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Minnesota Cooks™ Update

You’ve undoubtedly heard that the Minnesota State Fair has been canceled, which means that for the first time in 18 years, there won’t be a Minnesota Cooks Day. But not all is lost: we’ll still publish the Minnesota Cooks calendar. Without the State Fair as a hard deadline, we’ve extended Katie’s timeframe for photo shoots into August and September – beautiful months on the farm. We are grateful she’ll have that time to capture late summer, and our goal is to have the calendar printed in October.

We’re moving forward with opportunities to highlight this year’s Minnesota Cooks farmers and restaurants in podcasts and short videos. There’s a significant amount of chatter within Minnesota’s local food circles about what sorts of safe activities and promotions we may be able to pull off during the State Fair timeframe. As we head into fall, we have our fingers crossed it will be possible to safely hold smaller Minnesota Cooks events around the state. We’ve had several appealing invitations to take Minnesota Cooks on the road, but, of course, the pandemic will have the final say as to whether or not those can happen.

I want to leave you with an update about The Farmer and the Chef: Farm Fresh Minnesota Recipes and Stories, the farmer-forward book with chef-driven recipes from MFU. Initially due out this month, the book’s publication has been delayed until May 1, 2021, due to delays in the publishing world. This news felt devastating at first, but upon reflection we believe it will set the book up for greater success. We’ll share updates and sneak peeks from time to time, but they’ll be few and far between – the last thing we want to do is make you weary of book updates nearly a year in advance.

We can’t say it enough – thank you for your support! Our editor was ecstatic about the number of pre-orders we secured. We look forward to the day when you can finally hold the book in your hands, and we can share it with you in person.

Upcoming Events

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<td>MFU Webinar: County Conventions How-To, online</td>
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<td>July 21-23</td>
<td>MFU Junior High Camp, online – Register at <a href="http://www.mfu.org/camp">www.mfu.org/camp</a></td>
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<td>July 28-31</td>
<td>MFU Senior High Camp, online – Register at <a href="http://www.mfu.org/camp">www.mfu.org/camp</a></td>
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<td>August 2-8</td>
<td>National Farmers’ Market Week, at your local market and on MFU social media</td>
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<td>August 22</td>
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The past four months have required a great deal of patience with uncertainty. COVID-19 has been a part of our reality in Minnesota since March, and we don’t know how long it will last before there’s a vaccine or more conclusive treatment methods. It’s likely that physical distancing and face mask advisories will last well into 2021. The economic ramifications on all sectors of agriculture have been vast. We’re doing our best, but what happens with this virus is largely out of our control. We must all collectively follow the experts’ guidelines to keep slowing the spread and keep buying locally as much as possible.

The MFU staff have returned to working in the office Monday-Thursday now, with careful sanitizing and mask-wearing procedures. But we cannot return to our usual in-person gatherings yet, at least not the way we’re used to. County convention season is upon us – a few county officers have reached out about scheduling them. At this point, we strongly suggest that you hold conventions either outdoors or in an indoor space that allows for six feet of physical distancing if you hold them in person, or you can hold them virtually with the MFU Zoom account. We will keep you posted on the schedule of conventions. Diana has more suggestions in her article on page 8, and our next webinar will focus on county convention procedures on July 21.

I know many of you look forward to the National Farmers Union Legislative Fly-In in the fall. That event will be held virtually to ensure everyone’s safety. We don’t know exactly what that will look like yet and will keep you updated on that as well. The technology that allows us to do so much virtually has been a real gift. We’ve had some excellent educational webinars – our last one, focusing on meat processing issues, was the best-attended one so far and provided much for us to keep working on. I’ve been on calls with the NFU Board of Directors, Minnesota Governor’s Biofuels Council and the World Farmers’ Organization as well. We’re still able to complete our work this way. I’m hopeful that these digital tools will help us complete the necessary work of county conventions and Fly-In this year, as we keep learning how to combat COVID-19.

**MFU, NFU sign onto American Connection Project Broadband Coalition**

Expanding high-speed internet access is a longtime priority of ours. We were happy to join Land O’ Lakes, the Twin Cities-based agricultural cooperative, in the new American Connection Project Broadband Coalition this month. It’s a collection of businesses, advocacy groups, universities and more who have a vested interest in broadband access for all. COVID-19’s consequent school and business closures have provided a sense of urgency to the issue, with remote learning and working being nearly impossible for those without broadband.

The coalition sent a letter to President Trump and Congressional leaders asking them to take action to connect every American to high-speed broadband internet. Recent studies show that it would require an $80-$150 billion investment to complete this work. In the letter, the Coalition wrote, “As we look to help our nation recover from this global pandemic, let’s make a smart investment in the future competitiveness of this country and ensure that all Americans, in both rural and urban areas, are able to access the internet.”

Learn more about our coalition at www.americanconnectionproject.com.

**Farmers Union files legal challenge against EPA fuel-efficiency rule**

This spring, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) issued their final Safer Affordable Fuel Efficiency Vehicle Rule (SAFER), reversing an Obama-era rule that called for significant improvements in vehicle efficiency. The rule calls for a 1.5% increase in efficiency each year for light-duty vehicles, rather than the 5% increase in the previous rule.

