Minnesota Agriculture
a publication of Minnesota Farmers Union
November 2019

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Minnesota Farmers Union  Standing for Agriculture, Working for Farmers
www.mfu.org
When the Farmers Union Coffee Shop at the Minnesota State Fair was being remodeled in 2018, we decided to incorporate films about the history of Farmers Union, the importance of supporting local farmers and why it’s important to be a member. The Twin Cities-based company W2 Films worked with us on this effort. The three films have shown during the fair in 2018 and 2019, as well as at the 77th Annual MFU Convention last year.

The stories our members shared in the films have clearly made an impact. We were overjoyed to be nominated for an Upper Midwest Emmy this year in the Lifestyle – Feature/Segment/Series category.

A group of us attended the awards ceremony on Oct. 5 in Prior Lake: MFU President Gary Wertish and his wife Jeanne Wertish; Minnesota Cooks Program Manager Claudine Arndt; Chris Fullerton, wife of MFU Membership and Outreach Director Bruce Miller; my fiancé Adam Kutz; and me. Also part of the nomination was MFU Programming Director Michelle Medina.

While we didn't win, being there was an honor, recognized alongside top media professionals from Minnesota, Iowa and Wisconsin. All of the nominees shared important stories about people in our region in their productions, just as we did. We are so glad that Minnesota family farmers were part of the Upper Midwest Emmys celebration. The films can be seen on the MFU website.
Informational breakout sessions
Our convention’s informational breakout sessions are at a new time this year – Friday, Nov. 22, starting at 1 p.m., in the St. Paul Ballroom. We will hold three sessions back-to-back about industrial hemp, biofuels and health care. Government Relations Director Stu Lourey has more details about the breakout sessions and who will be speaking at them, found on page 6.
Detailed RSVP instructions can be found on page 8, and a tentative agenda following.

Representing family farmers on global food security
I recently returned from Rome, Italy, where I spoke on a panel at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization Committee on World Food Security conference. I represented the World Farmers’ Organisation, of which National Farmers Union is a member, on a panel on antimicrobial resistance (AMR). The theme of the panel was “field to fork,” or in other words, how family farmers provide the food for the world’s population.

It’s important to me to make sure family farmers are at the table in discussions around AMR, because farmers need antibiotics to be able to treat their animals when they are sick, just as people sometimes need antibiotics when we are sick. I was honored to bring this topic to the forefront of the larger conversation about global food security.

Farmers Union frustrated by USDA Secretary Perdue’s ‘small go out’ comment
Just under two months after he raised eyebrows at Farmfest, joking that farmers are “whiners,” United States Department of Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue stated at the World Dairy Expo that he didn’t know if small family dairy farms can survive in the evolving industry.
“In America, the big get bigger and the small go out,” he said, according to the Associated Press.

It’s incredibly frustrating to hear things like this from someone who’s supposed to represent all family farmers. The “get big or get out” business philosophy, which has been the driving force in agriculture for more than 40 years now, hasn’t worked. Rather, it has caused consolidation in agriculture that’s driven too many family farmers off the farm and hurt rural communities.

If the USDA really supports all American agriculture, it must make policies that earn family farmers a fair price and keep them on their land, no matter what size they are. Regardless of what the administration says, I want you to know that all farmers have a voice in our organization.

Trump administration disappoints again on biofuels
The big reason we’re having a breakout session about biofuels is that President Trump and his administration continue to let down family farmers on this issue. This president, who campaigned heavily in the rural Midwest that he would support biofuels, broke his promise by allowing his Environmental Protection Agency to approve 85 unnecessary small refinery exemptions (SREs) to large, profitable oil refiners. This exempts them from the Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS), which means there is less requirement for them to blend homegrown ethanol into their fuel.

The refiners claim “hardship” to get the SREs, despite being some of the most profitable companies in the world. This has severely damaged the market for corn ethanol and eliminated about four billion gallons of demand for it. Not to mention the ethanol plants that have closed, including the one in Winnebago, Minn., costing rural communities valuable jobs.

In early October, EPA and USDA announced they had a plan to offset the lost biofuels demand from the SREs. The plan included initiating a rulemaking process to remove barriers to selling E15 and seeking comment on actions to ensure that more than 15 billion gallons of ethanol be blended into the nation’s fuel supply beginning in 2020.
President’s Message (continued from page 3)

The plan’s details, released in mid-October, fell flat for family farmers. EPA proposed basing the relief provided on values recommended by the Department of Energy (DoE), rather than the actual three-year average of exempted gallons. The DoE values would increase the demand for biofuels by about 770 million gallons, while basing relief on the actual three-year average would increase demand by 1.35 billion gallons. The administration claimed for months they were hard at work on a plan to fix this issue, but the results fell way short of the rhetoric and what farmers need.

To stand up for farmers on this issue, National Farmers Union joined a coalition of renewable fuel and agricultural organizations petitioning the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, challenging the process by which EPA issued SREs. Rob Larew, NFU Senior Vice President of Public Policy and Communications, also submitted written testimony for a hearing in the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change about the waivers.

