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Minnesota Agriculture
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JUNE is DAIRY MONTH

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Minnesota Farmers Union  Standing for Agriculture, Working for Farmers

www.mfu.org
MARL Class X Reflections

I almost didn’t apply for Minnesota Agriculture & Rural Leadership (MARL) Program. I didn’t think I had the experience or enough background in agriculture to qualify; I’m not a farmer and I live and work in St. Paul. Luckily for me, a MARL alum and MFU member recommended I apply and even got me an extension to apply after the deadline. I found out in late June 2018 that I was accepted into Class X. I was excited and a bit apprehensive, being an introvert and not quite knowing what I had gotten myself into for the next 18 months.

The biggest impact of those 18 months for me was gaining a group of 29 friends from across the state who I can call on if I ever need anything or have any questions about any topic in agriculture. The breadth of experience, knowledge, expertise and talent in our class is incredible and I’m thankful to have such an amazing group of classmates and mentors. Several of them have also become MFU members since the beginning of Class X.

We further bonded and were pushed outside of our comfort zones on our international seminar to Cambodia and Taiwan. In Cambodia, we saw economic disparities in both urban and rural areas of the country. Their agricultural systems are not as developed as those in the U.S., but it was interesting learning about their systems on our trips to a cattle farm, banana, orange and coconut farm, cashew processing facility and a sustainable farming community. In Taiwan, we visited more agritourism sites including a small working agritourism farm, a hydroponic farm and a mushroom farm. Traveling around Cambodia and Taiwan during the onset of COVID-19 was a bit nerve-wracking, but thankfully we all got back safe and without any cases of COVID-19.

My time in MARL helped me achieve personal growth that I wouldn’t have otherwise. For instance, I gained a better understanding of my leadership style, learned about emotional intelligence and how to use it as a leader and how to better navigate conflict in both professional and personal lives. An important lesson is that I am a leader in my own right. I have more confidence in myself and I look forward to putting these new skills and knowledge to work at Minnesota Farmers Union. MARL was exactly the professional development program that I was looking for. I’m proud to join the network of 300 MARL alumni.

The deadline to apply for Class XI was May 18; however, with the complications stemming from COVID-19 affecting many facets of life, there may have been changes. Go to marlprogram.org.
PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting everyone differently, and there’s no question that some demographics are disproportionately affected. Fortunately, MFU staff have been working remotely to keep themselves, each other and you safe, while still fighting for the needs of rural Minnesotans.

We are following the guidelines issued by Gov. Tim Walz, the Centers for Disease Control and Minnesota Department of Health to help slow the spread of the coronavirus. Consequently, we do not anticipate holding any official MFU events in person for some time yet. You can stay connected with us on the bi-weekly educational webinars, the weekly e-newsletter and email or phone. Being physically distant from each other does not weaken our Farmers Union family. We just have to use different methods, like Zoom, to carry out our mission.

State Fair, MFU camp canceled
As you may have heard, the Minnesota State Fair Board voted on May 22 to cancel this year’s fair. We were not surprised at this news, as we had anticipated it for several weeks. But it’s still sad news for so many. Our commitment to local farmers through food that we demonstrate at the State Fair is by no means diminished – with the Buy Local While Socially Distancing List, we’ve helped farmers and eaters come together in the face of closed restaurants and schools. (See Claudine’s article on page 10.)

We are looking into alternative programming options for our work at the fair and for Minnesota Cooks Day. Please feel free to reach out with any thoughts or concerns. I will miss seeing you at the Farmers Union Coffee Shop and Minnesota Cooks Day, but as long as we keep working to slow the damage of COVID-19, we’ll be back and better than ever in 2021.

Education Director Glen Schmidt and I also had to make the tough decision to suspend in-person MFU camp activities this summer. Our first priority every year is the well-being of our campers and staff, and that was the driver of this decision too. Glen and the camp staff are considering options for online camp activities this summer, so campers can still get some of the experience they were looking forward to. Please contact Glen with any questions about this. (See Glen’s article on page 5.)

CFAP applications now open through FSA
USDA is now accepting applications for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program through August 28. As part of applying for the program, you’ll need to contact the Farm Service Agency county office at your local USDA Service Center to schedule an appointment. Find your office and detailed application instructions at farmers.gov/cfap.

The program will provide up to $168 to farmers and ranchers affected by the pandemic, $9.5B of which was appropriated by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Stability (CARES) Act and will compensate farmers for price declines and specialty crops that spoiled due to loss of marketing channels. The other $6.5B, which will cover market disruptions, comes from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC).

Farmers who grow commodities that have experienced a price decline of five percent or more due to COVID-19 and face significant marketing costs as a result of lower demand, surplus production, and disruptions to shipping patterns and the orderly marketing of commodities are eligible to apply. Covered commodities include a variety of grains, wool, cattle, lambs, yearlings, hogs, dairy, almonds and an assortment of fruit and vegetables.

The program eliminates earlier per-commodity payment limits but maintains overall payment limits. An individual can receive up to $250,000 on all commodities combined, and as many as three members who “actively provide personal labor or personal management” can receive payments, for a total of $750,000 per operation. Those who earn more than $900,000 in adjusted gross income are not eligible, unless three-quarters or more of their income comes from agriculture. To prevent the program from running out of money, producers will only receive 80 percent of their payment up front; the remaining 20 percent will be sent later if there’s adequate funding.

Your local FSA staff will work with you to apply for the program, and through forms asking for this type of information:

• Contact
• Personal, including your Tax Identification Number
• Farming operating structure
• Adjusted Gross Income to ensure eligibility
• Direct deposit to enable payment processing

Please do not send any personal information to USDA without first initiating contact through a phone call.

Meat processing issues come to forefront
The pandemic has led to some big policy and financial action at the state and federal levels, which Stu details in his article. However, the issue that has stood out most is meat processing. Several large pork processing plants, including JBS in Worthington and Smithfield in Sioux Falls, S.D., have closed following outbreaks of COVID-19 among their employees. This has caused many pork farmers to have to euthanize hogs, with no place to send them. President Donald Trump issued an executive order under the Defense Production Act that calls these facilities “critical infrastructure,” directing USDA to keep the plants running. But he provided no guidance for how to enforce safety measures or consequences for plants whose workers fall ill. Data indicates that regions surrounding large meat plants are seeing higher numbers of positive COVID-19 tests than others, such as Nobles County, where Worthington is.

