Bylaw changes

At the 78th Annual MFU Convention, the MFU Rules & Bylaws Committee heard proposals from members on bylaws change suggestions. The committee has met several times since then to discuss these changes. They propose the following for delegates’ consideration at the 79th Annual MFU Convention on Nov. 21, 2020. Please read them carefully. They will be published three times prior to the convention in Minnesota Agriculture.

The MFU Rules & Bylaws Committee consists of Chair Tim Velde of Yellow Medicine County, Markell Vogt of Aitkin County, Carol Anderson of Benton County, Roland Cleveland of Chisago County, Nancy Dahlin-Teich of Chisago County and MFU Legal Counsel David Velde. Thanks to each of them for their service.

Underlined text denotes the new language and strikethrough text denotes previous language.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1
To be admitted to regular membership, a person must be over the age of sixteen, a citizen of the United States (or have declared an intention to become a citizen). A regular member must be a farmer (a farmer is defined as one who operates a family farm, derives an appreciable income from family farming, is actively involved in providing labor and management and is at risk for the obligations of the farm operation or retired from farming), a farm employee, a manager or employee of a farmer’s cooperative enterprise, an employee of a Farmers Union cooperative enterprise or an instructor in agriculture education.

ARTICLE VI. STATE UNION AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 2
The President shall be elected for a term of two years and until a successor is elected and qualified. The Vice President shall be an active farmer, as defined in Article III Section 1, and shall be elected for a term of two years and until a successor is elected and qualified. Both shall be elected in the manner provided in Article VII, Section 4 of these bylaws.

Section 5
The MFU State Board of Directors shall elect a secretary, who shall be an active farmer, as defined in Article III Section 1, and shall serve at the pleasure of the board, and shall elect an Executive Committee of five (5) from its own members, which Executive Committee shall act for the Board of Directors when that board is not in session.

ARTICLE VI. STATE UNION AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Section 7
The Executive Committee shall have all the powers and privileges of the MFU State Board of Directors when the Board is not in session, further, the Executive Committee shall determine the budget of the organization including compensation.

ARTICLE VI. DUTIES OF OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Section 8
The President shall perform such other duties as may be required of him by the Board of Directors; receive for services a salary, the amount of which shall be determined and authorized by the Board of Directors.

Section 9
The First Vice President shall receive such compensation, if any, as may be fixed by the Board of Directors.

Section 10
The Secretary shall be selected by the majority of the Board of Directors, which shall fix compensation.

Section 12
Members of the Executive Committee shall be reimbursed for necessary travel and subsistence cost for their attendance upon regular or special meetings of the Committee as shall be determined by the Board of Directors.

Each member of the Executive Committee shall receive for his services while in charge of official duties, a per diem as shall be determined by the Board of Directors, plus the travel and subsistence costs above provided.

ARTICLE VII. STATE CONVENTION

Section 2
However, so that the number of convention delegates will be sufficient to constitute a state convention, no one delegate may carry more votes than the maximum number carried by three duly elected delegates or sixty (60) thirty (30) votes.

Section 2, number 2.
If a county president is that county’s only registered convention delegate, that president may carry the maximum weighted vote of a county as noted in this section (60) (30).

Section 4, letter d
In the event of three or more candidates for the office of either President or Vice President, election shall be by preferential ballot as provided in Roberts Rules of Order, if no candidate for either office receives a majority vote after the first ballot, the candidate with the least votes shall be eliminated, with this process continuing, until the candidate receives a majority of the votes cast.

ARTICLE VII STATE CONVENTION

DUTIES OF CONVENTION COMMITTEES

Section 10
The Bylaws Committee shall meet before the annual meeting to consider necessary changes in the bylaws and receive and consider all amendments suggested by local unions and county unions that received a majority vote to recommend such changes, or members of Minnesota Farmers Union. The committee shall formulate recommendations and make reports to the annual meeting. The committee shall meet in accordance with time and publication requirements of Minnesota law as described in Article XIII AMENDMENTS.

ARTICLE XII. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Section 6
Any meeting conducted on behalf of the organization such as Board Meetings, Executive Committee meetings, committee meetings and the state convention may be conducted by electronic means provided participants may simultaneously hear each other during the meeting, and have a recognized means to communicate with each other.

Section 7
Any person seeking to hold any office or serve as a delegate must be a member of the Minnesota Farmers Union.
Please vote!
The general election is on Nov. 3, but voting has already begun. You can vote early by mail or in person with your face mask on. Voting ahead of time will help make Election Day safer, with less crowded polling places. Thank you in advance to all those serving as election judges, too. It’s a tense time politically, so please be respectful to everyone at your polling place.

It’s always important for farmers and rural residents to vote so our perspectives are well-represented. Take time to study the candidates in your area and learn what their thoughts are on rural policies, including but not limited to agriculture funding, infrastructure, climate, biofuels, local foods and health care.