The problem that we’ve joined the legal challenge to address is that while EPA requested information about octane levels and how they could be increased in accordance with the Clean Air Act, they did not address these concerns in the final rule. Because EPA failed to consider mid-level biofuels blends as an evidence-based answer to these concerns, NFU, MFU, other state Farmers Union divisions, the Governors Biofuels Coalition, biofuels and public health advocates have jointly filed a petition for review in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

“There is strong evidence that ethanol can improve fuel efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, all while providing new markets for farmers and bolstering rural economies,” said NFU President Rob Larew. “Given their benefits, NFU advocated a clear path to adoption of mid-level biofuels blends as an evidence-based answer to these concerns, NFU, MFU, other state Farmers Union divisions, the Governors Biofuels Coalition, biofuels and public health advocates have jointly filed a petition for review in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

Additionally, in accordance with Title II of the Clean Air Act, EPA is required to reduce toxics in gasoline to the greatest extent possible as new technologies become available. It’s been shown by many studies that higher ethanol blends of fuel, such as E30, produce fewer pollutants and greenhouse gases than lower blends. We’re calling on EPA once again to increase these blends, for cleaner air, better fuel efficiency and more reliance on American-grown fuels. And we don’t need to wait for new technology because we already have the resources we need in biofuels.

(continued on page 4)
Our goal with this petition is to require EPA to defend a flawed cost-benefit analysis and false assumptions about emissions and harm caused by toxic aromatic compounds in conventional fuels. We continue to be frustrated with the EPA’s lack of regard for biofuels, demonstrated by the myriad unnecessary small refinery exemptions (SREs) issued during the Trump administration. Homegrown biofuels provide a marketing opportunity for family farmers and jobs in rural areas. Our government should be investing more in biofuels, not less.

MDA and DNR encourage conservation grazing as a cattle feed option

We are well familiar with the consequences of meat plant closures during COVID-19. While the current situation is unprecedented, the challenges we face now are similar to challenges we have faced before. Our markets are changing, like they did when farmers attempted to sell livestock and haying and grazing lands were in demand to provide feed for livestock. This was also the case when we had the pandemic with haying and grazing on DNR land.

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has allowed haying and grazing on DNR lands for many years. It became clear to us that we needed to accelerate this program to alleviate potential feed shortages. We worked with the DNR, Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), Minnesota State Cattlemen’s Association and others to update and improve information about the conservation grazing program and get the word out.

In addition to being a resource for farmers, haying and grazing cattle on grasslands and wildlife management areas (WMAs) is a useful management practice for wildlife and pollinator habitat, according to the DNR. We very much appreciate this option to keep our cattle healthy and provide a benefit to our public lands.

To find public lands in your area or contact information for your local land managers, refer to the Conservation Grazing web site and map: mda.state.mn.us/conservation-grazing-map.

• Haying or grazing on WMAs must meet wildlife habitat management objectives on that site. This often means haying only a part of any area and grazing at lower stocking rates.
• Most WMAs do not have adequate fencing for cattle. Producers should expect to install and remove temporary fencing before and after each grazing period. Water is often available but should be checked for quality and quantity.
• Farmers can expect to pay market values for hay and grazing done on public lands. Deductions will be made for work done such as putting up and removing fence, hauling water and work to cut, bale and move hay, etc.
• Since a major reason for this increased haying and grazing initiative is to provide additional forage for Minnesota producers, we ask that any hay harvested from public land stays in Minnesota or the surrounding counties.

If you have general questions about conservation grazing, please contact Greg Hoch, DNR at 218-443-0476 / greg.hoch@state.mn.us, or Kelly Anderson, MDA at 320-808-4424 / kelly.anderson@state.mn.us.

MFU approved for PPP loan

Several weeks ago, I looked into whether MFU was eligible for a Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan. We’ve shared this as an option for farmers to replenish lost income, but I wasn’t sure if the organization itself could apply. Congress passed some changes to PPP in June and I discovered that we could apply after all. I worked on the application along with our accountant, Jo Schwake, and our bank, and they submitted it to the Small Business Administration on June 24.

We were approved and received the amount we applied for on the same day, for a total of $208,800. We have 24 weeks to use the money for the loan to be forgiven, though if it is not, it becomes a 1% loan for five years. I don’t expect that to happen at this point. Our bank was very helpful to work with on this and we’re glad to have been approved so quickly. You can still apply for PPP loans until Aug. 8 – the deadline was extended thanks to a bill from U.S. Rep. Angie Craig of Minnesota. Contact your lender about the process.

MDA offers grants in farm COVID safety, Farm-to-School

Minnesota U-Pick Operations, On-Farm Markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms seeking help to ensure a safe and sanitary equipment and supplies that will help them more information and to get an application. U-Pick operations and on-Farm Markets reimbursed up to $250 for the purchase of new Safe on the Farm Direct Marketing Cost Share web page – mda.state.mn.us/safe-farm-direct-marketing-cost-share-program.

MDA also anticipates awarding up to $124,000 through two new mini-grants to respond to the disruptions COVID-19 has caused in traditional Farm to School markets.

AGRI Farm to School Rapid Response for Schools – Grants are intended for school districts to begin, diversify and expand purchasing from Minnesota producers during the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily during the summer and fall 2020. School districts may apply for $1,000 to $5,000 and there is no match required.

AGRI Farm to School Rapid Response for Food Vendors – Grants are intended to support equipment purchases for food vendors that will help them to meet the product needs of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

For more information and to get an application form, visit the MDA’s Safe on the Farm Cost Share web page – mda.state.mn.us/safe-farm-direct-marketing-cost-share-program.

