Farmers Union urges increased funding for farm safety net, rural infrastructure in priorities for Farm Bill

Given the persistent and ongoing economic challenges in farming and rural economies, National Farmers Union (NFU) is calling on Congress to increase funding for farm programs in the Farm Bill and pass the legislation as soon as possible. The NFU Board of Directors, of which MFU President Gary Wertish is a member, recently passed a resolution to this effect, outlining requirements for a Farm Bill that family farmers and ranchers can support.

“American farmers are not only suffering from price pressure that has reduced net farm income by half over the last four years, but devastating wildfires, hurricanes and other natural disasters continue to punish agricultural communities,” said the Board.

“Trade policies continue to promote the sale of farm products at prices below the cost of production. Farm Bill legislation in 2018 must strengthen the safety net so that farmers and ranchers can manage risk, stay in business and continue to feed our country.”

The Board laid out a series of 14 recommendations that Congress should follow to provide a sufficient farm safety net, support rural communities, protect natural resources, improve beginning farmers’ and ranchers’ opportunities for success and ensure the nation’s most vulnerable people have enough to eat.

“The Farm Bill, rightly so, touches all aspects of our food system,” said NFU President Roger Johnson. “As such, Congress must write and pass a Farm Bill this year that adequately supports each part of the food system—from the family farmers who grow our food, to the land they do it on, to the rural communities they support, and all the way to the consumers who rely on safe, affordable food. Providing adequate support begins with a recognition of the dire economic conditions of the farm economy, the impacts of food production on the land, and the moral imperative of our country to ensure its most vulnerable citizens have access to food.”

Among the NFU Board’s recommendations were a set of changes to the Farm Bill’s commodity title, Title 1, which has not provided adequate relief for farmers amidst the recent, dramatic slide in net farm income. It called for “increased and robust reference prices under the Price Loss Coverage program,” technical corrections to the Agricultural Risk Coverage program, and an “incentives-based inventory management program to manage milk supplies based on market demand.”

The Board also called for mechanisms to address oversupply of grain and dairy, and for meaningful assistance to cotton producers. Recognizing the role family farmers play as stewards of our natural resources, NFU recommended a strong conservation title that provides “additional acreage under the Conservation Reserve Program,” maintains “funding for working lands conservation programs that promote active stewardship and locally led conservation activities,” and funds “climate mitigation research and technical assistance at national and local levels.”

Central also to our organization’s concerns are the Farm Bill’s impacts on rural communities. The NFU Board urged Congress to include “robust funding for programs that promote economic, infrastructure and clean energy development in rural communities,” and to prioritize development of local cooperatives.

To ensure the success of beginning and future farmers and ranchers, NFU called for implementation of programs within the farm bill that improve beginning, veteran and socially disadvantaged farmers’ and ranchers’ access to land, capital, efficiency and markets.

Finally, and of equal importance, Farmers Union called for strong nutrition programs in order to provide a safety net against hunger. “The family farm is the keystone of a free, progressive and democratic national society as well as a strong America, and is the basis of a safe, secure, and stable food system,” wrote the NFU Board. “It provides opportunities for individual enterprise to all families in our society to achieve economic and social stability, as well as soil, water and environmental stewardship of our natural resources and unparalleled production efficiency.

“National Farmers Union’s Board of Directors, in its continued efforts to protect family farms, calls on Congress in 2018 to provide strong support and increased funding in the best interests of family farms, rural communities and consumers.” ▲
President’s Message

GARY WERTISH
PRESIDENT
gary@mfu.org

Farewell to Wayne Boettcher
First of all, I would like to recognize Wayne Boettcher, Field Representative from Isanti County, who recently retired. Wayne worked with Minnesota Farmers Union from 2002-2017 and has been a strong voice in our outreach efforts. He is a former dairy, beef and hog farmer and a former Isanti County Farmers Union President, before joining our staff. We wish him and his wife Lois all the best. He is our Member in Focus this month, on page 8.

Remembering Ernest Anderson
A distinguished member of ours, Ernest Anderson, passed away recently. Ernie was an active member of Swift County Farmers Union for many years and earned six Silver Star awards for signing up new members. He was a strong advocate for agriculture, family farmers and our organization. As part of his dedication, he attended the Rally for Rural America with us in 1994 and served as a delegate to many state and national conventions. We send our deepest condolences to his wife Judy and their two sons.

We can all follow Ernie’s example of spreading the message of Farmers Union. I encourage you to talk to the people in your lives about what a membership in our organization does to give family farmers more influence in our state and country.

Lobby Day Drive-In
I would like to invite each of you to our annual Lobby Day Drive-In at the Minnesota State Capitol on Feb. 27. This is your opportunity to make your voice heard on what’s going on in rural Minnesota. We gather in the morning for a briefing, then meet with elected officials. Sharing personal experiences of farming and rural life with legislators is an extremely effective way to get the message of our grassroots policy across. Everyone is welcome. More details about Lobby Day Drive-In and how to RSVP are on page 6.

Farm Bill update
Now that the federal tax reform bill is passed, Congress has the opportunity to turn its focus to the Farm Bill. While there’s often vast disagreement on issues such as taxes and health care, agriculture has traditionally been a bipartisan effort. We hope that will be the case this year.

However, we remain wary of the potential effect of the tax bill on having funds available for agriculture. Congress did include language in a short-term spending bill to waive the pay-as-you-go rules that would have triggered cuts to agriculture because of the tax bill, but that doesn’t change the fact that the House and Senate Agriculture Committees lack the funds to come up with a Farm Bill that addresses the real needs of family farmers and rural Americans.