With just a few large companies controlling the market for pork, beef and poultry, the shutdown of one plant made a huge dent in U.S. meat production. Grocery stores have already limited how much meat someone can buy on one shopping trip, similar to what we saw with toilet paper earlier this year. And these outbreaks raise concerns over the safety measures the plants are providing workers. Farmers Union envisions a diverse, flexible food system that can withstand pandemics, supports farmers, respects plant workers and benefits local communities.

I spoke personally with Gov. Tim Walz recently and said that we need more small and diversified livestock processing plants in our state. For now, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture is working to connect farmers with “equal-2” processors who have extra capacity, and opened

(continued on page 4)
2020 is a year the world will never forget. During a discussion with a local farmer, this was the conclusion of our visit (via phone of course!). Here we are, a couple of months into a pandemic like few envisioned even months ago, COVID-19 has changed the way we conduct almost every aspect of our lives.

In the early weeks of this developing story, I quickly started to get the word out to producers of all shapes and sizes that they need to begin thinking of a plan for their operation. In our part of the world there was still snow on the ground and spring work seemed a way off for many.

Of course, some thought this would blow over by the time we hit the field.

As I write this, Northwest Minnesota is in the heart of spring field work. With the numbers rising in our area with people contracting COVID-19, farmers could become the most susceptible of the population. Therefore, I encouraged people to prepare early, use the resources available, sit down with family members and employees and be prepared. With broad spectrum changes in all our lives, one thing that hasn’t changed is the support for our membership. Minnesota Farmers Union has been at the forefront of the issues that COVID-19 has presented to folks in rural Minnesota, such as by working hard to be sure Gov. Tim Walz and his administration are aware of the complex issues that our farmers face. MFU is still advocating for our members and farming communities.

President’s Message (continued from page 3)

AGRI grants for local processors to expand. You can find that information on their website. We’re in regular contact with Walz and Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen about this and many other issues, while being aware that the pandemic has shifted our state’s budget outlook.

On the federal level, a bipartisan group of eleven states’ attorneys general sent a letter to U.S. Attorney General William Barr requesting that the Department of Justice investigate possible price-fixing among beef packing companies. Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison was part of this effort, and we thank him for supporting this. Four companies own 85 percent of the market for beef. This anticompetitive marketplace is detrimental for farmers, workers and eaters.

Other advocacy work

As the State Legislature conducted business in a modified fashion up until its adjournment May 18, I submitted written testimony in support of the supplemental agriculture finance bill and Farmer-Lender Mediation deadline extension to Dec. 1. Both of these passed the House and Senate with strong bipartisan support and were signed by Gov. Walz. This follows letters I sent in April to both state and federal elected officials calling for a moratorium on farm foreclosures and access to credit for farmers. Both the State Legislature and Congress have passed measures increasing access to credit, the first opening up Rural Finance Authority Disaster Loans to farmers who have lost markets due to COVID-19; the second opening up the Economic Injury Disaster Loan program to farmers. The recently-passed HEROES Act in the U.S. House would provide direct payments to farmers as well.

While we’re grateful for all this, there’s still much more that needs to be done to make our food system fair and resilient. It has been heartening to see more public interest in the needs of farmers and folks buying their food directly from them. As we move through this pandemic together, my hope is that we will set the groundwork for another “new normal” that’s better for everyone than where we were before COVID-19.
The health and safety of everyone in our camp community has always been our top priority. This includes our summer staff, the returning campers who love their summers spent at MFU Camp, the new campers who were looking forward to their first overnight camp experience, their families at home and all the others who are connected to our camp in some way.

Operating a safe and enriching camp takes many months of preparation under normal circumstances. However, with this many unknown threats, MFU cannot in good faith offer the safe and enriching camp experience our campers and parents have come to expect.

In the meantime, the camp staff and I are working on innovative ways to bring the spirit of MFU camp into our campers’ homes. We hope to bring many of the hallmarks of MFU Camp that you and your kids know and love. While there is no substitute for the real thing, my hope is these online events are a way to keep us all connected.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me. I’ll be happy to answer your questions as best I can at this time and in this era of so many unknowns. We’re already looking forward to creating the best-ever camp program for 2021, and we know that when we’re back together, we will pick up right where we left off!

NFU Beginning Farmer Institute Applications

National Farmers Union’s Beginning Farmer Institute (BFI) is a free training program that prepares beginning farmers of all ages and operation types for a successful future in agriculture.

Participants will attend three in-person learning sessions over the course of the year, one each in Washington, D.C., San Francisco, CA, and Nashville, TN. The sessions include farm tours, seminars on a variety of beginning farmers issues – such as business planning, USDA programs and access to credit – as well as the opportunity to meet with members of Congress. Each year’s curriculum will be tailored to the participants’ needs as determined by a pre-attendance survey. Minnesota has been well-represented in BFI each year, so let’s keep that trend going!

Applications for the BFI class of 2020-2021 are open through June 15. Learn more and apply: nfu.org/education/beginning-farmer-institute

MFU, with Farmers Union Enterprises, donates to Second Harvest Heartland

With food insecurity on the rise due to COVID-19-related unemployment, the Twin Cities-based Second Harvest Heartland food shelf is much busier than normal. With Farmers Union Enterprises (FUE), Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) pitched in to help meet their needs.

On Wednesday, May 6, MFU donated 30,000 pounds of Redwood Farms pork ribs to Second Harvest Heartland’s Brooklyn Park facility, observing social distancing practices.

Redwood Farms is a meat processing facility that is part of FUE’s family of businesses, Farmers Union Industries (FUI). Normally, it supplies premium pork products to high-end restaurants in major cities across the United States. As these restaurants have had to shut their doors because of the pandemic, Redwood Farms has faced a decrease in pork demand.

“Donating pork to Second Harvest Heartland is a win for all of us,” MFU President Gary Wertish said. “People in need of food assistance will be able to get healthy, delicious pork, and Redwoods Farms is able to continue processing meat from family farmers and keep people employed.

“Additionally, I’d like to thank Second Harvest for their long-standing commitment to feeding Minnesotans and supplying fresh food from Minnesota’s family farmers.”