Applications to the program are being accepted now through Aug. 31, 2020 or until all funds are depleted. Funds will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Businesses will receive payment approximately two to four weeks after their application is approved. For more information and to get an application.
Across much of Minnesota the crops went in without a hitch, but there were areas with more challenges. The northwest corner of the state had tough field conditions this spring, which was no surprise to those in the area, as last fall brought heavy rainfall and late season flooding. The northern half of the Red River Valley has a fair amount of prevent plant claims this spring.

Normally I would have seen much of the state’s crop progress in person by this time of year, but due to COVID-19 preventing many gatherings, I’ve turned to you, our members, to stay informed. Most I have spoken with have been pleased with the crop progress thus far, some needing a little rain, some hoping for a little sunshine to dry things out, but nothing extreme at this juncture of the growing season.

With my morning coffee each day, I read market reports from several marketing agencies. The theme for the rest of the growing season will be the weather. Acres have been determined and conditions look favorable across the country, so the force that drives prices from here will be the weather. July can be very hot and is a critical month in corn development. The reason I mention corn is because it’s the commodity with the largest supply glut and certainly seems to keep a lid on market rallies. If it’s hot and dry, we can see some price movement. But if it’s moist, the price will be lower. Putting our income, our livelihood and family farms in the hands of Mother Nature is one of the most stressful aspects of the job.

Meanwhile, in politics, the 2020 election year will be remembered for some time, with the pandemic changing how many of us vote. No matter your political affiliation, we all know the TV commercials and the radio ads become constant in our lives during election years, as well as mailboxes full of campaign flyers. As someone who has run for local office, I know it’s hard for rural candidates to get the word out, as they’re working with small budgets and possibly weak internet connections. Keep in mind as the election season carries on and you see or hear about a state or local candidate, more than likely, these candidates worked really hard for things that seem really simple, like buying radio and newspaper ads and sending mailers. I certainly did. Whether you agree with their politics or not, respect the effort they’re putting in.

Take time to listen and learn about your local candidates. This is your opportunity to find out their positions on agriculture and rural issues, so you can make an informed decision when you go and vote. And no matter your political affiliation, be respectful of each other. I tell my family all the time: Around here it starts with us – don’t worry about the others.

**BRYAN KLABUNDE**  
**VICE PRESIDENT**  
bryan@mfu.org

**Sign up to vote absentee this fall!**

With the contagiousness of COVID-19, people are rightfully concerned about how elections will be run this fall. Fortunately, we can save ourselves and our election workers some stress by voting by mail! Request your absentee ballot for the August primary and November general elections now. You can complete your absentee ballot application on the Minnesota Secretary of State’s website: [mnvotes.sos.state.mn.us](http://mnvotes.sos.state.mn.us).

You can also print out and mail a paper application in from this web page.

Make sure to request an absentee ballot for both August’s primary and the general election in November – you’ll thank yourself later when voting materials show up on your doorstep for both elections! You will also be doing your local election offices a huge favor by submitting these requests early so they have time to process them.
infrastructure and conformity with Section 179 for equipment expensing. But as the House and Senate are independent bodies, led by different parties, what they’re able to accomplish depends on their willingness to negotiate and get things done.

All that said, agriculture was a bright spot of bipartisan agreement at the end of the 2020 regular session, which ended mid-May. We detailed these accomplishments in the supplemental agriculture policy and finance bills in the June issue of Minnesota Agriculture and have provided weekly updates in the MFU member e-newsletter.

Also worth mentioning, a few new state investments were made possible by a substantial amount of COVID relief funding passed down to Minnesota from the federal government from the CARES Act, which also paid out the $1,200 stimulus checks and funded the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP).

MFU, in coordination with NFU, is working to secure another congressional relief package that builds on these important investments and provides relief to farm families who’ve been hit hard by the pandemic and associated disruptions, on top of what they were already grappling with prior to the pandemic.

Unlike the State Legislature, which must balance its budget, Congress can spend into a deficit. This means that when we’re talking about the meaningful financial relief it will take to keep farmers on the land and jumpstart the economy, we’re looking to the feds.

In May, the U.S. House passed the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act, a $3 trillion aid package that would provide relief across the economy. The bill includes significant relief for agriculture, though it falls short of the systemic reforms needed to ensure that our food system is fair for family farmers and resilient. The bill invests another $16.5 billion in direct support for farmers, strengthens mental health resources, expands nutrition assistance and bolsters the struggling biofuels industry. While the Senate has yet to offer their vision for a fourth stimulus, Senate leaders signaled that they’d begin negotiations upon returning from the 4th of July holiday and are likely involved in that work now.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about MFU’s legislative work, don’t hesitate to reach out to me at stu@mfu.org or (320) 232-3047.

While state legislators have been out of session, the team at MFU has remained busy engaging with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) as they implement what was passed at the end of the regular session, building the case for additional relief from Congress and preparing for policy development at county conventions.

During June’s special session, the State Legislature adjourned without reaching final agreement on significant issues facing the state including a bonding bill, tax bill, additional small business relief, broadband and criminal justice reform. While House Speaker Melissa Hortman (DFL-Brooklyn Park) said her caucus was committed to pushing through into July to hammer out compromises on priority legislation, the GOP-led Senate stuck to their initial plan of returning home – deal or not – after one week. Governor Tim Walz (DFL) also called for legislators to continue working and highlighted his ability to call them back into special session. The Legislature will be automatically called back each time the Governor extends his emergency powers with the pandemic.

