



# AGRICULTURE TODAY

**Monday, September 29, 2025**

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# USDA Declares Minnesota Dairy Herds Unaffected by H5N1 Virus

## Minnesota Department of Agriculture

Change comes after four consecutive months of no detections

After four straight months of testing raw milk samples from Minnesota cow dairy farms for the avian influenza A (H5N1) virus without any detections, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has changed Minnesota's status from Affected to Unaffected in their National Milk Testing Strategy (NMTS).

That means that the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) will reduce how frequently it tests milk samples from once a month to approximately once every two months. Federal restrictions on animal movement between states remain in effect.

In February 2025 the MDA, in cooperation with the Minnesota Board

of Animal Health (BAH), joined the NMTS to begin conducting H5N1 virus surveillance and prevent its spread to unaffected dairy herds and poultry flocks.

"We and the Board are extremely grateful for the dairy industry's cooperation in achieving this important milestone and for supporting the health and vitality of Minnesota's livestock and poultry industries," MDA Commissioner Thom Petersen said.

After one case of H5N1 was detected in a dairy herd in March, there have been no other Minnesota detections. The USDA approved Minnesota's status change on August 22.

The MDA may further reduce testing frequency if results continue to show no detections through the fall, but continued monitoring is required

until all 50 states have reached Unaffected Status.

Dairy farmers don't have to do anything to help with sampling or testing, as they are done in cooperation with industry laboratories who routinely test for other purposes.

While H5N1 is still an emerging disease in dairy cattle, most affected herds in the U.S. have fully recovered. This is good news for the dairy industry, but H5N1 remains deadly in poultry and capable of causing human illness. It is important to prevent the spread of the virus whenever it is detected in livestock animals.

If tests detect H5N1 in a dairy herd, the MDA or BAH assigns a case manager to guide the farm through the response, which includes a quarantine period and follow-up testing.





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Working with students one-on-one on student and industry partner equipment is just one of the reasons that Ridgewater's Agriculture Equipment Mechanic program recently received national recognition. The program was named the National Association of Ag Educators (NAAE) Outstanding Post-Secondary Program for Region 3, a six-state region. Submitted

## Ridgewater Agriculture Equipment Mechanic Program Receives National Honor

Submitted

Ridgewater College's Agriculture Equipment Mechanic program has been named the National Association of Ag Educators (NAAE) Outstanding Post-Secondary Program for Region 3.

NAAE recognizes individuals and programs committed to advancing agriculture and cultivating the next generation of agricultural educators. Region 3 includes Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Nebraska.

The Outstanding Post-secondary Agriculture

Program Award honors post-secondary institutions, farm business management programs, full-time young farmers, and adult agricultural education programs that are developing humble leaders energized by shaping the future of agriculture one student or adult at a time.

"Our Ag Equipment Mechanic instructors are deeply committed to the success of our students with a focus on ensuring each student receives a high-quality education and the support they need to thrive," said Ridgewater's Mike Kutzke, Vice President

of Academic Affairs. "Their dedication is evident in the strong relationships they build with students." He commended instructors Jon Barka, Erik Hoff, and Randy Barka for their commitment to student success, industry partnerships, and continuous improvement.

Award criteria included a program narrative and supporting materials from the past five years, program design and development goals, effective classroom and lab instruction, expe-

**RIDGEWATER**  
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# Biosecurity and public health guidance for on-farm events

## University of Minnesota Extension

As fall approaches and farms prepare to welcome the public for seasonal celebrations such as fairs, harvest festivals, and apple picking, health and safety remain a top priority. University of Minnesota Extension has updated biosecurity and public health guidelines to ensure that on-farm programs, whether educational or for entertainment, continue to thrive while protecting people, animals, and farms.

These protocols are more than good practice; they're essential. By reducing the risk of disease spread between humans and animals, they safeguard animal health, uphold public confidence in agricultural spaces, and reflect the host's commitment to science-based risk management.

