October is National Pork Month

Minnesota ranks 3rd in the number of pigs raised and 3rd in the value of pigs. Join Minnesota Farmers Union in supporting all family pork farms. Thank you for all the hard work you do to provide delicious pork products for our families.
SEND US YOUR PHOTOS!

Do you have photos you’d like to share with us? Send them our way! We’ll display our favorites at the Minnesota Farmers Union Convention, Nov. 22-24.

Some examples of what to send:
• Breakfasts on the farm
• County picnics, fairs and other events
• Highlights from county conventions
• Children’s FFA/4-H events

Guidelines for sending photos:
• Send a high-resolution digital photo file (1.5MB or larger, not to exceed 10MB)
• Most smartphones have cameras that take high-enough quality photos
• Include your name, city and a brief caption of the photo
• All submitted photos become property of MFU. The information received with your email will serve as a permission slip that MFU can use your photo(s) in printed materials and/or for advertising purposes. No images will be returned.

The DEADLINE is Nov. 11 to be included in the Convention slideshow.
Send photos to MFU Public Relations Director Brita Moore at brita@mfu.org.

Meet Molly Jansen

I’m thrilled to have been named Operations Assistant for Minnesota Farmers Union and excited to get to work on behalf of our members! I have been interested in agriculture and rural-urban issues for years, so I am grateful for the opportunity to work in this close-knit community.

I grew up in New Brighton until my ambitions and wanderlust took me overseas to study at universities in Scotland and Spain. Despite my international studies, I have always treasured Minnesota and considered it home. I have a strong background in office management, programming and fundraising in the Twin Cities nonprofit sector. Prior to joining the team at MFU, I worked in elections administration at Ramsey County for the 2018 midterms and as a legislative assistant with the law firm Lockridge Grindal Nauen. I am passionate about policy and excited to be a part of an organization that advocates for farmers at the Capitol.

In these roles, I developed organizational skills and a team-oriented mindset that I will bring to our offices in St. Paul. Additionally, I am a friendly face you can expect at the front desk every time you stop by our offices. I look forward to connecting with you, and in the meantime, don’t hesitate to reach out with questions, concerns, or requests to (651) 288-4060 or molly@mfu.org.
October is Pork Month
This month, we celebrate our hardworking family pork farmers. Minnesota is one of our country’s top pork producing states thanks to these dedicated people. Enjoy some Minnesota-grown bacon, sausage, ham, pork chops or whatever your favorite pork product is, this month and every month.

State Convention Announcement
With county conventions mostly complete, it’s time to start looking ahead to the 78th Annual Minnesota Farmers Union Convention. Our staff and I have enjoyed visiting with each of you at your county conventions and hearing the resolutions you had to share. I remind you to submit them to the State Office by Oct. 15 so we can prepare them for the Policy Committee and send invitations to delegates and alternates.

Whether you’re a delegate, alternate or simply interested in learning more about ag policy and Farmers Union, I invite you to attend the MFU Convention, taking place Nov. 22-24 at Delta Hotels by Marriott Minneapolis Northeast. MFU members look forward to the event each year, which we’ve held now for 78 consecutive years. We get together to debate and pass the policy statement that drives our advocacy work in government and shapes the organization’s priorities for the coming year. We’ll also elect delegates to the National Farmers Union Convention, coming up in early March in Savannah, Ga., and MFU President and Vice President. As usual, we’ll serve Minnesota-grown food and provide plenty of opportunities to reconnect with your fellow members. We are also working on our speaker lineup.

One change for this year’s convention is that it will start earlier – 1 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 22, before the joint reception with Farmers Union Insurance Agency. We are planning three informational breakout sessions for that day on health care, renewable fuels and hemp and are in the process of arranging speakers for them. Please plan to join us that afternoon. You’ll be able to attend all three sessions if you like.

A preliminary draft of the convention agenda is included on page 10. We’ve also made online registration available at bit.ly/78MFUrsvp, as well as hotel reservations at bit.ly/78MFUHotel. More details for registration are on page 8.

Fly-In
More than 40 MFU members and staff joined the nearly 400 National Farmers Union members in Washington, D.C. in mid-September for the annual NFU Legislative Fly-In. We met in person with the offices of every member of Minnesota’s members of Congress and Senators, with the officials themselves present at most of the meetings. These were incredibly productive conversations, as we focused on how Congress and the administration can strengthen the farm safety net; support biofuels and climate-smart farming practices; restoring competition in the agricultural economy; and improving the U.S-Mexico-Canada Agreement and ending ongoing trade wars. We also presented NFU Golden Triangle Awards to five elected officials – Senators Tina Smith (D) and Amy Klobuchar (D) and Representatives Collin Peterson (D-MN07), Angie Craig (D-MN02) and Tom Emmer (R-MN06), who have shown support for Farmers Union policy in the bills they sponsor and how they vote.

From my observation, trade has consistently been the most pressing issue for agriculture in the past year and a half. Since President Trump levied his first round of tariffs on imported steel and aluminum, many farmers have dealt with the uncertainty of not knowing how other nations will respond to the tariffs, on top of a five-year decline in farm income. The USMCA deal and the recent deal with Japan are good steps towards certainty, but they are unlikely to make up for the lost income. Neither are the Market Facilitation Program (MFP) payments, which, while appreciated, have hurt farmers in the political sphere. We aren’t looking for a “bailout”; rather, we’d prefer to get a fair price from the marketplace.