We were disappointed that a Jan. 2 article from the Washington Post listing six of the likeliest issues that Congress will deal with in 2018 didn’t include the Farm Bill. While the issues listed are certainly important ones to deal with, the Farm Bill is the most important piece of legislation for rural America. This time of rural and agricultural economic crisis calls for strong legislative action. We urge Congress to make the Farm Bill a priority. Family farmers need a safety net that provides good crop insurance, a conservation title that supports working lands programs like the Conservation Stewardship Program, and strong energy and rural development titles. We also need a well-funded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program that gives rural and urban Americans alike a “hand-up” to get through hard times.

I met with our newest senator, Tina Smith, in Washington, D.C., in January, and shared these concerns with her. She is serving on the Senate Agriculture Committee, alongside fellow Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar. Having both Minnesota senators on the committee will give us more Midwest representation in the final outcome of the Farm Bill. Sen. Smith also is on the Energy Committee, so she will be involved in constructing policy for the country’s energy needs. She will be a strong voice in support of renewable energy projects, which provide many jobs to rural Americans.

Trade agreements
In January, I attended meetings in Washington, D.C. as a member of the United States Department of Agriculture Advisory Committee for Grains and Oil Seeds. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer briefed the committee on trade agreements. They both said they were fairly optimistic about renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and are working on other bilateral agreements.

As we have mentioned before, the uncertainty of NAFTA’s future has had a downward effect on commodity market prices. Trade agreements have a significant impact on farm income. According to the Wall Street Journal, U.S. farmers send about $18 billion a year in agricultural products to Mexico and $23 billion to Canada. NAFTA prevents the U.S. from being subject to Mexico’s tariffs on agricultural commodities.

A sudden end to NAFTA would leave countless farmers struggling even more than they are now. We delivered the message to do no harm to family farmers in renegotiating NAFTA and other trade agreements. MFU has always supported trade agreements that are fair and that benefit family farmers, not just the large companies doing the trading.

Crisis resources
The only thing that can truly fix the farm economy right now is higher prices. However, there are resources available to help you get through this difficult time. I’ve mentioned the Rural Finance Authority, which offers loans and tax credits for farmers. It’s a big priority for us in the coming legislative session to ensure adequate funding for the RFA. You can reach out to them at (651) 201-6556.

This month our resource highlight is the Farm Advocates program. They are knowledgeable, experienced professionals in farm business issues and meet with farmers one-on-one for no cost. There are Farm Advocates all across the state. Find more information about them and the phone numbers for each Advocate on page 13.

Lastly, we’re proud to be a sponsor of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s Down on the Farm sessions, a series of workshops for agricultural professionals about rural mental health. Sessions have already taken place in Marshall and Willmar, and there are several more scheduled in February and March (see page 12). The stress of the farm economic crisis is enough to trouble anyone – we encourage you to attend a session and learn stress management skills from professionals well-versed in the unique stress of agriculture. Sessions are filling up, so be sure to sign up for one today at www.mdadownonthefarm.eventbrite.com.

(continued on page 9)
National Farmers Union, American Farm Bureau Federation launch “Farm Town Strong” Campaign to address rural opioid addiction

As farming communities face mounting challenges with the nation’s opioid epidemic, the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) and National Farmers Union (NFU) have begun a new campaign, “Farm Town Strong,” to raise awareness of the crisis’s impact on farming communities. The campaign will also provide resources and information to help farm communities and encourage farmer-to-farmer support to overcome the crisis.

The groups have launched a new website, FarmTownStrong.org, to provide easy access to information and resources that can help farm families and rural communities. The Farm Town Strong campaign comes on the heels of a recent survey commissioned by AFBF and NFU that highlighted how the opioid epidemic has hit farmers and farm workers especially hard. While just under half of rural Americans say they, a family member or friend have been directly affected by opioid abuse, for farmers and farm workers it’s 74 percent. A strong majority of respondents also support increasing public awareness of anti-opioid resources and reducing the stigma that surrounds addiction to help solve the opioid crisis.

“Farm country has been hit hard by the opioid epidemic—even harder than rural America as a whole or big cities,” said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. “It’s going to take everyone working together to combat this crisis to make a difference. That’s why Farm Bureau and Farmers Union are teaming up to show unity on this issue and encourage farm families to help their neighbors. If you or a family member has been affected by opioid addiction, it’s important to talk about it so that others will know they are not fighting this alone.”

Too often, those struggling with addiction and their family members don’t seek the help they need. Through the Farm Town Strong campaign, we’re tackling this crisis head-on by encouraging more dialogue, more information sharing and more farmer-to-farmer engagement.”

The two organizations will also hold public events and launch a social media campaign, #FarmTownStrong, to highlight the crisis and share resources.

More information on the campaign can be found at FarmTownStrong.org.

**minnesota cooks™**

Organic Steel Cut Oatmeal with Black Currant Blueberry Jam, Charred Sweet Corn, Sambal Maple Syrup, Chia Seeds and Bacon Bits

From Birchwood Cafe

Note from Chef Marshall: The black currant blueberry jam, bacon and sambal maple syrup are meant to be made ahead of time and stored. Prepare and use whatever quantities you desire on your steel cut oatmeal with charred sweet corn.

For black currant blueberry jam:

Yield: 4 cups
2 t Pomona pectin 1 c black currants, mashed
3/4 c cane sugar 3 c blueberries, mashed
2 t calcium water (comes with Pomona pectin) In a small mixing bowl, whisk pectin into sugar.

For sambal maple syrup:

Yield: 1/3 cup
1 T sambal (to make your own, see recipe below) 4 T maple syrup

For homemade sambal:

1 lb red fresno peppers, stemmed (or any spicy red pepper available at the farmers market) 2 cloves garlic half a lime, chopped pinch of salt 1/3 c rice wine vinegar 1 T cane sugar

Put peppers, garlic, and lime into a heavy-bottomed pan. Cook on low heat for about 15 minutes, to soften and sweat. Add vinegar and slightly increase heat. Cook gently for about 8-10 minutes. Remove from heat, then add salt and sugar. Cool to room temperature, then process in Robot Coupe or blender.

Transfer to jars for water processing, or store refrigerated.