Whether you're planning an interactive petting zoo or a morning of animals sprinkled into a yoga practice, here's what to keep in mind:

### Separate public and animal production or living areas

- Maintain a distance of at least 30 feet and ideally 50 feet or more between visitors and animal housing.
- Clearly mark and enforce a line of separation between where animals live and where guests are allowed to roam. This might include an addition-

al fence gate, cones, or an entryway with signage that reads, "You're entering an animal zone."

- Designate meal and activity areas in clean, dry spaces well away from livestock zones. Mud, manure, and feed residue should be kept out of public sight.

### Design tours for safety and education

- Market your event as an educational experience, rather than a standard farm tour.
- Use alternatives like "windshield tours," virtual GoPro walk-throughs, or barn tours via wagon, where participants remain on board, to minimize exposure to production zones.
- If feasible, bring animals to a separate display area rather than leading guests into barns or pastures.
- In cases where foot traffic must overlap with farm operations, provide boot covers or sanitize footwear before and after entry.

### Engage minds while promoting safety

- Use the event as an opportunity to raise awareness about biosecurity; explain why animal health matters and how humans can contribute to it.
- Post signs or share brief presentations about how these precautions protect both animals and humans.



- Encourage visitors to arrive in freshly laundered clothes and clean footwear, especially if they've been on other farms recently.

### Invest in hygiene and infrastructure

- Provide ample hand washing stations that are conveniently placed and well-stocked, allowing guests to clean up regularly during their visit.
- Ensure all enclosed public areas

have good ventilation.

- Encourage all staff, volunteers, and attendees to stick to the "clean clothes, clean shoes" mantra.

By proactively planning around these guidelines, you're not only keeping your farm and visitors safe, but you're also demonstrating leadership in agricultural education and community health.

Let's make fall 2025 both memorable and mindful.



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# Know Where, When to Apply Fall Nitrogen Fertilizer

## Minnesota Department of Agriculture

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) reminds farmers and commercial applicators that fall nitrogen fertilizer applications are restricted in some areas of the state. Under the MDA's Groundwater Protection Rule, fall nitrogen fertilizer application is prohibited in vulnerable areas of Minnesota based on environmental concerns or risks. Areas with

coarse-textured soils, shallow soils to bedrock, or karst geology are the most vulnerable to nitrate-nitrogen loss and groundwater contamination.

The restrictions begin Sept. 1 each year. Farmers are encouraged to check the online map before fall application to determine if their fields are subject to these restrictions. For more information on the restrictions outlined in the Groundwater Protection Rule, visit [mda.state.mn.us/nfr](http://mda.state.mn.us/nfr).

In other areas of the state where fall nitrogen fertilizer application is allowed, the MDA advises farmers and commercial applicators to check soil temperatures and wait until the average soil temperature reaches 50 degrees F or cooler before applying fertilizer. Research shows that delaying fall application of anhydrous ammonia and urea fertilizer, as well as manure, reduces nitrogen loss, protects water quality, and

ensures more nitrogen will be available for next season's crop.

To assist tracking soil temperature, the MDA provides access to real-time, 4- and 6-inch soil temperatures at 70 locations across the state. View the interactive map to find the current 6-inch soil temperature and the past week's history.

Although the soil temperature network was established to support application of ni-

trogen fertilizer, it is equally useful for those applying manure in the fall. University of Minnesota Extension recommends the same temperature delay (after soil temperature is below 50 degrees F) to prevent leaching losses.

For more information on the Six-inch Soil Temperature Network visit [mda.state.mn.us/soiltemp](http://mda.state.mn.us/soiltemp).

## RIDGEWATER

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rential learning, leadership development, partnerships, marketing, photos, professional growth, and more.

The program began in 2017 as the Agriculture Power and Equipment Technician program and changed its name to Agriculture Equipment Mechanic in 2024. The program received formal accreditation that

same year. It is one of 11 of Ridgewater's Agriculture Department programs.

"This award means a lot to our program because it recognizes the hard work our students put in every day and the strong partnerships we have with industry," said Ridgewater instructor Randy Barka. "Together, we're making

sure our graduates are ready to succeed in the ag equipment field."

