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Member in Focus: Allen and Elaine Torpet
Renewable Energy Policy Update
Restructure II Loan Program
Food Safety Modernization Act Training
Braised Chicken Legs and Thighs with Tomatoes and Heirloom Beans

Recipe from Encore Farm & Lucia's Restaurant, Wine Bar and To Go

Yield: 4 servings

To cook chicken legs and thighs:

- 2 chicken leg/thigh pieces to equal 4 pieces of meat
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- Big splash of white wine
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, smashed
- 1 red pepper, diced
- 1 yellow pepper, diced
- 2-3 cups tomatoes, diced (fresh is best)
- 2 cups good chicken stock
- 1 sprig each of rosemary, thyme and parsley
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 cups cooked heirloom beans

Garnish: Parsley, lemon, orange, basil and mint

In a heavy casserole dish, heat oil until just smoking. Add the chicken legs and things and brown all over. Season with salt and pepper. Remove and set aside. In the same skillet, add the garlic, onion and peppers. Cook over high heat, stirring frequently for about 3 minutes. Add the wine, stir, and cook down for a few minutes. Add tomatoes, stock, salt, pepper and all the herbs. Nestle the chicken into the pot and cook covered over medium-low heat about 40 minutes. Test for doneness in the thickest part of the thigh (you can peek in with a sharp knife). Remove any big pieces of herbs and stir in the cooked beans. While the chicken is cooking, make the garnish. Zest the lemons and oranges. Chop or rip up the other herbs and mix with the zest.

To serve, put the chicken and all the juice and beans in a pretty bowl and sprinkle with the garnish.

To cook heirloom beans:

Heirloom beans
- Water
- 1 dash olive oil
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 whole tomato
- 3-4 garlic cloves, unpeeled
- Salt
- Butter
- Grated parmesan

Soak the beans in enough water to generously cover in the refrigerator overnight. In the morning, drain and lightly rinse with cold water. Cover with plenty of cold water (at least 3 inches above the beans) in a heavy kettle. Add a dash of olive oil, a bay leaf, one whole tomato, a few unpeeled cloves of garlic and a pinch of salt. Bring the beans to a boil and then reduce heat and cook until tender to the bite. This can take 1-3 hours depending on how dry and delicate the beans are. Drain (save liquid for a soup) and season with butter, salt and pepper, and grated parmesan.
This would jeopardize the ability of many rural Americans to get health insurance, which also threatens rural doctors and hospitals. While some family farmers might see some short-term gain in their taxes, these cuts are temporary and will expire in a few years. Meanwhile, the cuts for corporations are permanent.

**Farm Bill update**

In the wake of the tax bill passing, there are more questions about what that will mean for the Farm Bill. As we heard at the National Farmers Union Legislative Fly-in this fall, the funding allocated for agriculture is less than what is necessary to help America’s farmers. Democratic U.S. Rep. Collin Peterson of Minnesota’s 7th District, the ranking member of the U.S. House Agriculture Committee, has said this repeatedly. Meanwhile, Sen. Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, of the Senate Agriculture Committee, has said that there has been no progress on the bill on the Senate side. We need to have a strong funding safety net in the Farm Bill, and we hope our elected officials will write a bill that addresses the needs of farmers, not to cuts. We are also concerned that the extra debt will prompt Congress to cut funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the Farm Bill. SNAP funding takes up 80 percent of the bill’s total funding and is necessary to get votes from members of Congress who live in urban areas. Plus, rural people use SNAP at a higher rate than urban people do.

In the 2014 Farm Bill, SNAP was initially separated from the rest of the bill in the House’s version, but was later put back into it. There is talk of the two being separated again. We support keeping SNAP in the Farm Bill and a strong funding base for it.

**Renewable fuels**

The battle between Big Oil and agriculture in Washington, D.C. has not let up. Although the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency recently announced it would keep the corn ethanol requirement at its current levels and increase cellulosic and advanced biofuel requirements slightly from their July 2017 proposal, it provides no increases in biodiesel requirements, staying well below the industry’s capacity.

“The (Renewable Fuels Standard) was written to promote expanded use of homegrown, renewable biofuels,” said National Farmers Union (NFU) President Roger Johnson. “So long as EPA continues to fail to meet that congressional intent, they’ll continue to shortchange our nation’s family farmers, rural communities, consumers and the environment.”

Oil-state legislators are still trying to undermine the biofuels industry’s impact on regulations. U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, has placed a hold on the confirmation of Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey as an undersecretary at USDA and has been talking with President Donald Trump about coming up with an RFS that benefits oil refiners.

Farmers need a better price for commodities to get out of the economic crisis. Increasing the use of renewable fuels will provide a boost to demand and help increase prices. MFU policy supports an increase to E30 for our fuels. We advocate for more use of homegrown renewable biofuels of all kinds, as well as more use of wind and solar energy, to help the climate and rural America. With NFU’s hire of Anne Steckel as Biofuels Advisor, we are taking the lead on renewable fuels in Washington, D.C.