“The EPA’s flagrant mishandling of small refinery exemptions has caused considerable harm to the biofuels industry. Family farmers have lost millions of dollars of hard-earned income, hundreds of rural Americans have lost their jobs, and rural communities across the country have lost local businesses that have contributed to economic growth,” Larew wrote.

President Trump needs to be held accountable for these SREs. The biofuels market has long been a reliable option for family farmers to get a fair price for their products, as well as a strong part of our country’s energy mix and a way to lower fuel costs for consumers. This administration has all but destroyed that market.

Uncertainty lingers with China; USMCA work continues

The U.S. and China reached a détente of sorts a few weeks ago in the tit-for-tat trade war. The Trump administration said it would delay additional tariffs on Chinese imports, while China agreed to unspecified changes to intellectual property policies and currency guidelines. China also said it would import between $40-50 billion worth of U.S. agricultural products over an unspecified period of time.

This “deal” leaves farmers with more questions than answers. The questions have only increased since news came out a week later that China has been buying soybeans from Brazil lately, even after their promise to buy up to $50 million worth of beans from the U.S. According to Reuters, purchases like this from South America are unusual for China, with the U.S. harvest underway. Though Trump has claimed China is already making U.S. ag purchases, his USDA has not backed him up. Soybean exporters told Reuters they had not made any sales immediately after the announcement of the deal.

On the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), House Democrats are still negotiating with U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to get to a deal they’re willing to vote on, and rightfully so. The National Farmers Union Full Board, which I am a member of, voted unanimously in support of a resolution withholding support for USMCA in its current form. This is not an outright opposition of the agreement; rather, we are waiting for the final agreement to be released before we express conclusive judgment. To provide needed protections to American family farmers and ranchers, the agreement should strengthen labor, environment, and enforcement provisions; rectify language related to prescription drugs; strengthen anti-dumping protections for agricultural goods; and re-establish Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) authority.

The point of all this is, family farmers need certainty and a decent price for their product. Press conferences and vague plans aren’t doing the job.
Harvest 2019 is one we will not soon forget here in northwest Minnesota. Just for an example, less than 40 percent of the fresh potato crop in the Red River Valley has been harvested. The effects of that will reach far beyond Minnesota. The Red River Valley is the number one supplier of red potatoes in the United States. They are distributed across the lower 48 states directly out of warehouses in East Grand Forks. The number of trucks picking up potatoes is down this year from last year and it’s not only having an impact on farmers but also the businesses they work with. Generally, about 2,000 truckloads leave East Grand Forks each year. It won’t be close this year.

When news of the struggles in northwest Minnesota hit St. Paul, it didn’t take long for Gov. Tim Walz and Department of Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen to act and make their way to East Grand Forks to hear first-hand from farmers.

“I’m hearing from folks, certainly old-timers in this – it doesn’t matter if it’s soybean, potatoes, sugar, wheat,” the governor said. “They have not seen it like this.”

East Grand Forks is a short 90-mile drive from my farm, so I went to hear from them.

As I was leaving that morning, I got a call from a friend who needed a ride to his tractor. While driving out to the field we talked about general farming things, and I asked if he planned to apply fertilizer this fall.

His response isn’t one you like to hear. He replied, “I don’t have any money, and I probably won’t be farming next year anyway.” He shut the door and simply walked away.

It occupied my mind all the way to East Grand Forks.

About 50 farmers along with state and local Officials and representatives from ag organizations attended the roundtable discussion at a potato inspection office of MDA. Walz told the farmers he wanted to hear from them about the challenges they are facing and how his administration can help them.

MFU President Gary Wertish mentioned concerns over propane deliveries being made in a timely manner. Commissioner Petersen said he and his staff have been in communication with propane distributors to make sure that farmers will have adequate supply to dry the crops when it does get harvested. One of the issues that affects propane distribution is “hours of service,” which refers to the hours in which a trucker may operate their transport truck. The day after the meeting, Gov. Walz issued an executive order lifting restrictions on hours of service, a good step to helping family farmers through these difficult times.

I thank Gov. Walz and Commissioner Petersen for taking the time to listen to farmers. It means a lot right now.

**FUIA Agent Highlight:**

**DEBBIE ANDERSON**

(320) 589-3245

10 E 6th St, Suite 105, Morris
danderson@mnfuia.com

**Why is working with Farmers Union Insurance Agency & MFU important to you?** I believe relationships are important stepping stones to building a business. Farmers Union Insurance Agency and Minnesota Farmers Union have the same interests I do in promoting sustainability of the family farm; they’ve created a loyal following of people with similar interests, beliefs and trust. I love the feeling of being able to help someone see the value in what they are purchasing. Being able to use tools FUIA has given me at work is extremely rewarding.

**What community organizations are you passionate about?**

I wear several hats in the community, from serving as a Township Clerk to serving as a Soil and Water Conservation Supervisor. I am also currently the president of Trinity Lutheran Church in Alberta. I enjoy being a 4-H Club Leader and sponsoring several local youth sports teams.

**What is your #1 concern when reviewing and selling farm insurance?** I think it’s of utmost importance to get to know my insureds and their businesses. Each operation has its own set of challenges; they are all unique, which prepares me to learn and adapt. Farmers Union Insurance Agency has so many great companies we work with that it is easy to find the right fit for our customers. I feel like I’m really helping educate my insureds that it’s more than a premium they pay, it’s life insurance for their futures.