In addition to the Congressional meetings, we heard from United States Department of Agriculture officials on the first day of the Fly-In. The highest-ranking official we heard from was Undersecretary Ted McKinney, who leads global trade programs at the USDA. Though McKinney has done some good work to build new markets, including a trade mission I was part of in Colombia, he’s holding on to the administration’s belief that tariffs are the way to solve the problems with China, just as USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue did at Farmfest.

(continued on page 4)
No one disagrees that China has been a bad actor. But tariff after tariff isn’t making them change their ways, and their retaliatory tariffs have disproportionately hurt U.S. farmers. Combined with consolidation in agribusiness and high health care costs, farmers’ bottom lines are in trouble. That’s bad for rural communities as a whole, and it’s why we need to raise our collective voice as much as we can.

I’m grateful for all those who came to Washington with us and made our presence felt. Along with myself, our group included Vice President Bryan Klabunde of Waubun; State Secretary Anne Schwagerl of Browns Valley; Farmers Union Insurance Agency (FUIA) President and General Manager Rodney Allebach of Maple Grove; FUIA agent Chris Sanders and his wife Bridget of Rochester; Farmers Union Industries CEO Dan Hildebrandt and his wife Deb of Redwood Falls; Executive Committee Chair Carol Anderson and her husband Steve of Foley; Josh and Cindy VanDerPol of Kerkhoven; Linda Larson and Brian Rohrenbach of Rosemount; John Beaton of Saginaw; John Hest of Moorhead; James Kanten of Milan; Marcus Irrthum of Wanamingo; Eric Monson of Eagle Bend; Theresa Bentz of Northfield; Jessica Keddy of Sebeka; Sarah Klabunde of Waubun; Melissa Roach of Cook; Amy Liddell of Ada; Ed Terry of Randolph; Nicole Koziolek of Northfield; Jaylynn Frandrup of Hastings; Alan Perish of Browerville; Eunice Biel of Harmony; Liz Biel of Lanesboro; Richard Moen of Clearbrook; Deborah Mills of Lake City; Grace and Dale Fladeboe of Kandiyohi; Gene Paul of Delavan; Sarah Barrett of Brainerd; Maria Fatz of Waubun; Nicholas Foss of St. Bonifacius; Josiah Zapf of St. Bonifacius; and Jeff Stewart of the Linder Farm Network. Most of the MFU staff attended as well.

Meet new intern Neve Pechacek

Hi folks! I’m Neve Pechacek, a University of Minnesota student and intern this fall. My agricultural roots are in Hager City, Wis., where my family owns and operates a dairy farm.

I am in my final year at the University of Minnesota where I study Youth Studies and Human Resource Development. This semester I am looking forward to gaining experience in policy work, communications and working towards this year’s Annual Convention. This semester I am also volunteering with the civil rights organization Outfront MN.

To cap off my year, I will be studying abroad this winter term in Cape Town, South Africa, where I will be assisting in community-led education and innovation initiatives to assist youth living in extreme poverty. My interests within agriculture include food justice and reducing the incidence of rural food deserts.

In my free time I enjoy rollerblading on the many beautiful trails the Twin Cities have to offer. I’m looking forward to meeting and working with all of the people around Minnesota involved with Minnesota Farmers Union this semester!

Meet new intern Marta Zurn

My name is Marta Zurn and I’m from Benson, Minn. I’m currently a student at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities where I’m in my senior year. I’m double majoring in Global Studies and German.

I recently returned from a year-long study abroad program in Vienna, Austria where I studied European education systems, politics and culture.

I have a long-standing relationship with Minnesota Farmers Union, first as a camper for 9 years, a counselor for a summer, and now an intern! I am excited to transition from the educational, camp side of Farmers Union into the legislative side, and to work in the office and learn more about how we work with our MFU community and how that relationship works with the government.
harvest. Along with that challenge comes the quality of the wheat that must go to market, issues such as test weight and falling numbers are major factors in determining the value of the crop.

It is hard to believe that with such a late spring, soybean acreage is down from 2018, but trade issues, especially in the soybean market certainly had an influence on farmer decisions at planting time. While traveling, I enjoy the opportunity to see progress from around the state. While our crop progress report will tell us that we are 7 to 10 days behind last year’s pace, it certainly seems as if the crop will make it to maturity, albeit a bit behind where we would like to see it. Maybe the most challenging part of the 2019 soybean crop will be figuring out when to market the soybeans that have yet to be sold.

And just as surprising, the fact we had such a delayed spring led to corn acres increasing. It should not come to the surprise to anyone that the latest crop progress report estimates that the 2019 corn crop is on average around two weeks behind schedule. That becomes more apparent in the areas that were ravaged by heavy spring rains. In speaking with several farmers, their opinions ranged from “if it doesn’t freeze for a couple more weeks” to “not even going to be worth chopping.” October doesn’t tend to leave us with many growing degree units to be picked up in general. Our temperatures are already falling and our daylight hours are becoming noticeably shorter. That being said, we will unquestionably take all the pleasant weather and good luck allowed to us.

These are only three examples of the challenges of 2019. The effects of such a tumultuous growing season takes a toll on many other of our agricultural producers. The challenges are there if you are a fruit and vegetable producer, or are involved in pork or beef production. And certainly, if you are in the dairy industry, along with pricing, making forage has been quite the test of patience. No matter what aspect of agriculture you are in, be it sugar beets, dry edible beans, sheep, goats or hops, keep your head up, work hard and stay safe.
NFU WASHINGTON CORNER

A monthly update from National Farmers Union

NFU Board calls on Administration to strengthen agricultural markets

At its meeting in Washington, D.C., the NFU Board of Directors unanimously passed a pair of resolutions calling for solutions to mounting financial difficulties in farm country. By most metrics, the farm economy is in a slump, and it has been for six years now. The farmer’s share of the consumer food dollar is at an all-time low. Prices for many commodities are below the cost of production. Farm debt is at its highest level in almost 40 years. Median farm income has been negative since 2014. An international trade war and the undermining of biofuels programs have added to family farmers’ and ranchers’ troubles by adding to the oversupply of many American farm products and depressing prices even further. In order to relieve these unnecessary market pressures, the Board called for a re-examination of the trade deficits that motivated President Trump to instigate a trade war in the first place.