For bacon:

Finely mince bacon. At very low heat, stirring often, render fat from bacon until its very crunchy. Strain through a fine-mesh chinois. Store at room temperature.

For steel cut oats and charred sweet corn:

Cook desired amount of oats in water with a pinch of salt according to package directions until soft. While oats are cooking, grill or roast corn. Place shucked and cleaned corn directly over a very hot grill, turning occasionally, until charred and cooked through, about 10 minutes. Mix corn into oats.

To assemble:

Add desired amounts of bacon, black currant blueberry jam, and sambal maple syrup to your steel cut oats with charred sweet corn. Sprinkle with chia seeds and serve.
Minnesota women return inspired, hopeful from NFU Women’s Conference

In January, 12 women from Minnesota traveled away from the cold to San Diego, Calif., for the National Farmers Union Women’s Conference. We were in for an energizing week that brought about 90 women together from across the country, gathered to build leadership skills and network with other women in agriculture. Each day was filled with speakers on topics such as farm business management, community organizing and running for office. We also toured three farms in the San Diego area: Dickinson Farm, Coastal Roots Farm and UrbanLife. It was the best-attended NFU Women’s Conference since it became an annual event.

Some of the highlights:

• Running for office workshops with MFU member Liz Johnson of VoteRunLead, Sarah Lloyd of Wisconsin Farmers Union and Ash Bruxvoort of Women Food & Ag Network, which showed women how to find the skills they need to be leaders within themselves
• Learning about the Soil Sisters program with Lisa Kivirist, Kriss Marion and Katy Dickson of Wisconsin, which brings women together to eat and organize cooperatively
• A presentation from Iris Gardner, a produce farmer in California who runs her farm on her own when her husband is deployed, demonstrating resilience in the ups and downs of agriculture

We asked each of Minnesota’s participants what they got out of the conference and what its importance is for our organization. Here is how they responded:

Lisa Baker, Avon: My new friends from the National Farmers Union Women’s Conference inspire me – these women are so intelligent, hard-working and practical, and more than anything they lift each other up with their shared values in running good businesses and farms, rural organizing for freedom and democracy, and working hard in our lives, electoral politics, and land stewardship. When it comes to being leaders, we’re reminded to ask ourselves: If it’s not me, then who?

Kajsa Beatty, MFU Intern: “This conference really showed me how exciting the future can be. There are so many women doing so many cool things and pushing each other up, and sometimes it’s really easy to feel like nothing will get better in agriculture because there are so many things pushing against it, but I feel like being here with people who are doing really awesome things shows that the future will change by those who really want it to.”

Sarah Bonvallet, Clearwater: “I think having a Women’s Conference is important because it’s a safe place to be a newbie. It feels safe to be around a bunch of women and ask questions that I know very little about. It’s also a space where you see a lot of team building and cooperation. That’s always an amazing place to start from.”

Rachel Brann, Milaca: “Now more than ever, we need women in agriculture. We have been, but we need to lift each other up so we can be more involved and be the future of farming, because it’s uncertain right now. And that is both on our farms and in elected positions, inside and outside of Farmers Union.”

Barb Heen, Maynard: “Where else are you going to have a nexus of people where the overarching point of the conference was women in ag? This needs to continue because it’s a resource, but it’s also a starting point. I’d never been here before, and I learned a ton. I don’t farm, but I can go back to my rural community and serve my community better with some of the things I learned here.”

Liz Johnson, Duluth: “Diverse leadership in any organization makes it a stronger organization. Women cannot continue to lead from the foot of the table. Young women, and women coming up the pipeline, are not sitting at the foot of the table. It’s a very good idea to be on the forefront of this, doing leadership conferences, encouraging women to be part of leadership at Farmers Union.”

Linda Larsson, Rosemount: “What I gained from the Women’s Conference is how diverse women make agriculture. Women don’t think of farming in conventional terms. They think of it in creative, innovative, out-of-the-box ways. That expands agriculture and the opportunities for everybody.”

Michelle Medina, MFU Renewable Energy Director: “When we get together, I think we open up more than we would otherwise. I really enjoy trying to connect members and helping them, finding them resources and buying their products for our events. We need to band together and lift each other up. We don’t have enough of that.”

Brita Moore, MFU Public Relations Director: “I was so inspired by all the women who said to be true to yourself, tell your story, be leaders. There’s a lot of hatred that gets spewed in the media and social media, but if you keep at it, you can make a difference. I think coming together lets us remind each other that there is strength in our diversity and we should be proud of who we are.”

Elaine Torpet, Fertile: “It was seeing all the young women coming together and getting their ideas out. By the time the young women here today are my age, they will have really accomplished something. I think it’s important that they get together so they reinforce each other.”

Sophie Vranian, Watertown: “I learned some tangible leadership skills that I have never had training in and never knew what they were. There were some really great exercises and sessions that made that very clear. You might not think you’re a leader because you’re not a loud, boisterous person, but there are qualities and skills that you have that still make you a leader.”
Agency have officially certified that Minnesota is ready to move to a B20 blend in the warm months of the year in 2018 (April–Sept.) from the current 10 percent blend. MFU will oppose legislation to delay the move to B20.

**Ditch Mowing**

Last year the Legislature put a moratorium on changes being made to the current state of roadside ditch mowing along state highways in Minnesota until this year. In the meantime, MFU has been participating in a stakeholder process to look at ideas, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation held several listening sessions around the state to take feedback from the public. At the writing of this article, there haven’t been any recommendations put forward from the stakeholder group. The big issues are the Aug. 1 mowing date and enforcement of the law. MFU supports allowing farmers to mow for livestock forage before the Aug. 1 date without a permit. We will update members as the process goes forward.

**Health Care**

MFU will continue to work toward providing affordable and accessible health care options for farmers in Minnesota. MFU will be looking to support the farmer cooperative health care model passed last year, expansion of Minnesota Care to allow a “buy-in” option and credits for those that buy health care on the exchange market.

