Minnesota Farmers Union President and Vice President.

Anyone wishing to file for these offices must get a petition from the State Secretary via the State Office.

Please contact Laura Sherar at 651-639-1223 or Anne Schwagerl, State Secretary
c/o MFU, 305 Roselawn Ave. E, Suite 200. Saint Paul, MN 55117

Nominations procedure according to MFU Bylaws, Article VII, Section 4 state:
“The President and Vice President of Minnesota Farmers Union shall be elected and installed at the biennial meeting of Minnesota Farmers Union in odd numbered years on such date as may be set by the state Executive Committee.

a) Nominations for President and Vice President shall be made by petition and such nominations shall be in the hands of the State Secretary on or before October 1 of each odd numbered year.

The nominating petition shall require the signature of at least one member in good standing from each of five local or at-large county unions. To be valid, the nominating petition must bear the signature of the nominee, indicating that it is being filed with the nominee’s knowledge and consent.

The State Secretary shall, on a date not more than 90 days nor less than 20 days prior to the final date for filing, publish in the official publication of Minnesota Farmers Union a notice that filings are open for the particular offices and that nomination petition forms shall be available to any member in good standing upon request to the State Secretary.

The State Secretary shall, on a date not less than 10 days prior to the first day of the convention, publish in the official publication of Minnesota Farmers Union a list of the persons nominated by petition for the particular offices. If there are no nominations by petition, or if any of the nominees who are nominated by petition shall be unable to serve or become ineligible, convention delegates shall have the privilege of nominating from the floor the day prior to balloting. “Petition forms must be in the hands of the State Secretary by Oct. 1, and a list of candidates will be included in the October Minnesota Agriculture paper, deadline permitting.”

The State Secretary shall, on a date not more than 90 days nor less than 20 days prior to the final date for filing, publish in the official publication of Minnesota Farmers Union a notice that filings are open for the particular offices and that nomination petition forms shall be available to any member in good standing upon request to the State Secretary.

The State Secretary shall, on a date not less than 10 days prior to the first day of the convention, publish in the official publication of Minnesota Farmers Union a list of the persons nominated by petition for the particular offices. If there are no nominations by petition, or if any of the nominees who are nominated by petition shall be unable to serve or become ineligible, convention delegates shall have the privilege of nominating from the floor the day prior to balloting. “Petition forms must be in the hands of the State Secretary by Oct. 1, and a list of candidates will be included in the October Minnesota Agriculture paper, deadline permitting.”

*Rate subject to occupancy and availability.

Membership Benefit Highlight!

Minneapolis Farmers Union Members receive a nightly rate of $90* at the Ramada Plaza Minneapolis, located at 1330 Industrial Blvd. NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413.

Located off of I-35, the Ramada Plaza Minneapolis is near both St. Paul and Minneapolis, and features amenities such as:
• 24-Hour Reception Desk
• Indoor Pool and Hot Tub
• Fitness Center
• ATM
• RV, Bus and Truck Parking
• Cafe and Restaurant
• Cribs & Rollaway Beds Available
• Daily Housekeeping
• Early and Late Check-in Available
• Eco-friendly
• Express Check-in/Check-out
• Free Parking
• Free Shuttle to Local Attractions
• Free WiFi
• Pet Friendly
• Safe Deposit Box

Rates subject to specialty and availability.

**Note: Rates are subject to specialty and availability.

Software and office
• 10 percent off purchases at Small Farm Central (www.smallfarmercentral.com)
• 25 percent off the first year’s service with CSAware (www.csaware.com)
• 10 percent off with Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com)
• Up to 80 percent off select products with Office Depot (www.officedepot.com)
County Conventions

**Sept. 6 • Pine County Convention**
12 p.m. • American Legion, Pine City
FFI: Kay Hills at 715-635-9521

**Sept. 7 • Douglas, Grant and Pope County Convention**
6 p.m. • Lakeside Ballroom, Glenwood • FFI: Vernon Pooch at 320-815-8360, Debbie Gilbertson at 320-283-5781 or Bob Klaasen at 320-491-2431

**Sept. 7 • Hubbard and Wadena County Convention**
12 p.m. • Hilltop Inn, Hubbard
FFI: Morton Berg at 218-224-2127 or Melvin Kinnunen at 218-564-4334

**Sept. 7 • Jackson County Convention**
12 p.m. • Pizza Ranch, Jackson
FFI: Gary Wilson at 507-736-4225

**Sept. 7 • Wilkin and East and West Otter Tail County Convention**
12 p.m. • 116 Café, Fergus Falls • FFI: Dave Johnson at 218-736-7734, Dean Lubitz at 218-346-4274 or Milan Drewlow at 218-643-2813

**Sept. 11 • Cass County Convention**
12 p.m. • Countryside Restaurant, Motley
FFI: Gary Sampson at 218-296-1154

**Sept. 11 • Morrison County Convention**
7 p.m. • The Royal Café, Little Falls
FFI: Lee Johnston at 320-630-6111

**Sept. 12 • Dodge and Olmsted County Convention**
6:30 p.m. • Ashland Town Hall, Dodge Center • FFI: John Larsen at 507-273-1451 or Glenn Hahn at 507-251-9432