The Washington Corner can be found at www.nfu.org/corner.

NFU President Roger Johnson said it was “no surprise” that China retaliated with yet more tariffs, particularly on agricultural products. “Every time Trump escalates his trade war, China calls his bluff – and why would we expect any differently this time around?” Johnson also expressed frustration that rather than solving the many problems already plaguing the agricultural sector – overproduction, low prices, climate change – the administration has created new problems. “Between burning bridges with all of our biggest trading partners and undermining our domestic biofuels industry, President Trump is making things worse, not better.” Since then, however, the two nations have forged ahead with negotiations. In a slight dénouement, China decided in September to exclude U.S. soybeans and pork from additional tariffs. Additionally, the country purchased $67 million worth of U.S. soybeans – for context, the United States exported $12.2 billion worth of soybeans to China in 2017. President Trump, in response, delayed his tariff boost for two weeks, until October 15. Though it is promising that China has increased its purchases of U.S. agricultural goods, albeit only marginally, there is still a long way to go until the situation is fully rectified. For one, it is unclear what trade between the two countries will look like long-term, as both have begun building relationships elsewhere. For instance, during the G-7 summit, President Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe came to a tentative trade deal that would reportedly increase U.S. agricultural exports to Japan by as much as $7 billion. China, on the other hand, nearly doubled its imports of Brazilian soybeans in the past year. Even in the unlikely event that the U.S.-China trade relationship returns to its pre-trade war state, there would still be outstanding issues to address. In particular, China’s unfair and manipulative trade practices, including currency manipulation and intellectual property theft, have yet to be corrected, even though these are the very practices that motivated President Trump to instigate a trade war in the first place.

Trade payments boost farm income

New estimates released by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) underscored the ongoing market challenges plaguing family farmers. The report set the final net farm income for 2018 at $84 billion and predicted that net farm income next year would increase to $88 billion. These numbers are still well below the 2013 high of $136.5 billion but are only slightly below the $90 billion average from 2000-2018. While these gains seem promising on the surface, they are not due to market improvements. In fact, farm cash receipts are forecast to decrease by $2.4 billion this year. The full $4 billion growth, plus another $1.8 billion, can be attributed to direct government payments, mostly in the form of trade assistance through the Market Facilitation Program.

NFU Vice President of Public Policy and Communications Rob Larew indicated some optimism about the report but said it “belies the economic difficulties that most farmers are still facing…commodity prices are still depressed, and oversupply continues to be a problem.” He expressed concern that “farm income will likely fall again next year” unless the administration pursues real solutions to trade disputes, the undermining of biofuels policies, and chronic overproduction.

U.S. -- China trade war heats up, cools down

In another round of escalation, Chinese officials announced in August that the country plans to increase tariffs on $75 billion worth of American goods, including soybeans, pork, corn, sorghum, and wheat. Just hours later, President Donald Trump tweeted that the U.S. would increase current punitive tariffs on $250 billion worth of Chinese goods from 25 percent to 30 percent starting on October 1. Additionally, he announced that a 10 percent tariff on $300 billion worth of Chinese imports, scheduled to go into effect on September 1, would be hiked up to 15 percent.

EPA must support biofuels, uphold intent of RFS

In early July, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released its proposed renewable volume obligations (RVOs) under the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) for the year 2020. Though the proposal would maintain the current volume of conventional biofuels at 15 billion gallons, it would also significantly reduce the statutory volume for advanced biofuels and, consequently, the total renewable fuel volume. Furthermore, the proposal does not compensate for the 4 billion gallons of demand for biofuels that was eliminated by the ongoing misappropriation of RFS small refinery exemptions (SREs) to multinational corporations. In response to dwindling demand, at least 15 ethanol plants and several biodiesel plants have closed, and many others have reduced production, resulting in the loss of thousands of rural jobs. On behalf of its nearly 200,000 family farmer and rancher members, NFU submitted public comments urging EPA to adjust its proposed volume obligations in order to “offset all 4 billion gallons lost to the waivers…enforce the volume requirements for conventional biofuels, and…increase volumes for advanced biofuels.”

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The Washington Corner can be found at www.nfu.org/corner.
STU LOUREY, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DIRECTOR
stu@mfu.org

MFU staff and members welcomed September with the final days of the State Fair, flew out to Washington, D.C. for the National Farmers Union Legislative Fly-in and closed with county conventions across the state. Each provided opportunities to drive on MFU’s priority issues from health care costs to trade.

On Sept. 8, 40 MFU members and staff flew to Washington D.C., which provided nearly 400 Farmers Union members from across the country the opportunity to meet face-to-face with members of Congress, members of the administration and others who help craft the federal policy farmers experience every day.

Having a strong, collective voice on agriculture and rural issues in our nation’s capital is as important now as ever. On top of chronically low prices and rising input costs, farmers are being hit with a devastating trade war, agribusiness consolidation and unpredictable weather. But in the face of these challenges, there are also opportunities, like new local markets, biofuels and hemp. To help family farmers tackle these challenges and take advantage of new opportunities, NFU members requested that Congress strengthen the farm safety-net, promote climate smart practices and biofuels, restore competition to the ag economy and resolve ongoing trade disputes.

