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Bylaw changes

At the 78th Annual MFU Convention, the MFU Rules & Bylaws Committee heard proposals from members on bylaw changes 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, where 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, an employee of a farmer, a farm employment 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 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 or her 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.

Section 12
Members of the Executive Committee shall be reimbursed for necessary travel and subsistence costs for their attendance and participation in 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 or her 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 six (60) thirty (30) votes.

Section 4
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 fewest votes shall be eliminated, with this process continuing, until the candidate receives a majority of the votes cast.

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 or members 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.
Physical distancing – the hall is 16,000 square feet. You may recall that it has hosted major ag conferences such as the Minnesota Organic Conference before.

As the convention agenda will be much shorter than usual, we will not have any special guests. Delegates, committee members and MFU staff should be the only ones present. Face masks and social distancing will be required, and hand sanitizer will be available. To help spread out the number of people registering at once, we will open delegate registration the evening before, on Friday, Nov. 20. Meals will be prepackaged.

If safety concerns demand it, we will have a backup option for a virtual event. If you sign up to be a state convention delegate at your county convention, please be aware of this plan and save Nov. 21 on your calendar. We have mailed this information to county presidents and secretaries to discuss at your county conventions as well.

Your health and safety continues to be of utmost importance in our event planning. Please don’t hesitate to call or email us with any questions or concerns.

MFU Executive Committee meets with Gov. Walz

In addition to our virtual Fly-In meetings, we were also thrilled when Gov. Tim Walz’s office reached out to us about member concerns. We set up a Zoom call with the MFU Executive Committee that was positive, discussing issues such as local meat processing, infrastructure investment, biofuels markets and access to credit for farmers.

The Governor has been supportive of MFU priorities throughout his term and we thank him for that. Particularly I want to highlight his support of biofuels, as the chair of the Governors’ Biofuels Coalition and in setting up the MN Biofuels Council, which I sit on. He’s also been adamant about the need for a bonding bill, as MFU members have been consistently. A bonding bill would provide funding for needed upgrades to infrastructure in rural Minnesota, particularly roads and bridges, and we can’t keep kicking the can down the road.

State convention to take place in St. Cloud

Of all the challenges COVID-19 has brought us, a big one for the MFU State Office is uncertainty in planning ahead. Normally we are busy attending events and meeting with members statewide. But the contagiousness of the virus has pushed many meetings to a virtual format, including MFU county conventions and the August Full Board of Directors meeting, as well as the National Farmers Union Fly-In (which Stu discusses in more detail on page 6). It’s hard to know what the state of COVID-19’s spread will be several months away, but we plan ahead as best we can.

For the health of our members, and with the approval of the MFU Executive Committee and full Board, we have moved our 79th Annual MFU Convention to the Glenn Carlson Hall at the River’s Edge Convention Center in St. Cloud. It will take place on Saturday, Nov. 21, only one day devoted to essential business, such as state policy discussion, bylaws changes and election of delegates for the National Farmers Union convention. The Delta Hotels by Marriott Minneapolis Northeast, where we usually have convention, is closed till March 1, 2021. Fortunately, the River’s Edge space was available and provides ample space for Zoom meeting with Governor Walz and MFU Executive Committee (continued on page 4)
F + B fills fair food void

Last month I shared that our restaurant venture with Birchwood Café has materialized as a pop-up concept in the Spoonriver space.

It opened on Aug. 22, just before the State Fair would have begun. We certainly missed the fair this year, along with millions of others, but the F + B pop-up provided a new experience to enjoy, along with favorite foods from the Farmers Union Coffee Shop. It also gives us a chance to introduce ourselves in the area.

We’ve gotten media coverage in the Star Tribune, KARE-11, TPT Almanac, Twin Cities Live and a podcast called Food Under Fire. On opening day, Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen and former Commissioner Dave Frederickson stopped by at about the same time. Lt. Gov. Peggy Flanagan also stopped by with her family – she continues to be a huge fan of the Blueberry Key Lime Pie. Our social media accounts have been full of tagged mentions, happy that we are doing this to support family farmers in a concrete way. Many have told us they’re overjoyed to get an Heirloom Tomato + Sweet Corn BLT too.