This dynamic means we’re now into another special session where we could see progress on MFU priorities like broadband funding, investments in rural...
NATIONAL FARMERS’ MARKET WEEK

For years, we’ve encouraged Minnesotans to buy local food as much as possible. One of the best-known ways to do that is shopping at your community farmers’ market. As COVID-19 closures have shut down many marketing options for local food producers, it was a huge relief that farmers’ markets were permitted to remain open.

Last year, we enjoyed celebrating National Farmers’ Market Week at the St. Paul Farmers’ Market with fun and games and a proclamation from Gov. Tim Walz. While we’re limited in what we can do in-person now at farmers’ markets, we can still celebrate Minnesota family farmers and food.

National Farmers’ Market Week 2020 is Aug. 2-8!

MFU, Minnesota Farmers’ Market Association and Minnesota Grown are planning an exciting week with video highlights from state leaders and farmers and providing resources to local markets to plan their own celebrations.

Since we’re celebrating (mostly) virtually this year, we need YOU to share why farmers’ markets are important to you. Take a short video clip of yourself with your phone sharing what you love about Minnesota farmers’ markets, then use hashtag #farmersmarketweek and tag @mfmaorg, @mnfarmersunion and @minnesotagrown on social media.

We’ve also brought back the National Farmers’ Market Week Photo Contest! Here’s how to participate:

1. Take a photo at any Minnesota farmers’ market or find one you’ve taken in the past (as long as it’s from a MN market).
2. Post it on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram using the hashtag #mymnmarket2020 by Aug. 1.
3. Or email your photo to kguenther@mfma.org by Aug. 1.

Make plans to visit your local market between Aug. 2-8, and review the Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s guidelines for shopping:

• Stay home if you’re sick.
• Check the market’s website or social media for updates or call ahead if you’re not sure.
• Check if the market has pre-order or drive-through options.
• Make a shopping list so you can make it a quick trip.
• Wash your hands before and after shopping.
• Clean your reusable bags, and make sure the market will allow you to use them.
• Wear a mask.
• Read the instructions posted at your market.
• Expect delays.
• Keep 6 feet (one cow) apart.
• Shop alone if possible, to make physical distancing easier.
• Do not eat prepared food onsite – bring it home and wash your hands before eating it.
• Plan how to pay – bring small bills to make exact change or see if credit card or prepay methods are available.

For more about National Farmers’ Market Week, visit farmersmarketcoalition.org/national-farmers-market-week.

MFU joins Local Food is Essential campaign

Another way MFU is helping support local foods is through the Local Food is Essential campaign, a collaboration of several groups also including The Good Acre, Mill City Farmers’ Market, Lakewinds Food Co-op, Minnesota Grown, Driftless Grown, Renewing the Countryside and more. MFU’s Minnesota Cooks™ team has been representing us in the coalition. We are encouraging consumers to eat locally grown foods as much as possible, which helps the farmer earn a fair price, decreases greenhouse gas emissions from shipping food and invests in your local economy.

“Local food builds resiliency and transparency in our food system and communities,” said Anne Schwagerl, MFU State Secretary and Minnesota Cooks Coordinator. “Having many small and mid-size family farmers producing our food supports rural communities – schools, hospitals, businesses – while also accomplishing the goals of increasing the accountability and safety of the foods we consume. As a farmer, it is rewarding to produce meat and grains to the highest quality and ethical standards I am able. And then in turn, selling these to a community of eaters that we have developed over the years.”

Learn more at localfoodisessential.org.

Brita Moore,
Public relations & Communications director
brita@mfu.org
Minnesota Farmers Union

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

When I go out and try to convince someone to join our Farmers Union, I often get asked, what do I get for becoming a member? My go-to answer is to talk about the grassroots nature of our organization and the representation we provide for family farmers at the legislature both at the local and federal levels, as well as our affordable summer camps, and news sources such as Minnesota Agriculture and our weekly e-newsletter. What I usually don’t dig into is the various discounts available to members.

Through National Farmers Union, we have access to discounts with hotel and car rental companies including La Quinta Inns & Suites, Avis and Budget. We also receive discounts from equipment and supply stores like Gempler’s and DripWorks. For the full list of discounts and the codes to use to receive them, see the National Farmers Union website at nfu.org/benefits.

Our full list of member benefits can be found at mfu.org/membership-benefits. While the discounts might not be the main reason to join Minnesota Farmers Union, they are a nice perk of being a member. Whatever your reason for being here, we are happy to have you and strive to provide value to you.

Stay safe at your county conventions

With cases of COVID-19 on the rise in much of the country, we have been looking forward to county convention time with some uncertainty. As the state opens up and cases continue to remain steady in Minnesota, at this time we have left the decision of whether to have an in-person convention up to each individual county. However, we strongly recommend that if you choose to have one in person, please practice social distancing, wear a mask when possible and meet in an outside area such as a park, restaurant patio, winery/cidery or hot meals where they’re needed.

MFU values our partnership with Second Harvest and supports efforts to fight hunger, including with our donation of 30,000 pounds of pork ribs last month. When farmers work hard to produce our food, we need to make sure it’s getting to the people who need it.

How to help

• Consider donating to Second Harvest or your local food shelf.
• Make it okay to ask for help. Talk about hunger and destigmatize the need for food assistance. Get help at 2harvest.org/gethelp or hungersolutions.org.
• Join the Minnesota Central Kitchen network to donate meals to MealConnect or provide hot meals where they’re needed.