To help make these issues real for legislators, farmers shared on-the-ground experiences about how these policies affect their farm and family. For example, in a Congressional meeting, MFU members discussed the negative effect that grocery mergers, like the tech giant Amazon’s purchasing of Whole Foods, have had on their ability to sell to local co-ops, illustrating the need to put a moratorium on big mergers in the food sector. In others, members talked about ethanol plant closures in their communities, illuminating the devastating effects of the administration’s numerous small refinery waivers that allow big oil and gas companies to skirt the Renewable Fuel Standard, plummeting the demand for corn ethanol. And finally, in order to underscore the need to get pharmaceutical provisions out of the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, another member relayed a powerful story about a friend who couldn’t afford the prescription medication they needed to survive.

MFU President Gary Wertish asks USDA Undersecretary Ted McKinney a question

Each of these stories were important not only because they relate to a policy request, but also because they help legislators understand what family farmers are facing and how they can better represent an important part of their district. Even for urban legislators – while they may represent a limited number of farmers, their constituents depend on our nation’s farmers for a safe, stable and sustainable source of food, fuel and fiber.

In addition to discussing policy, MFU took the opportunity to present five members of Minnesota’s Congressional delegation with NFU’s Golden Triangle Award. Since 1988, this recognition has been extended to legislators who partner with Farmers Union to champion family farmers. This year both Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Senator Tina Smith (D-MN), in addition to Representatives Collin Peterson (D-MN07), Tom Emmer (R-MN05) and Angie Craig (D-MN02), received the award. This recognized not only that they’ve been an excellent partner, but also that they’ve empowered their staff to go to bat for MFU members and other farmers when they have a policy issue or run into roadblocks with federal agencies.

For example, when a dairy farmer couldn’t get a straight answer from her local FSA office about whether corn silage was eligible for payments under the Market Facilitation Program (MFP), she worked with Representative Craig’s office to get clarification from the head of the program at USDA that corn silage is in fact included. This, of course, helped her operation. But it also had a broader impact given that it resulted in a directive to agency staff clarifying that all intended uses of corn are eligible non-specialty crops for MFP.

In all, members who joined and shared their stories ensured that the trip reinforced MFU’s leadership on agriculture and rural issues. If you’d like to join for next year’s NFU Fly-In or have questions about this fall’s, don’t hesitate to reach out to me at (320) 232-3047 or stu@mfu.org.
Minnesota Farmers Union 78th Annual Convention

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the 78th Annual MFU Convention on Friday, Nov. 22 through Sunday, Nov. 24 at Delta Hotels by Marriott Minneapolis Northeast, at 1330 Industrial Blvd. NE, Minneapolis (previously Ramada Plaza). Our annual state convention offers an opportunity for members to set our policy and network with other members and participate in lively discussions. Highlights include the annual policy debate, current issues breakouts and fundraiser live auction.

For the full draft convention agenda, see page 10.

There is no cost to attend daily programming, but meals are ticketed events.
RSVP required by Nov. 11.

Minnesota Grown Meals: MFU works with members and local farmers to showcase local foods in all of our convention meals.
$15 per Saturday or Sunday lunch ticket in advance
$30 per banquet ticket
$50 for full meal package
(Saturday lunch, Saturday banquet and Sunday lunch)

Open to delegates, members, media and the public. You may pay for meals at the door if you like. There will also be invitations coming in the mail to delegates, alternates and county presidents.

To register: Call (651) 639-1223, email info@mfu.org, or on Eventbrite at bit.ly/78MFUrsvp (case sensitive).

Accommodations at Delta Hotels by Marriott Minneapolis Northeast

To reserve a hotel room, contact Delta Hotels by Marriott Minneapolis Northeast directly at (612) 331-1900, ext. 3 (the front desk) by Monday, Nov. 11 to guarantee a special rate of $109 plus taxes and fees. Mention that you’re calling for MFU.

You can also reserve a hotel room online at bit.ly/78MFUHotel.
A credit card is required to book your reservation.
The Delta Hotels by Marriott is located at 1330 Industrial Blvd. NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413.

Policy Committee

MFU is currently seeking members to serve on the Policy Committee for 2019-2020. The Policy Committee is charged with looking at resolutions sent in from MFU county organizations and preparing them for debate at the state convention.

The committee will meet on Saturday, Nov. 2 and Sunday, Nov. 3 to process resolutions. They will then meet one more time by phone to discuss late resolutions and late changes prior to the convention.

MFU asks for a two-year commitment for members serving on the committee if possible. MFU offers reimbursement for meals, mileage and hotel.

If you are interested, please contact Director of Government Relations Stu Lourey at (320) 232-3047 or stu@mfu.org.
ELECTION NOTICE

The State Secretary shall, on a date not less than 10 days prior to the first day of the convention, publish in the official publication of Minnesota Farmers Union a list of persons nominated by petition for the particular offices.

Anne Schwagerl
Secretary

Nominated for President:
Gary Wertish

Nominated for Vice President:
Bryan Klabunde
Deborah Mills
Anne Schwagerl
Noreen Thomas

Child Care

Child care at the Convention is open to all MFU members.

Ages for child care are 4 years of age and older.

You must register in advance by Friday, Nov. 15.

Contact Education Director Glen Schmidt at glen@mfu.org or (651) 288-4066.

MFUPAC Reception

Saturday, Nov. 23 • 4:30 p.m.