The dividends from FUI businesses help fund Farmers Union organizations in North Dakota, Minnesota, Montana, South Dakota and Wisconsin, the states that make up FUE. Funds also go towards FUE programs and National Farmers Union. FUE is donating a total of 150,000 pounds of Redwood Farms pork ribs to food pantries in the five states.

USDA programs and access to credit – as well as the opportunity to meet with members of Congress. Each year’s curriculum will be tailored to the participants’ needs as determined by a pre-attendance survey. Minnesota has been well-represented in BFI each year, so let’s keep that trend going!

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MFU President Gary Wertish and Allison O’Toole from Second Harvest Heartland

“Farmers Union is all about working together to meet our common needs,” President Wertish said. “When it comes to dealing with a global pandemic, the late Sen. Paul Wellstone’s words ring even more true: ‘We all do better when we all do better.’

“Rural and urban folks alike are facing unique challenges. We’re proud to support an essential Minnesota public service with something we all need: food.”

As you may have already heard, MFU has made the incredibly difficult decision to not hold in-person camp sessions this summer. Over the past weeks and months, we have monitored the COVID-19 pandemic very closely to understand how it would impact our 2020 summer camp season.

In the meantime, the camp staff and I are working on innovative ways to bring the spirit of MFU camp into our campers’ homes. We hope to bring many of the hallmarks of MFU Camp that you and your kids know and love. While there is no substitute for the real thing, my hope is these online events are a way to keep us all connected.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me. I’ll be happy to answer your questions as best I can at this time and in this era of so many unknowns. We’re already looking forward to creating the best-ever camp program for 2021, and we know that when we’re back together, we will pick up right where we left off!
On May 17, after a marathon weekend of remote voting, floor speeches and negotiations, the Legislature concluded the 2020 regular session. The work of legislators and agencies is rapidly evolving to meet urgent needs of communities across the state, but this deadline is a chance to reflect on what we accomplished and what priorities remain. In this unprecedented challenge, lawmakers responded with unprecedented action. Congress passed a historic $2.2 trillion relief package; sent relief checks to millions of citizens; rolled programs to dole out billions to businesses within weeks; and spent billions expanding public health infrastructure. The state passed more than $500 million in relief and instituted a Stay-at-Home order to allow hospitals and others to build capacity, which expired May 18. Through all this, MFU has worked to make sure family farmers and their communities are considered in big decisions, while recognizing that the crisis is hurting all sectors and communities. Before the Governor’s Stay-at-Home order, MFU President Gary Wertish wrote to the administration that agriculture and food should be exempt from the order.

“This will help farmers get crops in the ground during this spring’s limited planting window and help maintain Minnesotans’ access to a safe and stable food supply through this crisis,” he said in a letter to the Governor. Agriculture was indeed exempted as a critical service.

Hearing from members concerned about cashflow in the near term, President Wertish requested that the Governor and legislative leaders work together to improve access to affordable credit. “These challenges and the critical nature of our food system make it imperative that you take action to give farmers urgent and needed financial relief,” he said in a letter. Shortly thereafter, they expanded the Minnesota Department of Agriculture Rural Finance Authority Disaster Recovery Loan Program to include farmers who have lost markets because of COVID-19.

The end of the regular session was less than triumphant for legislators. It is widely assumed they will reconvene for a special session, likely in mid-June. This is true in part because of big-ticket items they still need to complete, such as a bonding bill, final approval of state worker contracts and additional COVID-19 relief, but also because state law requires the Legislature to convene if the Governor extends his emergency powers for a third time when they expire on June 12. Although so much is left to a special session, agriculture was a bright spot of bipartisan work. House and Senate leaders worked together to pass supplemental ag policy and finance bills, which invested in MFU priorities including:

- $40,000 for rural mental health, with added capacity for outreach to farm and rural youth.
- $60,000 for MDA Farm Advocates to add capacity, particularly in the southwest region of the state, and help keep farmers on the farm.
- $100,000 for farm safety grants and outreach, building on the Rollover Protection Structures (ROPS) Rebate program and funding up to $400 grants for farmers purchase, ship and install grain storage safety equipment.
- $100,000 to expand local meat and poultry processing, through grants to independently or employee-owned processors, building on grants already made available.
- $100,000 to assist farmers and value-added businesses whose markets were negatively impacted by COVID-19.
- $675,000 for ag emergency preparedness, providing needed funding to the University of Minnesota’s (UMN) Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (VDL) to guard against an animal disease pandemic comparable to COVID-19.
- Creating an Emerging Farmers Taskforce to advise MDA on supporting young farmers, farmers of color, immigrant farmers, indigenous farmers, women farmers, LGBTQ+ farmers and others.

- $175,000 for farm loan origination fee grants, reimbursing farmers for 50 percent of the fee required to obtain a FSA guaranteed loan or RFA program loan, providing Farm Advocates and others with another resource with which to assist farmers who are in financial trouble.

Except for the investments in farm safety and ag emergency preparedness, these funds are contingent on them qualifying for federal pandemic relief funding for Minnesota. But the Legislature approved them in good faith and expect they will be funded. In testimony supporting these investments, President Wertish said, “This bill doesn’t include all the answers – and we won’t know all that’s needed for some time. But it does stand up resources farmers need now, representing a meaningful step in the right direction.” These bills were championed by House Agriculture Chair Jeanne Poppe (DFL-Austin) and Senate Chairs Torrey Westrom (R-Elbow Lake) and Bill Weber (R-Luverne).

Lawmakers also unanimously approved a further extension to Farmer-Lender Mediation deadlines, before which lenders can’t – without the farmer’s permission – start to collect on a debt. This initiative, championed by Rep. Todd Lipper (DFL-Northfield) and Sen. Mike Goggin (R-Red Wing), moves the deadline to Dec. 1, 2020. President Wertish said in written testimony, “extending the deadline would not only give farmers and lenders more time to reach a mutually beneficial plan for managing debt… but also allow them to resume this work when they are able to meet face-to-face.” Of the items left to the special session, the biggest is the bonding bill, which refers to a large package of capital investments that the state funds through borrowing. One bonding investment we support includes funding for the Northeast Regional Corrections Center (NERCC) to update their meat processing facility, which helps livestock farmers and provides vocational training to inmates. This project has support from the House Capital Investment Chair Mary Murphy (DFL-Hermantown) but was left out of the Senate’s proposal. Investing in ag emergency preparedness by upgrading the laboratory shared by MDA and the MN Department of Health was included in both proposals.