**Broadband**

MFU will be supporting a comprehensive well-funded package that will bring broadband to all parts of Minnesota to support businesses and farms in rural areas.

**Buffers**

MFU is also continuing to look at the implementation of the buffer law. Last session, MFU supported legislation that allowed a waiver until July 1, 2018 for landowners to meet the Nov. 1, 2017 50-foot buffer requirement. Almost 3,000 landowners took advantage of this option. MFU may look for a similar option for landowners for the Nov. 1 deadline for 16.5-foot buffer on public drainage systems. MFU also continues to look for ways to help compensate farmers for buffers. Members who are still having issues and questions with buffers are encouraged to contact me.

**Taxes**

MFU will be working to ensure no harm is done to important tax provisions passed last session which included passage of the beginning farmer tax credit and the 40 percent ag school credit. MFU will also be looking at conformity with Minnesota tax law to Section 179 of the Federal Tax Code which deals with accelerated depreciation of equipment.

**Transportation Funding**

MFU will continue working to create adequate funding to support Minnesota roads and bridges.

**Wind Easements**

MFU supports reinstating the sunset on the law that expired last summer that limits wind development contracts to 7 years.

**Industrial Hemp**

MFU supports legislation to help continuing to grow Minnesota’s industrial hemp industry from the over 2,000 acres that were grown last year by increasing value-added opportunities for farmers.

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**Join MFU at the Capitol • Tuesday, Feb. 27, 2018**

Come make your voice heard with MFU at the 2018 Lobby Day Drive-In at the State Capitol in Saint Paul. Help us deliver our member-driven legislative priorities to lawmakers.

We will begin the day at 10 a.m. in room 300 North of the State Office Building, and then members and staff will spend the day meeting with legislators, attending committee hearings and meeting with other elected officials. The day usually ends about 3 p.m., but you can join us for however long you are able.

This is a great and important opportunity for MFU members to connect with their legislators and help MFU make our presence felt at the Capitol.

Members who have questions about the lobby day or to RSVP should contact Laura Sherar at laura@mfu.org or (651) 639-1223.

MFU can provide you with convenient Capitol parking options and maps for your visit to the Capitol upon request. MFU will also be organizing some carpools to the Capitol if you do not wish to drive yourself or would like to ride with someone. Please contact MFU Field Services for assistance:

- Bruce Miller, bruce@mfu.org or (651) 288-4064
- Ken Pazdernik, ken@mfu.org or (218) 206-4499
- Lee Johnson, lee@mfu.org or (507) 317-7537
- Dori Klein, dori@mfu.org or (507) 993-1658
- Amanda Rosendahl, amanda@mfu.org or (320) 815-8670
At the time of writing this article, the temperature outside is -4 degrees. It may not feel like it, but it’s time to start thinking about summer, summer camp to be more specific. Once again, Minnesota Farmers Union is looking for exceptional young people 18 years of age or older to lead camp and make it a great experience for all those involved.

**Camp Staff**
A Minnesota Farmers Union Camp Counselor is responsible for planning, leading and implementing core and non-core programs and experiences for children in small and large group settings. They are also responsible for the general safety and development, growth and skill achievement of the participants in their group. MFU counselors provide high quality outdoor educational and recreational experiences for participants that focus on the MFU core values: cooperation, leadership, respect and responsibility. Other traits in a successful camp staff are:

- Ability to organize and lead a variety of small and large group activities each session
- Ability to lead, plan, organize, and implement program activities
- Ability to work as a member of a team and the ability to accomplish tasks with little direct supervision
- Strong organizational and communication skills
- Experience with education classes, camp, youth programs, recreation, working with children or a related area

If this sounds like you or anyone you know, please have them contact me at glen@mfu.org.

**Camp Registration**
Mark your calendars: Registration for MFU summer camp opens March 1.
Leadership Camp is affordable and open to everyone. Camp is where kids can hang out, be kids and have fun. Campers get to sing at campfires and dress up in crazy costumes for theme night. They can swim, play games, go on nature hikes and much more. Reasonable rates are made possible through financial support from MFU Foundation and CHS Foundation.

**Camp Dates and Locations 2018**
- June 18-22 (Mon-Fri): Northern Elementary Camp at Lake Sarah Campground
- June 25-29 (Mon-Fri): Northern Junior High Camp at Lake Sarah Campground
- July 17-21 (Tues-Sat): Southern Elementary Camp at Sibley State Park
- July 23-27 (Mon-Fri): Southern Junior High Camp at Sibley State Park
- July 29 - Aug 3 (Sun-Fri): Statewide Senior High Camp at Sibley State Park

Registration/Information: www.mfu.org/LeadershipCamps
Please note there are a few changes to the dates of some camps.

**Continuing Education Scholarships**
Every year, Minnesota Farmers Union and National Farmers Union offer numerous scholarship opportunities to members and their children. In 2018, there are more opportunities than ever. There is more than $14,000 worth of scholarship money available.

Please encourage any student currently attending, or just starting college this fall, to visit www.mfu.org/scholarships for more information and to download the applications.

**New in 2018, Minnesota Farmers Union** will be offering five $1,000 scholarships to be awarded to MFU members or their children.

“With the high cost of college education, it’s important to provide support for students that seek higher education and will bring that knowledge back to farms and rural communities in Minnesota,” said MFU President Gary Wertish.

**Rice County Farmers Union** has a long history of sponsoring scholarships not only within Rice County, but also to students across the state. Scholarships from Rice County Farmers Union are available to Minnesota Farmers Union family members planning to attend or currently enrolled in a post-secondary institution, technical or trade schools, community colleges, or state universities or private institutions.

**The Kandiyohi County Farmers Union Scholarship** is available to any Minnesota Farmers Union member or their child who resides in Kandiyohi County. Please contact Donnel Williamson for more information at WilliamsonOrganicFarm@gmail.com.