Delta Hotels Minneapolis NE • Suggested donation: $25

For more information please contact MFU Government Relations Director Stu Lourey at (320) 232-3047 or stu@mfu.org.
CONVENTION AGENDA

Friday, Nov. 22
1 p.m. Breakout session: Hemp (St. Paul Ballroom)
2:15 p.m. Breakout session: Renewable Fuels (St. Paul Ballroom)
3:30 p.m. Breakout session: Health Care (St. Paul Ballroom)
5 p.m. County officer leadership session (St. Paul Ballroom)
6:30 p.m. Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) & Farmers Union Insurance Agency (FUIA) Joint Reception honoring Rodney Allebach’s years of service (Minneapolis Ballroom)
8 p.m. Depart for Young Member Mixer at Can-Can Wonderland/Blackstack Brewery, returning 10:30 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 23
6:30 a.m. Free farm-fresh breakfast for MFU members (ends 8 a.m.) (St. Paul Ballroom)
7:45 a.m. Registration opens (Foyer)
8:00 a.m. Auction item check-in begins (Lake Mille Lacs Room)
8:30 a.m. Door prizes (Minneapolis Ballroom)
Convention convenes (Minneapolis Ballroom)
Welcome – Gary Wertish, MFU President
Prayer
Pledge of Allegiance
Present & adopt convention rules – Markell Vogt, Rules & Bylaws Committee Chair
Present & adopt minutes of 2018 convention – Anne Schwagerl, MFU State Secretary
Greeting – Carol Anderson, MFU Executive Committee Chair
Social media – Brita Moore, MFU Public Relations & Communications Director
Insurance update – Rodney Allebach, FUIA President & General Manager and Josh Vickerman, FUIA District 1 Manager
Green View report – Don Knutson, retiring Green View Executive Director, and Mike McShane, new Executive Director
Remarks – Bryan Klabunde, MFU Vice President
Farmers Union Enterprises Leadership Couple report – Andrea & Chris Koller
Policy – Stu Lourey, MFU Government Relations Director

Saturday, Nov. 23
10 a.m. Policy discussion
11:30 a.m. Lunch (Buffet in Foyer, eat in Minneapolis Ballroom)
12 p.m. Vice Presidential Candidate Panel
12:45 p.m. Reconvene (Minneapolis Ballroom)
1 p.m. Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) update – Thom Petersen, MDA Commissioner
Policy discussion
2:45 p.m. Credentials report – Lisa Severson, Credentials Committee Chair

Most agenda times are subject to change.
For further information, contact us at (651) 639-1223

Sunday, Nov. 24
6:30 a.m. Free omelet breakfast for MFU members (ends 8 a.m.) (St. Paul Ballroom)
8 a.m. Registration re-opens (Foyer)
8:15 a.m. Door prizes (Minneapolis Ballroom)
Call to order (Ballroom)
Farmers Union Industries (FUI) report – Dan Hildebrandt, FUI CEO
Youth activities report – Maria Fatz, Nicholas Foss and Josiah Zapf, National Youth Advisory Council
Introduction of New Leader Academy – Glen Schmidt, MFU Education Director
Membership & Outreach report – Bruce Miller, MFU Membership, Outreach and Minnesota Cooks Director
Minnesota Cooks report – Claudine Arndt, MN Cooks Program Manager, and Katie Cannon, photographer

Saturday, Nov. 23
9 a.m. Policy discussion
(9:30 a.m. registration closes – time certain)
9:45 a.m. Credentials report (final count of registered delegates) – Lisa Severson
President and Vice President Elections
10:30 a.m. Policy discussion
11:15 a.m. Introduction of NFU convention delegate nominees
11:45 a.m. Election of delegates to NFU convention (time certain) (Minneapolis Ballroom)
12 p.m. Lunch (Buffet in Foyer, eat in Minneapolis Ballroom)
12:30 p.m. Reconvene (Minneapolis Ballroom)
2018 audit and financial report – Russ Barnhardt, Hennen & Associates, PLC
National Farmers Union update
12:45 p.m. Policy discussion
Special orders
Old business
New business
Announcements
Election results (if/when available)
Door prizes
Grand door prize drawing for a Yeti cooler
Adjournment

Most agenda times are subject to change.
For further information, contact us at (651) 639-1223

REGISTER TODAY
bit.ly/78MFUrsvp

Minnesota Farmers Union
Standing for Agriculture, Working for Farmers
These events would not be possible without support from our members. Thank you to Lee and Noreen Thomas of Doubting Thomas Farms for hosting the first REWS at their farm. Thank you to the Mille Lacs Energy Cooperative in Aitkin, Kruse Motors in Marshall, and the Vetter farm in St. Peter for opening your farms and businesses for our tours to learn first-hand about your systems. It was interesting to learn more about each system, your experience with it, how and where it was set up and learn more about the financials and payback.

A few of the main policy issues were discussed at length and the issues were broad. Here is a list of some of the topics covered: energy storage/batteries, how to read your energy bill, financing, Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), energy audits, energy efficiency, siting solar gardens on farmland, decommissioning and restoration, Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE), energy efficient appliances, net metering, avoided cost, natural gas and more. The REWS help me better understand the needs and concerns of our members and where MFU can help. Thank you to everyone who participated. We had over 120 people attend the five meetings.

If you have not yet read the Farmers’s Guide to Solar and Wind Energy in Minnesota, I highly suggest you do so. It is available online at: www.mfu.org/farmers-guide-to-solar-and-wind and we also have copies available that you can pick up in our office. We partnered with the Farmers Legal Action Group to create this guide which is meant to help farmers navigate the contract process with a developer looking to install a large project on their land. As always, we suggest you consult a lawyer with specific questions before you sign any contract.