Also, MFU supports new investments on broadband. With remote work, distance learning and increased reliance on telehealth, the pandemic has brought the need for these investments into sharper focus. Competing proposals to spend an additional $10 million on the state’s Border-to-Border Grant Program were debated in the House and Senate in the final weeks of session, though a compromise failed to materialize before the time ran out.
Minnesota makes dramatic decarbonization progress

By Amelia Cerling Hennes, Clean Energy Economy Minnesota

A dramatic shift in how electricity is being generated across Minnesota has led to a significant decarbonization of our state’s power sector. It’s part of a longer-term trend in transitioning Minnesota to a clean energy economy, one that supports more than 61,000 Minnesotans currently employed in the clean energy industry. In partnership with rural communities, utilities’ investments in renewable electricity have helped the state cross a new threshold – in 2019 nearly half of Minnesota’s power came from zero-carbon sources.

That threshold is one of several new findings in the 2020 Minnesota Energy Factsheet, a companion to the 2020 Sustainable Energy In America Factbook compiled by research firm BloombergNEF for the Business Council for Sustainable Energy (BCSE) and Clean Energy Economy MN (CEEM). The Factbook outlines key trends influencing national and state investment and economics, energy supply and energy demand, as well as offers a roadmap where policy could speed up progress.

The report finds carbon emissions from Minnesota’s power sector fell nearly 14 percent from 2018 to 2019. Over the last decade, renewables have accounted for 84 percent of all new electricity generation capacity added since 2010, totaling 3.4 gigawatts. Farmers’ decisions to lease their land for new wind farms, solar farms and community solar gardens is helping contribute to this progress. In fact, the clean energy industry can be mutually beneficial to rural landowners and communities. Just last year alone, 26 Minnesota counties received more than $12 million in production tax revenue from wind farms according to the Minnesota Department of Revenue.

Increased local electricity generation has meant the gap between demand and supply is narrowing. Minnesota imports of electricity from across state lines fell to their lowest level in over two decades. The report also finds that the costs for building a new wind farm is cheaper than the cost of building a new natural gas plant. When you factor in the Production Tax Credit and Investment Tax Credit, utility-scale wind and solar technologies are the cheapest form of new electricity generation in the state.

At CEEM, we are working hard to make sure Minnesota is on the right track to seize the market opportunities available for clean energy growth. Along the way, clean energy businesses are innovating, solving problems and creating good-paying jobs. The data in the Factsheet this year undergirds the progress we have been making and signals a path forward for continued declines in carbon emissions as renewables take on an ever-increasing role in how Minnesotans receive their electricity.

For more about CEEM, visit cleanenergyeconomymn.org. The complete 2020 Minnesota Energy Factsheet can be found at www.cleanenergyeconomymn.org/2020-minnesota-energy-factsheet.

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**Legislative Update (continued from page 6)**

On the federal level, the United States House recently passed an ambitious $3 trillion package, dubbed the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, aimed at providing relief to working families. The bill includes significant relief for agriculture, including $12 billion for the state and local fiscal relief and $6 billion for food and nutrition assistance.

On April 27, the State Senate voted to confirm him to his position. As confirmation is largely a formality – and not assumed for every cabinet member – a vote from a GOP Senate in support of a DFL cabinet appointee speaks volumes about the trust in Thom’s leadership. MFU members got to know Thom well in his 17 years as Government Relations Director, where he elevated farmer voices and brought together coalitions to achieve meaningful legislative wins, such as legal protections for farmers engaging in agritourism, increased access to locally-grown foods and paving the way for industrial hemp in Minnesota. In his letter in support of his confirmation, President Wertish shared that “in many ways, agriculture is at an inflection point. To use a phrase that Thom employs often, ‘every day there are challenges and opportunities’ …Thom is humble, thoughtful and carries the stories of Minnesota’s farm families in his heart every day.”

I can’t think of anyone better prepared to lead us through these challenges and help us take advantage of new opportunities.

If you have questions or thoughts about MFU’s legislative work, please don’t hesitate to reach out to me at stu@mfu.org or (320) 232-3047. And thank you to those who have shared about challenges and opportunities you’re seeing.
**WASHINGTON CORNER**

*A monthly update from National Farmers Union*

As family farmers and rural communities continue to feel the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, legislators are working on ways to support them. Two major stimulus packages will provide funding for direct assistance to farmers, food purchases, nutrition assistance, medical services and small businesses, among many other things. President Donald Trump has stepped in as well; in response to disruptive meat packing plant closures, he issued an executive order compelling them to stay open. While efforts to keep the food supply chain up and running are greatly appreciated, they ignore many of the underlying problems that made our agricultural system so vulnerable to begin with.

**HEROES Act provides much-needed support for farmers**

Amid the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression, the U.S. House of Representatives is poised to pass a $3 trillion relief and stimulus bill, known as the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act. The legislation includes a number of provisions for agriculture, most notably $16.5 billion in direct assistance for farmers and ranchers. This would augment the $16 million in payments that will be made through the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). Additionally, the bill would offer discounted premiums for future enrollment in the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC), provide financial assistance to ranchers who were forced to euthanize animals due to capacity reductions at processing plants and allocate $50 million for the Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) to help local farmers, farmers markets and other local food outlets affected by market disruptions.

Other aspects of the agricultural and rural economies would benefit as well. After being notably absent from previous assistance packages, the HEROES Act would provide ethanol or other biofuel plants with 45 cents for every gallon of fuel produced between January 1 and May 1, 2020. To protect workers at risk of occupational exposure to COVID-19, including meat packing workers, the bill would also require the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) to issue an emergency temporary standard (ETS). To address rising food insecurity, the bill would temporarily increase the maximum monthly benefit for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by 15 percent.

Additionally, it would allocate $25 million for the Farm to Food Bank program, which can be used by states to cover the cost of harvesting, processing, packaging and transporting donated commodities.

A number of provisions would improve access to health care. Not only does it fund large-scale testing and contact tracing, but it would also extend employer-sponsored health insurance to individuals who are furloughed or have lost their jobs. On top of that, it provides $20 million to strengthen the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network, which connects farmers, farm workers and other agricultural professionals with mental health resources.