**The Don Tentis Memorial/Wabasha County Scholarship** is available to Minnesota Farmers Union family members who reside in Wabasha County and plan to attend or are currently enrolled in a post-secondary institution (technical or trade schools, community colleges, state universities or private institutions).

**National Farmers Union** also offers many scholarships, such as the Stanley Moore National Scholarships, the Hubert K. & JoAnn Seymour, and the Stanley Moore FUI Foundation Regional Scholarships. Please visit www.nfu.org for more information on these National scholarships.
Wayne Boettcher, Isanti County

The farm in Isanti where Wayne and Lois Boettcher live is the place Wayne has called home from day one. He was born in that house with his grandmother as the midwife, the third of four children.

When he was a sophomore in high school, he decided to devote his life to agriculture. From dairying, to beef and hogs, to helping neighbors combine, to becoming a Minnesota Farmers Union Field Representative and boarding horses, he’s lived out that mission.

“I’m proud of my history,” Wayne said. He retired as of the beginning of 2018 – here’s a look back on the ways he made a mark on agriculture and on MFU.

Farm beginnings
Wayne’s father purchased the land they farmed in 1939 and made it into a dairy operation. That was common for Isanti County at the time.

“When I was a kid, every farm place along here, this is about 120-160 acres, each of them, every single one of them was milking cows,” Wayne said. “Now there are only four left (in Isanti County).”

His role in the family farm was hauling milk to town, until his father began to have some health problems and took the job of county assessor. Wayne talked him out of selling the herd, wanting to farm himself.

“In college, I did chores in the morning, went down to the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, had my first class at 8 a.m. and my last class at noon, and I drove back and forth, living at home,” said Wayne.

When his mother became pregnant and less able to help with farming, Wayne returned to the farm full-time. His father helped as much as he could.

“In the farming world, your day starts at 5 a.m. and ends at 9 or 10 p.m.,” Wayne said.

The family was milking 50 cows in 1970, when he took over completely. He had gotten married and built another house on the property, with the help of his first wife’s father and uncle. He also added pigs and beef cattle to the operation, as well as adding more acreage and help.

“My uncle (Elton)’s farm was for sale, so I asked him if he wanted to milk cows and be a partner,” he said. “We cut a deal. We had 60 cows over there. The barn would hold 35. So we had two shifts of cows. We’d let one out to feed and milk the other one, then let them back in. You always had to have the same ones out and in for the bulk of the day. We had our loafing shed, and he would switch around so that the cows that were the heaviest producers were in the barn, and the tail-enders were in the loafing shed.”

The family had a hired man on Elton’s acres. Meanwhile, Wayne had about 100 cows on his part of the property. Together, their acreage added up to about 800.

“ Anything you can see from here, we were farming in those days,” he said. “We put up hay 20 miles away when we were short of feed.”

All about family
Wayne has two sons of his own, one of whom unfortunately died in a farm accident at the age of 14. His surviving son, Shane, lives nearby and works with Select Sires.

“When his brother was killed, (Shane) took it really hard,” Wayne said. “He was fighting himself.” Shane moved to California in the late 1980’s. Wayne moved there himself in the mid-1990’s, but came back when his farm did not sell. He wasn’t actively farming any more by that point and took a job marketing dairy heifers.

Sadly, Wayne’s first wife died in 2000 from cancer. But it didn’t take long for Lois, a horse enthusiast, to come into the picture. Now Lois’ daughter and her husband and three children have ten acres on the north end of the property.

The horses move in
“When we got married, our insurance was huge because of these empty buildings,” Lois said. “Kicking ideas around, a close friend of ours suggested we board horses. Never in my life had I thought that would be something I would do. My knowledge comes with horses; I’ve never been without them. I can smell a sick horse. But when it came to building our facility, that was all Wayne. He had the knowledge of all his animals, and along with my knowledge, we made a place of excellent care for the horses.”

The Boettchers keep horses at BMW Stables. They always have a few around and get especially busy around the time of 4-H competitions. With Wayne’s knowledge of livestock raising, they came up with an automatic feeding system for the horses that made sure they all got equal amounts. They built stalls with buckets of feed attached to them.

“According to the Minnesota Horse Council, we are the only ones in the state who do it like this,” Lois said.

‘Farmers Union was good to me’
Wayne’s family was strongly involved in the cooperative model. His father was on the Midland Co-op Board, the Isanti Creamery Co-op Board and the Isanti Mill Co-op Board. His uncle Elton was more involved with MFU and invited him to a meeting. Wayne was elected Isanti County President at that meeting in the 1980s.

“They were looking for younger members, which we do today,” he said. “I felt indestructible and figured the sky’s the limit.”

It was 2002 when then-Membership Director Ron Hauglie invited him to join the staff as a Field Representative.

“I never looked back once I got hired,” Wayne said. “I wouldn’t do it any other way if I could.” Wayne worked on membership in the northeast part of the state. He said his favorite memory of MFU was getting to know other agriculturally-minded people at the State Fair or trade shows, especially those from other fields than him.

“I’ve figured out that I know a little bit about chickens and pigs and sheep and ducks and cattle and dairy and beef and buffalo and horses, so I can talk almost intelligently with anybody that’s doing any kind of farming,” he said.

To both Wayne and Lois, MFU is a family they cherish getting together with.

“Every time we have done something with the Farmers Union group, there’s always laughter and warmth,” Lois said.

“Farmers Union was good to me,” Wayne said. “But it’s time to veer off and let the herd run. They’ve got a good plan.”
Farm-related business assistance and mentorship now available through SCORE

In the FSA Office, we frequently get inquiries from farmers regarding resources for operating their business. For instance, producers commonly inquire about how to run a cash flow or calculate next year’s projected expenses. In the current agricultural economy, it’s important that farmers strategically market and know their breakeven prices. As farming becomes more technologically advanced and marketing factors grow more complicated, even successful farmers look for outside resources to help them run their business more effectively.