Virtual Fly-In successful
I’d like to thank everyone who joined in the virtual National Farmers Union Fly-In last month. We missed being in Washington, D.C. in person but appreciated the opportunity to have conversations with our members of Congress via Zoom. A strong group of members joined each meeting and contributed important stories. Stu has more about specifics we covered in his update on page 6. We hope to be back to in-person meetings soon.

79th Annual Convention
As you may know, we’re holding an in-person state convention for one day, Nov. 21, albeit with many changes to make it a safe experience for all. The registration information can be found on page 8, as well as a tentative agenda on page 9. Due to COVID-19, note that attendance is limited to delegates, county presidents, convention committee members and MFU staff – if you do not fall into any of these categories, please do not attend. Alternates will receive a separate mailing explaining the situation for them; they should not plan to attend unless a delegate in their county is unable and the county president asks them to upgrade to delegate. This will help us stay under the 250-person limit of the hall. And if you get sick or are exposed to someone positive for COVID-19 within two weeks of the convention, please do not attend. Even if it’s the day before, you can change your plans.

We understand the risks of having this in-person gathering indoors. However, we believe with great care and cooperation from everyone to reduce the risks, we can do it safely and hold our annual policy debate. The River’s Edge Convention Center of St. Cloud convention hall has 16,000 square feet of space that will allow for adequate social distancing. You must wear a face mask at all times while indoors, covering your nose and mouth – MFU staff will be enforcing this.

Food will be served in prepackaged containers; fortunately, we have still been able to incorporate local farmers into the meal as we do every year, as well as providing lunch at no cost thanks to supportive sponsors. While we will not have guest speakers this year, we will still provide attendees with written reports from staff and Farmers Union entities, along with materials from sponsors and organizations who would otherwise be exhibitors at the convention.

We know it’s been a strange year, but we’re hopeful that a short time gathering safely in person will be fruitful. Don’t hesitate to reach out to us with any questions or concerns.

Schwagerl, Lunemann named to Governor’s Advisory Council on Climate Change
I was pleased to hear that MFU State Secretary Anne Schwagerl and member Pat Lunemann were both appointed to Gov. Tim Walz’s Advisory Council on Climate Change in September. Farming in Big Stone and Todd counties, respectively, each brings a unique perspective on the experience of climate change. Intense heat, heavy rainfalls and difficult pests create obstacles in a career already marked by the uncertainty of weather. And the news of wildfires, hurricanes and floods elsewhere in the country and world are making climate change’s threat impossible to ignore.

But farmers are stepping up and helping find solutions. We appreciate Gov. Walz and Lt. Gov. Flanagan making sure people like Anne and Pat are on the council to represent agriculture’s unique role in helping mitigate climate change. Thanks to the work of people like them, our organization’s grassroots policy reflects strong support for ecologically sustainable agriculture practices.

“I am humbled to join the impressive group of leaders assembled to assist the state of Minnesota in addressing climate change,” said Anne, who raises pastured hogs and organic grains with her family. “Along with farmers across the state, my livelihood is dependent on being able to adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate. I am excited to explore and develop plans to meet these challenges head on in partnership with the Governor, the other members of the council and stakeholders from across the state.”

(continued on page 4)
Get your questions answered on utility bills

Did you know that October is Energy Awareness Month?
At MFU, we’re constantly seeking ways to support farmers in their energy needs. But everyone needs energy to keep their homes warm (or cool) and their lights on. It’s also one of our costs of living that we have some control over. In the September issue of Minnesota Agriculture, Clean Energy Resource Teams’ Dan Thiede provided several ideas for investments you can make to save on your energy bills.

It’s also important to make sure you’re paying the right amount for the energy you use. The Citizens Utility Board of Minnesota (CUB) is another partner of ours in energy programs, and they offer utility bill clinics several times a month to answer questions and address concerns about what is on your bills (cubminnesota.org). Any Minnesota residential or small business utility customer is eligible to participate. The clinics are currently being conducted via phone. If the scheduled times do not work for you, contact CUB at (651) 300-4701 or info@cubminnesota.org to schedule a time.

Each consultation lasts about 20 minutes. A CUB staff member will review your utility bills and discuss strategies to save money for your specific household, including energy efficiency and ways to incorporate renewables. Even if you don’t have a specific question or complaint but would just like an expert to give your bills a once-over, you are welcome to participate in a bill clinic.

What are your renewable energy program needs?

Due to COVID-19, we have suspended in-person activities for our Renewable Energy Program and are looking for feedback from members on what we should focus on next. Please reach out to MFU Programming Director Michelle Medina Germán at michelle@mfu.org with suggestions or answers to any of the following questions:

- What are you interested in learning more about regarding on-farm renewable energy?
- What resources do you need?
- What is of most interest to you? Energy efficiency, energy audits, wind, solar, large- or small-scale installations, something else?
- What format would be most beneficial? Written articles, Zoom meetings, webinars, Q&A sessions with experts, videos, etc?
- What can MFU do better to support you and this programming?

Thank you in advance – we hope to take our program on the road again next year!