**Trump orders meat plants to stay open**

In response to growing concerns of a meat shortage, President Trump issued an executive order designating the facilities as “critical infrastructure.” The order, which invokes the Defense Production Act, directs the U.S. Department of Agriculture to “ensure America’s meat and poultry processors continue operations uninterrupted to the maximum extent possible.”

The decision follows the temporary closure of at least 22 meat plants due to coronavirus outbreaks among workers. As a result, national meat processing capacity has fallen by 20 percent, costing family farmers and ranchers key markets and rising meat shortages at grocery stores.

Though NFU shares the president’s concerns around maintaining food system infrastructure, the organization is equally concerned with the health and wellbeing of meat plant employees. According to data collected by the Food and Environment Reporting Network, more than 4,000 workers at 85 plants have tested positive, at least 20 of whom have died. Per the executive order, “processors will continue to follow the latest guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA),” though does not indicate if or how those guidelines will be enforced. Additionally, President Trump indicated that he would absolve the plants from liability for illnesses or deaths among workers.

While the administration pursues solutions to protect food security, NFU President Rob Larew urged them not to forget about worker welfare.

“Theyir health and lives are not an acceptable tradeoff for our meat supply, nor are these things mutually exclusive – we must find solutions that protect both.” He recommended that workers be provided with “personal protective equipment and other safeguards, access to testing and treatment and paid sick leave.”

In the longer-term, he emphasized the need for antitrust enforcement. “Both the abuses that workers are enduring as well as the disruptions farmers and consumers are experiencing are a direct result of extreme consolidation in the meat industry,” Larew said. “We hope that this current crisis finally compels Congress and the administration to address the issue of market power in the agriculture industry and promote a diverse and resilient food system.”

**USDA announces food assistance program**

In late April, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released preliminary details for a $19 billion emergency aid package to support farmers and ranchers and bolster food security. Known as the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, it will provide $16 billion in direct support to family farmers and ranchers, $9.5 billion of which was allocated by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The other $6.5 billion will be sourced from the Commodity Credit Corp. (CCC). The program will provide $9.6 billion to livestock and dairy producers, $3.9 billion for row crop producers, $2.1 billion for fruit and vegetable growers and $500 million for producers of other crops. Eligible farmers will be compensated for 85 percent of price losses experienced between January 1 and April 15, as well as 30 percent of expected losses from April 15 through the next two quarters. An operation or producer can receive up to $125,000 per commodity, or $250,000 in total. The signup period has not yet opened, but is expected to soon.

The USDA has started purchasing $3 billion worth of fresh produce, dairy and meat, which is being redistributed to food pantries and other non-profit organizations that serve Americans experiencing food insecurity. NFU is extremely concerned about the financial pressures family farmers and rural communities are currently experiencing, a fact that the organization highlighted in a letter to U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue that

(continued on page 9)
NFU seeks farmer stories from the pandemic

U.S. Senators Mike Rounds of South Dakota and Jon Tester of Montana – along with cosponsors Steve Daines of Montana, John Thune of South Dakota and Cory Booker of New Jersey – introduced a resolution in support of the reinstatement of country-of-origin labeling for beef products. MCOOL, which was in place for beef for several years before it was repealed in 2015, required retailers to inform customers what country beef products were born and raised.

NFU has advocated for COOL for 35 years in order to provide more information for consumers and to allow American farmers to differentiate their products. The organization applauds the resolution and will continue its decades-long fight for truth in labeling. The Washington Corner can always be found at nfu.org/corner.

The following exceptions apply to acreage reporting dates:

- If the crop has not been planted by the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 15 calendar days after planting is completed.
- If a producer acquires additional acreage after the acreage reporting date, then the acreage must be reported no later than 30 calendar days after purchase or acquiring the lease. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the county office.

Producers should also report crop acreage they intended to plant, but due to natural disaster, were unable to plant. Prevented planting acreage must be reported on form CCC-576, Notice of Loss, no later than 15 calendar days after the final planting date as established by FSA and USDA’s Risk Management Agency.

Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) policy holders should note that the acreage reporting date for NAP-covered crops is the earlier of the dates listed above or 15 calendar days before grazing or harvesting of the crop begins.

For questions, please contact your local FSA office. To locate your local FSA office visit farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

NFU.org invites you to tell us how the pandemic has affected you and your farm, what your experience has been with federal assistance programs, and what kinds of resources would best help you overcome any obstacles you’ve confronted.

Thank you for your time and input!
Knowing that many of our farmers would suddenly be sitting on product, we wanted to do something quickly to further assist connecting farmers with consumers. As part of a rapid response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Minnesota Cooks team created and distributed a Buying Local While Social Distancing survey, with help from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, asking farmers to share how consumers could safely purchase from them while social distancing, including on farm pick ups, delivery options, farmers markets, etc. We also asked them to list available products. The results were compiled into a pretty significant list we’re calling the Buying Local While Social Distancing List, where consumers can browse for everything from local animal protein to honey, grains, beans, produce, cheese and much more from more than 80 different farmers and producers. This list can be found on minnesotacooks.org under the Resources tab. If you would like to be added to our list or know somebody else who should be included, please fill out or pass along our survey, which is also located under the Resources tab at minnesotacooks.org. We are continually updating the list as we receive more information. We are also exploring how we can use this resource to funnel more business directly to farmers in the future.

Please consider sharing this resource with your friends, family and customers through email and social media channels. As consumers express concerns about both food security and the economy, we hope many see this as an opportunity to form strong relationships with the farmers who grow and raise food. Other groups, such as Minnesota Grown, are also working to promote local Minnesota farmers, and it’s been effective – many direct-market and CSA farmers are sold out!

In addition to adding this resource, we have also brought back the Minnesota Cooks Farm-to-Table Directory, which we have also housed under the Resources tab on the Minnesota Cooks website. This directory lists all Minnesota Cooks alumni – both farms and restaurants – that are still in business. The directory is organized according to regions to make searching for nearby farms and restaurants more targeted. We are doing our best to keep this directory current, but since changes are happening quite rapidly right now, please call ahead or do a quick search to verify hours of operation and current offerings.

Claudine Arndt, Minnesota Cooks

For many of the farmers we’ve featured in Minnesota Cooks throughout the years, the foundation of their businesses has been built on selling directly to restaurants. In some cases, anywhere from 80-90 percent of their direct sales in the pre COVID-19 world were from restaurants, so when the order came down for restaurants to close their doors and move exclusively to take-out, many of our farmers’ sales took a drastic and devastating plunge virtually overnight.