F + B continues to be open Thursday–Friday from 4–8 p.m. and Saturday–Sunday from 9 a.m.–8 p.m. for curbside pickup, walk-in orders, takeout and patio seating. Brunch is served Saturday–Sunday from 9 a.m.–2 p.m. It’s located at 750 South 2nd Street, Minneapolis.
It is widely acknowledged that being a farmer has a never-ending supply of challenges. If it’s not something on the farm, there is certainly something happening around the world worthy of concern for farmers. Currently we are mired in a trade war and a global pandemic. The trade war has been a big issue for a couple years now. Meanwhile, no one knew about COVID-19 until this year. These story lines are dominating our lives, but eventually they will pass by. What will be our next set of challenges and opportunities?

I would argue that we are due for a rally in prices, one that brings profitability back to producers and encourages the next generation to keep their family farms going. One could argue that it’s necessary for the older generations to keep farming for now. We have seen a sustained downturn in commodity prices, and while there have been efforts to ease the pain of the trade war, no permanent policy has been enacted to protect farms from the long-term effects. Many also feel that the average age of farmers holds major implications for the future. Farmers older than age 65 outnumber farmers less than 45 by two to one. In other words, as older farmers retire, there are fewer younger farmers to replace them.

We have seen consolidation in agriculture for many years now, but the next step may change what our farms look like, as one describes their vision for farming as larger businesses. I do not have to look far to see that mentality. This is why farm policy is so important, as we talk about at MFU all the time. Good farm policy helps ensure that there is opportunity for farmers to farm the way they want to. When the question is what we want our farms to look like, we want to be able to look out the front window and say, “just like that.”

I have two friends who are about my age. They have the same family dynamics, and their farms are similar today’s standards. In a recent conversation, we were talking about the issues that 2020 has presented us. One talked about a large number of acres that he had the opportunity to add to his farm this spring, but after he contemplated for some time, he decided to pass on the opportunity. His decision was not based on a financial analysis, but that he wanted to spend more time with his young family. The other friend was in disbelief that this opportunity was dropped right in someone’s lap and he did not want it! The first one responded that this is what they need financially to make it possible for their family to spend more time together. Both parents could work on the farm allowing both more time with the kids as well. The complexity of choices out there sometimes make farm policy difficult to write.

I love to talk about opportunity. It is what keeps me positive when it is to easy to be negative. We have an amazing group of members who are passionate about agriculture, just like me and my family. We will continue to fight for family farms and our way of life in Minnesota. ▲
Remote meetings is that more members can participate, learn from each other and make their voices heard. For those without broadband, this importantly includes the opportunity to call-in to meetings over the phone.

In meetings with lawmakers, USDA officials and others, Farmers Union members from various regions with diverse production types will come together to share stories about the challenges they’re confronting in their communities and on their farms and promote commonsense legislative solutions that will help ensure the long-term success of family agriculture, make our food system equitable and build prosperity in rural communities.

Broadly, Farmers Union members are talking with their Congresspeople about:

• Reforming agricultural markets by supporting small and mid-sized meat processors, restoring competition to livestock markets and establishing a supply management system that prevents chronic overproduction and stabilizes prices.

• Supporting pandemic recovery through making sure pandemic funds through the USDA or SBA are distributed equitably, providing relief to state departments of agriculture so they can best serve farmers and ensuring that all families can afford to feed their families by increasing food assistance benefits.

• Strengthening rural infrastructure by defending our rural healthcare system, building on mental health resources, connecting families to quality, high-speed broadband and defending prompt and affordable mail delivery through USPS.

• Supporting climate-smart agriculture and biofuels by providing farmers with additional tools and resources to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change, helping the biofuels industry fully recover from the pandemic and halting the abuse of small refinery exemptions (SREs) under the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS).

Now as much as ever, it’s critical that family farmers make their voices heard when it comes to policies that affect their families, their farm businesses and their communities.

Engaging with policymakers is important now not only because we’re facing some immense challenges – consolidated agricultural markets that don’t allow farmers to earn a fair price, economic fallout from the pandemic and ever rising healthcare costs to name a few – but also, because with these challenges come opportunities for change. For example, supply chain disruptions due to COVID-19 highlighted injustices in our food system for the everyday consumer. And lawmakers and others are recognizing the immense power that farmers hold to help mitigate the effects of climate change.

That’s why this month, family farmers from Minnesota and across the country are making their voices heard with lawmakers and agency officials in Washington, D.C. at the annual National Farmers Union Legislative Fly-In. But unlike in years past, for the sake of protecting members from COVID-19, this year’s Fly-In is being held virtually through video conference platforms, like Zoom. While it’s unfortunate that we aren’t able to meet in person, a silver lining of this year’s shift to
USDA Service Centers, including Farm Service Agency county offices, are open for business by appointment, and field work will continue with appropriate social distancing. While program delivery staff will continue to come into the office, they will be working with producers by phone and using online tools whenever possible. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with the FSA, Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other Service Center agency are required to call their Service Center to schedule a phone appointment. More information on Service Centers can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.