Debbie joined the Agency in September 2015 and is licensed in Property, Casualty, Life, Accident & Health in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. Prior to serving as an Agent, Debbie worked as an Insurance Quality Manager at a local bank, specializing in Farm and Crop insurance.
CONVENTION BREAKOUT SESSIONS

This year’s panels will be held on Friday afternoon, Nov. 22, ahead of the opening reception. Panel topics and times are as follows:

- **Industrial Hemp** – 1 p.m. (St. Paul Ballroom)
- **Biofuels** – 2:15 p.m. (St. Paul Ballroom)
- **Health care** – 3:30 p.m. (St. Paul Ballroom)

First, the panel on industrial will help members and others in attendance understand the perspective of regulators, growers, and researchers as they all work together to build a thriving hemp industry in Minnesota. Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) Assistant Commissioner Whitney Place, who oversees the department’s hemp program, will give an overview of the industry in Minnesota, as well as help potential growers and others better understand how to work with MDA as they navigate the state’s policies on this new crop. John Strohfus, who founded Minnesota Hemp Farms, will give the perspective of an innovative grower who’s building new markets around not just fiber, but also protein and CBD products. Lastly, Shannon Schlecht, Executive Director of the Agriculture Utilization Research Institute (AURI), will provide an update on processing and value-added work the institute is doing to ensure that there is a viable market for hemp grown in Minnesota.

Secondly, the panel on biofuels will provide information on national- and state-level efforts to increase the use of biofuels and new research on biofuels that can help in that effort. Joining for this panel will be Anne Steckel, who works with National Farmers Union (NFU) as biofuels advisor. She has more than 20 years of experience in Washington, D.C. working on legislative, regulatory, advocacy and political issues and previously served as the Vice President of Federal Affairs for the National Biodiesel Board. MDA Deputy Commissioner Andrea Vaubel, who oversees the budget and internal workings of the department, will join to share how Minnesota is working to lead on biofuels and lift up the voices of family farmers.

And finally, the panel discussion on health care will include perspectives from the Walz administration, a think-tank focusing on state health care policy and people working on the ground to improve health care in rural Minnesota. Assistant Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services for Health Care Tom Moss will discuss strategies the administration is working on to bring down the cost of health care, and particularly the price of prescription drugs. Joanna Dornfeld, Senior Director of State Affairs at the United States of Care, will be joining to talk through ideas from her organization for lowering health care costs and improving competition on the individual market. MFU President Gary Wertish serves United States of Care as part of their equity feasibility project, and the organization was founded by former Acting U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Andy Slavitt.

Between these panels, our hope is that members will gain valuable perspective that will help inform conversations throughout the weekend. We hope you’re able to join us!

At the 78th Annual MFU Convention, we will hold informational breakout sessions to give members the opportunity to engage with experts on priority and emerging issues that MFU works on at the Capitol. Our hope is that this will not only help share information and resources, but also spark new conversation and debate throughout the convention. Members are encouraged to share their perspectives and ask questions.

**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.
- Send photos to MFU Public Relations Director Brita Moore at brita@mfu.org.
The Policy Committee for Minnesota Farmers Union and our staff are busy sorting through the resolutions sent in this year by county conventions for delegates to consider at the 78th Annual MFU Convention, Nov. 22-24. The Policy Committee this year includes some familiar faces as well as new members. Serving the Policy Committee this year is:

- Krista Osendorf, Stearns
- Kirsten VanDerPol, Chippewa
- Erik Hatlestad, Kandiyohi
- Frank Grimm, Sibley
- Laurie Driessen, Yellow Medicine
- Theresa Keaveny, Brown
- Eunie Biel, Filmore
- Jim Kanten, Chippewa

There have been many resolutions submitted by each county for members to consider at state convention. These resolutions will be categorized, edited and refined by the policy committee and MFU staff prior to the convention, who will then present the final resolutions to delegates for consideration.

While there is a wide spectrum of resolutions to consider, a few resolutions have appeared to be consistent across many different counties. Here are a handful of the most common submissions:

- Support for more transparency, accountability and oversight of all commodity check off payments.
- Support for the creation of an indemnity fund to protect farmers with the risks associated with elevator collapse or damage.
- Support for collaborating with government officials to figure out a better trade solution to help provide relief to farmers being damaged by tariffs.
- Support to refine small-scale enterprise food license guidelines and funding.
- Support for the appropriate funding regarding cottage food laws and safety regulations and providing more information about cottage food programs.

The Policy Committee is committed to helping farm families, agribusinesses and their employees get access to comprehensive health plan options. “Member-owned and member-governed” means 40 Square members are part of an empowered community of Minnesotans working together to find common solutions that help curb rising health plan prices, gain access to local doctors and tap into multiple health plan offerings without sacrificing quality. Any health care dollars left over in the co-op’s reserve at the end of the year go back to members in the form of enhancing benefits, decreasing premiums or curbing premium increases, not in the pocket of a large third-party company looking to gain profits.