DIANA RICO, MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR
diana@mfu.org

We know times have been challenging economically and socially since COVID-19 hit. Here’s another piece of news: A hunger crisis is coming to Minnesota. Based on statewide projections, beginning this summer, peaking in September (when unemployment benefits expire) and continuing through 2021, an additional 275,000 Minnesotans – including 112,000 children – will face hunger.

A new study from McKinsey & Co. predicts a 65% increase in demand for food assistance in Minnesota, or the equivalent of 25 million meals. Projections indicate that the total demand from July to December 2020 will require Second Harvest Heartland to distribute 75 million pounds of food, which is a 70% increase from distribution during the same 2019 timeframe.

Such an increase in demand on food banks and food shelves will cost an additional $17 million over the next six months in the Second Harvest Heartland service area and $21 million across the entire state. Our friends at Second Harvest Heartland are preparing to meet the increased need, but they need our help.

Minnesota Farmers Union.

Minnesota facing massive demand for food assistance

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

We also have an MFU Zoom account that we are making accessible to counties that would prefer to meet remotely. If, between now and convention time, Minnesota experiences a surge, we may re-evaluate our recommendations but will make sure to keep our members as up to date as possible. If you want to use the Zoom, please contact me.

County officers, please get your convention dates on the calendar as soon as possible! Remember that you must hold your convention by October 1, and have all paperwork returned by October 15 to qualify your county for the $200 Early Bird bonus.

Schedule your convention online at mfu.org/county-convention-scheduling, email countyconventions@mfu.org or call me at (651) 288-4064.

If anyone has any questions, thoughts or concerns about your county convention, I encourage you to reach out to your county leadership team. If you are unsure who that would be, how to get in contact with them, or you are on the county leadership team and have questions, please contact me directly.

COVID-19 has brought new challenges for our organization, but together we can remain safe and healthy, while also continuing the grassroots work that is the foundation of Minnesota Farmers Union.

Stay safe at your county conventions

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• Join the Minnesota Central Kitchen network to donate meals to MealConnect or provide hot meals where they’re needed.
In order to sustain this sense of community, we knew we couldn’t just cancel camp; there had to be some other way. As the weather heats up and we get into the thick of summer, camp counselors have been planning an alternative option to the summer camp our members and children have always loved. In order to maintain the safety for all of our staff and campers, we have moved to an online platform! Campers still can participate in the activities they know and love from camp.

Everything we do in a normal day has now been translated into online activities. Campers can engage in friendship bracelet making, lessons about cooperatives, fun theme nights and the ever-popular game of Bonkers. Each camp will last three days, with four sessions each day. The sessions vary day to day and include a healthy balance of different activities from trivia to origami frogs. The counselor team and I have been brainstorming ideas, testing games and developing a mix of new and old activities in order to deliver the best online camp experience possible. In addition to the material we normally present, we will also be doing a special lesson focusing on our mental health and how to improve it during these unprecedented times.

In addition to being online, camp is completely free!

After registering, campers will receive a complimentary box filled with all the goodies they need for crafts and games. We hope to engage as many young minds as possible and invite you to dive into this new journey with us.

Camp dates:
Junior High: July 21-23 (Ages 11-14)
Senior High: July 28-31 (Ages 14-18)

Sign up today at www.mfu.org/camp.

One of the main goals of MFU Leadership Camp is to create an everlasting sense of community and demonstrate how effective this community is regarding cooperatives, agriculture and everyday life.
Applications will be accepted through Aug. 28, 2020. Through CFAP, USDA has made $16 billion available for financial assistance to agricultural producers who have:

- experienced a 5% or greater income decline due to COVID-19 and
- face additional marketing costs due to lower demand, surplus production and disruptions to shipping patterns and orderly marketing of commodities.

Producers of all eligible commodities will apply through their local FSA office. Those who use the online calculator tool may print off a pre-filled CFAP application to sign and submit to your local FSA office electronically or by mail. Please contact your local office to determine the preferred method.

Find contact information for your local office at farmers.gov/service-center-locator.

Producers in search of one-on-one support with the CFAP application process can call 877-508-8364 to speak with a USDA employee. This is a good first step before contacting your local USDA Service Center.

FSA reminds producers of ongoing disaster assistance program signup

USDA is now making payments through the Wildfire and Hurricane Indemnity Program – Plus (WHIP+) to agricultural producers who suffered eligible losses because of drought or excess moisture in 2018 and 2019. Producers who suffered losses from drought (in counties designated D3 or above), excess moisture, hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, snowstorms or wildfires can apply for assistance through WHIP+.

Complete your crop acreage reports

FSA offices in Minnesota are currently open to phone and virtual appointments only but can still work with producers on timely filing crop acreage reports. FSA staff can aid over the phone, by email and virtual meetings. Acreage reporting dates vary by crop and by county. Contact your local FSA office for a list of acreage reporting deadlines by crop.

To stay up-to-date on farm programs, you can sign up to receive direct news bulletins via email at www.fsa.usda.gov/subscribe. You can also contact your local FSA office to sign up for email and or text alerts. With deadlines coming, it’s important to stay informed.