Anne Schwagerl joins Minnesota Cooks team

By Claudine Arndt

In January 2020, Anne Schwagerl, Minnesota Farmers Union State Secretary, joined Katie Cannon and myself on the Minnesota Cooks team as the new Minnesota Cooks Coordinator. It has been a delight to add Anne’s skill set to our team, along with her enthusiasm for local foods and passion for protecting rural communities and the environment. Anne dove into her coordinator position headfirst, bringing new ideas and lending assistance with the overall organization, communication and promotion of MFU’s local foods program. To help you get to know Anne better, I asked her a few questions, which she graciously answered in between planting her garden and fields, fulfilling customer orders, attending various Zoom board meetings for Farmers Union Industries and MFU and enjoying spring with her family on their diversified grain and livestock operation, Prairie Point Farm, near Browns Valley, Minn.

What do you want people to know about you?

My passion for food and food policy are married perfectly with the missions of MFU and Minnesota Cooks. The reason Peter and I farm is because we want to eat like kings, and we know quality food is fresh, local and raised by family farmers. This is where my own personal philosophy lines up so well with Minnesota Cooks and MFU.

What prompted you to become a farmer?

Peter and I met in college and pursued other careers after completing our undergraduate degrees. Peter went into academia and I went into non-profit grant management, then the two of us eventually moved to North Central Florida while Peter was working on his PhD at the University of Florida. The summer we got married, he didn’t have any research funding, and since weddings are expensive and we needed money, he needed a job. We had been avid farmers market goers, and so we struck up a conversation with and cold called a local farm whose products we really liked.

(continued on page 11)
I had just finalized the details for Rural Voices Discussions when we got the news that the state was going into a state of peacetime emergency. After this announcement, events started canceling that same day and throughout the rest of the week – and we had to cancel our Rural Voices Discussions as well. We made the decision to close the office and do as much as we could from home. With the office closed, events canceled and travel frowned upon, we wondered how we could continue to engage with you, our members.

Over the last month, we have put together interesting and educational webinars through the Zoom video conference platform. As of the writing of this article, we have held two of them with an additional three or four planned.

On April 28, we hosted NFU President Rob Larew and NFU Vice President Patty Edelburg along with our own MFU President Gary Wertish in a listening panel to learn what is being done at the state and national levels to help family farmers and to hear from members what their primary concerns were.

On May 12 we heard from Kent Thiesse from MinnStar Bank, Mark Wehe from South Central College and Matt McDevitt with the MDA Rural Finance Authority on accessing farm financing options. Some topics covered were how to access PPP funds and the need to revisit business plans with the chaotic market in mind. The panelists also urged listeners to be proactive with managing financing issues, as there are more options available before a bill is due than after. This was the first session we recorded, and the audio is available on our Facebook page.

On May 26 we held another session titled Diversifying Your Farm Income through Direct to Consumer Sales.

Our current model is to hold a new webinar every two weeks on Tuesdays at 10 a.m. If you are interested in attending them you can call in or attend via Zoom. Follow us on social media and check the weekly e-newsletter for updates. All available audio recordings will be posted within a few days of the live webinar. We ask that attendees please RSVP for the webinars on Eventbrite so we can send the Zoom links to the right people. We send out evaluation surveys following the webinars, so please provide your feedback on those you attend.

If you have ideas on a subject you are interested in learning about, please feel free to send me an email or give me a call and we can discuss.

Anne Schwagerl (continued from page 10)

They were rotational grazers, which meant that they raised 100 percent grass fed beef and followed that beef with laying hens and meat birds. They also had some pasture raised hogs. Peter ended up working for them that summer, and we developed a great working relationship with them. After that summer, they asked us to start working their farmers markets, which became our weekend job. Peter and I had our nine to five, Monday through Friday jobs, and then we’d get up at 5am Saturdays, drive to the farm, pack orders and work at farmers markets.

This became a much more fulfilling way to work together than what we were experiencing at our fulltime jobs. We discovered we really liked working together and made a good working team, in addition to being good life partners. So we decided we wanted to take a big leap of faith and become farmers.

We called our parents and gave them the biggest surprise they had received in a long time. It was a funny Skype date:

“Are you pregnant? Are you getting divorced?”

“No! We’re going to be farmers!”

We moved back to Minnesota, transitioned into Peter’s family grain farm, and here we are.

What have you learned since joining Minnesota Cooks?

I’ve learned more about the depth and breadth of Minnesota agriculture. To see the creativity of our farmers and their businesses and how they earn a living is so impressive. Many people have a pretty vanilla picture of what agriculture looks like; Minnesota Cooks does an excellent job highlighting our differences and strengths and the diversity of Minnesota agriculture. Rural America is not a monolith! There’s an incredible amount of diversity and opportunity for farmers.

What energizes you about the Minnesota Cooks program?

Our team! Working with you and Katie! The shared passion of the team members for showcasing and highlighting the exciting things farmers are doing around the state.

Where would you like to see Minnesota Cooks go?

I’d like to see the program expand, and feature more than twelve farms a year. If we can show more farmers doing creative, innovative things, I think that will be a good thing for farmers and rural communities – and consumers! Consumers need to know there are more options available than just whatever is available at the nearest grocery store.

Connect with the Minnesota Cooks team at: claudine@mfu.org
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Cancer doesn’t discriminate. It doesn’t care how much your family or farm depend on you.

For generations, Farmers Union has lent a hand to various causes through legislation, education and philanthropy. Now it’s our turn to take on breast cancer. In collaboration with the National Breast Cancer Foundation (NBCF), Farmers Union is excited to announce our Spreading Awareness Campaign, with a pink manure spreader from Artex, a division of Farmers Union Industries (FUI).

State Farmers Unions will be proudly displaying the pink manure spreader at various events and state conventions, along with some of the top Artex dealerships around the Midwest. Stay tuned on the FUI Facebook and Instagram page to follow along on its Breast Cancer Awareness journey as we work with NBCF to inspire hope for those facing breast cancer.

“We are excited to shed light on the hard work, dedication and generosity of Farmers Union in our communities while simultaneously raising awareness for a disease that affects so many American families,” said FUI CEO Dan Hildebrandt. The spreader will be on the road through July 2021, at which point it will be sold and proceeds will be donated to NBCF.