President’s Message (continued from page 3)

“I have watched our climate change in my career as a farmer,” said Pat, a family dairy farmer in Clarissa. “I hope to provide a farmer’s perspective to the Advisory Council and be an advocate for how agriculture can be a partner in climate solutions. My hope is that my many years in agricultural leadership roles will provide many connections to bring more than just my skills to this council.”

CFAP 2 open, but further stimulus talks break off

Also in September, President Trump announced during a Wisconsin campaign rally that the U.S. Department of Agriculture would provide a second tranche of pandemic aid – the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP 2). The applications for CFAP 2 are open through the Farm Service Agency (FSA) through Dec. 11 and provides up to $14 billion in additional funding. The good news is, CFAP 2 addressed several concerns from the first CFAP, including adding more eligible commodities. The program is meant to assist producers facing market disruptions and associated marketing costs due to COVID-19. More about CFAP and application instructions can be found on page 12.

We appreciate this second round of aid and urge USDA to distribute it fairly. But everyone is affected by the pandemic in some way, especially those who already face social and economic disadvantages. The aid provided by the CARES Act earlier this summer helped many people stay afloat after losing income, and the House-passed HEROES Act would have done the same thing again. The HEROES Act was recently revised again to include more agricultural provisions, which Stu Lourey reports on page 7. It hasn’t yet been discussed on the Senate floor as House leadership has been in talks with the administration to agree on a compromise.

However, in a baffling move, President Trump ordered his representatives to cut off negotiations with House Democrats for a second stimulus until after the election. Farmers and all Americans need a hand up to recover and rebuild.

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President’s Message (continued from page 3)

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Thank you in advance – we hope to take our program on the road again next year!
COVID-19 has certainly provided new hurdles to the already intense election and convention season. As we navigated through the county conventions this year, it was interesting to see how different counties handled things. I was able to attend some in person and others virtually.

One of the highlights for me this season was the Polk County convention. It was an in-person convention, held at the Lake Sarah Farmers Union campground in Erskine, with everyone observing mask and social distancing requirements. Besides being in person and getting to visit with friends and a beautiful fall morning, it was amazing to see them take a moment to honor a few of MFU’s most dedicated members. Polk County President Judy Moen made the day special by honoring Allen and Elaine Torpet and Ken Pazdernik for all they have done for MFU and Polk County. Ken and Allen took time to speak of their experiences with our organization, with humility and gratitude. They talked about how this organization has played such a pivotal role in their lives. Allen shared a powerful message of how resolutions from the very room we were in are vigorously debated, brought forward to the state convention and can become policy. It was inspirational to hear from them. They and their families continue to advocate for policy that’s good for all Minnesotans.

In election years like this one, county convention time is an opportunity for us members to visit with our local elected officials and candidates, sometimes in virtual settings this year. Here in Mahnomen County, we had a small outdoor convention at our farm, and we got a visit from State Senator Kent Eken of Twin Valley. I want to thank Senator Eken for taking the time to join us. He updated us on the latest happenings in the Legislature and gave some key insight to what to expect in the coming months. Worth noting, he is the son of former MFU President Willis Eken.

Campaigning is tough in these conditions, but people appreciate getting to know who they are voting for on a personal level. I follow many candidates on social media, and it’s amazing how some have figured out a way to bring a personal touch to the digital age. Those that get it right can tell their story in such a way that it’s exciting to support their efforts. Some of them have reached out to me in the recent months to learn more about our organization and looked to us for guidance on ag issues. It’s fun to talk shop about farming and politics, but these are important conversations. They’re looking at MFU policy to guide them through conversations around their respective districts. Many of them are MFU members as well.

I want to thank Stu Lourey for his accessibility to these candidates, as I will quite often refer candidates to him. He has been tremendous at accurately and promptly communicating with folks. I know this because they call me back and appreciate the insight they receive from Stu and everyone at MFU. I hope we can all be proud of our efforts, because it’s our grassroots policy that our leaders are consulting to shape the future of agriculture in Minnesota.

The basis of representation at the Minnesota Farmers Union state 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 and one additional delegate who will represent each additional ten dues-paying members or a major fraction thereof.

CREDENTIALS BLANKS
Forms will no longer be accepted at the time of registration and must be processed ahead of time.

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 Anne Schwagerl
President Secretary

OFFICIAL CONVENTION CALL
79th Annual Convention of the Minnesota Farmers Union
Notice is hereby given that the 79th annual convention of the Minnesota Farmers Union will begin on Saturday, Nov. 21, 2020, at the River’s Edge Convention Center in St. Cloud, Minn. until all business has been concluded. Business to be conducted will include election of delegates to the National Farmers Union convention and discussion and passage of resolutions into MFU policy.

Standing for Agriculture, Working for Farmers
It goes without saying that farmers are facing a lot of challenges right now – concentrated and uncompetitive markets, the Trump administration's trade war and efforts to undermine the Renewable Fuel Standard, market closures due to the pandemic and the effects of climate change, to name a few. This makes it even more important that we make our collective voices heard with policymakers in D.C. In light of these challenges and the work before Congress in the coming weeks and months, we shared support for reforming agricultural markets, strengthening programs aimed at pandemic recovery, rebuilding infrastructure across rural America and support biofuels and climate-smart agriculture.