**NAFTA Uncertainty**

The president’s threats over terminating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has created uncertainty in the marketplace, which has put downward pressure on commodity prices. Renegotiation efforts have been difficult thus far. While the agreement is by no means perfect, dropping it altogether would be a steep hit for farmers who need the export market for their products. We support a solution to the NAFTA debate that benefits all types of agriculture, while avoiding any abrupt changes that harm farmers’ income.

**MinnesotaCare**

On the state legislative side, I have been participating in several panel discussions on the possibility of a “buy-in” option being added to the MinnesotaCare program, an idea championed by Gov. Dayton and Lt. Gov. Smith. MFU policy supports this option. Minnesota authorized a reinsurance program during last year’s legislative session, which was a money infusion to insurance companies that only bought down insurance premiums for two years. With the recent projected deficit in our state budget, the MinnesotaCare buy-in option would be an option that allows people to take advantage of the state’s buying power reflected in their pool, and it would be less costly for the state, compared to the $542 million reinsurance program. It would also allow more people access to affordable health insurance who don’t fit in the income bracket currently designated for MinnesotaCare participation.

(continued on page 5)
Happy New Year! I hope you all had a pleasant holiday season and are off to a good start with 2018. Even though it’s winter, I know many of you are still hard at work planning for the next season, as I am on my farm.

Farming has always been hard work, threatened with the uncertainty of weather and market prices. In a time of economic depression like the one we’re experiencing, it gets that much harder. Doing the tough physical work of harvest while feeling nervous about the price you’re going to receive for the crop takes a toll on one’s mind. And the chaotic political atmosphere does not help.

I’ve heard many reports of farmers experiencing extreme emotional distress and the need for rural mental health services skyrocketing. A recent article from The Guardian got a great deal of attention, telling the story of a farmer behavioral health expert named Mike Rosmann and his experiences helping farmers in tough times. He spoke of the need for more and better therapy for people in rural areas, particularly care that’s geared toward the unique challenges of agriculture.

Some of the objectives of the sessions are:
- Recognize the signs of mental and emotional distress and crisis.
- Learn to use active listening skills.
- Learn about local and regional resources available to farmers in distress or crisis, and able to refer appropriately.
- Improve your confidence about delivering difficult information to farmers.
- Be able to use anger de-escalation strategies when necessary.
- Understand how and why to take care of your own emotional and mental health in stressful situations.

These sessions will be held in Willmar, Marshall, Austin, Mankato, Grand Rapids and Thief River Falls. See page 14 for registration information.

Farm & Rural Help Line
Minnesota Farmers Union policy supports greater funding for mental health providers and doctors in rural areas. While it may take some time to see this become reality, it’s heartening to see the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) taking steps to address this issue. Recently, MDA unveiled the Farm & Rural Helpline as a resource for Minnesota farmers and rural residents under stress. The free, confidential service is available seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Farmers who dial the toll-free number at (833) 600-2670 will speak with a counselor who is trained to ask questions and discuss the unique stresses seen in agriculture. Farmers don’t have to offer any personal information beyond voluntarily providing his or her first name and a callback number if disconnected. While counselors will be trained to direct callers to resources for follow-up assistance, their main objective will be to listen to concerns and help farmers find solutions.

The Farm & Rural Helpline can connect callers to financial assistance programs, health and mental health services, legal help and more. Translation services are also available, with translators available in all languages.

Additional help is available through Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU). Ted Matthews, a state rural mental health specialist based out of MnSCU, meets with farmers one-on-one and free of charge. His number is (320) 266-2390. No insurance card, paperwork or referral is necessary.

‘Down on the Farm’ series
If you’re able to attend a more intensive session about helping others cope with farm stress, MDA is also offering a series of three-hour workshops on the subject called “Down on the Farm.” These sessions are totally free and are meant to help recognize signs of burnout and emotional distress. MFU is happy to be a sponsor of these sessions, held in six cities in rural Minnesota in January, February and March.

Financial counseling
It can also be helpful to talk with someone who can directly address financial stress. The University of Minnesota Extension offers farm financial counseling. If you or a farmer you know is experiencing financial stress, contact the Farm Information Line at (800) 232-9077 to set up a financial counseling session.

Financial counseling is free and completely confidential. A team of Extension farm financial analysts has been assembled of retired experts from areas like banking and farm business management education to provide free, one-on-one financial counseling to farmers who are experiencing financial stress. These analysts will help participating farmers understand their financial situation, explore options and seek to identify alternatives to help alleviate the financial stress caused by the current agricultural climate.

The circumstances we are facing right now as farmers are challenging, but turning to others for help is a strong first step in the right direction. Taking care of yourself is always important.
At the 76th Annual Convention, we made several changes to our energy policy. Take a moment to review them and let me know if you have any questions. The underlined text was added and the strikethrough text was deleted.