Several deadlines are coming up in the next few months for farmers to apply for FSA assistance programs. Please review if any of these programs can benefit your operation.

**Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program**

The Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) provides financial assistance to producers of noninsurable crops when low yields, loss of inventory, or prevented planting occur due to natural disasters. The application deadline for wild rice, asparagus and strawberries is Sept. 30. Nov. 20 is the application deadline for apples, blueberries, cane berries and sage. The application deadline for honey is Dec. 1 and maple sap is Feb. 1. For more information visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/nap](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/nap).

**One-Time PLC Yield Updates**

Farm owners have a one-time opportunity to update PLC yields of covered commodities on the farm, regardless of Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program election. The deadline to request a PLC yield update is Sept. 30. For more information, reference resources and decision tools, visit [www.farmers.gov/arc-plc](http://www.farmers.gov/arc-plc).

**Organic Certifications Cost Share Program**


**CRP Soil Health and Income Protection Program**

The new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) Soil Health and Income Protection Program (SHIPP) is available to producers in Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. The signup for this pilot ends Nov. 20. Through SHIPP, producers have the option of three-, four- or five-year CRP contracts to establish perennial cover on less productive cropland in exchange for payments. This pilot enables producers to plant perennial cover that, among other benefits, will improve soil health and water quality while having the option to harvest, hay and graze during certain times of the year. For more information, see the fact sheet or visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/crp](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/crp).

**WHIP+ Signup Ongoing**

Producers who suffered losses from drought, excess moisture, hurricanes, floods, tornadoes, typhoons, volcanic activity, snowstorms or wildfires in 2018 and 2019 can still apply for assistance through WHIP+. To be eligible for WHIP+, producers must have suffered losses of certain crops, trees, bushes or vines in counties with a Presidential Emergency Disaster Declaration or a Secretarial Disaster Designation (primary counties only) for qualifying natural disaster events that occurred in calendar years 2018 or 2019. Also, losses located in a county not designated by the Secretary as a primary county may be eligible if a producer provides documentation showing that the loss was due to a qualifying natural disaster event. More information on WHIP+ can be found at [farmers.gov/whip-plus](http://farmers.gov/whip-plus).
Farmers, rural communities need more pandemic support

The pandemic has had serious ramifications in rural communities—and as cases continue to tick up across the country, it’s evident that circumstances likely won’t improve anytime soon.

Though Congress provided initial assistance through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Stimulus (CARES) Act and subsequent legislation, much of the funding has already been allocated. In a letter to Senate leadership, National Farmers Union (NFU) President Rob Larew pushed for additional “policy changes and strategic federal investments… to sustain our communities through the coming months and lay the groundwork for a fair and equitable national economic recovery.”

First and foremost, he advocated financial aid for farmers and ranchers, who, in the absence of further assistance packages, face a 12% drop in net farm income this year.

Specifically, he urged boosts in funding for direct assistance for farmers; programs to facilitate the purchase and distribution of surplus food from farms to food banks; greater flexibility for farm credit programs; and the elimination of barriers to Small Business Administration (SBA) programs.

Such changes should be subject to “rigorous transparency and reporting standards… to ensure that these funds are used to help family farmers and ranchers most in need of assistance,” meaning that Congress should provide strong oversight and that taxpayers should be provided with information about how and to whom payments are made.

Financial assistance alone is not enough to keep farmers afloat. The markets, personnel, infrastructure and services they rely on need to be fully healthy and operational as well. Larew maintained the need to strengthen local and regional meat processing facilities, rural broadband and the biofuels industry, as well as ensure the availability and health of agricultural workers.

While farmers are concerned about their bottom lines, they are also thinking about the health of their families and community members in the midst of the pandemic, as “the daily number of new cases in rural counties has grown by 150% in the past month.” To help rural facilities cover the financial pressures and technical challenges of treating acutely ill patients, Larew suggested that lawmakers set aside funding specifically for rural facilities and prioritize “providers with the greatest financial need, those hit hardest by COVID-19, and those serving a large portion of at-risk patients.”

Farmers aren’t the only ones struggling—millions of Americans are out of work, resulting in a “steep rise in hunger and food security.” Larew encouraged the Senate to ensure that all Americans can get enough to eat by “providing a 15% boost in the SNAP maximum benefit and increasing the SNAP monthly minimum benefit from $16 to $30.”