During the fly-in, MFU members took time to meet with almost every member of our Congressional delegation or their staff. A common thread throughout the meetings was the need for more distributed small- and mid-sized meat processors to ensure that livestock producers can sell their products, and to address the undue influence of the large, multi-national, corporate entities that control so much of our food system. Just over 50 plants are responsible for as much as 90% of the cattle slaughtered in U.S., for example. When a member from Northfield raised this issue with Sen. Tina Smith (D), she agreed and talked about the need to address workforce challenges facing small processing plants. She also shared her support for greater anti-trust enforcement and discussed ways to restore transparency to livestock markets so that farmers have a stronger foothold in the marketplace.

Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D) touched on the need for reforming agricultural markets and talked about her leadership on legislation that would require the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to disclose more information about the so-called “small refinery exemptions” the administration handed out in order to allow big oil companies to skirt compliance with the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS). She also addressed the great need for stronger leadership from Washington on agricultural trade policy to help restore foreign markets destroyed in part by the administration’s erratic trade policy.

Rep. Collin Peterson (D-CD7), who chairs the House Agriculture Committee, was generous in spending time not only with MFU, but also with all the participants from across the country in a large-group webinar session. He talked about how he continues to stand up for farmers in the COVID relief packages and that he understands the need great need for more processing opportunities for livestock farmers. That is a big reason why he authored the RAMP-UP Act, which made its way into the newest House COVID relief package. He also talked about the
need to reinstate country of origin labeling (COOL) and his work to restore fair, sustainable prices for farmers and get away from ad hoc disaster payment programs.

Representative Angie Craig (D-CO2), a fellow member of the House Agriculture Committee, echoed Peterson’s support for building more resilient agriculture markets, highlighting her leadership in the House supply chain caucus. She also talked about the need to look to farmers for solutions on climate change, which is already exacting a significant cost on farmers and others across the country.

Finally, members also had meaningful and productive conversations with Congressman Tom Emmer (R-CO6), Congressman Dean Phillips (D-CO3) and Congressman Pete Stauber (R-CO8), as well as staff members from metro-area Congresswomen Betty McCollum (D-CO4) and Ilhan Omar (D-CO5).

We talk about Fly-In as an opportunity to start or build on a relationship with an elected official or their staff—not just a once-a-year check-in. This year’s virtual event has been true to that principle. A number of MFU members have followed up on conversations with congressional staff and we’ve continued to keep in close touch with our elected representatives. Congresswoman Craig, for example, stepped out between votes the Friday following Fly-In week to hop on a call with MFU county officers.

Early indications are that this work left an impression on policymakers. In the Democratic-led U.S. House of Representatives, lawmakers passed an updated proposal aimed at pandemic relief, which includes several priorities we shared in our visits. These include the RAMP-UP Act, which would provide funding for small and mid-sized meat processing plants to meet federal inspection, additional support for the Postal Service, an increase in food assistance and funding for farm and rural mental health.

There is still much work to be done to see these changes into law, including action by the Senate, but this is certainly a welcome development in the ongoing negotiations over a second aid package.

Unfortunately, the Senate’s work has been temporarily stalled because of a bevy of members testing positive for COVID-19, including a few who attended the nomination ceremony of Judge Amy Coney Barrett for the Supreme Court. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has halted Senate floor sessions until Oct. 19. And, President Trump tweeted on Oct. 6 that he was calling off negotiations on pandemic aid until after the election.

As always, if you have any thoughts or questions about MFU’s legislative work, don’t hesitate to reach out to me at (320) 232-3047 or stu@mfu.org.
79th Annual Minnesota Farmers Union Convention

Delegates and County Presidents: Plan to attend the 79th Annual MFU Convention on Saturday, Nov. 21, at the River’s Edge Convention Center in St. Cloud.

Our annual state convention offers an opportunity for members to set our policy and network with other members and participate in lively discussions.

**Minnesota Grown Meals:**
MFU works with members and local farmers to showcase local foods in all of our convention meals. 

No cost for meals this year.

Out of respect for the safety and health of our members during the COVID-19 pandemic, we have made a number of changes to our convention programming this year. The River’s Edge space allows enough space for 6-foot physical distancing with the amount of people we expect to attend. **Face coverings over your nose and mouth will be required indoors at all times.** Lunch will be served in individually-packaged containers rather than a buffet and provided at no cost.

We are limiting attendance to delegates, county presidents, convention committee members and MFU staff.

Lastly, we have abbreviated the convention agenda to consist of essential business only – discussion of rules and bylaws change proposals, state policy discussion, debate and approval of special orders and NFU Convention delegate elections. There will be no banquet or guest speakers. While it’s unfortunate, we hope our time will be fruitful and folks will enjoy seeing each other briefly in person. That being said, if you RSVP as attending convention and become ill within two weeks of it, **please do not attend!** Contact our office and let us know, even if it’s the day before.