"Every day, I get to teach students who are excited about agriculture and want to learn the skills to keep things running," instructor Jon Barka shared. "Being recognized by the NAAE shows that what we do in the shop and classroom matters — not just

to Ridgewater, but to the businesses and communities that depend on us."

Instructors Hoff, Barka, and Barka will be

formally recognized at the NAAE Conference in Nashville, TN, in December. To learn more about Ridgewater's Agriculture Equipment

Mechanic program, go to [www.ridgewater.edu/agmech](http://www.ridgewater.edu/agmech).



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# 13th International Hemp Building Symposium on October 3-5

Submitted

The 13th International Hemp Building Symposium will take place on Oct. 3-5 at the Lower Sioux Indian Reservation, organized by the International Hemp Building Association (IHBA).

IHBA symposiums are famous for bringing together experts and innovators from around the world to share the latest ideas and projects in hemp construction. It's also the best place to meet others working in this growing and exciting field. This is the biggest event in the world

focused on building with hemp.

The three-day event will include speakers from many countries sharing new research, test results, and real-life building projects. You will also hear from people working with hemp on the ground, sharing their experience from completed or upcoming projects. There will be a site visit to local hemp building projects where you can see for yourself how this sustainable material is being used.

The event is hosted by the Lower Sioux Indian

Community, together with Americhanvre, a leading US hemp building company with our main sponsor Eready. Morton is a small town in Minnesota near Redwood Falls and known for its natural beauty and cultural history. It's a great place to explore sustainable building solutions and connect with others who care about the future of construction. The Symposium language is English.

This year's event will be held at Jackpot Junction Casino Hotel in

Morton, Minnesota.

Building with hemp means building for a greener, more sustainable future, join us and be part of it!

Evening highlights include the symposium dinner with a charity auction benefiting the Lower Sioux School. With profits shared between the International Hemp Building Association and the Lower Sioux Indian Community, this event is not only an opportunity to connect with leaders in the field but also to support sustainable development and the local community.

Full 3 Day Ticket for the 13th International Hemp Building Symposium, October 3-5, 2025 includes:

The three-day event.

The site tour and live hemp building demonstrations.

Three refreshment breaks.

Three buffet lunches.

Entry to the exhibitors hall.

The Symposium Dinner, featuring a charity auction in aid of the Lower Sioux Community School Project MC'd by our special guest Dallas Goldtooth!

Fifty percent of the profits from the 13th Symposium will be shared with the Lower Sioux Community to help build a community school.

By contributing in this way, we aim to support their vision for education, cultural preservation, and future generations, ensuring that the benefits of the event ex-

tend far beyond the symposium itself.

Get your tickets here: [https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A\\_\\_internationalhempbuilding.org\\_13th-2Dinternational-2Dhemp-2Dbuilding-2Dsymposium-2Dregistration\\_&d=DwIFaQ&c=ILNqkSEM-8fZHMcUYFdZ1x-6CQ91xWNuCT-MwK9anzFCh-g&r=aea2i5erjki-hZsaJV12R7ggPX-B4RSQWiIc0Mk1N-F4CY&m=pAnj5P-CEo5mbpSu7dMg5cnd-17Yb\\_MOPM8sLms0\\_nWoI4CKye8X8hKKeP-WhGY76E-&s=9wtpb-VAsAi\\_wvCP96RAuLxi01d8TgQui7M-AX-rfuIZM&e=](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__internationalhempbuilding.org_13th-2Dinternational-2Dhemp-2Dbuilding-2Dsymposium-2Dregistration_&d=DwIFaQ&c=ILNqkSEM-8fZHMcUYFdZ1x-6CQ91xWNuCT-MwK9anzFCh-g&r=aea2i5erjki-hZsaJV12R7ggPX-B4RSQWiIc0Mk1N-F4CY&m=pAnj5P-CEo5mbpSu7dMg5cnd-17Yb_MOPM8sLms0_nWoI4CKye8X8hKKeP-WhGY76E-&s=9wtpb-VAsAi_wvCP96RAuLxi01d8TgQui7M-AX-rfuIZM&e=)