NFU offers suggestions to improve USDA innovation agenda

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) published its Agriculture Innovation Agenda in February. The document outlines how the agency will “align… resources, programs and research to provide farmers with the tools they need… to meet the food, fiber, fuel, feed and climate demands of the future.”

To inform those efforts, USDA sought input from the public and private sector. President Larew submitted comments recommending improvements so that the agenda better reflects the needs of the agricultural community. More specifically, he urged the agency to prioritize climate change research and technological development, expand higher biofuel blends, improve rural broadband access, robustly fund public research and ensure new information and technologies are accessible and affordable for all farmers and ranchers. Additionally, he emphasized the importance of not exacerbating the issue of oversupply with the agenda, suggesting moving away from the model of consistently increasing production.

JBS plans to convert lamb processing facility

Brazilian company JBS, the world’s largest beef and pork processor, plans to buy the second-largest lamb processing facility in the United States and use it to process beef instead, drawing concern from farmers, legislators and anti-trust advocates.

The plant, based in Colorado, processes about 350,000 lambs each year. The region lacks any other facilities of comparable size, meaning its closure could strand Western lamb producers without anywhere to process their livestock. Under any circumstances, such a loss would be devastating, but the timing is particularly cruel as the lamb industry is reeling from pandemic-related disruptions.

On top of its implications for farmers and ranchers, stakeholders have apprehensions about what the acquisition would mean for food sovereignty, trade and market power.

JBS USA, the U.S. subsidiary of JBS, already controls 18.5% of the beef industry. The company has been accused of allegedly driving deforestation in the Amazon, bribing health officials to overlook unsanitary practices, fixing prices and failing to protect workers. By expanding beef processing capacity in the U.S., this corporation could claim an even larger share of the industry.

It’s also important to note that JBS is one of the largest importers of lamb to the U.S. By reducing domestic processing, it may be positioning itself to ramp up lamb exports, as a group of Republican members of Congress pointed out in a recent letter to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ).
“Through this acquisition, JBS will eliminate a major domestic competitor in the region and could replace significant quantities of the American-raised lamb with imported product,” they wrote, urging DOJ to “open an investigation into this acquisition and demand that JBS cease from any irreversible actions that might harm the ability of American sheep ranchers to get their products to market.”

**USDA releases report on cattle markets**

The USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has released an update on its investigation into recent market disruptions and price volatility in the beef industry. The investigation, which was prompted by complaints by ranchers, covers two recent events that caused the spread between the prices of Choice boxed beef and live cattle to rise to records levels: the temporary closure of a Kansas beef packing plant after it caught fire last summer and the closure of dozens of plants due to COVID-19 outbreaks among employees. Per the allegations, meatpacking plants used the occurrences to suppress the prices they paid to ranchers while artificially inflating the prices they charged grocery stores and other retail establishments.

According to AMS, the inquiry is meant to “examine whether any regulated entities violated the Packers and Stockyards Act by taking advantage of the situation through price manipulation, collusion, restrictions of competition, or other unfair practices.” This work has not yet been completed and, as such, the agency cannot “publicly report the full scope and status of the investigation.” Because of that, the report neither exonerates nor indicts beef packers for the alleged violations of the Packers and Stockyards Act. However, it does provide policy recommendations for “improved price discovery, reinvigorated competition and a more transparent relationship between the prices for live cattle and the resulting products.” This includes making changes to Livestock Mandatory Reporting (LMR), offering risk management training and products for small- and mid-sized ranchers, easing financial and regulatory burdens for smaller meat processors, providing technical assistance for the development of meat processing co-operatives, and bolstering the Packers and Stockyards Act.

While NFU appreciates “USDA’s efforts to examine this issue and present potential solutions... it is clear that this is just the beginning,” as President Larew indicated. He urged the agency to “thoroughly conduct its ongoing investigation” as well as work with Congress and other agencies to “strengthen protections for farmers and ranchers, enforce existing antitrust regulations and prevent future abuses of market power.”

The Washington Corner can always be found at [nfu.org/corner](http://nfu.org/corner).
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.

Whether it’s in a large space outdoors or a virtual meeting, we can help! Schedule online at mfu.org/county-convention-scheduling.

You can also send your county convention information to: countyconventions@mfu.org or call Membership Coordinator Diana Rico at (651) 288-4064.