Thanks to all of you that attended your county conventions and submitted resolutions on energy. I’m looking forward to the policy discussions and debate at the State Convention in November.

**Farm Stress Radio Series**

Prompted by the many sources of stress currently impacting farmers and ranchers, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Red River Farm Network (RRFN) have joined forces to create a new radio series called **TransFARMation**. MFU is proud to be one of its sponsors.

The series uses farm radio, podcasts and social media to increase awareness and reduce inhibitions about acknowledging farmer stress while highlighting sources of support.

"Many people are struggling and need to know they’re not alone," said Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen. "This is a powerful series. We hear from farmers, ranchers and others in agriculture talk about some of the strategies and solutions that helped them when times got tough."

The 60 second prime-time radio stories can be heard on all of RRFN’s 20 stations throughout Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. In addition, the in-depth podcasts can be found at www.rrfn.com/transfarmation.

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**MINNESOTA FARMERS UNION**

Standing for Agriculture, Working for Farmers

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**MICHELLE MEDINA, PROGRAMMING DIRECTOR**  
michelle@mfu.org
With October here, we want to remind you to contact your local FSA office if your bank account information needs to be updated.

FSA program payments are issued electronically into your bank account. In order to make timely payments, you need to notify your FSA servicing office if you close your account or if your bank information is changed for whatever reason (such as your financial institution merging or being purchased). Payments can be delayed if FSA is not notified of changes to account and bank routing numbers.

For some programs, payments are not made until the following year. For example, payments for crop year 2018 through the Agriculture Risk Coverage and Price Loss Coverage program aren’t paid until 2019.

Additionally, if the bank account was closed due to the death of an individual or dissolution of an entity or partnership before the payment was issued, please notify your local FSA office as soon as possible to claim your payment.

**ARC and PLC signup periods for 2019 and 2020 announced**

Agricultural producers can now enroll in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs, two popular safety net programs, for the 2019 crop year. Interested producers must sign up for either program by March 15, 2020.

The 2018 Farm Bill reauthorized and made updates to these two USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) programs. ARC provides income support payments on historical base acres when actual crop revenue declines below a specified guarantee level. PLC program provides income support payments on historical base acres when the price for a covered commodity falls below its effective reference price.

Covered commodities include barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium grain rice (which includes short grain rice), safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

**Elections and enrollment**

Updated provisions in the 2018 Farm Bill allow producers with an interest in a farm to enroll and elect coverage in crop-by-crop ARC-County or PLC, or ARC-Individual for the entire farm, for program year 2019. The election applies to both the 2019 and 2020 crop years. If a 2019 election is not submitted by the deadline of March 15, 2020, the election defaults to the current elections of the crops on the farm established under the 2014 Farm Bill.

No payments will be earned in 2019 if the farm established under the 2014 Farm Bill applies to both the 2019 and 2020 crop years.

For crop years 2021 through 2023, producers will have an opportunity to make new elections. Farm owners cannot enroll in either program unless they have a share interest in the farm.

Once the 2019 election and enrollment are completed, producers on the farm for 2020 can complete an enrollment contract for the 2020 crop year beginning Oct. 7 and ending June 30, 2020.

Although 2019 enrollment began Sept. 3 and must occur first, a producer waiting until Oct. 7 to enroll is afforded the opportunity to enroll in either program for both 2019 and 2020 during the same office visit. During this time, farm owners have a one-time opportunity to update PLC payment yields that takes effect beginning with crop year 2020. If the owner accompanies the producer to the office, the yield update may be completed during the same office visit.

**Web-based decision tools**

In partnership with USDA, the University of Illinois and Texas A&M University are offering web-based decision tools to assist producers in making informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations. Tools include:

- **Gardner-farmdoc Payment Calculator**, the University of Illinois tool that offers farmers the ability to run payment estimate modeling for their farms and counties for ARC-County and PLC.

- **ARC and PLC Decision Tool**, the Texas A&M user friendly tool that allow producers to analyze payment yield updates and expected payments for 2019 and 2020. Producers who have used the tool in the past should see their username and much of their farm data will already be available in the system.

**Crop insurance considerations**

Producers are reminded that enrolling in ARC or PLC programs can impact eligibility for some forms of crop insurance. Producers who elect and enroll in PLC also have the option of purchasing Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) through the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA). Producers of covered commodities who elect ARC are ineligible for SCO on their planted acres.

To sign up for the program, visit your FSA county office.
“I think we have a decent crop out there,” said Jeff Leonard. “Hopefully we’ll get some decent price opportunities.”

“That’s farming,” his brother-in-law and farm business partner, Doug Wenner, added. “There are going to be good years and bad years.”

You’ve probably had these same thoughts if you have your own farm operation. Jeff and Doug, who run a 14,000-hog finishing operation, along with 2,500 acres of corn, soybeans and sod, know it as well as anyone. The two of them are the fifth generation farming their land, with Jeff’s son Josh now on board as the sixth. It’s an endeavor of two families working together: Doug and his two brothers, Brad and Steve, used to have their own farm nearby. His wife, Nancy, is Jeff’s sister. Doug decided to join Jeff’s operation in 1988. When Brad and Steve retired, Doug and Jeff rented about half of their land. Despite a tough weather year in southern Minnesota, Jeff, Josh and Doug are keeping their heads up.

“You just gotta be ready to make things happen when you can go,” Doug said. “You do what you have to do.”

**Sows, sod and a computerized feed mill**

Every farm has its evolution story. The Leonard-Wenner operation’s evolution is a little unique. The farm has long had hogs, and up until 2003 it included a farrowing operation. Doug and Jeff took it a little different direction: They got rid of the sows and started farming sod. Now they show up on Google Maps as Timber Lake Sod.