MFU offers FREE agritourism sign to members

Thinking of inviting the public onto your farm this summer for a farm tour, breakfast, U-pick, etc.? MFU worked to pass the state agritourism bill in 2015. To be protected, the provider of the 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, Minnesota Farmers Union will provide interested members one FREE sign that meets the specific guidelines in accordance to the Limited Liability Law. With the sign, 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 MFU Membership Coordinator Diana Rico at diana@mfu.org or (651) 288-4064.
Job losses from COVID-19 crisis eliminate years of clean energy job growth, but Minnesota’s clean energy industry will play a vital role in state’s economic recovery

By Amelia Cerling Hennes, 
Clean Energy Economy MN

Following a year of rapid job growth, 11,546 Minnesota clean energy workers have filed for unemployment since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March. The numbers come from a recent analysis of Department of Labor data released June 15 by E2 (Environmental Entrepreneurs), the American Council on Renewable Energy (ACORE), E4TheFuture and BW Research Partnership.

Recently, Clean Energy Economy MN (CEEM) released Minnesota’s fifth annual Clean Jobs Midwest 2020 Report, which illustrates the job losses represent 18% of Minnesota’s clean energy workforce. According to the new report, clean energy has been one of Minnesota’s biggest and fastest-growing employment sectors, growing 6% since 2017. In the last year, the industry added 1,147 jobs totaling 61,805 clean energy jobs in Minnesota pre-COVID-19. But the unemployment claims since March are now 3.3 times the number of clean energy jobs created since 2017.

Despite the heavy toll COVID-19 has exacted on the industry, CEEM Executive Director Gregg Mast says the clean energy business community has shown its ability to help restart the economy in the past. He’s confident the strength of the industry will re-emerge as a key figure to help repower Minnesota’s economy again.

“Minnesota’s sizable clean energy workforce has shown its potential for rapid job creation and economic growth – two things our state is in dire need of. We look forward to helping the state harness the power of this industry to create 100,000 jobs by 2030, creating a strong and prosperous clean energy economy that works for everyone,” said Mast.

“Minnesota workers deserve career options in renewable energy that are locally grown, have a direct positive impact on our communities and provide for an equitable and resilient economy that all Minnesotans can be proud of,” said Minnesota Department of Commerce Commissioner Steve Kelley.

“As we prioritize reopening and rebuilding our state’s economy for the future, these jobs must be a part of the solution to ensure a resilient workforce, especially in Greater Minnesota,” added Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development Commissioner Steve Grove.

The Laborers’ International Union of North America (LIUNA) Minnesota & North Dakota is an infrastructure union of 12,000 skilled construction and blue-collar Laborers who contribute to building large utility wind, solar and transmission projects in the region.

“We have seen industry leaders take action to ensure that clean energy investments create high-quality jobs for Minnesota workers, and those efforts are paying off,” said Kevin Pranis, Marketing Manager with LIUNA Minnesota and North Dakota. “Wind farm construction projects put hundreds of local tradespeople to work, boosting local economies in Greater Minnesota. We need public and utility investments in clean energy now more than ever to stimulate our economy.”

The widespread layoffs in clean energy risk derailing what had been a thriving industry. Most at risk currently are small businesses that have been driving the recent years of growth, and rural areas that increasingly benefit from clean energy opportunities. Seventy-one percent of Minnesota’s clean energy workforce were employed by businesses with fewer than 20 employees, while one in three clean energy jobs, or 22,884 jobs, were based in Greater Minnesota.

Compared to 2019 statewide workforce demographics, Minnesota’s clean energy industry was slightly more racially and ethnically diverse. However, the industry lagged Minnesota’s overall workforce in a few demographic areas. Women made up 50% of Minnesota’s overall workforce, but only 27% of the state’s clean energy workforce. The Clean Jobs Midwest Report does not provide wage data or race and gender breakdowns for manager-level and executive positions, though CEEM acknowledges that is important data for analyzing diversity, equity and inclusion.

About Clean Energy Economy MN (CEEM):
CEEM is an industry-led 501(c)(3) nonprofit representing the business case for clean energy in Minnesota. CEEM provides a unified voice for clean energy business across the state. Our mission is to provide educational leadership, collaboration, and policy analysis that accelerates clean energy market growth and smart energy policies. Learn more at www.cleanenergyeconomymn.org.

The 2019 U.S. Energy and Employment Report was produced by the Energy Futures Initiative (EFI) in partnership with the National Association of State Energy Officials (NASEO), using data collected and analyzed by the BW Research Partnership. The report is available at www.usenergyjobs.org.
NFU calls for national effort to address racism

The killing of Minnesota resident George Floyd by Minneapolis police has spurred widespread outrage and pushed the United States towards a reckoning with its long and painful legacy of racism – especially here in Minnesota.

The agricultural industry is not exempt from critique; a century ago, Black Americans owned an estimated 15 million acres and operated 14% of all U.S. farms. But decades of systemic discrimination and the abuse of legal loopholes have robbed black families of millions of acres of farmland worth billions of dollars and pushed most out of the industry. Today, just 1.3% – or 45,500 – of American farmers are Black, and they own just 0.52% of the nation’s farmland. Given this vast inequity, it is unsurprising that Black farmers on average earn substantially less farm income than their white counterparts – just $2,408, compared to $17,190. The effects of Black land loss have been pervasive and lasting; many experts say it’s a major contributor to the modern racial wealth gap.

NFU, which has historically supported social justice movements including women’s suffrage and the 1960s civil rights movement, is redoubling its efforts to support racial equity and justice in the aftermath of Floyd’s death and the ensuing, ongoing global protests.

“If we stand idly by while our friends and neighbors suffer – as too many of us have done for too long – we are complicit in their suffering,” said NFU President Rob Larew.