Of note, delegate registration will also be different from usual. One registration period will be open from 7-9 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 20 at the convention center. The other will be on the morning of the convention, Nov. 21, from 8-10:30 a.m. **No delegate registrations will be accepted after 10:30 a.m.** Please make plans to arrive for one of these times. Additionally, if you are an alternate being upgraded to a delegate, you must be upgraded by your county president by 10:30 on Saturday as well. **Alternates may not attend unless they are asked to upgrade.**

To register: Call (651) 288-4060, email molly@mfu.org or on Eventbrite at mfu79.eventbrite.com.

**Accommodations at Courtyard by Marriott St. Cloud**

To reserve a hotel room, go online to [bit.ly/MFU79Hotel](bit.ly/MFU79Hotel). You must reserve your room by Monday, Nov. 1 to guarantee a special rate of $129 plus taxes and fees. Mention that you’re calling for MFU. You can contact Courtyard by Marriott St. Cloud directly at (320) 654-1661.

A credit card is required to book your reservation. There is also a parking fee of $4.51 per night, which will be charged to your room.

The Courtyard by Marriott St. Cloud is located at 404 West St. Germain Street, St. Cloud, MN 56301.
Vote from home or vote early in person safely!

The general election isn’t until Nov. 3, but in Minnesota, people are already casting ballots. Early in-person voting is open, and many people who requested absentee ballots have gotten them in the mail. We encourage you to take advantage of one of these options if possible and help make Election Day safer for our poll workers and all Minnesotans. The Secretary of State’s office has distributed absentee ballot applications statewide to those who haven’t signed up for them already, so watch your mailbox for that if you want to vote from home. If you vote! In-person, please wear a face covering and follow social distancing guidelines, as well as any measures put in place by the polling location.

Due to COVID-19, there is no requirement for a witness signature on absentee ballots this year. Once you’ve completed your ballot, you can either mail it in or drop it off at a designated location for your area. If you still need to request your ballot to vote from home, the deadline to do so is Oct. 27. Ballots must be postmarked by Election Day, Nov. 3, to be counted.

Make sure you have a voting plan in place well ahead of time – register to vote, apply for a mail ballot or find your early voting location at www.sos.state.mn.us/elections-voting. As always, Election Day voter registration will be available as well.
A monthly update from National Farmers Union

Farmers Union members gather for Fly-In

In mid-September, more than 400 farmers, ranchers and food advocates gathered online to speak with their elected representatives and administration officials as part of National Farmers Union’s (NFU) Legislative Fly-In. The event is part of NFU’s long history of grassroots advocacy; since 1909, the organization’s members have traveled to Washington, D.C., to speak with lawmakers about the issues that matter most to them. In a first, this year’s event was held online for the health and wellbeing of members during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like most recent Fly-Ins, the gathering began with a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) briefing. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue provided pre-recorded remarks, acknowledging the damage that the pandemic has inflicted on agricultural markets and providing an overview of the ways that his agency is working to support affected farmers. Additionally, he highlighted recent trade deals with China, Mexico and Canada, and indicated that the administration is working on opening up new markets in Europe and Africa, citing negotiations with Kenya and the United Kingdom. The Secretary’s video was followed by a live appearance from Deputy Undersecretary of Rural Development Bette Brand, who answered questions about rural broadband, medical infrastructure, climate resilience, pandemic relief and strengthening local and regional food processing.

The next day, fly-in participants heard from several legislators during a congressional briefing. Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) spent 45 minutes with the group, responding to inquiries about biofuels, the U.S. Postal Service (USPS), climate legislation, the possibility of a follow-up stimulus package and how best to protect food chain workers from COVID-19. The remainder of the session featured Chair of the House Committee on Agriculture Collin Peterson, as well as recorded messages from Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), Senator Jon Tester (D-Mont.) and Representative Frank Lucas (R-Okla.).

Throughout the week, attendees joined small-group meetings with congressional offices to discuss the issues most important to them. Between pandemic-related disruptions, climate change, low commodity prices, corporate control of the food industry, and underfunded infrastructure, there’s certainly no shortage of things to talk about. About 40 members from Minnesota participated in these meetings, which MFU Government Relations Director Stu Lourey covers in further state-specific detail.

EPA rejects gap year waivers

After significant pushback from farmers and the biofuels industry, the U.S. Environment Protection Agency (EPA) announced that it would reject 54 of 68 requests for retroactive small refinery exemptions (SREs) under the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS). The remaining 14 waivers will remain under review for the time being.

The announcement comes nearly nine months after a Tenth Circuit Court decision that struck down three SREs that were not extensions of previously existing exemptions. To try and circumvent the precedent set by the court, small refineries tried to establish a chain of continuously “extended” exemptions with retroactive waivers.

NFU, one of four petitioners in the case, has consistently voiced opposition to the abuse of SREs, most recently urging EPA and the Trump administration to reject these so-called “gap year” requests. The organization welcomed EPA’s announcement, but it should have happened significantly earlier.