When a member enrolls in a 40 Square plan, they get collective buying power that is like employer-group style coverage. They have seven health plan options that are designed specifically for farm families, as well as businesses that directly support production agriculture, and their employees. Health savings account-eligible plans are available as well. Benefits include a large network with providers in rural areas, plus a national network for individuals who travel or might doctor over state lines.

40 Square is proud to be the only independent agricultural health plan cooperative in the state and is committed to working on behalf of its members through education and resources to stabilize health plan costs and enhance every member’s overall health.

Open enrollment for the 2020 Plan Year is occurring now through Dec. 31! To learn how 40 Square can benefit your family or employees, visit www.40Square.coop, contact info@40Square.coop or call 844-205-9579.
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.

Nominated for President:
Gary Wertish

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

Anne Schwagerl, Secretary

78th Annual Minnesota Farmers Union 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.

This year’s keynote speaker: Lori Wallach

Lori Wallach is the director of Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch. A 25-year veteran of congressional trade battles starting with the 1990s fight over NAFTA, she was named to the “Politico’s 50” list of thinkers, doers and visionaries transforming American politics for her leadership in the Trans-Pacific Partnership debate. Wallach is an internationally recognized expert on trade with experience advocating in Congress and foreign parliaments, trade negotiations, courts, government agencies, the media and in the streets.

Wallach has testified on NAFTA, WTO, and other globalization issues before 30 congressional committees and frequently appears as a trade commentator on television and has been published and quoted in numerous U.S. and foreign publications.

Dubbed “the Trade Debate’s Guerrilla Warrior” in a National Journal profile and “Ralph Nader with a sense of humor” in a Wall Street Journal profile, she combines a lawyer’s expertise on the terms and outcomes of trade pacts with insight from the front lines of trade debates.

Wallach’s specialty is translating arcane trade issues into accessible language. She is a graduate of Wellesley College and Harvard Law School.

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. Invitations were mailed to delegates, alternates and county presidents.

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

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**78th Annual Minnesota Farmers Union Convention Reception**

Hosted by Minnesota Farmers Union and Farmers Union Insurance Agency

Minneapolis Ballroom - Delta Hotels by Marriott Minneapolis Northeast
(formerly Ramada Plaza) 1330 Industrial Blvd NE, Minneapolis, MN

**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.

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**Child Care**

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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.

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**OFFICIAL CONVENTION CALL – 78th Annual MFU Convention**

Notice is hereby given that the 78th annual convention of the Minnesota Farmers Union will begin with registration at 7:45 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 23, 2019 at the Delta Hotels by Marriott Minneapolis Northeast and continue through Sunday, Nov. 24, or until all business has been concluded. Business to be conducted at the state convention will include election of delegates to the national convention, president and vice president elections and discussion and passage of resolutions into MFU policy.

The basis of representation at the Minnesota Farmers Union convention, as provided by the constitution and bylaws, shall be one delegate from each local union who will represent as many as ten regular dues-paying members, then for each additional group of ten members or major fraction thereof, one delegate. For instance, a local with 26 members would have three delegates. Credentials blanks should be returned prior to the convention to: Minnesota Farmers Union, 305 Roselawn Ave. E, Ste. 200, St. Paul, MN 55117.

Members of unchartered, at-large membership within a county are eligible to become delegates to the state convention provided they are elected at a special meeting conducted for the specific purpose of delegate election. At-large delegates will represent their counties by the same manner and terms as regular local delegates. To qualify, the delegate must be in good standing with Farmers Union.

Gary Wertish
President

Anne Schwagerl
Secretary
**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)
4:00 p.m. Rules and Bylaws Committee meeting
4:45 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 and 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 – Mike McShane, Green View Executive Director
Remarks – Bryan Klabunde, MFU Vice President
Farmers Union Enterprises Leadership Couple report – Andrea & Chris Koller
Policy – Stu Lourey, MFU Government Relations Director
Policy discussion
9 a.m. Policy discussion
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)
Policy discussion
1 p.m. Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) update – Thom Petersen, MDA Commissioner
2:15 p.m. Remarks – Congressman Tom Emmer, R-MN06
2:45 p.m. Credentials report – Lisa Severson, Credentials Committee Chair
Nomination of candidates for President and Vice President
(3:30 registration closes; re-opens Sunday 8–9:30 a.m.)

Most agenda times are subject to change.

**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
Policy discussion
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

For further information, contact us at (651) 639-1223
Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) provides resources and educational opportunities to its members. In this tradition, I am pleased to announce class two of the New Leader Academy (NLA).

This new class will be holding its first session during the state convention later this month. At this session the NLA will learn about the importance of MFU’s policy and how it shapes the direction of the organization. Participants will get to experience first-hand how policy is drafted, submitted, debated and passed. The class will also have the chance to meet MFU members and staff as well as having the opportunity to hear from speakers from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, National Farmers Union and, of course, MFU.

Class two of the NLA includes nine selected individuals from Minnesota. They come from various backgrounds and locations. Leadership classes can include farmers, ranchers, Farmers Union insurance agents, cooperative leaders, local food and urban food advocates, and entrepreneurs.

To get to know the participants better I have included their names where in Minnesota they are from, and their answer to the question: What would you like to gain personally and professionally from participation in the Leadership program?