That comes with its own challenges, of course.

“I got a text message from someone saying he wants sod today, if possible,” Jeff said. “He’s going to get a lot of sod, which is perishable, so it has to be laid the same day.”

The pigs still drive the every day work at the farm. It was around the same time as the transition into sod that the family constructed their own on-farm feed mill.

“We’ve produced all our own pig feed since 1992,” Doug said. “Our father-in-law and uncle used to own an elevator in St. Peter, so we would haul our corn down there, they’d turn it into feed, then we’d haul it back. So when Jeff and I were getting started, we decided we needed to build our mill right on-farm.

We borrowed the money and built the mill. It saved the trucking costs, paid for it within a couple years. We went to a computerized mill at that time. We don’t have to have someone sitting there tracking the ingredients. That’s part of Josh’s responsibility, ordering ingredients.

Josh is in charge of keeping track of the different rations that go into the feed mixes. There are three rations that go into the nursery pigs and six to the finishing hogs.

“It’s all pre-programmed to try to optimize the hog growth and costs as much as you can,” Josh said.

**Spreading the joy of pork**

Doug and Jeff have both served on their local pork boards, and Doug is currently on a committee with the National Pork Board. He’s taken initiative to get farmers in his community out interacting with people – what better way than with barbecue?

“Back in 1999, we bought a grill to do promotional events,” he said. “We now have two grills. We do weddings, customer appreciation days, we have a booth at the Nicollet County Fair, where we serve pork chops, ribs, pork burgers, shredded pork. I organized it for five years, and it’s all volunteer work.”

He encourages his fellow board members to post on social media, so they can interact with consumers without having to spend too much time away from the farm.

“I can sit in the combine and put things on Facebook,” he said.

The family has also made a strong effort to welcome others onto their farm, looking to inform and answer questions about what they do and what they go through.

“We have a connection with the agriculture teacher at the St. Peter High School. I was on the committee that helped hire her,” Doug said. “They brought groups of students out to our farm, during harvest. They’d hop in the combine and ride for a little bit, or they’d come out to the sod field. I was also on the 7 Mile Creek Watershed Committee. They got a group together through Gustavus Adolpus College. They brought a lot of local people out for a crops day. We looked at the machinery and talked about what we do. We got a lot of unique questions and comments from people who’ve never seen that kind of equipment.”

**It’s the price**

The Timber Lake farmers are wary of the international trade disputes the United States have embroiled themselves in.

“We’re getting it on both ends, with soybeans and hogs,” Jeff said. “That’s hurting the bottom line for sure.”

Having been on a trade mission to China with the Pork Board, Doug emphasized that our trade relationships are products of hard work by farmers themselves.

“You do spend a lot of time setting up trade partnerships, and that just got the kibosh (from the Trump administration),” he said. “It’s hard to see because I don’t think someone that makes that decision has any idea how much time we spent making those relationships.”

An important point Jeff raised is how the control of meat packing companies has increased – often at the expense of family farmers.

“When the margins get tight for them, it all comes back to us,” he said. “We can lose money three years in a row and it doesn’t bother them one bit. It’s not like it used to be where they were farmer-friendly… There are no cash prices anymore because of the way it’s reported. It’s going to eliminate the independent producer. There should be some way to establish a cash price so we know where we’re at.”

And, the price of health insurance.

“That’s one of the reasons my wife, Natalie, is in town for her full-time job (at the hospital),” Jeff said. “Farmers are struggling just because of that health care cost. I don’t know what they’re going to do about it.”

**Beyond their control**

“Farming is a gamble – you never know exactly what the weather is going to be like on a given day, if you’re going to have enough people to get the work done, if things are going to work out in the export markets. Doug, Jeff and Josh haven’t been able to start harvesting corn, since it’s too wet. And they haven’t faced the worst of the rain, and they have a solid group of part-time workers they can turn to.

“The battle you’re having now is the battle you’re going to be having six months from now too,” Jeff said. “You just put out the fires as they come up, that’s all you can really do for now.”

MINNESOTA FARMERS UNION  Standing for Agriculture, Working for Farmers
Maple Coffee Bean Parfait with Pumpkin Bar

For the parfait: (Yields 12 6-oz. servings.)
16 egg yolks
2 cups sugar
16 oz. coffee
6 oz. pure maple syrup
1 cup heavy cream
2 oz. confectioner’s sugar
Chocolate covered coffee beans
Pinch of cocoa

In a medium saucepan, reduce coffee by half to make 8 oz. of concentrated coffee. Add sugar and boil for about 5 minutes.

Separate egg yolks and place in a bowl. In a double boiler, whisk egg yolks and coffee/sugar mixture together for 7-10 minutes until a custard forms. Remove from heat and place in an ice bath, stirring occasionally.

Whisk the heavy cream with the confectioner’s sugar until small peaks form. Remove custard from the ice bath. Combine the cream/confectioner’s sugar mixture and pure maple syrup to the custard. Pour into martini glasses and freeze for 8 hours.

For the bars:
1/2 cup vegetable oil
2 eggs
1 cup sugar
1 can pumpkin
1/2 tsp. baking soda
Pinch of salt
1 tsp. baking powder
1 tsp. cinnamon
1 cup flour
1/2 oz. banana liqueur
1/2 tsp. allspice

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In a mixing bowl, cream oil, eggs and sugar together. Add remaining ingredients and mix. Pour batter into two 9” round cake pans. Bake for approximately 20 minutes. Cool completely.

Frost with cream cheese frosting.