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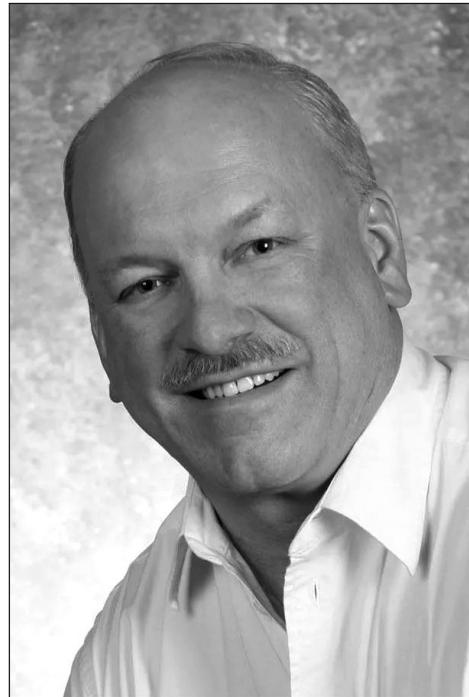
## Sept. 12 USDA Crop Report lowers US yield estimates

Written by Kent Thiesse,  
Farm Management Analyst

The September 12 USDA National Ag Statistics Service (NASS) Crop Report adjusted the projected 2025 U.S. average yields for both corn and soybeans slightly lower from the August estimates; however, both the corn and soybeans yields would still be at record level. USDA also increased the expected 2025 harvested acreage for both corn and soybeans in the September report from earlier reports, which basically offset lower yield projections. The end result was very little change from the August report in the estimated overall 2025 corn and soybean production levels. Some grain marketing analysts feel that the USDA corn yield and production estimates may be a bit high, given some of the late season dryness and disease pressure that is affecting the 2025 crops in some areas.

The grain market response for corn and soybean futures prices on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT) following the report was fairly positive. This would seem to indicate that most of the USDA estimates were already calculated into the CBOT prices, and that there were other factors influencing the grain markets. These factors could include some questions by grain traders regarding the NASS yield projections in some States and prospects for potential trade agreements with China and other countries. The latest NASS yield estimates were based on U.S. crop conditions as of September 1st; and were the first 2025 USDA yield estimates that included actual field data.

The September 12 USDA Report projects the 2025 U.S. average corn yield at the record level of 186.7 bushels per acre, which was decreased from 188.8 bushels per acre in the August report. The projected 2025 national corn yield compares to the current record yield of 179.3 bushels per acre in 2024, 177.3 bushels per acre in 2023, 173.3 bushels per acre in 2022, and



177 bushels per acre in 2021. A year ago, USDA estimated the average corn yield at 183.6 bushels per acre in the September report; however, the final 2024 average yield was 4.3 bushels per acre below that level. USDA estimated 2025 harvested corn acreage in the U.S. at 90 million acres, which included estimates from crop acreage certification data filed by producers through the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) offices. This was an increase of 1.3 million acres from the August estimate, and compares to 82.9 million harvested acres in 2024. USDA is now estimating total U.S. corn production for 2025 at the record level of just over 16.8 billion bushels, which would be a 13.1 percent increase from the 2024 production level of just under 14.87 billion bushels;

USDA is estimating Minnesota's 2024 average corn yield at the record level of 199 bushels per acre, which is a decrease of 3 bushels per acre from the August estimate. The projected 2025 corn yield compares to the very low 2024 average yield of 174 bushels per acre, 185 bushels per acre, in

2023, and the current record average yield of 195 bushels per acre in 2022. The NASS report also lowered Iowa's projected 2025 average corn yield by 3 bushels per acre to 219 bushels per acre, which would still be a record statewide average yield. This compares to final average yields of 211 bushels per acre in 2024, 201 bushels per acre in 2023, and 200 bushels per acre in 2022.