Rachel Sannerud, Milaca
“My goal is to be a strong advocate for young farmers, the next generation of agriculture, for my community and all communities in Minnesota, and especially for family farmers. As a beginning first generation farmer, I’ve faced a lot of barriers in starting my farm, and see my community struggling, especially area farmers. I hope to build a strong voice and a comprehensive understanding of the issues facing farmers across the state and across the country so I can be a voice at the legislature and to advocate for positive change for family farmers and rural communities.”

Melany Thomas, Felton
“The leadership program will help me on both the personal and professional level in many aspects such as personally putting myself out there more to network and hear from others all around the state and the issues they face. Gaining knowledge and insight from others would be one of my primary goals as well as sharing my experiences with others to encourage their growth.”

Randel Hanson, Duluth
“I would like to create greater links to the new program I’m building and young people, non-profits, for profit orgs, governmental agencies and politicians to work together to rebuild our regional infrastructure for food and ag.”

Anneliese Walker, Princeton
“I would like to get a greater birds eye view of the industry, identify new strategic partnerships between sectors, and continue to learn from others in the industry that I would not otherwise have access to. I would like to continue to grow and develop as a professional within the agriculture industry and do my part to contribute to the ongoing conversations surrounding agriculture.”

Mary Paul, Clear Lake
“I would like to gain experience working with others in agriculture as well as developing my skills of communicating with other professionals. I want to be able to take what I learn from the Leadership program into my future endeavors as a livestock producer, member of society and as someone who can bridge the gap between producers and consumers.”

Jaime Malone, Wadena
“I would like to have more understanding of the organization to help bring awareness to what is happening to the agriculture industry.”

Josephine Tropale, Northfield
“As a young farmer, I see that a large proportion of leadership in our local communities, at the state and national level is made up of older generations. This is especially true of rural leadership and politics. NLA is the program best equipped to train the next generation of farmers to lead in their communities into the future.”

Fallon Ryan, Brainerd
“I would like to not only gain more perspective from other individuals in the program but learn about the most beneficial points of interaction in a system from the past and present insight of MN Farmers Union. This opportunity is a great avenue to learn at many levels and identify ways to use my personal abilities to benefit the larger community.”

Jode Freyholtz-London, Eagle Bend
“My experience in mental health and farming can help me to bring leadership advocacy to the great need for mental health resources to farmers. I want to gain access to people who are passionate about those concerns and lead with them to form alliances in supporting farmers from a peer perspective.”

The NLA will include four sessions over the course of the next year. Most sessions will take place over a weekend. The September 2020 session will be a trip to Washington, D.C. The sessions will be held at different locations, urban and rural, to offer direct experience of the diversity of the region.

I invite you to seek out these new leaders during the convention and introduce yourself.

For more information, to recommend a participant for a future class, or to request an application, please contact me at glen@mfu.org or 651-288-4066.
Family farmers and ranchers have been waiting for months for updates on the United States’ trade relationship with China and on biofuels policy. This month, they got both – but it is still unclear what the implications of either will be in the long term.

**White House announces trade deal with China**

After many months of stalled negotiations, President Donald Trump announced that the United States had finally reached an agreement in principle with China to put the brakes on a trade dispute between the two countries.

Though the specific terms of the deal have not yet been made public, according to the President, the United States will not increase tariffs on $250 billion worth of Chinese imports from 25 percent to 30 percent, which had been scheduled to kick in on Oct. 15. In exchange, China has agreed to what are thus far unspecified changes to intellectual property policies and currency guidelines.

The country will also reportedly make annual purchases of roughly $40 billion to $50 billion worth of agricultural goods from the United States, which will ramp up over the next two years. This is almost double the greatest value of farm products the U.S. has ever exported to China in any given year – $25.9 billion in 2012 – and about six times more than this year’s exports. Specifics of the deal are expected to be made public in the next month.

Given the volatile relationship between the two countries, many are worried that the truce could fall apart before the deal is finalized.

National Farmers Union (NFU) was encouraged by the announcement, but hesitant to celebrate it prematurely.

“While we are glad to see a détente in this seemingly endless trade war, the tangible benefits to American family farmers and ranchers are unclear,” said NFU President Roger Johnson.

If and when the deal is finalized, Johnson urged the administration to “work with our friends and allies” to address China’s unfair and manipulative trade practices with “substantive and meaningful reforms.”

**EPA’s biofuels fix a broken promise to American Farmers**

Shortly after announcing its intentions to offset a portion of the 4 billion gallons of demand for biofuels eliminated due to the ongoing misappropriation of small refinery exemptions (SREs), the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a supplemental proposed rule outlining how it plans to do so.

Under the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS), 15 billion gallons of corn ethanol and 2.4 billion gallons of biodiesel are required to be blended into transportation fuel. However, EPA has waived that requirement for 85 oil refineries over the past three years, a rate quadruple that of the previous administration. As a result, the amount of corn ethanol and biodiesel in the transportation sector during that time has been under the benchmark, representing a 1.4-billion-bushel decline in demand for corn and an 825-million-bushel decline for soybeans.

Family farmers have, consequently, lost millions of dollars of hard-earned income, upwards of 30 biofuels plants have halted production and hundreds of rural residents have lost their jobs.