FUI is a family of six businesses, majority-owned by Farmers Union Enterprises (FUE). FUE is made up of the state Farmers Unions of Minnesota, Wisconsin, North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana, making FUI a family-farmer-owned corporation.

The culture of agriculture and its communities

By Marta Zurn, MFU Intern

This past January, I had the privilege of participating in a Global Seminar through the University of Minnesota’s College of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS). This seminar took us on a three-week journey through the islands of Java and Bali in Indonesia while exploring the premise that human culture, farming and our relationships with the environment are inextricably linked. We were led through myriad experiences, from exploring the uses of native medicinal plants to discussing the importance of coral reef conservation. The experience that impacted me the most was our visit to a small village in the Balinese region of Kerambitan. In this village, we met several generations of rice farmers who shared their farming experiences, informed us about how they maintain their sacred relationship with their land and voiced their concerns for the years to come.

After our meeting, we had the opportunity to get our hands dirty in their rice fields by turning over the soil with garden hoes and finished by washing away the mud from our hands and bodies in the river.

The main export of Bali is rice. The Subak system of rice paddy water irrigation reflects the farmers’ practicality, as well as their religious and cultural practices. Their model of cooperation among communities and farmers reminded me of the structures we use in Farmers Union. They use a system with a president, executive board and community outreach teams to maintain tradition and the best interests of the communities and nature around them.

The main concern of these farmers is one we also have here in the United States – aging and continuity. As the rice farmers grow older, younger generations cease to replace them. They fear the loss of their traditional agriculture systems and culture. Even though they may be continents apart, many international farming communities are sharing the same fate. In the United States we are losing family farms, and, therefore, losing more relationships to the earth and important networks of community support. As students and stewards of the land, it’s our responsibility to reach out to our cohorts to promote supporting local agricultural systems whenever applicable. Farming is not just an occupation, it’s an essential cultural practice.

Intern Marta Zurn (second from the right) and the other participants of the U of MN CFANS Global Seminar experienced working in a rice field in Bali.
Finishing college while social distancing

By Abby Penzenstadler, MFU Intern

Four years ago, I chose to attend the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities to pursue a degree in Agricultural Communications and Marketing. Unlike most, my college decision was easy when I discovered the hidden gem of the small, yet lively St. Paul campus, filled with many agricultural enthusiasts like myself. They say college is the best four years of your life and that couldn’t be any truer. I’ve met my best friends, mentors and colleagues here. I continued my vast, over-involved lifestyle with Lambda Delta Phi Sorority, Block and Bridle, Minnesota Royal and the collegiate livestock judging circuit. I’ve held countless jobs and internships. I’ve walked through immense challenges and came out more prepared for the real world.

Heading into my final semester this spring, there was so much excitement in the air. Everyone tells you to enjoy your ‘lasts’ and that was certainly my plan. My course load was dwindling down. I started a new internship with Minnesota Farmers Union. I was preparing for my final term as Events Chair for our St. Paul campus homecoming, Minnesota Royal. I was beginning my endeavor to (hopefully) land my dream job post college. And of course, dreaming about my graduation ceremony to officially close the door on the past 16 years of education.

Flash forward and my senior year has been completely turned upside down. When I left for a spring break trip to Texas with my family, I never expected to return to such uncertainty and sadness. My classes would begin with distance learning completely online until April 1. With optimism, I began my first day of remote school, only to receive an additional email that online learning would continue through the rest of the school year and my graduation ceremony postponed for the time being.

These times are unprecedented and I applaud my university officials for taking the appropriate steps with such urgency, paving the way for other Midwest schools. However, I can’t help but grieve the loss of my senior year. No good-byes, no ‘lasts’; just an empty, eerie campus.

Now, my biggest worry is about job prospects, post-pandemic. This summer, I will be continuing my Facilities Coordinator internship with Minnesota 4-H at the Minnesota State Fair. I’m thankful for the opportunity to continue serving an organization and event, that were so prominent in my childhood. Come September, all I can hope is that I’ll find my way into a career where I can continue advocating and supporting the future of agriculture.

Sure, I’ll still graduate and receive my diploma, but in an untraditional way. I’ll celebrate alongside my family, commemorating my years of education and reminiscing on the memories and unforgettable college life.

For now, I’m finding my ground back at home, tending to livestock and the farm while navigating this new remote learning which has been surprisingly manageable. I’ll always be grateful for my agricultural days and the future I’ve pursued because of my roots. With resilience, a new day will come.

FUIA Agent Highlight:
STEVE DOSTAL
(218) 463-2369
118 Main Ave. S, Roseau
(located inside Citizens State Bank)

Why is working with Farmers Union Insurance Agency and Minnesota Farmers Union important to you?
I grew up on a farm and was a partner in a family dairy farm for many years, so I feel a deep connection to agriculture. I feel fortunate to work with organizations that support and protect farmers and rural communities.

What community organizations are you passionate about?
I am currently the board president of Focus Corp in Roseau, a day activity facility for handicapped adults that helps them to learn and use life skills and participate in community life and meaningful activities. I am on a fundraising committee for a newly-completed remodeling and addition to our church and was a church council member for many years. When our sons were playing, I was a youth baseball coach and was a high school baseball and softball umpire for many years. Our Agency is a partner with a local ALS fundraising group

Please tell us a little bit about your family life.
My wife Donna and I have five children and eight grandchildren. My family and I enjoy many outdoor activities together including biking, fishing, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. We also enjoy any opportunity to spend time with our grandchildren!

What is your number one concern when reviewing and selling farm insurance?
My main concern when working with farm insurance is understanding each client’s situation well enough to recommend coverages and solutions that give that farmer the best value and protection that I can provide for their specific situation. When reviewing a farm insurance policy with a client, I want to know about any changes in their operation so that we can address any potential coverage gaps or new risks. I feel that it is my responsibility to help our clients understand and manage the risks involved in their operation from the insurance perspective.

Steve joined Farmers Union Insurance Agency in March 1997, has been winner of many sales incentive contests and trips, was named 1999 Agent of the Year, and is licensed in Property, Casualty, Life, Accident & Health, and Variable Life & Annuities in Minnesota and North Dakota.
This month we’re featuring a pizza crust recipe from MFU member Noreen Thomas, farmer and baker extraordinaire, with a couple of topping suggestions from Minnesota Cooks team members Katie Cannon and Anne Schwagerl. Enjoy!