- We support the re-establishment of the Made in Minnesota solar incentive program.
- We support raising the state of Minnesota’s renewable energy standard of 25% to 50% by the year 2020 using sources such as wind and solar to meet electrical needs and biomass to meet the liquid and gas needs for energy.
- We oppose any attempt to place generation, transmission and distribution cooperatives operating within the state of Minnesota under the regulation of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, except for member/owner protections and dispute resolution concerning distributed generation. We support that all Minnesotans, especially those served by rural electric cooperatives, have the right to a fair, transparent and equitable dispute resolution process regarding net-metering, interconnection procedures and all other aspects of installing distributed generation renewable energy projects before the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.
- We support the MFU work with rural electric coops to actively look at business models that support their farmer members in being clean energy producers as well as consumers of energy.

Additionally, on Sunday morning of the convention I held a renewable energy breakout for members. Anne Steckel, the Biofuels Advisor at National Farmers Union, talked to members about ethanol and biodiesel. There was a lot of interest in ethanol and also in increasing blends up to 30 percent for vehicles. Lindsay Kuehn, a Staff Attorney for the Farmers Legal Action Group (FLAG) attended the meeting to get input from members for the Farmers Guide to Wind & Solar that we are partnering on. This guide is designed to help members interested in installing wind or solar on their farm or house, so if you have any suggestions, ideas or are willing to share your contract with FLAG to help them better understand your needs, let me know.

I look forward to continuing to work with you all on renewable energy issues this year. As always, feel free to contact me with any comments, questions, concerns and ideas for events.

It is hard to believe it’s already 2018 and that we are into the third year of our renewable energy grant. I am currently planning five one-day renewable energy working sessions across the state during the summer. We are looking to have more member participation by spreading the sessions out across the state and keeping them to one day. If you would like to host a session, have ideas on speakers, or have issues you would like addressed, please contact me.

**MICHELLE MEDINA, RENEWABLE ENERGY DIRECTOR**

michelle@mfu.org

**President’s Message (continued from page 3)**

**Crisis resources**

Farmers should know they are not alone in tough economic times. Over the next few months, we’ll be highlighting resources available to them in Minnesota. On page 9, you’ll learn about the Restructure II loan program from the Rural Finance Authority. I sit on the RFA board, as do a couple other MFU members. It’s an important program for our state, and I encourage you to look into it if you need help.

We also would like to mention that the Minnesota Department of Agriculture has expanded its Farm Advocates team.

Steve Zenk, a retired Farm Business Management instructor, will serve the Renville County area. Farm Advocates provide free one-on-one assistance for Minnesota farmers who face crisis caused by either a natural disaster or financial problems. Visit [www.mda.state.mn.us/about/commissionersoffice/farmadvocates](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/about/commissionersoffice/farmadvocates) to find the Farm Advocate in your area. See their information to the right.

As always, don’t hesitate to reach out to us if you have any questions. We’ll be making your voices heard.

**Farm Advocates:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan Boll</td>
<td>Trail</td>
<td>(218) 268-4472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce Lubitz</td>
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<td>Connie Dykes</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Ellison</td>
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<td>David Hesse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dean Hetland</td>
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<td>Dan Hunz</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruth Ann Karty</td>
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<tr>
<td>George Bosselman</td>
<td>Fosston</td>
<td>(218) 200-9432</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steve Zenk</td>
<td>Danube</td>
<td>(320) 894-2517</td>
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Farmers Union Insurance Agency donates $5,000 to MFU camp and leadership programs thanks to online contest

Recently, MFU Insurance partner Farmers Union Insurance Agency (FUIA) won a Charity Challenge photo contest with Secura Insurance, with the photo of FUIA Operations Director Robin Rohde Keller. FUIA is donating the $5,000 winnings to MFU’s camp and leadership programs! We are grateful to FUIA for the donation.

You can find your precinct caucus location by contacting your local political party contact, your county auditor’s office or going to the Secretary of State’s website: www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting/how-elections-work/precinct-caucuses/. Minnesota Farmers Union is a grassroots organization; we discuss and develop policies that come from you, our members. That is why it is important for you to attend your precinct caucuses and bring that rural Minnesota voice to them, let our policies be heard and help farmers be at the table when issues are being discussed and agendas are being set.

Members who have questions about the caucuses should contact me at (651) 288-4067 or thom@mfu.org.

ATTEND YOUR PRECINCT CAUCUS

On Feb. 6, all across Minnesota, voters will have the chance to attend their precinct caucuses in their local communities. Minnesota is unique in the fact that the precinct caucus system allows for grassroots level involvement, whether with the GOP, DFL or Independent. All parties are open to those who want to be a part of the political process and to offer their ideas. With health care, the Farm Bill, animal care, environmental concerns and other issues such as biofuels or local foods, it is as important now as it has ever been for farmers and rural Minnesotans to take a couple hours out of their day and attend the caucuses.

In Minnesota, there are more than five million people, yet about 73,000 are listed as farmers, which is another reason to attend.

What happens at a precinct caucus? Each one can be very different depending on the number of people, the local leadership and the interest of those in attendance. But in general, the parties identify local contacts by electing “precinct chairs” and other local party officers. Resolutions are passed, ideas are shared, straw polls for some office may occur and speeches from local officials such as a state legislator or a candidate are given.