Early reports indicated that the agency would increase its annual biofuels blending quota by an average of total exempted gallons over the past three years, which would have come out to about 1.35 billion gallons per year. However, EPA will instead recalculate the annual renewable fuel percentages using values recommended by the Department of Energy (DoE). This will increase the amount of biofuels in the transportation sector by approximately 770 million gallons.

Farmers Union is disappointed that the plan would determine relief not with the actual losses incurred by family farmers and rural communities, but with the DoE’s much lower suggestions.

“This president who campaigned heavily on promises to support biofuels has undermined that promise over and over again,” Minnesota Farmers Union President Gary Worthig said.

“Press conferences and vague plans don’t benefit family farmers. The administration claimed for months they were hard at work on a plan to fix this issue, but the results fell short of the rhetoric and what farmers need.

“Ultimately, President Trump needs to be held accountable for allowing these SREs to continue for so long. The biofuels market has long been a reliable option for family farmers to get a fair price for their products, as well as a strong part of our country’s energy mix and a way to lower fuel costs for consumers. This administration has all but destroyed that market.”

**Proposed rule would increase food insecurity**

A proposed rule to change the eligibility guidelines for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) would erode food security in the United States, according to the Alliance to End Hunger. If the rule is implemented, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) estimates that 3.1 million hungry Americans would lose food assistance through SNAP, and more than 500,000 children from affected families would also lose automatic eligibility for free and reduced-price school meals.

The rule in question would change a policy known as broad-based categorical eligibility (Cat EI). Currently in 40 states that have adopted Cat EI, families who receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families benefits also automatically qualify for SNAP, rather than having to apply for both programs separately. The proposed rule, however, would substantially limit the use of Cat EI by lowering the maximum income and setting a limit on savings for eligible households. If the rule were implemented, USDA estimates that 3.1 million hungry Americans would lose food assistance through SNAP.

This has additional implications for children who live in affected households. School children whose families receive SNAP benefits are automatically eligible for school nutrition programs. But if their families lose SNAP benefits because of limited Cat EI, those children would also lose automatic enrollment in free and reduced school meals. This would make it more difficult for more than 500,000 children to access food at school.

As a member of the Alliance to End Hunger, NFU advocates policies that decrease hunger by improving access to safe, nutritious and affordable food. Because the rule would achieve just the opposite, the organization opposes its implementation.

“Too many Americans don’t know where their next meal is coming from,” said NFU President Johnson. “This latest proposal would remove one of the last lines of defense and leave millions of Americans — including hundreds of thousands of children — more vulnerable to hunger. We urge USDA to protect this critical program and ensure that all Americans are able to put food on their tables.”

**Bipartisan bill would boost rural mental health services**

In response to a growing farmer mental health crisis, U.S. Senators Jon Tester, D-Mont., and Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, introduced the Seeding Rural Resilience Act to increase access to mental health resources in rural communities. Specifically, the bill would implement a stress management training program to Farm Service Agency, Risk Management Agency and National Resources Conservation Service employees; provide
With the new Farm Bill being passed in 2018, the last year has been a busy one full of changes, new programs and updates to many existing programs. The end of 2019 and much of 2020 will bring similar activity. In this article, I hope to give brief updates and reminders on some of the programs with upcoming deadlines and signup periods.

The Market Facilitation Program (MFP) provides direct payments to help producers who have been directly impacted by retaliatory tariffs, resulting in the loss of traditional exports. The 2019 Market Facilitation Program (MFP) signup at local FSA offices will run through Friday, Dec. 6. Producers requesting an MFP payment must have a crop acreage report on file with FSA for MFP crop commodities. Dairy producers who were in business as of June 1, 2019, will receive a per hundredweight payment on production history, and hog producers will receive a payment based on the number of live hogs owned on a day selected by the producer between April 1 and May 15, 2019.

Agricultural producers now can enroll in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs. ARC provides income support payments on historical base acres when actual crop revenue declines below a specified guaranteed level. PLC provides income support payments on historical base acres when the effective price for a covered commodity falls below its reference price. Farm owners also have a one-time opportunity to update PLC payment yields beginning with crop year 2020. Signup for the 2020 crop year closes June 30, 2020, while signup for the 2019 crop year closes March 15, 2020. Producers who have not yet enrolled for 2019 can enroll for both 2019 and 2020 during the same visit to an FSA county office.

FSA held a continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) signup from June 3 through Aug. 23, 2019. FSA plans to open a CRP general signup in December 2019 with a CRP Grasslands signup later. Landowners interested in CRP should continue to look for updates via news releases, bulletins, and contact their county office with questions regarding upcoming CRP enrollment periods.

Dairy producers can now enroll in the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) for calendar year 2020. The DMC program offers reasonably priced protection to dairy producers when the difference between the all-milk price and the average feed cost (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer. The deadline to enroll in DMC for 2020 is Dec. 13, 2019.

2019 crop year Marketing Assistance Loans (MALs) are available for eligible commodities and producers. MALs and are marketing tools available to producers beginning upon harvest or shearing. The MAL provides interim financing at harvest time for help agricultural producers to meet cash flow needs without having to sell their commodities when market prices are typically at harvest-time lows, allowing the producer to delay the sale of the commodity until more favorable market conditions emerge.