SCORE, the nation’s largest volunteer network of expert business mentors, is seeking to assist individuals who are seeking support and advice in the early stages of building a farm business or who need council in growing their current operation.

This past summer U.S. Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue signed a Memorandum of Understanding with officials from SCORE to support new and beginning farmers. The agreement provides additional resources for beginning ranchers, veterans, women, socially disadvantaged Americans and others, providing new tools to help them both grow and thrive in agribusiness.

“Shepherding one generation to the next is our responsibility. We want to help new farmers, veterans, women and people transitioning from other industries to agriculture,” said Secretary Perdue. “They need land, equipment and access to capital, but they also need advice and guidance. That’s what SCORE is all about.”

SCORE matches business professionals and entrepreneurs with new business owners to mentor them through the process of starting-up and maintaining a new business. USDA and its partners across rural America are working with SCORE to support new farming and ranching operations and to identify and recruit mentors with a wealth of agricultural experience.

“SCORE’s mission to help people start and grow vibrant small businesses is boosted by this new partnership with USDA. America’s farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses will benefit from the business knowledge and expertise SCORE can offer,” said Steve Records, Vice President of Field Operations for SCORE. “The partnership allows both SCORE and USDA to serve more people while providing America’s farmers added support to lead to more sound business operations, create profitable farms with sustainable growth and create new jobs.”

SCORE mentors will partner with USDA and groups already hard at work serving new and beginning farmers and ranchers such as FFA, 4-H, cooperative extension and land grant universities, nonprofits, legal aid groups, banks, technical and farm advisors. These partnerships will expand and integrate outreach and technical assistance between current and retired farmers and agribusiness experts and new farmers.

This joint initiative leverages SCORE’s existing volunteer mentors and USDA’s expertise in agricultural communities to bring no-cost business mentoring to rural and agricultural entrepreneurs. In Minnesota, the mission is to conduct mentoring activities in person and electronically, host training classes and offer general support to small agribusinesses. If you have questions about Farmer-Lender Mediation, you are encouraged to contact the Statewide Mediation Coordinator, Mary Nell Preisler, at (218) 935-5785.

Anyone interested in becoming a mentor can get information and sign up on the USDA New Farmers’ website at https://newfarmers.usda.gov/mentorship.

President’s Message (continued from page 3)

Crisis resources (cont.)

Farmers should also know about the important resource of Farmer-Lender Mediation from the University of Minnesota Extension. Mediation is the use of a trained neutral facilitator—a mediator—to assist in the negotiations of parties in a dispute. Mediation is an informal and confidential process that generally requires less cost and time than adversarial court litigation. A farmer in debt has the opportunity to renegotiate, restructure or resolve farm debt through Mandatory Farmer-Lender Mediation. Your creditor cannot proceed to collect debt against a property until the offer of mediation has been extended and, if the farmer chooses to go forward with mediation, completed.

If you have questions about Farmer-Lender Mediation, you are encouraged to contact the Statewide Mediation Coordinator, Mary Nell Preisler, at (218) 935-5785.
NFU applauds Rural Task Force, urges immediate action and federal investment in infrastructure

The Interagency Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Prosperity, a government-wide group including more than 22 federal agencies and led by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, has released a report to President Trump. The 23-page document identifies the many needs and opportunities of rural communities and recommends over 100 legislative, regulatory and policy changes to address them.

In response to the Task Force’s report and President Trump’s executive orders regarding rural broadband, National Farmers Union President Roger Johnson released the following statement:

“National Farmers Union applauds the Task Force and Secretary Perdue on their efforts to help rural America grow and thrive. For too long, rural communities have lagged behind their urban counterparts, both socially and economically, and the federal government has not provided the tools or funding necessary to bridge the gap. The priorities outlined in the report are essential to tackling longstanding disparities, by both bolstering the economies of as well as improving the quality of life within rural communities.

“Farmers Union appreciates the administration’s focus on broadband access, as its unreliability and unavailability is one of the biggest issues plaguing rural areas. Expansion of broadband holds the potential to address many other rural concerns, including economic development, educational opportunities, and access to health care. We hope the President’s executive orders will reduce unnecessary regulatory barriers and encourage broadband development.

“However, these executive orders are among the first of many steps to promote prosperity in rural America. We urge President Trump and Congress to act quickly to uphold their promises by providing major federal investment in a comprehensive infrastructure package.”

The full report can be found at: www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/rural-prosperity-report.pdf.

Clean Jobs Midwest Overview: Minnesota Leading the Way

Did you know that Minnesota is home to an impressive 57,351 clean energy jobs? That number, along with the fact that job growth in the sector was growing 3.8 percent faster than all other jobs last year, was announced this past fall by the non-profit Clean Energy Economy MN (CEEM) in its release of the Clean Jobs Midwest Report.

The report, created by the Energy Foundation, which studied the clean energy industry in 12 Midwest states, made an impact, and featured vocal supporters like U.S. Senator Tina Smith.

The report highlighted the statistic that a full 30 percent of the clean energy jobs cited in the report are located in Greater Minnesota. This fact is has contributed to the increasingly bipartisan support that the clean energy industry is starting to experience.

The report also demonstrated that 86 percent of the clean energy jobs in Minnesota were in the energy efficiency sector. That sector includes newer startups and traditional sectors including hardware and software implementers, contractors who can diagnose, adjust and verify the efficiency of heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, and system technicians. The shift in traditional sectors such as HVAC illustrates a transition to embrace the clean energy economy as a business decision.

Renewable energy generation is the second largest clean energy job sector in Minnesota with just over 6,000 jobs. Renewable energy generation includes solar, wind, geothermal and bioenergy technologies. Overall renewable energy generation jobs were also the fastest growing sector. Between 2015 and 2016, renewable energy generation jobs grew by 15.7 percent in Minnesota—11 times faster than overall job growth in Minnesota over the same time frame.