**Sept. 14 • Pennington and Red Lake County Convention**
7 p.m. • American Legion, Plummer
FFI: Kay Chercestad at 218-796-5554 or Steve Linder at 218-796-5331

**Sept. 14 • Rice County Convention**
6:30 p.m. • Keepsake Cidery, Dundas
FFI: Steven Read at 612-306-4210

**Sept. 15 • Carlton County Convention**
10:30 a.m. • Lazy Bear, Barnum
FFI: Mark Thell at 218-851-7718

**Sept. 15 • Clay County Convention**
12 p.m. • Flower Pan, Moorhead
FFI: Larry Jacobson at 218-962-3453

**Sept. 17 • Becker County Convention**
5 p.m. • 59er Café, Detroit Lakes
FFI: Roger Schaefer at 218-334-4631

**Sept. 17 • Lyon and Yellow Medicine County Convention**
6 p.m. • Prairie’s Edge Casino, Granite Falls • FFI: Tim Velle at 507-828-5343 or Alan Benz at 507-247-5315

**Sept. 17 • Todd County Convention**
7:30 p.m. • Thunder Lodge, Long Prairie
FFI: Alan Perish at 320-760-2516

**Sept. 18 • Crow Wing County Convention**
12 p.m. • Pizza Ranch, Baxter
FFI: John Borden at 218-765-3432

**Sept. 18 • Kittson, Marshall and Roseau County Convention**
7 p.m. • Roseau Diner, Roseau • FFI: Gary Gregerson at 218-242-7429 or Steve Sparby at 218-459-3316

**Sept. 19 • Aitkin County Convention**
7 p.m. • Rustic Trail, Palisade
FFI: Markell Vogt at 218-927-2215

** Sept. 19 • Brown County Convention**
6:30 p.m. • Comfrey Bar & Grill, Comfrey
FFI: Jerome Graf at 507-723-4791

** Sept. 20 • Winona County Convention**
6 p.m. • Perkins Restaurant, 956-1/2 Mankato Ave. • FFI: Steve Simon at 504-421-4529

**Sept. 20 • Faribault and Freeborn County Convention**
6:30 p.m. • Wedgewood Cove Golf Club, Albert Lea • FFI: Terry Cunningham at 507-852-3465

**Sept. 21 • Benton County Convention**
7 p.m. • Coyote Moon, St. Cloud
FFI: Carol Anderson at 320-387-2883

**Sept. 21 • Cottonwood County Convention**
12 p.m. • Imker Home, 3980 210th St., Lamberton
FFI: Brent Imker at 507-430-3190

**Sept. 21 • Murray, Nobles and Rock County Convention**
6 p.m. • Countryside Inn Steakhouse, Adrian • FFI: Ted Winter at 507-360-1567

**Sept. 23 • Houston County Convention**
12:30 p.m. • Rock Filter Distillery, Spring Grove
FFI: Katie Bonow at 507-961-4523

**Sept. 23 • Isanti and Chisago County Convention**
10 a.m. • Perkins, North Branch
FFI: Al Teich at 612-408-9529 or Bruce Bloomgren at 651-472-1997

**Sept. 26 • Blue Earth, Le Sueur and Nicollet County Convention**
6 p.m. • Jake’s Pizza, St. Peter • FFI: John Thormodson at 507-642-8039, Bruce Hulke at 507-359-2788 or Steve Schultz at 507-931-4499

**Sept. 26 • Carver and Scott County Convention**
12 p.m. • Jordan Supper Club & Tap, Jordan
FFI: Don Entinger at 952-758-3728 or Scott Hoes at 952-693-6645

**Sept. 27 • Dakota County Convention**
10 a.m. • Dakota County Extension Office, Farmington • FFI: Linda Larson at 612-554-9963

**Sept. 28 • Wabasha County Convention**
7 p.m. • Uncle John’s Bar & Grill, Rochester
FFI: Eddie Jostock at 507-753-2452 or cell 507-273-7852

**Nov. 17–Nov. 19 • MFU State Convention**
Minneapolis • Details to come

Join the discussion and help to make Minnesota’s water quality cleaner by 2025

The 25 by 25 Water Quality Goal is a new program designed to improve Minnesota’s water quality 25 percent by 2025. Without this action, the quality of Minnesota’s waters are expected to improve only 6 to 8 percent by 2034.

Gov. Dayton wants to hear from Minnesotans and is hosting a series of Town Halls over the summer and fall. In addition, he is calling on Minnesotans and civic organizations to organize their own Community Water Meetings this summer to provide further feedback and ideas. Gather your community, school, family and friends to have a conversation this summer about what you can do at the local level to help Minnesota reach our 25 by 25 goal! More at www.eqb.state.mn.us/25by25.

Locations and dates for the Water Quality Town Hall meetings:

Crookston • Tues., Sept. 5 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.
University of MN–Crookston

St. Cloud • Wed., Sept. 6 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.
St. Cloud Technical and Community College

Ely • Tues., Sept. 12 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Grand Ely Lodge, 400 N Pioneer Rd.