The caucuses also elect delegates to the next level of participation: the county and Senate district conventions. MFU encourages members to offer resolutions at their caucuses. Have a position on the Farm Bill, health care, crop insurance, renewable fuels or local food? Put it into a resolution and bring it to your precinct caucus! It’s a similar process to offering resolutions at your county Farmers Union conventions. Resolutions are important; they help craft a party’s platform and spark conversation among policy makers. MFU also encourages members to take it to the next level and run for delegate to the county, congressional and state conventions. It is very important to have farmers represented at these meetings.

Minnesota Farmers Union and Farmers Union Insurance Agency staff with the $5,000 check from Secura Insurance. From left: FUIA Operations Director Robin Rohde Keller, FUIA District 2 Manager Jared Harding, Secura Marketing Manager Kevin Benz, FUIA Communications Director Emmy Frederickson, FUIA President and General Manager Rodney Allebach, MFU President Gary Wertish, Secura Marketing Manager Joe Smith, MFU Education Director Glen Schmidt.
Upon completion of the Train-the-Trainer class, all 52 individuals received a certificate that allows them to participate in training produce farmers and growers to comply with the new federal FDA regulation. I helped organize the November training session and participated in it as well.

These PSA Grower Trainings will satisfy the FDA proposed Produce Safety Rule requirement that “at least one supervisor or responsible party from the farm to successfully complete food safety training at least equivalent to that received under the standardized curriculum recognized as adequate by the Food and Drug Administration (§ 112.22(c)).”

The PSA Grower Training is a one-day program, with seven curriculum modules including: An Introduction to Produce Safety; Worker Health, Hygiene and Training; Soil Amendments; Wildlife, Domestic Animals, and Land Use; Agricultural Water; Postharvest Handling and Sanitation; and How to Write a Farm Food Safety Plan. The curriculum has been designed to teach growers how to assess food safety risks on the farm, implement practices to reduce risks, and understand the proposed FDA Produce Safety Rule requirements. The curriculum places an emphasis on small and very-small growers, providing solutions for limited resource farms, but not to the exclusion of any farm.

The Produce Safety Alliance (PSA), a national group based at Cornell University, has developed this course to fulfill that requirement of the Rule (outlined in §112.22(c) of the Produce Safety Rule). But all farms, including those that are exempt and qualified exempt from the full Rule, are encouraged to take this course to understand Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) and the FSMA Produce Safety Rule. University of Minnesota Extension will also continue to host general introduction to GAPs workshops and field days throughout 2018, but the PSA FSMA course is the only course that is currently recognized by the FDA.

Minnesota will host our first PSA FSMA Grower Trainings in 2018. These courses will be co-led by PSA staff, MDA Produce Safety Program staff, UMN Extension staff and trained fruit and vegetable farmers. There will be more PSA FSMA grower trainings in the future in other parts of the state.

Jan. 17, 2018 • 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.
River's Edge Convention Center, St. Cloud, MN
(Day before Upper Midwest Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers annual conference)

March 20, 2018 • 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Monticello Community Center, Monticello, MN
(Day before the Minnesota Farmers’ Market Association annual conference)

After attending the entire daylong course, participants will be eligible to receive a certificate from the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) that verifies they have completed the training course. This is a great opportunity to get a valuable credential, as the training credential belongs to the participant who attended and is good for life. Learning about GAPs and food safety is beneficial to all produce farms, no matter what size or type of operation, and can help prepare for a GAP audit if desired.

Registration information can be found on page 15. Feel free to contact me with any questions at bruce@mfu.org.
FSA Commodity and Farm Loan Products as a Resource

The 2017 crop harvest has concluded and now the challenge of searching out marketing opportunities is on producer’s minds. FSA wants to assist producers with the programs the agency offers especially during those times when cash flow is tight.

Following are available FSA program options:

Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs)
These loans are made using the 2017-crop as collateral. MALs are a low interest rate low for 9 months. MALs provide interim financing after harvest to help meet cash flow needs without having to sell crop during typically harvest time lows. These loans provide a cash infusion of low interest funds that then allow a producer to put together an effective marketing plan over the 9 months of the loan’s lifespan.

Direct Loans
FSA offers direct farm ownership and direct farm operating loans to producers who want to establish, maintain or strengthen their farm or ranch. FSA loan officers process, approve and service direct loans. Direct farm operating loans can be used to purchase livestock and feed, farm equipment, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other costs including family living expenses. Operating loans can also be used to finance minor improvements or repairs to buildings and to refinance some farm-related debts, excluding real estate.

Direct farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, enlarge an existing farm, construct and repair buildings and to make farm improvements. The maximum loan amount for both direct farm ownership and operating loans is $300,000 and a down payment is not required. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer’s ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Guaranteed Loan Program
FSA guaranteed loans allow lenders to provide agricultural credit to farmers who do not meet the lender’s normal underwriting criteria. Farmers and ranchers apply for a guaranteed loan through a lender, and the lender arranges for the guarantee. FSA can guarantee up to 95 percent of the loss of principal and interest on a loan. Guaranteed loans can be used for both farm ownership and operating purposes. Guaranteed farm ownership loans can be used to purchase farmland, construct or repair buildings, develop farmland to promote soil and water conservation or to refinance debt. Guaranteed operating loans can be used to purchase livestock, farm equipment, feed, seed, fuel, farm chemicals, insurance and other operating expenses.