Clean energy jobs are quickly becoming a significant part of the overall economy in Minnesota as their growth continues to outpace all other job sectors. Part of Clean Energy Economy MN’s goal for 2018 is to continue this momentum and ensure that clean energy policies continue or are added to at the Minnesota Legislature.

Minnesota is already a leader in clean energy policy with the American Council for an Energy Efficient Economy ranking our state 10th out of 51—and 1st in the Midwest—on its state energy efficiency policy scorecard.
Last spring, the delegates at the National Farmers Union 115th Anniversary Convention passed a special order stating that NFU would continue efforts to expand renewable fuels infrastructure. As part of that effort, NFU hired veteran energy, environment and agriculture policy specialist Anne Steckel as Biofuels Advisor in August 2017.

“My experience so far has been very positive,” Steckel said. “It’s always a challenge to go in and talk with members of Congress who have no perception or negative perception of these fuels, and to educate them about the need to diversify fuels in the U.S. The benefits aren’t just to just farmers and rural Americans, but to the economy as a whole. It benefits consumers with lower prices.”

She’s been to Minnesota already, talking with members at the 76th Annual MFU Convention, and recently spent three days with MFU speaking with Minnesota corn and soybean producers and visiting the Chippewa Valley Ethanol Company in Benson.

“It’s important to me to hear firsthand the benefits our members have had with renewable fuels as I talk about policy and growth on Capitol Hill,” Steckel said. “Having firsthand knowledge and feedback gives a way to personalize stories.”

Steckel said she spent a lot of time ensuring the RFS was not rolled back. Though it ultimately was not decreased, she felt it could have come out better.

“It was a real missed opportunity for the administration to continue increasing biodiesel,” she said. “They could have looked at all the potential and taken the opportunity to be leaders in the industry.”

She hopes to inspire more enthusiasm for NFU’s E30 initiative. “E30 is an incredibly exciting future and a way we can utilize a growing corn crop we have,” she said. “Our farmers have been incredibly efficient in growing corn, and we see tremendous benefits to the ag economy of higher blends of ethanol. It also is a lot cleaner than petroleum. We have a lot of great talking points and testimonials about E30.”

Farmers Union has long been a leader in renewable fuels advocacy, at both the state and national level. Steckel applauded Minnesota’s efforts to expand biofuel use.

“You guys are very cutting-edge in terms of the state mandates you’ve used,” she said. “Some of the issues you had with moving to B20 and some of the resistance you’ve got from other groups are similar to the resistance we see on the national level. We can see what you’ve done here and how it will translate to the national level.”

Going forward, Steckel says she’ll continue to work to get the message of ethanol out in a way that someone from anywhere can appreciate.

“When you’re talking to different people across the country, different messages will resonate with different people,” she said. “To someone from Rhode Island, I might talk about climate change. If I’m talking to someone from Illinois, it might be about the corn crop. To someone in an urban area, I can talk about pollutants from petroleum and how higher ethanol blends can mitigate that.”

Steckel has a history of success with biofuels in D.C. As Vice President of Federal Affairs at the National Biodiesel Board, she led a campaign to increase biodiesel levels in the RFS. She’s also worked with American Farm Bureau Federation and Growth Energy.

“I think NFU brings a distinct voice to this conversation,” she said. “We are visionary in terms of where the future is going to go, and we really get that message across.”

Steckel, a native of Illinois, has more than 20 years of experience lobbying for renewable fuels on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. She’s already hit the ground running making sure Congress and the Trump administration hear about the benefits of a strong Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS) and investment in biofuels.

Winter Energy Savings

by Carmen Carruthers, Citizens Utility Board of Minnesota

It’s no surprise that our highest energy bills are in the winter. Whether you use delivered fuels or natural gas to heat your home, reducing the amount of energy consumed will help keep your household expenses in check.

Our favorite strategy is to adjust your thermostat as you come and go. The Department of Energy recommends 68 degrees when you are awake and up to 10 degrees cooler when you are away or asleep. Reducing your temperature 7-10 degrees from its normal setting for 8 hours a day can reduce your annual energy costs by up to 10 percent. To prevent frozen pipes, never set your thermostat below 55 degrees.

If you don’t already have one, consider getting a programmable or Smart thermostat (WiFi needed) to make these adjustments easy.

Another tip, many utilities offer rebates on these energy-saving thermostats. Visit www.cubminnesota.org for more energy saving tips.
MDA offering workshops providing support for farm stress

Stress factors are on the rise for Minnesota farmers. Many face financial problems, price and marketing uncertainties, farm transfer issues, production challenges and more. You may know farmers who are struggling with stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, feelings of indecision or suicidal thoughts.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture is partnering with MFU and a number of other organizations to offer six free, three-hour workshops to help agricultural advisors (and others who work with farmers) recognize and respond when they suspect a farmer or farm family member might need help.

Locations and dates for Down on the Farm workshops are:
- Feb. 21 • Austin
- March 14 • Grand Rapids
- Feb. 22 • Mankato
- March 15 • Thief River Falls

An informational brochure can be found at [http://www.mda.state.mn.us/protecting/~/media/Files/protecting/downonthefarm.pdf](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/protecting/~/media/Files/protecting/downonthefarm.pdf). Register at [www.mdadownonthefarm.eventbrite.com](http://www.mdadownonthefarm.eventbrite.com). Space is filling quickly.

Farm & Rural Help Line

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has extended its “Crisis Connection” telephone hotline service for another year.

The program has renamed the service Farm & Rural Help Line, with the toll-free number (833) 600-2670. You are encouraged to call this line if you need any kind of assistance. It’s available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

If you or any farmers you know would like to speak with Ted Matthews, the state rural mental health specialist based out of MnSCU, his number is (320) 266-2390. He meets with farmers one-on-one and free of charge. No insurance card, paperwork or referral is necessary.