“To overcome the terrible legacy of racism in this country, we all must reflect on our own privileges and prejudices, rethink our institutions and demand structural change.”

Chicken executives indicted on price fixing charges

Four current and former executives at Pilgrim’s Pride Corp. and Claxton Poultry Farms, both of which produce chicken, were indicted in May for price fixing.

Those indicted include the current CEO and a former vice president of Pilgrim’s Pride and the president and vice president of Claxton Poultry Farms. Pilgrim’s Pride, of which JBS USA is a majority shareholder, is the second largest poultry processor the United States.

From 2012-2017, the four allegedly colluded to artificially inflate the price of birds sold to grocery stores and restaurants.

The case highlights the need for greater antitrust enforcement, President Larew said. “Companies are only able to employ anticompetitive business practices when they’ve amassed control over their respective industries. In this instance, just five companies control 60% of the chicken market in the United States.”

Other areas of the meat sector are even more concentrated; for instance, just four companies each dominate 66% of the pork industry and 85% of beef. Corporations in both industries have been accused of price fixing in recent years, including a recent letter from 11 states’ attorneys general, Minnesota AG Keith Ellison among them, asking the U.S. Department of Justice for a probe into the beef industry.

Larew indicated that NFU “wholeheartedly” supports these legal challenges and that legislators should take action to address the root of the problem. He encouraged them to “enforce antitrust policy; restore competition in the agricultural marketplace; reinstate the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration; and develop strong protections for farmers.”

NFU urges finalization of organic livestock rule

In comments, NFU urged USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to finalize the Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices (OLPP) final rule as soon as possible.

The rule, which was published in January 2017, clarifies animal welfare standards under the National Organic Program (NOP) by outlining how organic livestock is raised, handled, transported and slaughtered. Currently, organic certifiers are inconsistently applying animal welfare standards to farming and ranching operations, causing confusion among consumers and undermining the integrity of the organic label. By providing clearer guidelines, the OLPP rule would mitigate the problem by standardizing organic livestock and poultry practices that producers need to meet for the voluntary NOP. In doing so, it would ensure greater trust in the certified organic seal and level the playing field for all organic livestock and poultry producers.

Despite its popularity among consumers and producers alike, the rule was withdrawn in March 2018. In his latest comments, President Larew reiterated NFU’s concerns.

“NFU continues to stand in strong support of the OLPP Rule,” Larew said, highlighting its role in “ensuring consumer confidence in the organic seal.” He then called on the agency to reverse its “ill-advised” withdrawal.

NFU backs carbon credit certification bill

A bipartisan bill introduced in early June would create a certification program at USDA for technical service providers to work with farmers as they implement practices to sequester carbon and sell the credits. The bill, known as the Growing Climate Solutions Act, also calls for an advisory committee at USDA composed of farmers, government officials and representatives from private markets to provide guidance on how Congress and USDA can reduce barriers to entry for carbon markets and resolve challenges for farmers.

NFU endorsed the bill, saying it would “provide certainty to those looking to participate in carbon credit marketplaces.” The bill aligns with a special order of business passed at NFU’s 118th anniversary convention encouraging federal agencies “to explore opportunities for family farmers and ranchers to realize financial benefit from the ecosystems services generated through improved management practices, including voluntary marketplace initiatives and voluntary federal support programs.”

President Larew emphasized the role that family farmers and ranchers can play in climate mitigation but noted that “meaningful and sustainable changes are not inexpensive or easy to implement.” He said that by providing farmers with technical assistance and financial incentives for these efforts, the bill is “an important step toward strong and comprehensive climate policy.”

The Washington Corner can always be found at nfu.org/corner.
Why is working with Farmers Union Agency and MFU important to you? My goal as an insurance professional is to help people and businesses get to a better place with their insurance protection, whether they do business with my agency or not. With FUA, I can take a solution-based approach in my role as an advisor to my clients, developing a program that provides seamless coverage between all the moving parts of my clients’ personal and professional situations. MFU was founded to fight for the well-being of the family farm and we are so blessed as an insurance agency to join that fight to ensure our farm families have the best value in insurance to save cost but not skimp on coverage. I am especially pleased to be an advisor for the family farmers helping transition to the next generation by providing creative resources and risk management solutions through Life insurance and Estate planning.

What community organizations are you passionate about? One of the joys of having an insurance agency is that we are tied to the community we serve. My clients become family members, and with that comes the opportunity to be helpful. As a singer, I’ve been called on through church to provide music ministry for radio and televised broadcasts, hoping to help provide a stronger connection to the worship experience. The need for food and shelter have been in great demand, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, and I have been called to lend voice through song to raise money and awareness for CHUM Food Shelf and emergency shelter support. We also embrace the opportunity to support local youth sports associations and events.

Please tell us a little bit about your family life. My wife Dawn provides stability and calm to my fast-paced days. Our children, Sam (20) and Greta (16), are growing way too fast, but I’m thrilled with how they are finding their passions with the drive to create their own paths. Sam is studying Architecture at the University of Southern CA and Greta will be finishing her senior year looking forward to studying business and marketing, school yet TBD. We love entertaining and sharing joy through cuisine. As a family, including two Vizslas, we enjoy water and snow sports, hunting, fishing and being able to spend time together.

What is your number one concern when reviewing and selling farm insurance? Farming has become more complex and farms are finding creative ways to create revenue. It’s my job to ensure proper coverage so clients don’t face an unexpected deductible from a property claim and that liability coverage flows seamlessly between all activities. Unexpected deductibles can be financially devastating, as can paying premiums for coverage they don’t need. I work very hard to make sure my clients have coverage to fit their needs and offer reviews to keep up with their changing farm demands.