FSA can guarantee farm ownership and operating loans up to $1,399,000. Repayment terms vary depending on the type of loan, collateral and the producer’s ability to repay the loan. Operating loans are normally repaid within seven years and farm ownership loans are not to exceed 40 years.

Beginning Farmer Loans
FSA assists beginning farmers to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these designated farm loan programs, FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person who:

• Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
• Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
• Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial management program sponsored by FSA
• Does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county’s average size farm.

Additional program information, loan applications and other materials are available at your local USDA Service Center. You may also visit www.fsa.usda.gov.
The Restructure II loan program is designed to help farmers who remain in good credit standing with their local agricultural lender, but are having trouble with cash flow due to adverse events. Only debt of an agricultural nature is eligible for refinancing.

The farmer will work through their local lender. If the lender agrees to make a mortgage loan to the applicant, the lender and the applicant will jointly complete an application for a Rural Finance Authority (RFA) participation. Participation is restricted to loans that do not exceed 80 percent of the appraised value of real estate comprising the collateral. Borrower net worth must not exceed $1.7 million (indexed for inflation, please call RFA for current limitation) including the assets and liabilities of their spouse and dependents.

The RFA will participate on 45 percent of a qualifying loan up to a maximum of $525,000. The agricultural lender will retain the balance of the loan. Participating lenders are allowed to charge either a fixed or adjustable rate. The interest rate on the RFA portion of the loan is fixed. Call the RFA for the current rate. The participation term may be up to a maximum of 10 years. Collateral for the loan must include a first mortgage on farm real estate. Terms of the loan will be determined by the type of debt being restructured. The loan may have a balloon.

There will be a $50 non-refundable application fee on all loans. The lender may collect normal closing costs.

An applicant must meet the following requirements:

1. Be a resident of Minnesota, a Minnesota domestic family farm corporation, or family farm partnership.
2. Be the principal operator of the farm.
3. Not be a current or previous participant in an RFA farm debt reorganization program.
4. Have a total net worth that does not exceed $1.7 million (indexed for inflation).
5. Have received 50 percent of their gross income from farming over the past three years.
6. Have expenses that do not exceed 95 percent of income.
7. Meet with local SWCD official.

For more information or to download forms, visit www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/loans/restructure2.aspx.

MDA announces new restrictions on use of dicamba herbicide

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) today announced new restrictions on the use of the herbicide dicamba in Minnesota for the 2018 growing season.

Dicamba is primarily used for controlling post-emergence broadleaf weeds. The new restrictions are in addition to those announced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in October. The affected formulations are XtendiMax by Monsanto, Engenia by BASF, and FeXapan by DuPont. The decision follows the MDA’s ongoing investigation and an informal survey last summer into reports of crop damage from alleged dicamba off-target movement.

In an effort to prevent dicamba-related complaints in 2018, Minnesota Agriculture Commissioner Dave Frederickson thoroughly reviewed the new EPA label restrictions, the MDA’s survey results, peer reviewed literature, and sought extensive input from the Minnesota Soybean Growers Association Drift Task Force, University of Minnesota Extension weed scientists and the pesticide manufacturers on the underlying causes of damage. Based on the review, the Commissioner set forth these additional protocols for dicamba use for the 2018 growing season:

Cutoff date: Do not apply after June 20. Setting an application cutoff date of June 20 is expected to help in reducing the potential for volatility (movement). The majority of Minnesota soybeans are still in the vegetative growth stage by June 20 and research has shown that plants in the vegetative stage are less affected than those in the reproductive stage.

Cutoff temperature: Do not apply if the air temperature of the field, at the time of application, is over 85 degrees Fahrenheit or if the National Weather Service’s forecasted high temperature for the nearest available location for the day exceeds 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Research has shown that dicamba volatilization injury increased with an increase in temperatures. “Dicamba is an important tool for soybean growers to manage weeds and I believe these additional restrictions will minimize the off-target movement,” Frederickson said.

“I want to thank the University of Minnesota Extension, and in particular Professor Jeff Gunsolus, for his research report on dicamba and the Minnesota Soybean Growers for their input on this important issue. We will be closely monitoring the herbicide’s performance with these restrictions in 2018.”

In Minnesota, the XtendiMax, Engenia and FeXapan formulations of dicamba are “Restricted Use Pesticides” for retail sale to and for use only by Certified Applicators.
MFU member dairy farmers named Producers of the Year by Minnesota Milk

The Minnesota Milk Producers Association named the Groetsch family of Groetsch Dairy, Inc. in Albany, Minn. its 2017 Producer of the Year. The honor was bestowed during the Minnesota Milk Dairy Conference and Expo in Red Wing on Nov. 28. They were selected on the basis of their involvement and commitment to the future of the dairy industry.