**Pizza Crust**

from Noreen Thomas, Doubting Thomas Farms

2-1/2 cups (12-1/2 oz. or 355 g) Doubting Thomas Farms creamy white flour
3 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 cup plain yogurt
approximately 3/4 cup water, depending on the dryness of the flour
1 tablespoon olive oil

Preheat oven to 400°F.

In a mixing bowl, combine flour, baking powder and yogurt; set aside. Combine the water and oil in a separate jug or cup.

Slowly add the water mixture to the flour mixture, holding back a little in case you don’t need it all.

Using a wooden spoon or your hands, mix until the dough is soft and feels like leather – but not sticky. Adjust to achieve desired texture by adding either more water mixture or more flour.

Lightly flour a work area and a rolling pin, then shape dough into a 12-inch circle using your hands.

Transfer the pizza dough to a nonstick pizza base or large baking tray and top with your favorite pizza toppings (ideas following).

Bake for 15-17 minutes, or until golden brown.

**Crushed Tomato and Shepherd’s Way Ricotta Pizza**

from Katie Cannon, Minnesota Cooks photographer

You can use your favorite jarred sauce if you choose, but the stars of this show are the fresh tomatoes and creamy sheep’s whey ricotta. Using simple ingredients and seasonings will allow these toppings to shine.

- crushed tomatoes – fresh* or canned dried oregano
- fresh garlic or dried garlic powder
- kosher salt
- fresh mozzarella
- sheep’s whey ricotta from Shepherd’s Way olive oil
- fresh basil

Spoon crushed tomatoes onto the readied pizza dough, then spread evenly with the back of the spoon. This should be a thin layer of sauce and can reach all the way to the edges. Sprinkle sauce with oregano, garlic and kosher salt. Tear mozzarella into pieces and arrange evenly onto dough, then dot the top with tablespoon sized pieces of ricotta. I find it easiest to get messy and use my fingers to scoop and crumble into pieces on top.

Bake at 400°F for 15-17 minutes, or until done. Allow to cool for a few minutes, then top with a drizzle of olive oil and torn basil leaves.

*To crush fresh tomatoes, score bottoms of tomatoes with an X, then dip into boiling water for about a minute. Let cool then peel and core tomatoes, then pulse in a food processor until crushed.

**Garlic-Scape Pesto and Sausage Pizza**

from Anne Schwagerl, Minnesota Cooks Coordinator

- 10 garlic scapes, trimmed just below the bulb and cut into 1-2” pieces
- 1/3 cup toasted walnuts
- 1/3 cup shredded parmesan or local hard cheese
- 1/2 lemon, juiced
- sea salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 1/3 cup olive oil

Your favorite local sausage, such as Pastures A Plenty, Yker Acres or Prairie Pride Farm of MN

- fresh mozzarella or other favorite cheese

In a food processor add scapes, toasted walnuts, parmesan and lemon juice. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Process by pulsing until the mixture begins to break down. Scrape the bowl down.

Spread an even layer of garlic scape pesto onto the readied pizza dough, then top with desired amount of local sausage and cheese.

Bake at 400°F for 15-17 minutes, or until done. Leftover garlic scape pesto can be stored in a covered container or lidded jar in the fridge for up to one week.
gave 146 people either a placebo or a garlic extract for 12 weeks; the garlic takers were two-thirds less likely to get sick.

Garlic is an easy immune booster to embrace. If you like to cook, incorporate garlic into your dishes at the end of cooking for the most immune-boosting impact. Better yet, set aside a couple fresh cloves, crush them slightly then cut into pieces small enough to swallow. Swallowing garlic bits, rather than chewing them, minimizes garlic breath. You can also buy garlic extract from health foods stores.

2. Embrace elderberry. Elderberries are loaded with antioxidants and vitamin C, making them an extremely effective immune-boosting tool. The Healthy Home Economist reported: “In one study, elderberry extract inhibited several strains of influenza and reduced symptoms. In another, elderberry syrup flavonoids were found effective against the H1N1 (Swine Flu) virus. In the most compelling study, a randomized trial of 60 patients aged 18-54 suffering from flu symptoms for 48 hours or less received 15 ml (3 teaspoons) of elderberry syrup or a placebo 4x per day for five days. [Researchers observed that] symptoms were relieved on average 4 days earlier and use of rescue medication was significantly less in those receiving elderberry extract compared with a placebo.”

If you’re lucky enough to get fresh elderberries from a Minnesota farmer, steep them in boiling water to make tea. Elderberry juice or elderberry syrup are additional options.

3. Stay hydrated. It sounds too simple to be important, but this needs to be a priority. The lungs and respiratory system require moisture and hydration to function optimally. To maximize hydration, drink room temperature or hot water, which is more easily absorbed by the body’s tissues and eat broths and soups.

4. Take zinc. Elderly people and vegans/vegetarians are at greater risk of being deficient in this trace mineral, which is well known for its immune boosting properties. Zinc deficiency produces a direct and rapid decline in T cell function. T cells elevate the body’s immune response to viruses, bacteria and other pathogens. Pick up a zinc supplement or lozenges, or eat zinc-rich foods like oysters, beef, crab, lobster, pork, chickpeas or cashews to increase your levels. If taking a supplement, follow the recommended dosage on the bottle.

5. Outwit bad bugs with an army of good bugs. Probiotic supplements and probiotic-rich foods, like yogurt, kefir, kimchi and sauerkraut are immune boosting superheroes. Even a tablespoon or two of these foods every day can do wonders for our health by populating the digestive tract with health-promoting bacteria. Most of our good bacteria live in our large intestine, and most of our immune system (70-80 percent, astonishingly) is found in and around our digestive tract; therefore, when we build a healthy population of bacteria in our digestive tract, we’re building immunity.

6. Avoid sugar if you are feeling sick or after being around others who are sick. A sugary treat is fine occasionally, but eating it regularly taxes the immune system. If your health is compromised in any way, do not eat sugar. Instead, try satisfying your sweet tooth with fruit, sweet vegetables (sweet potatoes, carrots, squash, red bell peppers), dates with almond butter or drinking kombucha (sparkling, fermented tea) or sweet herbal teas. ▲
Standing for Agriculture, Working for Farmers

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We are proud to support the hard-working men, women and families during May Beef month, June Dairy month and every day.

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