Bemidji • Wed., Sept. 13 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Bemidji State University

Minneapolis • Tues., Sept. 26 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Glover Sudduth Center for Economic Development and Urban Affairs

Burnsville • Wed., Oct. 4 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Diamondhead Education Center

Stillwater • Thurs., Oct. 5 • 6:30-8:30 p.m.
Stillwater Area High School
ANNOUNCEMENTS

MDA VALUE ADDED GRANTS NOW AVAILABLE

$1 million available to increase sales of agricultural products

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) anticipates awarding up to $1 million through the competitive Value Added Grant Program. Funding for the grants was established through the Agricultural Growth, Research and Innovation (AGRI) Program to advance Minnesota’s agricultural and renewable energy industries.

The Value Added Grant program seeks to increase sales of Minnesota agricultural products by diversifying markets and increasing market access and food safety of value-added products.

“We’re excited to see what kinds of projects will be represented in this round of applications,” said MDA Grant Specialist Julianne LaClair. “The Value Added Grant program helps drive sales of Minnesota agricultural products, which can bolster farmers of all kinds, all over the state.”

New or established for-profit businesses may apply for funding to purchase equipment or make physical improvements. Applications that have a meat processing or marketing component, or address a food safety plan will receive priority.

Grant funds reimburse up to 25 percent of the total project cost with a maximum award of $200,000 and a minimum of $1,000. Equipment purchases and facility improvements are eligible.

Applications must be received no later than 4 p.m. on Sept. 20. Applications are available at www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/valueaddedgrant.aspx and may be submitted online, by mail or in-person.

MDA encourages farmers to take survey on alleged dicamba damage

Dicamba is a herbicide used to control broadleaf weeds in corn and a variety of other food and feed crops, as well as in residential areas. In 2016, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) conditionally approved the use of certain new dicamba products on dicamba tolerant (DT) soybeans.

Dicamba is a highly volatile chemical that can drift and/or volatilize.Dicamba drift may cause unintended impacts such as serious damage to non-DT soybeans, other sensitive crops and non-crop plants. This survey looks to gather information about these unintended impacts to other crops and plants.

As of Aug. 3, the MDA had received 102 reports of alleged dicamba damage; not all of those reports requested an investigation. Those who have already submitted a report to the MDA are encouraged to complete the survey.

If you believe dicamba was used in violation of the label or law, and you wish to request an MDA investigation, you will also need to complete the pesticide misuse complaint form at: www.mda.state.mn.us/chemicals/pesticides/complaints/misusecomplaints.aspx or call the Pesticide Misuse Complaint line at 651-201-6333.

You can find out more information at www.mda.state.mn.us/dicamba.

MFU offers FREE agritourism sign to members

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is gathering information on plant damage that may have been caused by the use of the herbicide dicamba.

The MDA is encouraging anyone with damage to complete a survey at www.mda.state.mn.us/chemicals/pesticides/dicamba/dicambasurvey.aspx. The survey will be open until Sept. 15.

“We are trying to gather as much information on this issue as possible,” said Assistant Commissioner Susan Stokes.

“Often, neighbors don’t want to file a formal complaint regarding crop damage against their neighbors. This survey, along with information we’re gathering from the product registrants, applicators and farmers, will help us collect info to assess the scope of the situation. We’re asking for everyone’s cooperation on this issue.”

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Thinking of inviting the public onto your farm this fall for a farm tour, breakfast, U-pick, etc.? MFU worked to pass the state agritourism bill in 2015. To be protected, the provider of the agritourism activity must post signs warning attendees of the inherent risks of visiting a farm. These signs should be posted at the entrance to the property and be clearly visible to all visitors.

Upon request, MFU will provide interested members one FREE sign that meets the specific guidelines in accordance to the Limited Liability Law. With the sign, you’ll also receive a two-page guide to the law that was put together by Farmers Legal Action Group (FLAG).

Additional signs for members can be purchased for $7. Signs for non-members cost $10.

To get your sign, contact MFU Executive Assistant Laura Sherar at laura@mfu.org or 651-639-1223.
The FDA’s Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) established the Produce Safety Rule for the safe growing, harvesting, packing and holding of fruits and vegetables grown for human consumption. The MDA Produce Safety Program is being developed to provide Minnesota produce growers:

- Outreach, education and food safety information
- Culturally aware and respectful partnerships that reflect the diversity of Minnesota’s farming community
- Assistance to address barriers and challenges to growers in following the Produce Safety Rule
- Structured, ongoing communication with stakeholders about the rule and program development
- Assistance and inspections for farms covered by the Produce Safety Rule

Did you know...

Minnesota has approximately 74,000 farms and approximately 3,000 of those farms grow produce for commercial sale?

For more information on the MDA’s Produce Safety Program please call 651-539-3648 or email producesafety.mda@state.mn.us
Do You Have Life Insurance?

Life Insurance can protect your family’s way of life if anything should ever happen to you. It’s not for you, it’s for the ones you love, to make sure they can pay bills, carry on their standard of living, or continue running the family business after you’re gone.

We can help you find an affordable solution and guide you to ensure the legacy you leave your loved ones is a positive one. (And it can cost less per month than your cable bill.)