Steve and Lisa Groetsch began dairy farming together after they were married in 1989. Starting with 40 cows in a stall barn, they always had an eye to the future and making improvements to the dairy to benefit their farm, their cows and their family.

"Investing in our facilities and adding new technologies makes Steve and I more efficient, helps keep our cows more comfortable and keeps the farm up-to-date in case one of the children chooses to come back to the farm in the future," says Lisa. In 2011, Steve and Lisa invested in robotic milking machines which allow cows to eat, lie down, drink and get milked whenever they want. "My definition of modern dairy farming is using technology to simplify our manual tasks," Lisa added.

The couple’s three children – Jennifer, Matthew and Katelyn – grew up working closely with their parents on the farm. “Our dairy wouldn’t be our dairy without our children,” said Lisa. “Doing what we do every day is even more fun when they are all home and we are all working together.”

The Groetsch family is also active in the community and welcomes tours of their farm. They hosted the Stearns County Breakfast on the Farm in June 2013, opening their farm to nearly 3,000 visitors, and regularly host tours for groups of all ages from kindergarten classes to nursing home residents.

As Producers of the Year, the family receives a $1,000 scholarship toward educational programming, a trip to the conference where the award was presented and a framed and matted art print.

Introducing MFU Intern Kajsa Beatty

Hello! I’m Kajsa! My name is pronounced Kai-sa. I grew up in Shoreview, Minn., and went to Mounds View High School. I attended the University of Minnesota in the bachelor’s degree program for food systems and graduated in December 2016.

Throughout high school and college, I played ultimate frisbee. It's the best sport out there. In my spare time, I continue to play ultimate and also enjoy doing other activities like biking, hiking and swimming. When not being active, I really appreciate healthy home-cooked meals. I love to cook and experiment in the kitchen. You can often find me trying out a new recipe or kitchen skill. Kombucha and cheese are the current ventures.

After graduation from the U of M, I traveled around Europe and worked on a farm. I went to Denmark, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Croatia, Germany and Ireland. In the Netherlands, I worked on a small organic vegetable farm. My host family grew 70 varieties of fruits and vegetables and had a passive greenhouse so they could grow vegetables all year long. My favorite farm task was pruning the cucumbers and tomatoes and feeding the chickens. While it had been a thought of mine earlier, this experience helped me realize that I wish to start my own farm one day. I have a long way to go and am in need of more experience until I would feel comfortable doing so.

Prior to all of that, I worked at the Minnesota Senate, The Good Acre and Restaurant Alma. The Good Acre was my professional introduction to farming and food in Minnesota. TGA aggregates and distributes produce from small immigrant farmers to schools, institutions and as Community-Supported Agriculture. At The Good Acre, I managed the farmers market and helped with the CSA.

At Minnesota Farmers Union, I hope to learn more about issues facing rural communities and the political process that helps alleviate those problems. The annual convention was a great introduction to the grassroots process that MFU abides by, and it made me proud to be working for an organization that is committed to listening and involving its members. I hope to get to know and learn from more members during my time at MFU.
Farmers Union has advocated for health care improvements more than any other agricultural organization. In Minnesota, Elaine Torpet is a big part of that movement.

“She’s the lady who put (health care) into our policy platform,” said Allen Torpet, her husband of 56 years and retired farmer, referring to Elaine’s effort at a previous MFU convention.

Elaine has been advocating on health care issues with MFU for more than 30 years. Allen has been a driving force of support for the Lake Sarah campground. Their investment in MFU is hard not to admire.

**Cattle, lobbying and much more**

The couple lives in Fertile, a town in northwest Minnesota, about four miles south of where Allen and his family farmed. His paternal grandfather emigrated from Norway and homesteaded that land. The Torpets milked cows up until their daughter Terry, the younger of their two children, was three. Then they converted to a beef operation.

While Allen farmed and worked as a rural mail carrier, Elaine managed the home, by sewing, cooking and caring for their children, Todd and Terry. She comes from a rural background herself, in Winter, Saskatchewan.

“My dad was a foreman at a coal dock,” Elaine said. “I went to business college in Saskatoon and worked there, and that’s where Allen came in.”

Allen had family in southern Saskatchewan, which allowed him to make the connection with Elaine. It didn’t take long for them to get involved in Farmers Union. Allen’s father had been a member also.

“We went on a Young Farmer Fly-in to Washington, D.C., in 1973,” Allen said. “That was where we learned how to lobby.”

Elaine became secretary of the local and county chapters and still is for Polk County. Allen is a past county president. They have been delegates at many state conventions and a few

National Farmers Union Conventions. Their children attended Farmers Union Camps and eventually became Torchbearers. Elaine served as a chaperone to the All-States Camp in Bailey, Colo., in 1981.

Adding in Elaine’s service as a 4-H volunteer and Allen’s service on the township board, the couple kept busy. They were rewarded for their work with the MFU Outstanding Leadership Award in 2010. And Elaine will attend the NFU Women’s Conference this month in San Diego.