Counties are eligible for a $200 early bird bonus if they hold conventions by Oct. 1 and submit all paperwork to the MFU state office by Oct. 15, 2020. The final deadline for county paperwork to be mailed is Nov. 15.
FOOD SHELVES & FARMERS – THE PERFECT MATCH?

When many farmers are searching for markets, why aren’t food shelves actively buying up their produce?

By Emily Reno, University of Minnesota
Integrated Food Systems Leadership Program

According to a recent white paper from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, it is estimated that key local and regional markets (including farmers markets, farm to school and food hubs) lost between $688.7 million in sales and a payroll decline of up to $103.3 million between March and May of this year.1 Wholesale farmers such as members of Cooperativa Agua Gorda, a Latino-owned grower cooperative that sells wholesale, organic produce in and around Long Prairie, Minn., had their contracts cut in half this spring. They are a prime example of how farmers have been negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Working with Agua Gorda this spring as a research assistant from February to May, we spent several months exploring wholesale market channel opportunities to sell to buyers closer to home as opposed to the Twin Cities. The project shed light on the ways that regulations and culture prevent nutritious food from getting into the hands – and onto the dinner plates – of those who need it most. A SNAP-Ed educator familiar with food assistance in the area commented that the food shelf was more likely to take donations than offer a farmer a price that was worth their time to harvest. The question of demand is inarguable. McKinsey and Co. recently estimated that Second Harvest Heartland, one of the largest nonprofits addressing hunger across Minnesota, will experience a 70% increase in demand in 2020.2 Yet even if a farmer wants to contribute to a local food shelf, donating farm products is not as easy as it seems. Often, a third party is involved to facilitate the donation, which slows down the process and makes it less attractive for farmers, who are strapped for time to deal with red tape during the growing season. Logistical hurdles, such as rerouting packing and trucking partners, prevents products such as fluid milk from entering other parts of the supply chain; and there’s a long history of litigation in this arena, despite policies such as the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act.

As community leaders and public officials consider ways to improve food security, a useful approach could be to work with farmers to identify the barriers along each point of the process of getting food from field to shelf, including harvesting, packaging and distribution, and rank them based on the cost. In rural communities especially, there may be ways to develop creative partnerships that could address these barriers, such as seeking out churches or other local food distribution options that could reduce transportation costs. Arranging for pickup at the farm, or even getting a team of volunteers out to the farm to harvest, can help avoid the need to use dangerous equipment or machinery. Furthermore, family, friends and food shelf employees could take on the responsibility of communications and marketing to ensure that people know food is available. Above all, identifying the parts of food distribution with the biggest costs and addressing them first will have the greatest impact.

Green View helps fight hunger with donation

Recently, MFU-owned Green View, Inc. made a donation to Second Harvest Heartland with the proceeds from selling a company vehicle. The transaction amounted to the equivalent of 10,895 meals for Minnesotans in need. This is another example of our continued partnership with Second Harvest, following our donation of 30,000 lbs. of Redwood Farms Pork in May. A massive increase in hunger looms on the horizon with the unemployment and economic uncertainty brought on by COVID-19, and we need to take every opportunity we can to help.

Thanks to Green View Executive Director Mike McShane and the team.
Chilly weather is just around the corner. The strategies and resources here will help you stay comfortable during the fall and winter months and save money on energy throughout the year.

Get a home energy assessment

Arrange an energy assessment to see where you can save energy for low- or no cost and make larger investments for long-term savings. Some providers are offering virtual assessment services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Contact your utility to see what they recommend. This assessment can help you decide what needs fixing, upgrading or replacement. An advanced assessment should include:

- A review of energy bills to assess home performance and identify savings opportunities.
- A blower-door test to determine air leakage.
- Infrared scans to detect insulation levels and sources of air leaks.
- Efficiency and safety testing of combustion appliances.
- Visual inspection for attic, wall, crawlspace, foundation, basement, window, door and roof problems.

The importance of energy assessments is captured in “Improving Your Home’s Performance,” a video produced by Twin Cities Public Television and the Minnesota Building Performance Association. Watch at www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org/home-energy-guide-tips, where you’ll also find a guide for energy-saving improvements in your home from the Minnesota Department of Commerce.

Insulation and sealing

Adding insulation and sealing air leaks are among the most cost-effective energy-saving improvements you can make to an existing home. It can cut heating and cooling costs by 15% or more. Air infiltration can cause drafts and a chilly feeling near windows and doors and in basements. The home assessment will determine how much insulation you have and how much more you need, as well as locating and sealing air leaks.