“By waiting so long to come to this obvious conclusion, EPA bruised an industry that’s already experiencing reduced demand due to deliberate efforts to undermine the Renewable Fuel Standard and the coronavirus pandemic,” NFU President Rob Larew said. Additionally, he urged the agency to follow up by releasing the overdue Renewable Volume Obligations (RVOs) for 2021.

NFU urges strengthening of meat labeling

In the five years since mandatory Country-of-Origin Labeling (COOL) was overturned, beef and pork that was born, raised and slaughtered in another country but processed in the United States has legally been labeled as a “Product of the U.S.A.” – a claim that misleads consumers and puts American ranchers at a disadvantage.

This inaccurate labeling would be reined in by a rule recently proposed by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Under the rule, which applies not just to food but most consumer products, voluntary origin labels like “Made in the U.S.A.” would require that “all or virtually all” ingredients be made and sourced domestically and that all significant processing and final assembly occur within the United States. Those who inaccurately label products would be penalized.

Method of Production

| 0 = Organic |
| 1 = Free Range |
| 2 = Barn |
| 3 = Cage |

Country of Origin

Unique Farm ID

2US12345
A longtime advocate of clear and accurate labeling, NFU expressed support for the rule in written comments and urged the FTC to swiftly finalize and “vigorously enforce it.” President Larew said American consumers deserve to know “where meat had been born, raised and processed,” and that the rule would “help deter misleading claims on imported meat.” He also recommended that USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) adopt the “all or virtually all” requirement for its beef and pork labeling standards.

**NFU, MANRRS work together to improve racial equity**

It’s no secret that racial and ethnic minorities are vastly underrepresented in agricultural professions. Even though 40% of Americans identify as Black, Indigenous or people of color (BIPOC), just 5% of farmers do, though many more desire to be farmers.

In an effort to strengthen diversity and inclusion in agriculture, NFU and Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) summarizing the ways in which their organizations will collaborate to provide educational and leadership opportunities for young people of all racial and ethnic identities, develop federal policy priorities and extend each other’s reach within agricultural communities.

The partnership is a natural next step for the two organizations in their commitment to racial justice. NFU, which has represented racially diverse farmers for more than 80 years, has primarily approached the issue through legislative action; the organization supported the Civil Rights movement and has backed legal challenges to institutional discrimination against Black farmers.

MANRRS is a national society that offers professional and academic development and networking opportunities for BIPOC in agricultural sciences and related fields. By leveraging each other’s expertise, NFU and MANRRS hope to strengthen each other’s efforts.

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

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**Farmers Union Agency Donations Benefit Local Non-Profits Affected by COVID-19**

Our Agents and Staff are so proud to be involved in their communities!

**Clockwise from top left:** Rochester Agent Chris Sanders donated his check to Channel One Food Bank and matched for a total of a $1,000 donation; Maple Grove Agent Brandon Hummel mailed his donation to the Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA), who are also members of MFU; and Jay and Brady Swanson (Thief River Falls, Hallock and Argyle Agents) donated a total of $500 each to the North Valley Health Center in Warren and the Argyle Hope Program for Senior Citizens.

We’ll be featuring additional donations in future editions of the MN Ag.

We are Trusted. Local. Committed.

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**Farmers Union Insurance Agency**

**Trusted. Local. Committed.**

Thanks to carrier partner National General’s COVID Relief Initiative, several of Farmers Union Agency’s Agents donated $500 checks (or more!) to local non-profits across Minnesota directly affected by the COVID shutdown.

We are Trusted. Local. Committed.
Price trigger commodities

Price trigger commodities are major commodities that meet a minimum 5% price decline over a specified period. Eligible price trigger crops include barley, corn, sorghum, soybeans, sunflowers, upland cotton and all classes of wheat. Payments will be based on 2020 planted acres of the crop, excluding prevented planting and experimental acres. Payments for price trigger crops will be the greater of: 1) the eligible acres multiplied by a payment rate of $15 per acre or 2) the eligible acres multiplied by a nationwide crop marketing percentage, multiplied by a crop-specific payment rate, and then by the producer’s weighted 2020 Actual Production History (APH) approved yield. If the APH is not available, 85% of the 2019 Agriculture Risk Coverage-County Option (ARC-CO) benchmark yield for that crop will be used. For broilers and eggs, payments will be based on 75% of the producers’ 2019 production. Dairy (cow’s milk) payments will be based on actual milk production from April 1 to Aug. 31, 2020. The milk production for Sept. 1 to Dec. 31, 2020, will be estimated by FSA. Eligible beef cattle, hogs, pigs, lambs and sheep payments will be based on the maximum owned inventory of eligible livestock, excluding breeding stock, on a date selected by the producer, between Apr. 16 and Aug. 31, 2020.

Flat-rate crops

Crops that either do not meet the 5% price decline trigger or do not have data available to calculate a price change will have payments calculated based on eligible 2020 acres multiplied by $15 per acre. These crops include alfalfa, extra-long staple (ELS) cotton, oats, peanuts, rice, hemp, millet, mustard, safflower, sesame, triticale, rapeseed and several others.