The Wildfire Hurricane Indemnity Program Plus (WHIP+) is available for eligible producers who have suffered eligible losses of certain crops, trees, bushes or vines in counties with a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or a Secretarial Disaster Designation. Disaster losses must have been a result of hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, snowstorms or wildfires that occurred in 2018 or 2019. Also, producers in counties that didn’t receive a disaster declaration or designation may still apply for WHIP+ but must provide supporting documentation to establish that the crops were directly affected by a qualifying disaster loss.

For more information you can always contact your local USDA Service Center. There are also resources available online at farmers.gov. If you would like to get local and state updates from the Farm Service Agency, you can always sign up to receive the electronic news bulletin by visiting www.fsa.usda.gov/subscribe.

Washington Corner (continued)

funding for a PSA campaign bringing awareness to the issue; and direct the Secretary of Agriculture to work with state, local and nongovernmental stakeholders to determine best practices for responding to farm and ranch stress.

Heavy workloads, social isolation and unpredictable markets are just a handful of the stressors that farmers and ranchers cope with daily. At the same time, many farmers and ranchers don’t have access to assistance when they need help; 60 percent of rural Americans live in areas with mental health professional shortages, while many others lack broadband access or health insurance. Given these circumstances, NFU applauded Senators Tester and Grassley’s bill.

“Even in the best of times, farming is an incredibly high-stress occupation. But this year, extreme weather events, low commodity prices and volatile export markets have made a difficult profession next to impossible and added to an already overwhelming need for more mental health resources in rural communities,” said President Johnson. “This important legislation…will improve farmers’ and ranchers’ access to help when they need it.” The Washington Corner can be found at www.nfu.org/corner.
MEMBERS IN FOCUS: THE BEATONS

John & Emily Beaton, St. Louis County

The counties along the North Shore of Lake Superior aren’t exactly known for agriculture. Magnificent state parks and waterfront views dominate the narrative there. But John and Emily Beaton, owners of Fairhaven Farm outside of Saginaw, see it as a place where a strong farm community can put down roots. They live on 27 acres of land, alongside Emily’s parents, selling vegetables to 40 Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA) shareholders and transplants to Duluth’s Whole Foods Cooperative – along with the occasional pizza night. “There’s a history of farming in this area, and we’re super excited about the potential here for small farms,” John said. “We’re trying to get more young farmers up here. We’re not worried about competition; we want to have a community up here.”

John was also a member of the inaugural New Leader Academy class. The program has made him excited to build a Farmers Union community in his part of the state and advocate about issues affecting beginning farmers.

Farmers by opportunity

Neither Emily nor John grew up on farms. It was during their college years that they each developed a passion for agriculture. “I grew up in the country, where we had a big a garden,” Emily said. “I didn’t know anything about farming until I did an internship after college. That’s how I got interested in, fell in love with the process of growing food. We weren’t trained to do this by any means with our upbringing.”

Before long, she was growing microgreens in her apartment and selling them at a farmers market. Meanwhile, John grew up in the Fargo-Moorhead area. His uncles farmed, but he didn’t catch the bug himself until a professor of his at the University of Minnesota-Duluth encouraged him to check out the farming community.

“I started working on a vegetable farm near Carlton,” he said. “I worked there for three seasons. For the last one, I started my own small CSA on their land.” By the time they met, both Emily and John had big dreams of buying farmland. They met vending at a farmers market, and they’ve built that dream together ever since. They even got married on their farmland.

Set up for success

The land on which Fairhaven Farm resides has been in production since 1887, as the couple discovered on the title deed. “This was a 100-acre farm, and in the early 1980s, four families bought it and started a little commune,” John said. “The land was subdivided to accommodate those four families. Our house and property were a result of that.”

He and Emily lucked out when, upon beginning to farm there, they saw that the previous owner had built good infrastructure on the land, including the house they live in, a barn and a greenhouse, as well as a deer fence around the garden space. “We could hit the ground running and start producing and selling our veggies right away,” he said. “We moved out here in December 2016, and the following year the owner let us plant the field that season while working out the sale of the house and farm.”

They’re also lucky to have Emily’s parents on board, who bought the house with Emily and John and live in the downstairs apartment of the house. “They help a lot on the farm,” Emily said. “My dad is retired now so he helps with building projects. My mom’s retiring at the end of the year.”

Being a CSA farm, the couple grows a diverse variety of vegetables – carrots, green onions, cabbage, broccoli, microgreens, tomatoes and peppers to name a few. They recently set up a high tunnel, thanks to a grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and they hope to use it for more tomatoes and peppers and also cucumbers. They also sell transplants and seedlings to the Whole Foods Co-op, where, coincidentally, Emily used to be a graphic designer. And Emily has added floral design to the operation.

The Beatons have built their farm’s visibility in the community by adding a pizza oven outside, which they use for baking pizza and bread. They’re part of the movement of on-farm pizza nights and are excited about what that can bring to agritourism.

“People come out and see where their food comes from,” John said. “They see the way we live, this beautiful life that we’ve worked really hard for.”