Sealing air leaks around windows, doors, vents, chimneys and other gaps is an important part of keeping cold air out and warm air in.

Blanchette Farm near Richmond, MN did air sealing and insulation of their home and other buildings before adding solar.

Energy-saving tips

Home heating:

- Replace furnace filters every month.
- Install a programmable thermostat and program it around your schedule. In winter, set your thermostat at 68°F during the day and lower it at night and when you are away.
- Open curtains on your south-facing windows during the day to allow sunlight to naturally heat your home. Close them at night to reduce the chill from cold windows.
- Make sure your air registers are clear of furniture or other obstructions so that air can circulate.
- Avoid using electric space heaters. They are an expensive way to heat your home, and some are a fire hazard. If it’s difficult to heat your home without a space heater, explore improvements to your heating system or insulation.
- Protect your home from winter drafts with plastic film or rubberized seals on the windows and draft snakes, door sweeps or weatherstripping for doors. Close storm windows.
- Keep your fireplace damper closed unless a fire is burning.
- Install tight-fitting, insulating drapes or shades on windows that feel drafty after weatherizing.
- Close windows and doors when running the furnace.

Lighting:

- Replace old incandescent bulbs with LEDs. Find the right bulbs with Lighting Guides from CERTs: www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org/lighting. Turn off lights when you are not in the room or have enough natural light.

Cooking and Cleaning:

- Install efficient appliances – look for the ENERGY STAR label when you are shopping, or search products online at www.energystar.gov/products.
- Cook with your microwave or slow cooker.
- Run your dishwasher with a full load and the air-dry option.
- When hand-washing dishes, use a rinse pan and turn off the water when you’re not using it.
- Wash your clothes with cold water. Clean the lint trap in your dryer before every load.
- Install water-efficient faucet aerators and showerheads to reduce hot water use. Look for the WaterSense label.
- Turn down the thermostat on your water heater to 120°F. This reduces energy use and helps prevent burns.

(continued on page 13)
On-farm specific savings
Switching to energy-efficient LED lighting can save energy on all farms. Other energy-saving opportunities depend on the operation. High-impact technologies include variable frequency drives, automated controllers, high-efficiency grain dryers, refrigeration heat recovery and high-efficiency space and water heating.

To find out what opportunities you have for savings, you can get an on-farm energy assessment. Often your electric utility will offer some form of assessment – contact them to learn more. Explore your options at cleanenergyresourceteams.org/energy-saving-equipment-farm.

Consider renewable energy
Once you have completed many basic energy-saving measures, you may want to consider a renewable energy system such as on-farm solar panels. By investing in energy efficiency and conservation, you lessen your energy demand, which reduces investment needed for your renewable energy system and optimize the returns on it. Learn more at cleanenergyresourceteams.org/solar-your-farm.

You may also qualify for grant and loan programs from USDA Rural Development (cleanenergyresourceteams.org/grants-farmers-rural-businesses), and many counties in Minnesota now offer Property-Assessed Clean Energy financing (cleanenergyresourceteams.org/pace).

Guidance on your energy bills
Your electric and natural gas bills have several types of charges. Actual energy costs and items on bills can be different depending on your utility, but here are the basics.

- **Service Charge:** Flat monthly fee that you pay to have access to energy.
- **Energy Charge:** The cost of the electricity or gas you used. It is billed by kilowatt-hour (kWh) for electricity and therms for natural gas. Your utility reads your meter to determine the amount of electricity or natural gas used.

  - **Understanding kilowatts (kW) and kilowatt-hours (kWh):** Kilowatts are a rate of energy use; kilowatt-hours are a quantity of energy used. For example, a microwave might use electricity at a rate of 1 kilowatt (kW). If that microwave is used for 2 hours, it will use 2 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity.

  - **Understanding therms:** Therms are a unit of heat. One therm is equal to approximately 29 kWh and can be provided by about 97 cubic feet of natural gas.

- **Riders:** Charges for specific aspects of your utility service, such as the cost of fuel. Riders may be based on how much energy you use or they may be a flat monthly fee.
- **Taxes:** These vary based on where you live. Taxes may be flat fees or variable.

Further Guidance: Citizens Utility Board of Minnesota can help you understand your utility bill or address related questions or complaints. Call them at 844-MINN-CUB (844-646-6282) or visit their website at cubminnesota.org.

Are you spending too much on energy?
The average Minnesota family of four uses about 800 kWh of electricity each month and pays around $100. Natural gas bills vary more widely but are typically $100-$200 per month. If you are paying more than this, you may have opportunities to improve your energy efficiency. There may also be an error on your bill.