Sales commodities

Sales commodities include specialty crops; aquaculture; nursery crops and floriculture; other commodities not included in the price trigger and flat-rate categories, including tobacco; goat milk; mink (including pelts); mohair; wool; and other livestock (excluding breeding stock) not included under the price trigger category that were grown for food, fiber, fur or feathers. Payment calculations will use a sales-based approach, where producers are paid based on five payment gradations associated with their 2019 sales. Additional commodities are eligible in CFAP 2 that weren’t eligible in the first iteration of the program. A complete list of eligible commodities, payment rates and calculations can be found on farmers.gov/cfap.

Eligibility

There is a payment limitation of $250,000 per person or entity for all commodities combined. Applicants who are corporations, limited liability companies or limited partnerships may qualify for additional payment limits when members actively provide personal labor or management for the farming operation. In addition, this payment limitation provision has been expanded to include trusts and estates for both CFAP 1 and 2.

Producers must certify they meet the Adjusted Gross Income limitation of $900,000 unless at least 75% or more of their income is derived from farming, ranching or forestry-related activities. Producers must also follow Highly Erodible Land and Wetland Conservation provisions.

Applying for assistance

Producers can apply for assistance through Dec. 11, 2020. Additional information and application forms can be found at farmers.gov/cfap. Documentation to support the producer’s application and certification may be requested. All other eligibility forms, such as those related to adjusted gross income and payment information, can be downloaded from farmers.gov/cfap/apply. For existing FSA customers, including those who participated in CFAP 1, many documents are likely already on file. Producers should check with their FSA county office to see if any of the forms need to be updated.

Customers seeking one-on-one support with the CFAP 2 application process can call (877) 508-8364 to speak directly with a USDA employee ready to assist. This is a recommended step before a producer engages with the FSA county office.

All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including some that are open to visitors to conduct business in person by appointment only. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency should call ahead and schedule an appointment. Service Centers that are open for appointments will pre-screen visitors based on health concerns or recent travel, and visitors must adhere to social distancing guidelines. Visitors are also required to wear a face covering during their appointment. Our program delivery staff will be in the office, and they will be working with our producers in the office, by phone and using online tools. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2

In mid-September, President Trump announced up to an additional $14 billion for agricultural producers who continue to face market disruptions and associated costs because of COVID-19. Signup for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP 2) began Sept. 21 and runs through Dec. 11, 2020. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will use funds from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) Charter Act and CARES Act to support row crops, livestock, specialty crops, dairy, aquaculture and many additional commodities. USDA has incorporated improvements in CFAP 2 based on stakeholder engagement and public feedback to better meet the needs of affected farmers.

Producers can apply for CFAP 2 at Farm Service Agency (FSA) county offices. This program provides financial assistance that gives producers the ability to absorb increased marketing costs associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Producers will be compensated for ongoing market disruptions and assisted with the associated marketing costs.

CFAP 2 payments will be made for three categories of commodities – Price Trigger Commodities, Flat-rate Crops and Sales Commodities.
FREE agritourism signs for MFU members

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

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

To get your sign, contact Diana Rico at diana@mfu.org or (651) 288-4064.

Upcoming Events

Oct. 31 • Happy Halloween!
Nov. 7 • Daylight Savings Time ends
Nov. 21 • 79th Annual Minnesota Farmers Union Convention • River’s Edge Convention Center, St Cloud
Feb. 28-March 2, 2021 • 119th Annual National Farmers Union Convention • San Francisco, Calif.

Get social with Minnesota Farmers Union!

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

Facebook: Minnesota Farmers Union

Twitter: @mnfarmersunion

Instagram: mnfarmersunion

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

Farm Advocates

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

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

Farm Advocates:

Jan Boll Trail (218) 268-4472
Bruce Lubitz Perham (218) 346-4866
Connie Dykes Lake City (651) 345-5149
David Ellason Isle (320) 676-3559
David Hesse Comfrey (507) 877-3012
Dean Hetland Eagle Bend (218) 639-9302
Dan Hunz Monticello (320) 743-5600
Ruth Ann Karty Clarkfield (320) 669-7135
George Bosselman Fosston (218) 200-9432
Steve Zenk Danube (320) 894-2517

www.mda.state.mn.us/about/commissionersoffice/farmadvocates

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

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

Minnesota also has two rural mental health specialists you can speak to at any time if you need help. They meet with farmers one-on-one and free of charge. No paperwork or referral is necessary.

Southern MN: Ted Matthews, (320) 266-2390
Northern/central MN: Monica Kramer McConkey, (218) 280-7785

www.mda.state.mn.us/about/commissionersoffice/farmadvocates
Knock-Your-Socks-Off Cauliflower Soup
An original recipe from Minnesota Cooks
Program Manager Claudine Arndt

Yield: 6 servings

1 Tablespoon olive oil
1 Tablespoon butter
1 yellow onion, chopped
2 leeks, chopped
1-2 cloves garlic, minced
2 small heads cauliflower, roughly chopped
8 cups chicken broth (add more, as needed)
4 ounces heavy whipping cream, half and half, or coconut milk
2 medium carrots, scrubbed and shredded
2 teaspoons fresh parsley, chopped
Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Heat olive oil and butter in a large saucepan over medium-low heat. Add onion, leek and garlic, along with 1 teaspoon salt, and sauté until onion and leek are almost transparent. Add chopped cauliflower and broth. Bring to a low simmer, and simmer until the cauliflower is just tender, breaking the cauliflower into small pieces as you occasionally stir the soup. When cauliflower is cooked to desired consistency (about 10-12 minutes), add cream or coconut milk, shredded carrot and parsley. Stir to combine and simmer an additional 3-5 minutes to soften the carrot slightly. Add more broth, if necessary. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. At this point, you can either serve the soup as is or you can use an immersion blender to partially puree.