Please tell us a little bit about your family life. My wife of 46 years, Shirley, has worked with me in the office in Goodhue for many years. I enjoy hunting, fishing and four-wheeling and spending time with our seven grandchildren and their parents. We enjoy going to the family cabin with the extended family and making sure our grandkids get to enjoy the outdoors there.

What is your number one concern when reviewing and selling farm insurance? My biggest concern with farm insurance is keeping ahead of all of the constant changes in the farming environment and making sure our insureds are properly covered, with no lapses in coverage.

Dan has been a Farmers Union Insurance Agent for 40 years, has been a Top Producer in multiple lines of insurance including Farmowners, has been a member of the Multi-Millionaire Premium Producers Club, and has been part of the Mile High Award (Sales Incentive) Trips. He and his wife, Shirley, are actively involved in their local MFU chapter and welcomed young Agent Alison Peters to their Agency last year.

Visit our website at [www.mnfuia.com](http://www.mnfuia.com) and click on “Find an Agent” to find a local FUIA agent in your area.
Applications open for MARL program

The Minnesota Agricultural and Rural Leadership Program (MARL) is now accepting applications for its Class X. MARL is a dynamic two-year educational experience featuring nine three-day in-state seminars, a six-day national study seminar and a 10- to 14-day international study seminar. Each class has 30 participants.

You may register yourself or nominate a candidate for the MARL program. Nominations are due by March 16, 2018. Applications are due April 12, 2018. You must be 21 years old or older and a resident of Minnesota to apply.

For more information and to download the application form, go to www.marlprogram.org/application.

Farm Advocates: provide one-on-one assistance for Minnesota farmers who face crisis caused by either a natural disaster or financial problems.

The Farm Advocates have developed a network of attorneys, accountants, human service professionals, educators and other sources of information and services. Equipped with all these resources, the Farm Advocates share their expertise with others, enabling them to make informed decisions.

When should you see a Farm Advocate?
- When you are going into mediation
- When you negotiate with lenders
- When you are liquidating assets of the farm operation
- When you need financial information
- When you suffer a devastating loss, i.e., fire, disease or natural disaster
- When you receive an adverse decision from a state or federal agency
- When your open accounts have substantially increased over 12 months
- When there is a major drop in your equity over a period of 12 months
- When you are entering into or dissolving a partnership
- When you want to begin farming

Farm Advocate Services
Financial Planning
- FINPACK preparation
- Cash flow projections
- Evaluate financial position
- Identify problem areas
- Discuss options
- Debt restructuring
- Provide information on debt resolution
- Assist/prepare loan applications
- Identify financial goals
- Retirement planning

Lender Negotiations
- Mediation planning/sessions
- Farm Service Agency
- Farm Credit Services
- Banks
- Implement dealers
- Other creditors

Farm Programs
- Planning
- Application
- Appeals

Legal Services
- Referrals
- Assist in case preparation

Social and Human Services
- Applications
- Appeals
- Referrals

Farm Advocates:
Jan Boll
Trail (218) 268-4472
Bruce Lubitz
Perham (218) 346-4866
Connie Dykes
Lake City (651) 345-5149
David Ellason
Isle (320) 676-3559
David Hesse
Comfrey (507) 877-3012
Dean Hetland
Eagle Bend (218) 639-9302
Dan Hunz
Monticello (320) 743-5660
Ruth Ann Karty
Clarkfield (320) 669-7135
George Bosselman
Fosston (218) 200-9432
Steve Zenk
Danube (320) 894-2517
www.mda.state.mn.us/about/commissionersoffice/farmadvocates
Join us for a three-day conference on the engaging international document, *Vocation of the Agricultural Leader*!
This event is open to the public, but space is limited.
**To reserve your seat, register at CatholicRuralLife.org.**

Some scholarships are available to MFU members.
Contact our office at (651) 639-1223 to learn more.

For more information contact Annie Brickweg
Annie@CatholicRuralLife.org or (651) 962-5955
MDA AgBMP loan program will cover more pollution prevention projects

Under an agreement between the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program in Louisiana, eligibility for loans to implement Agricultural Best Management Practices (AgBMP) in Minnesota will be expanded to include larger livestock operations.

A formal Letter of Understanding was recently signed recognizing the importance of coordinating pollution prevention efforts throughout the Mississippi River watershed; both locally in Minnesota and in distant downstream areas, including the receiving waters of the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary in Louisiana and the Gulf of Mexico. The Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary has developed a Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan recommending practices that can be implemented from the headwaters of the Mississippi River to the delta that will ultimately reduce sediment and nutrient loading to the estuary area and the gulf. With Minnesota’s formal recognition of the Barataria-Terrebonne management plan, eligibility for the MDA’s AgBMP Loan Program will be expanded to include livestock operations holding National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits or those operations with more than 1,000 animal units.

“All along the Mississippi River, we need to work with our partners and follow the same road map to manage the watershed while still recognizing that people and communities use the land in a variety of ways,” said MDA Commissioner Dave Frederickson. “Expanding the number of farm operations eligible for AgBMP loans here in the Mississippi River’s headwaters state is another step toward managing and protecting this important watershed.”

This Letter of Understanding recognizes that pollution does not stop at state boundaries and that a multi-state perspective should be considered when addressing pollution problems. In addition to the expanded eligibility options and guidance, the understanding establishes regular reporting and communications between the two organizations.

Since its inception in 2015, the MDA AgBMP Loan Program has issued more than 13,000 low interest loans to Minnesota businesses and landowners financing over $220 million for projects addressing erosion, runoff, manure management, septic treatment and drinking water problems.
Now is the time to start thinking about your MPCI coverage. The March 15th submission deadline will be here before you know it!

Remember, our Agents have access to many companies with competitive rates and prices to better serve your needs, so if you need quotes for your farm and equipment, we can do that, too.