Financial assistance
The state Energy Assistance Program (EAP) may be able to help with your energy expenses. Find your local EAP provider at mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/eap-provider.jsp. If your utilities get shut off or you are behind on payments, contact your utility to set up a payment plan and find out if they have affordability programs, in addition to EAP. During winter, (Oct. 15 - Apr. 15), if you use EAP or your household income is less than 50% of the state median, you and the utility should establish a reduced payment plan. If you make timely payments on that plan, the utility may not disconnect you. Learn more at cubminnesota.org/shut-off-protection.

The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) may also be able to weatherize your home and reduce your energy bills for the long term. WAP providers improve the energy efficiency of homes of income-qualified households. From insulation to heating systems to appliances and more, WAP takes a “whole-house” approach to reducing families’ energy costs and improving health and safety. Find your Weatherization provider at mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/weatherization/wap-providers.jsp.

Where to find resources
**Electric Utility:** Your electric utility may provide energy assessments, direct installation of energy-saving devices, and/or rebates on energy-saving devices. Find your utility by checking your bill or contacting your city hall, or find it at mn.gov/puc/consumers/help/utility.

**Natural Gas Utility or Delivered Fuel Vendor:** Your natural gas utility may provide energy assessments, direct installation of energy-saving devices and/or rebates on energy-saving devices. They may also provide seasonal cost-averaging programs. Find your utility at blueflame.org/whos-my-utility.

**Citizens Utility Board of Minnesota (CUB):** CUB can help you understand your utility bill or address related concerns. Call 844-MINN-CUB (844-646-6282) or visit cubminnesota.org.

**Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs):** CERTs has a wide range of resources on energy efficiency and renewable energy. cleanenergyresourceteams.org.

**Minnesota WAP Providers:** Find your local WAP provider at mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/wap-providers.jsp.

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Resources from the Minnesota Department of Commerce and the U.S. Department of Energy contributed to this article.
The Minnesota Cooks™ team is heading into the home stretch of calendar preparations and production, grateful for the extra time we’ve had to extend our participant interviews and photo shoots into August and September. Normally we need all our materials – photos, stories, ads and recipes – polished and submitted to our design team no later than the first week in August so the calendar is ready to debut at the State Fair.

The extended deadline we’re working with feels like a small silver lining in this rocky year. We’ve gotten a few questions about when members can expect the calendar this year, so here’s what we can tell you: The calendar will be printed in mid to late October, and all members can expect their calendars to be mailed to them in early December, as usual.

Without our pinnacle Minnesota Cooks Day at the fair, the program is shaping up differently, but stay tuned: we’ll be highlighting our participants in a number of ways throughout the rest of 2020 and into 2021, including radio spots, podcasts, video content, virtual meet-and-greets and small outdoor events, if and when possible.

Make sure you’re following @minnesotacooks on Facebook and Instagram, where we share sneak peeks from our farm-to-table journeys around the state and will post about events and spotlights coming up, as well as sharing stories from the new F + B pop-up restaurant and anticipate the May 2021 release of our book, The Farmer and the Chef.

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**Corn Chowder**

2010: Chef Heather Hartman, Spoonriver (*the space where F + B pop-up now resides*), in partnership with Loon Organics

**Yield:** 10 cups (serves 6–8)

- 8 ears sweet corn, shucked
- 2 bay leaves
- Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 5 cups corn stock made with scraped corn cobs
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, minced fine
- 1 tablespoon fresh thyme leaves, minced fine
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 medium carrot, diced small
- 2 stalks celery, diced small
- 3 medium potatoes, diced small (should yield 3 cups diced)
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh, flat leaf parsley (optional)

**For corn stock:**

Divide ears of corn in half. With four of the ears, remove kernels by laying cob down flat against cutting board, holding it steady with one hand. Keeping your knife parallel to the cob, slice your blade between kernels and cob so that a strip of corn falls away from cob. Rotate cob until all kernels have been released. It is fine if there are some errant kernels remaining. Add kernels to a large bowl.

With remaining 4 ears of corn, remove kernels by standing ear of corn upright and then, using the back end of your knife blade, scrape kernels until liquid and kernel have been released but hull is left behind. With force, scrape back of blade against cob again to release any remaining corn milk. You can do this over the bowl holding kernels or if you choose to do it over a board, scrape all corn and milk into bowl along with kernels that you cut off cob as directed above. You should have about 5 cups of kernel and milk removed from all 8 ears.