Farm Stress Radio Series

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

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

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

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

**Statement of Ownership of the Minnesota Agriculture published in accordance to the U.S. Postal Regulations**
WELLNESS: SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

For as long as I can remember, autumn has been my favorite season. I love everything about it: the brisk air, nature’s fiery kaleidoscope of colors, even the shorter days and long nights. Many people, however, feel the opposite. When the calendar hits September, some people fill with dread, knowing that the dark, chilly months ahead may sour their moods, tank their energy levels and leave them feeling depleted. These can be signs of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

While it’s long been known that some people struggle with mood and energy during autumn and winter, the term SAD has only been around since 1984 when Norman Rosenthal and his colleagues at the National Institute of Mental Health named it in a joint paper, fostering a wider discussion about SAD. It spurred decades of concentrated research about what drives SAD and how it might be treated effectively. It also brought validity to the struggles many people experience like clockwork every year, including 10-20% of Americans.

The reasons some people experience SAD and others don’t isn’t understood completely, and there are many nuances to consider. However, the general theory is that SAD is related to changes in circadian rhythms and shifts in melatonin and serotonin production. Melatonin is a hormone that regulates sleep wake cycles; serotonin is our feel-good hormone. SAD is a big topic, but below are a few ideas around physical activity and nutrition (including supplementation) we can experiment with:

1. **Eat an anti-inflammatory diet**, consisting of, for example:
   - Brightly colored fruits and vegetables: dark leafy greens like kale and collards, berries, glowing orange squashes and pumpkins, purple cabbage, etc. Strive to eat a rainbow of produce each day.
   - Healthy fats such as avocados, omega-3 rich fish like salmon and sardines, olives, olive oil, chia seeds, flaxseed and nuts.
   - Incorporate fresh ginger into your meals or drink ginger tea.
   - Other nutrition dense, fiber-rich foods such as black beans, pinto beans and brown rice.
   - Avoid soda, sugar, excessive alcohol, highly processed or other poor-quality food.

2. **Supplement with vitamin D**. Bone health, immune health, mental health and more rely on a solid bank of vitamin D, preferably in the 55-80 ng/ml range (you can get a blood test to check your vitamin D levels). SAD is more common the further north you go: According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, SAD is seven times more common in Washington than in Florida, which has led researchers to conclude that optimal vitamin D levels play a critical role in warding off SAD, as vitamin D is typically absorbed by the body from sunlight. Find out your vitamin D levels, then talk to your doctor about just how much vitamin D to supplement with.

3. **Ask your doctor about 5-HTP**. 5-HTP is an amino acid used in the production of serotonin, which is the neurotransmitter responsible for stabilizing one’s mood and helping us feel good. 5-HTP can also be converted into the sleep-inducing hormone melatonin, often proving helpful for those suffering from insomnia related to SAD. While 5-HTP is generally considered safe, don’t start supplementing without consulting your doctor first. If you take an anti-depressant, it may not be wise to throw 5-HTP into the mix.

4. **Boost your B-vitamins with a quality probiotic**. Among the trillions of important bacteria that live in our digestive tract are friendly little guys that produce B vitamins, specifically biotin, folate and B12. B vitamins are important for energy production, which is critical for people suffering from winter lethargy. B vitamins are also known to lessen depression and anxiety. Besides supplements, probiotics can be found in fermented foods like sauerkraut, kimchi and yogurt.

5. **Move your body, preferably in the morning**. It’s a tall order to ask someone who is feeling down and lethargic to incorporate exercise into their routine, but moving your body is critical for keeping SAD at bay. Try getting outside for a brisk walk in the morning (another thing that helps balance our circadian rhythms), but if that doesn’t speak to you, find something that does. Even just putting on some favorite tunes and lifting weights for 10 minutes can send a positive ripple through your day.

SAD is real and can be debilitating. I hope you found an idea or two you can explore further, and I wish you joy during these times of less daylight. As always, these suggestions are not intended to be medical directives – please consult with your medical professionals to determine the exact treatment you need.
Medicare Open Enrollment is October 15 - December 7.

Plans change every year. So can your health needs. It’s important to review your health plan annually, even if you’re happy with your current plan.

Open to something better? Contact your local FUA Agent to compare all your options for 2021, including prescription drug or Medicare Advantage plans from private insurers. You may find lower costs, extra benefits, or both!

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

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(NEW LOCATION)