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MFU and FUA support FFA through Blue Jackets Bright Futures

Minnesota Farmers Union and Farmers Union Agency are incredibly proud to sponsor the Minnesota FFA Association and the Blue Jacket Bright Futures Program in conjunction with Nationwide Insurance! FFA provides its members opportunities to develop the direction and skills to become part of the next generation of leaders in our country. The Blue Jacket is a symbol that unifies members in a long-standing tradition and reminds them they’re part of something bigger than themselves. We’re delighted to be a small part of supporting their goals.

For more information about FFA in Minnesota or to donate, please visit www.mnffafoundation.org.
Minnesota Raspberry Jam
Chef owner Christine “Montana” Rasmussen, River Rock Kitchen & Bakery in partnership with Little Hill Berry Farm

Yield: 1 1/4 cups
5 cups fresh raspberries
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
3/4 cup organic sugar
2 teaspoons organic lemon juice
1/2 cup water

Place a plate with 3 metal spoons in the freezer for testing the jam later.

Combine everything in a medium sauce pot and heat over medium low heat.
Cook, stirring and mashing constantly with a heatproof rubber spatula until juice begins to run from the berries.
As soon as sugar dissolves, increase heat to medium high. Stirring constantly to avoid scorching, cook jam until it becomes thick. If jam is sticking to the bottom of the pan, turn heat down.
To test for doneness, carefully transfer a small amount to one of the frozen spoons. Place spoon back in freezer for 3 minutes (it should be neither hot nor cold). Tilt spoon vertically to see whether jam runs. If it doesn’t run, the jam is ready. If it does, cook for another couple of minutes and test again. Repeat as needed until desired consistency is reached.
Refrigerate and use within two weeks.
BUILDING RESILIENCE AGAINST STRESS

When the adrenals are tired from overuse, the body may experience a number of different symptoms. The most common symptoms caused by tired or worn-out adrenal glands are:

- overall fatigue or malaise
- difficulty getting up in the morning
- low stamina for stress and getting easily irritated or overwhelmed
- difficulty calming down
- difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep
- dark circles under the eyes
- muscle twitches
- low blood sugar or blood sugar swings
- excessive sweating from little activity
- craving salt/sweets/carbs/alcohol
- tendency to startle easily

This list of symptoms isn’t exhaustive. If you suspect you have tired adrenals, address it right away. Adrenal glands contribute to your sense of well-being, hormonal balance, immune health and digestive health. And, the good news is that adrenal glands are resilient! With proper care, they can recover in a matter of weeks. Discuss your symptoms with your doctor to come up with the right treatment plan for you. Additionally, some natural approaches to healing include:

- Take a break from caffeine, which forces our adrenals to work overtime. Using caffeine when your adrenals are tired has been compared to “whipping a dead horse.” Drink plenty of fresh water or herbal tea instead.
- Do not skip breakfast. Eat a high-quality, protein-based breakfast within one hour of waking up.
- If you absolutely can’t go without your morning cup of coffee, eat your protein-rich breakfast FIRST, then have one cup of coffee.
- Eliminate alcohol until your symptoms subside.
- Eliminate trans fats from your diet.
- Eliminate sugar, sugary juices and processed carbohydrates like chips, store-bought cookies, cakes, crackers, etc. The resulting blood sugar roller coaster from eating these places a lot of stress on the body.
- Don’t over-train/over-exercise, which can be stressful on the body.
- Rest. Go to bed by 10 p.m. every night. Make this a priority and stick with it.
- Eat protein-rich foods. Protein repairs the adrenals.
- Eat when moderately hungry, even if it’s every 2-3 hours. Don’t wait to eat until you’re too hungry and your blood sugar is low.
- Snack on low-glycemic foods that keep your blood sugar stable: nuts, seeds, veggies, fruit, nut butter and hard-boiled eggs, to name a few.
- Exercise within your aerobic heart range, engaging in endurance-building activities like brisk walking, slow cycling or swimming.
- Practice relaxation techniques such as positive visualization, deep breathing, meditation, prayer and intentional muscle contraction/relaxation.
- Supplement magnesium, which calms the entire body and helps counter anxiety.
- Supplement an activated vitamin B-complex and/or Ashwaganda or Holy Basil, which calm down the stress response and help the body relax.

Keep in mind, when our adrenals are tired, we’re vulnerable to feelings of hopelessness and overwhelm. If we’re not careful, we can start blaming ourselves for it. Resist that mindset and remind yourself there’s likely a biological driver of those feelings. Life presents challenges every day that give the adrenals a workout. Give them some extra support so they can bounce back and you can feel like yourself again.

The information provided herein should not be construed as a substitute for professional medical advice. If you have a serious concern, please contact your doctor.
Farmers Union Agency is proud to partner with Minnesota Farmers Union in sponsoring the MN FFA Foundation’s Blue Jackets Bright Futures Program.

We feel FFA is ground zero in the development of the next generation of leaders of our country. If you have spent any time around FFA members, you recognize the talent and bright futures they have. We are delighted to be a small part of supporting their goals.

For more information about FFA in Minnesota or to donate, please visit their website at www.mnffaorganization.org. We look forward to seeing the next class wear their Blue Jackets with pride! Best wishes for continued success!

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