Prepare corn stock by putting all 8 of empty cobs in a stock pot. Add bay leaves and some salt and pepper. Cover cobs with water; bring to a boil and simmer for an hour. Taste and add salt as necessary. Strain and reserve the corn stock. Stock can be made a day or two before preparing soup.

**For soup:**

Melt butter in a large pot over medium heat. Add herbs and saute until fragrant. Add onions and saute until beginning to soften. Add carrots and celery, saute another 4–8 minutes until soft then add potatoes, corn and stock. Season with a little salt and pepper. Simmer 20–30 minutes until potatoes are done. Remove 2–3 cups of the soup, puree in a blender. Add pureed soup back to the pot. Taste and adjust seasonings. Ladle into bowls and stir in parsley if desired.
Harvest time is just around the corner for Minnesota farmers, and that’s always a stressful time. From getting the crops out before the cold, to concerns about the price you’ll receive for your products, there may seem to be no end to the stressors.

At the same time, stress built up in the body affects our physical health both in the short and long terms, as well as adding another risk to the already-risky job of farming. To counter the effects of stress, little moments and delights in life have the power to keep us sane, even when schedules are chaotic and relentless. If you find yourself feeling stressed during this demanding time of year, consider the following:

- **Set aside relaxation time.** Even 5-10 minute blocks of conscious relaxation can help reset one’s nervous system. Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule and protect that time. Everyone needs a break from their responsibilities to recharge one’s proverbial batteries.

- **Connect with others.** Set aside time for positive people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from the negative effects of stress, especially now after enduring long stretches of physical distancing during the pandemic. A friendly phone call or distanced outdoor chat can be medicinal.

- **Do something simple you enjoy every day, even if for short moments.** Make time for the simplest leisure activities that bring you joy, whether it be stargazing, playing the piano, watching the antics of animals, singing or watching a beautiful sunrise or sunset. These ordinary moments provide extraordinary benefits.

- **Keep your sense of humor.** This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. The act of laughing releases positive hormones and helps your body fight stress in a number of ways.

- **Share your feelings.** Express yourself to someone you trust. Nutritionaly, there are several things we can do to support a healthy stress response:

  - **Experiment with stress-busting herbs like Ashwaganda and Chamomile.** Chamomile tea before bed can do wonders to help you unwind.

  - **Supplement with B-complex vitamins, calcium/magnesium and vitamin D.** These supplements also help calm the nervous system.

  - **Set aside relaxation time.** Again before bed to reset your stress-response system to a calmer state.

  - **Increase your intake of dark leafy green vegetables,** which contain potassium and magnesium and a host of other minerals that help nourish the adrenal glands, which largely control our stress response.

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In an interview with Experience Life magazine, Aviva Romm, M.D., an integrative/holistic physician I admire, had this to say about how to keep one’s stress response from getting stuck in overdrive:

“Two things are most important. One is hitting the pause button. We’re all busy and we don’t pay enough attention to how we’re feeling. We often go hours before realizing we’re hungry or thirsty. It’s important to make a practice out of paying attention to how you feel and honoring that by responding to your basic impulses. When you’re tired, sleep. When you’re hungry, eat.

Set an alarm on your phone for around 11 a.m. and between 2-4 p.m. to remind yourself to stop what you’re doing for at least 5 minutes to take a few deep breaths, hydrate or walk around and stretch. Ideally, it’s good to take a few moments to check in with yourself when you wake up and again before bed to reset your stress-response system to a calmer state.”

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**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.

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 dues-paying members and one additional delegate who will represent each additional ten dues-paying members or a major fraction thereof. Credentials blanks will be mailed to county presidents and should be returned prior to the convention to: Minnesota Farmers Union, 305 Roselawn Ave. E, Ste. 200, St. Paul, MN 55117. County and local units must submit credentials forms to the MFU State Office by Nov. 15.

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
**Millions of Americans can’t afford warm coats for their family this winter.**

Farmers Union Agency is holding a Fall Coat Drive from September 1 through October 2, 2020. You can help by donating gently worn, freshly laundered coats at the State Office (305 Roselawn Ave E, Suite 100, St. Paul, MN 55117) from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. You can also donate money to our secure, online drive at https://bit.ly/31TVsTb. Additionally, October 1st is One Warm Coat Day, and any monetary donation made on our site will be MATCHED!

You can also contact one of our local Agents listed below to donate or contribute to their office coat drives. Cold weather will be here before you know it. Please help us spread the warmth!