It’s all about relationships

As part of the New Leader Academy, John attended the 77th Annual MFU Convention, Lobby Day in St. Paul and the 2019 NFU Legislative Fly-In, plus a trip to the New London-Spicer area to tour farms and businesses. His friend Eric Sannerud, a hops farmer from Foley, encouraged him to apply and get plugged in with MFU. “I thought it was a great way to learn more about agriculture in the rest of the state,” he said.

A big part of the NLA is building political advocacy skills. As new farmers, John and Emily’s knowledge of the challenges of starting a farm are fresh. “We’re fired up about issues surrounding land access to young farmers,” John said. “I think it’s really important to create ways or incentives for not just beginning farmers, but support for retiring farmers to sell their land to beginning farmers.”

They’re personally invested in an issue with property tax codes. Their land doesn’t qualify for ag property tax status because they fit neither distinction of having 10 continuous acres in production or a greenhouse on less than 10 acres. This is a dilemma for many small farms. “We have 27 acres total, and our fenced-in area is only 2 acres,” Emily said.

Student loan debt and the cost of health care are also issues they’re concerned about. They aren’t able to grow their income too quickly because of the impact it could have on their health insurance premiums, and college debt prevents them from being able to invest as much in the farm as they’d like. But, in the true spirit of farming, they find ways to make it work. “We balance those challenges with creative ways of working around them, like buying the farm with our parents, incorporating value-added things, doing agritourism,” Emily said. And they’re fortunate to have a community around them who not only buy their produce, but who care about them as people. “People are cheering for us,” John said. “We make sure that we post on social media so that people can see what we’re doing. We’re building, creating, cultivating community.”

Standing for Agriculture, Working for Farmers
MDA Produce Safety Program

FSMA Produce Safety Rule Grower Trainings – December 2019 to April 2020

Register now for the upcoming grower trainings brought to you by the MDA Produce Safety Program and the University of Minnesota Extension along with other partners. Attendees will learn food safety practices, Produce Safety rule requirements and answers to questions about the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety rule.

If your farm is not excluded or exempt from the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety rule, at least one supervisor or responsible party from your farm must complete a training course that uses FDA-recognized curriculum or an equivalent. The MN grower training course meets this requirement.

The cost for the training is currently subsidized at $35 per attendee. For more information on dates and locations of the Grower Trainings and to register online, please visit www.mda.state.mn.us/growertraining.

Dates and Locations

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78th Annual MFU Convention

Nov. 22-24 • Delta Hotels by Marriott, Minneapolis

Emerging Farmers Working Groups

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture established its Emerging Farmers Working Group earlier this year to engage them on issues they are experiencing and brainstorm solutions. The group will meet twice in November, dates and locations below:

Friday, Nov. 8 • 1-3 p.m. • Eagles Club, 105 S. Broadway, Crookston
Thursday, Nov. 14 • 1-3 p.m • Lake Superior College, Room S255, 2101 Trinity Road Room, Duluth

Please RSVP online at tinyurl.com/emergingfarmers or by contacting Christina Iliev at 651-201-6610 or christina.iliev@state.mn.us.

Registration open for the National Farmers Union 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.

You can apply for a scholarship from MFU to attend the conference – go to mfu.org/nfu-womens-conference-scholarship.

safeTALK: MDA, MDH sponsor suicide prevention training

Farmers and others who work in agriculture are used to helping neighbors, clients, family and friends do chores or make repairs, but they may not know how to help someone having thoughts of suicide.

A free, half-day safeTALK training sponsored by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) will be offered in six locations around the state this fall to help people build the skills they need to offer that help.

The safeTALK training teaches participants how to recognize someone having thoughts of suicide, how to engage them, and how to make sure they get help. This evidence-based training is effective for people as young as 15 years old. Farmers, lenders, mediators, agency staff, clergy, educators, veterinarians, health care and social service providers, agricultural advisors and business people are all invited to attend.

The trainings run 8:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and take place on the following dates:

Nov. 20 • Faribault (South Central College)
Nov. 21 • Austin (Riverland Community College)
Dec. 3 • Marshall (MERIT Center)
Dec. 4 • Waite Park (Quarry Center)

The training is free but pre-registration is required, as enrollment at each session is limited to 30 participants. Register today at www.safetalk-agriculture.eventbrite.com.

This workshop is supported by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number 2018-38640-28416 through the North Central Region SARE program under project number ENC18-170.

Individuals with a disability who need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this event please contact Stephen Moser at 651-201-6012 or through the Minnesota Relay Service at 711 at least one week prior to the session you want to attend.
Open Enrollment has begun for Medicare, Part D and Individual & Family Health Plans!

MEDICARE Open Enrollment is October 15 through December 7, 2019 for supplemental Medicare plans and Part D prescription drug plans.

Open Enrollment for Individual and Family Health plans is November 1 through December 15, 2019 for plans that are in effect on 1/1/20.

For MNSure plans, Open Enrollment runs from November 1 through December 23, 2019 to shop for 2020 health coverage.

Confused? Understandable! Talk to one of our Agents to discuss your options and find the best fit for you.

Please join Farmers Union Insurance Agency at the 78th Annual MFU Convention Reception on Friday, November 22nd from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. at the Delta Hotels by Marriott Minneapolis Ballroom!