**Lake Sarah**

One of the most significant contributions Allen has made to MFU is his work to keep Farmers Union Park at Lake Sarah in good shape. The park, which once belonged to Polk County Farmers Union, was built by “some forward-looking guys from along the Red River,” Allen said. Polk County later gifted the park to the MFU Foundation for $1. The Torpets put great effort into raising money to keep the park going.

However, as the park aged, it needed improvements to its sewers and bathrooms. Allen said at one point, he heard from a few people that the park should be sold.

“I didn’t like that plan,” he said. So he invited the MFU Full Board to a meeting at the park. “After they saw what was there, they said it would be like selling the family farm.”

He got down to business and started a new fundraising effort to build a shower house and update the kitchen. He raised money by selling baseball caps for $100 apiece that proclaimed support for Lake Sarah.

“Somebody came up to me (at the state convention) and said, ‘I’m not paying $100 for a cap!’” Allen said. “I responded, ‘I’m not selling you a cap. You give me $100 for the park, and I’ll give you a cap, how’s that?’”

Farmers Union Park at Lake Sarah still keeps busy today, hosting Farmers Union Camps in summer and available for members to rent for special occasions.

**Health care: ‘It has to be said’**

Long before the national debate on health care became mainstream, Elaine made sure MFU took a stand on it in the official policy. At a state convention during Cy Carpenter’s presidency of MFU, she spoke up to get it included. When someone tried to have it removed, she fought back and kept it in.

“Carpenter, (former MFU Vice President) Vere Vollmers and (Legal Counsel) Dave Velde came up to me and said thank you,” Elaine said. “People are sick of listening to me harp on health care, but it has to be said.”

As a Canadian native, Elaine is well-versed in a system that she found to be more helpful than what she has gotten in the United States. She cited the dynamic nature of health – a healthy person can have their world turned upside down by a farm accident or kidney failure.

“We all should get in (to the health care system),” she said. “If you don’t need it, thank God, let somebody else use it. And when your time comes that you need it, somebody who’s working and able will be able to carry you.”

The Torpets are grateful for the impact of Farmers Union policy to make a difference and for the connections they’ve made over the years.
History of Minnesota Farmers Union

By Roger Rucker, Waseca County Farmers Union President

Remember…

National Farmers Union is a federation of state and local Farmers Union organizations founded in 1902 in Point, Texas. It was formed to protect and enhance the economic well-being and quality of life for family farmers and ranchers and their rural communities. NFU does this through promoting legislation, cooperation and education beneficial to farmers and ranchers. The goal of profitable and stable uniform prices for the farmer has always been part of its mission.

In 1905 a convention in Texarkana, Texas changed the Farmers Union from a regional organization to a National Farmers Union, electing Charles S. Barrett as president. Goals of education, legislation and profitability were set for the entire United States. In 1908, stock was sold to form the Equity Cooperative Exchange, the forerunner of the Farmers Union Cooperative.

President Theodore Roosevelt’s commission on Country Life reports in 1909 included NFU president Charles S. Barrett. This was an attempt to explore life and problems in rural America. In June 1914 the Bureau of Crop Estimates was established, something NFU had long urged, as a tool for economic stability in rural America. In April of 1915, W.B. Evans of Bismarck, N.D., started an organizing effort in Minnesota for Farmers Union. It was noted that this effort was taking place before North Dakota had received its state charter. Minnesota’s entry into the Farmers Union begins with the founding of its first local. In the autumn of 1918 in Jackson County, the “Rost Center Local” was organized. Charley F. Wendel of Wakefield said, “Now is the time for honest and loyal leaders and members to pull themselves together and show the present and rising generations the stuff they are made of. Our children will live after us and suffer the penalties of our mistakes and harvest the rewards of our honesty and courage.” These are words for all generations to remember.

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More Than an Organization by Don Muhm

Lt. Gov. Tina Smith appointed U.S. Senator

Minnesota Farmers Union congratulates Minnesota Lt. Gov. Tina Smith on her appointment to the U.S. Senate by Gov. Mark Dayton.

“We have a long history of working with Lt. Gov. Smith on issues that affect family farmers, especially health care and broadband,” said MFU President Gary Wertish. “We look forward to working with her in this new capacity.”

2018 will be a key year for agriculture, with low crop prices still looming over so many farmers and a new Farm Bill to be written. Smith has been a strong advocate for agriculture during her time as lieutenant governor and has often visited farms.

“We are grateful for Smith’s work in supporting Minnesota’s family farmers and believe she will continue to advocate for them in Washington, D.C.,” President Wertish said.

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.
Save the Date!

MARCH 21 — MARCH 23
University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota

Faith, Food & the Environment
NATIONAL CONFERENCE

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 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 workshops are:

- Jan. 30 • Willmar
- Feb. 22 • Mankato
- Jan. 31 • Marshall
- March 14 • Grand Rapids
- Feb. 21 • Austin
- March 15 • Thief River Falls

Women’s Conference Scholarship Recipients

We are happy to announce that seven women will be receiving a scholarship to attend the National Farmers Union Women’s Conference in San Diego, Calif., from Jan. 14-18. They are:

- Rachel Brann of Milaca
- Kajsa Beatty of Shoreview
- Sophie Vranian of Hutchinson
- Lisa Baker of Avon
- Linda Larson of Rosemount
- Elaine Torpet of Fertile
- Barbara Heen of Maynard

Additionally, two MFU staff will be attending the conference – Renewable Energy Director Michelle Medina and Public Relations Director Brita Moore.