For the frosting:
2 oz. cream cheese
3 Tbsp. European butter, softened
1/2 tsp. milk
1/2 tsp. vanilla
1 cup confectioner’s sugar

Cream together frosting ingredients in a mixing bowl. Spread onto pumpkin bars. When ready to serve, cut bars into desired size and shape and arrange on top of parfait. Embellish with coffee beans and a pinch of cocoa.

SAVE THE DATE!

NFU Women’s Conference

The National Farmers Union (NFU) Women’s Conference will be held January 19–21, 2020 in San Diego, Calif.

Farming is never a one-woman job – it takes a village to run a successful operation. This conference will not only prepare you for success in agriculture, but it will also provide you with your own network of women farmers and ranchers you can reach out to throughout the year.

Farmers, policy makers, educators and specialists will present on a number of subjects, including financial management, farm labor, leadership and more.

Visit NFU.org/WomensConference for more information and to register.

Contact the MFU State Office at (651) 639-1223 about scholarship opportunities for attending the conference.

Farm Advocates

Farm Advocates provide one-on-one assistance for Minnesota farmers who face crisis caused by either a natural disaster or financial problems. They understand the needs of agricultural families and communities. They are trained and experienced in agricultural lending practices, mediation, lender negotiation, farm programs, crisis counseling, disaster programs and recognize the need for legal and/or social services. Plus, most of the Farm Advocates are MFU members.

The Farm Advocate Program has been supported by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture since 1984. There is no charge or fee for Farm Advocate assistance.

Farm Advocates:

Jan Boll Trail (218) 268-4472
Bruce Lubitz Perham (218) 346-4866
Connie Dykes Lake City (651) 345-5149
David Elliasson 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
FREE agritourism signs for MFU members

Upcoming Events

Oct. 17-19 • Women in Sustainable Ag Conference • InterContinental Riverfront, Saint Paul

Oct. 17-20 • Minnesota Beef Expo • Minnesota State Fairgrounds, Saint Paul

Nov. 4-6 • Food Justice Summit • Duluth Entertainment and Convention Center, Duluth

Nov. 22-24 • 78th Annual Minnesota Farmers Union Convention • Delta Hotels by Marriott, Minneapolis

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

Upon request, MFU will provide members one FREE sign that meets the guidelines. You’ll also receive a two-page guide to the law that was put together by Farmers’ Legal Action Group (FLAG). Additional signs for members can be purchased for $7. Signs for non-members cost $10.

To get your sign, contact Molly Jansen at molly@mfu.org or (651) 639-1223.

Get social with Minnesota Farmers Union!

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

Facebook: Minnesota Farmers Union

Twitter: @mnfarmersunion

Instagram: mnfarmersunion

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

FUIA Agent Highlight:
LISA VALIANT | (952) 467-2922
312 W Hwy. 212, Suite B, Norwood Young America
lisa@mnfuia.com

Why is working with Farmers Union Insurance Agency & MFU important to you? Working with FUIA is fulfilling because I have the career I aspired to have and am able to work with a company that is like a family! All of our Agents, staff and companies are so supportive of each other and our customers. I appreciate being a part of MFU and supporting an organization that is truly fighting every day for our farmers. Farmers face some of the toughest challenges and knowing that what I do every day is supporting them is very rewarding.

What community organizations are you passionate about? I have been a Hutchinson Chamber member for 3 years and have served on the Hutchinson Agribusiness Committee for at least 5 years. We are responsible for Dairy Days, Farm Fatigue Safety check events, and hold seminars for farmers during the winter to help educate and support them to plan with various aspects of their industry. I have been a Chamber member in Norwood Young America for 3 years and have served on their Board ever since, serving as Vice President twice and as President for one term. I’ve been a part of the Holiday Extravaganza Committee and the Taste of NYA Committee for 2 years (as well as volunteering for 3). This year I also joined the Stiftungsfest Celebration Committee and am president of its Classic Car Show. This summer I served on the committee for and volunteered at the Wright & Carver County Breakfast on the Farm.

Please tell us a little bit about your family life. I live in Hutchinson and my office is located in NYA; I have two dogs that are my babies. In my spare time, I enjoy running as a hobby, and recently ran my first 10k! I also enjoy boating and fishing, and anything at the lake. I also have a passion for restoring old cars and trucks.

What is your #1 concern when reviewing and selling farm insurance? My biggest concern when I am looking at farm policies is that everything has the proper coverage and endorsements that are tailored specifically for each individual and their farm operation’s needs. I also strive to make sure my insureds fully understand the coverages on their policies.

Lisa joined the Agency in June 2016 as a startup Agency and is licensed in Property, Casualty, Life, Accident & Health. Within her first full year with us, she earned a spot on a Sales incentive trip to Punta Cana. You can follow Lisa’s community involvement on Facebook at Lisa Valiant Insurance.

Follow Farmers Union Insurance Agency on Facebook and Twitter at @MFUIns, and visit our website at www.mnfuia.com for more information about our Agents and the insurance services we can provide. Photo © 2019 Katie Cannon Photography
Medicare Open Enrollment is October 15 - December 7.

Benefits and premium can change annually. So can your health needs. It’s important to review your health plan every year before you lock in, even if you’re happy with your current plan.

MNsure open enrollment runs November 1 - December 23.

Open to something better? Contact your local FUIA Agent to compare all your options for 2020, including prescription drug or Medicare Advantage plans from private insurers. You may find lower costs, extra benefits, or both.

(800) 229-1064 toll-free or (651) 639-1064
www.mnfuiaw.com

Farmers Union Insurance Agency is fully owned by Minnesota Farmers Union.