We look forward to an inspiring week of Women in Leadership!

FUIA Agent Highlight: Jay Swanson

Thief River Falls: (218) 681-6443
(223 East 3rd Street)
Hallock: (218) 853-2468
(101 S Atlantic Ave.)
Email: jay@mnfuia.com

Why is working with Farmers Union Insurance Agency and MFU important to you? The camaraderie among the Agents and Rodney’s staff is number one. We have access to the best companies and carriers in the insurance industry, giving us a huge advantage over our competition. I have been with FUIA for more than 16 years, and I feel we have endless opportunities to grow our business like we’ve never had before! Minnesota Farmers Union is a name people know and has been working for family farms in rural areas for a long time, and I feel our relationship is a big advantage for our Agency.

What community organizations are you passionate about? I stay very active in my community. I’ve been an active Argyle Lions member for 30 years, am a past President, and have served on the Board of Directors for the past 15 years. I’m active in the Argyle Community Club (and have been “Santa Claus” for several years… shhh! Don’t tell the kids!), and retired as a Firefighter in Argyle after serving for 22 years. My wife and I are members of Our Saviors Free Lutheran Church in Argyle helping with Klub Dinners, their Sportsman Extravaganza and ushering. I am on the Advisory Committee of Unity Bank North helping with local business projects in the area. I support our local schools and sports teams, attending games and other events, and have volunteer coached.

Please tell us a little bit about your family life. My wife, Janelle, and I have been married for 33 years and have five children together: Samantha (Drew) Olafson, Kelsi (Daniel) Douglas, Taylor (Ali), Brady, and Regan. We also have six grandchildren: Lillian, Clara, Hazel, Halle, Olive and Gustaf (Gus). Our Agency is a family-run Agency as my wife and son Brady both work very actively to stabilize and grow the business.

What is your number one concern when reviewing and selling farm insurance? Farm Liability coverage is my main concern when reviewing farm business. Property can be replaced, but a farmer being sued and not having sufficient coverage could put them out of business. Farmers work too hard to lose their livelihood.

Jay has been an Agent for FUIA since 2001. His Agencies in Thief River Falls and Hallock, with satellite offices in Warren and Argyle, serve insureds in MN and SD. Jay was FUIA’s 2014 and 2015 Agent of the Year for his Agency’s outstanding performance and consistently high level of exceptional service he and his staff provide to his customers. Jay and Janelle participated in the 2016 NFU Legislative Fly-In to Washington, D.C. along with FUIA President Rodney Allebach and other Minnesota Farmers Union members.

Visit our website at www.mnfuia.com and “Find an Agent” to find a local FUIA agent in your area.
**Get social with Minnesota Farmers Union!**

Follow Minnesota Farmers Union on social media to find out about events, policy happenings, photos and more.

Facebook: Minnesota Farmers Union

Twitter: @mnfarmersunion

Instagram: mnfarmersunion

Tag us in posts we should see and we’ll like and share them.

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**Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) FSMA Trainings**

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule is a new piece of federal food safety legislation for fruit and vegetable farms.

**Farms covered by the rule are required to send at least one farm supervisor to a standardized and approved training about produce safety.**

The Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) has developed a course to fulfill that requirement of the Rule. It is the only course recognized by the Food and Drug Administration to fulfill the Rule’s training requirement.

Minnesota will host its first PSA FSMA Grower Trainings in 2018. Courses will be led by PSA staff, Minnesota Department of Agriculture Produce Safety Program staff, University of Minnesota Extension staff and trained fruit and vegetable farmers. MFU is a co-sponsor of these trainings, along with MDA, U of M Extension, Minnesota Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and Minnesota Farmers Market Association.

After the day-long course, participants will be eligible to receive a certificate from the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) that verifies they have completed the entire training course.

**Dates and locations**

- **Jan. 17 • 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.**
  River’s Edge Convention Center, St. Cloud, MN
  Registration deadline: Jan. 10 or when full

- **March 20 • 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.**
  Monticello Community Center, Monticello, MN
  Registration deadline: March 10 or when full

**Registration**

To register: [www.psp.tix.com](http://www.psp.tix.com). Cost is $25. This is a subsidized cost and will likely rise in following years. Preregistration required. Participation limited to 30 on a first-come, first-served basis.

More trainings will be scheduled in the future.

**Questions?** Contact the Minnesota Department of Agriculture Produce Safety Program at (651) 539-3648 or email producesafety.mda@state.mn.us.
Now that the busy harvest and holiday seasons are over, it’s the perfect time to review your farm policy and ensure you have what you need covered.

Interested in getting a new quote? Our Agents have access to many companies with competitive rates and prices to better serve your needs.

Wishing you and yours a prosperous 2018.