USDA is projecting Illinois to have a 2025 corn yield of 219 bushels per acre, compared to 217 bushels per acre in 2024; Indiana at 205 bushels per acre, compared to 198 bushels per acre in 2024; Nebraska at 191 bushels per acre, compared to 188 bushels per acre in 2024; and South Dakota at 167 bushels per acre, compared to 164 bushels per acre in 2024. The 2025 corn yield estimates in some other States include, North Dakota at 145 bushels per acre, compared to 149 bushels per acre in 2024; Wisconsin at 184 bushels per acre, compared to 174 bushels per acre in 2024; and Ohio at 194 bushels per acre, compared to 177 bushels per acre in 2024.

The USDA Report on September 12 estimated total 2024 U.S. soybean production at just over 4.3 billion bushels, which would be down slightly from the 2024 soybean production of just under 4.37 billion bushels. USDA projected the 2025 U.S. average soybean yield at the record level of 53.5 bushels per acre, which was lowered by 0.1 bushels per acre from the August report. The 2025 NASS soybean yield estimate compares to final U.S. soybean yields of 50.7 bushels per acre in 2024, 50.6 bushels per acre in 2023, 49.5 bushels per acre in 2022, and 51.4 bushels per acre in 2021. The record national average soybean yield was 52 bushels per acre back in 2016. The USDA 2025 soybean yield projection was very close to the average yield estimates by grain trading analysts.

USDA is estimating Minnesota's 2025 average soybean yield at the

record level of 53 bushels per acre, which is unchanged from the August estimate. The 2025 yield projection compares to recent statewide yields of 45 bushels per acre in 2024, 48 bushels per acre in 2023, 50 bushels per acre in 2022, and 47 bushels per acre in 2021, as well as the current record statewide soybean yield of 52.5 bushels per acre in 2016. The Iowa's estimated 2025 soybean yield is at the record level of 65 bushels per acre, which is up by 2 bushels per acre from the August estimate. The 2025 estimated yield compares to 60 bushels per acre in 2024, 58 bushels per acre in 2023, 58.5 bushels per acre in 2022, and the current record yield of 62 bushels per acre in 2021.

The projected 2025 yields in major soybean producing eastern Corn Belt States include Illinois at 65 bushels per acre, compared to 64 bushels per acre in 2024; Indiana at 61 bushels per acre, compared to 59 bushels per acre in 2024; and Ohio at 58 bushels per acre, compared to 50 bushels per acre in 2024. Most soybean yields in the Western Corn Belt States are expected increase from 2024 yield levels. Soybean yield estimates for 2025 include Nebraska at 61 bushels per acre, compared to 57.5 bushels per acre in 2024; South Dakota at 47 bushels per acre, compared to 43 bushels per acre in 2024; and Wisconsin at 55 bushels per acre, compared to 48 bushels per acre in 2024. North Dakota is projected to decline slightly at 37 bushels per acre in 2025, compared to 37.5 bushels per acre in 2024.

### SEPTEMBER 12 WASDE REPORT

The USDA World Supply and Demand Estimates (WASDE) was also released on September 12, which included the projected adjustments in the 2025 U.S. corn yield and produc-

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tion levels that were referenced earlier. The report projects an increase in the corn usage levels during 2025-26 marketing year, as compared to the 2024-25 corn usage levels. Corn use for livestock feed is expected to increase by 425 million bushels in 2025-26 and corn use for ethanol is projected to increase by 165 million bushels. U.S. corn export levels for 2025-26 are estimated at 2.97 billion bushels, which is up from the estimated export total of 2.83 billion bushels for 2024-25 and 2.25 billion bushels in 2023-24. Corn export levels have been fairly strong in recent months.

The U.S. corn ending stocks for 2025-26 are projected at 2.11 billion bushels, which would be an increase of 59 percent from the estimated carryover of 1.32 billion bushels for 2024-25. The latest 2025-26 corn



ending stocks projection would also be considerably higher than the final corn carryover levels of 1.76 billion bushels in 2023-24, 1.36 billion bushels in 2022-23, 1.38 billion bushels in 2021-22, and 1.23 billion bushels in 2020-21.

The higher level of projected 2025-26 corn ending stocks continues to put considerable pressure on the corn

price projections for the 2025-26 marketing year, which extends from September 1, 2025, through August 31, 2026. USDA is estimating the average on-farm corn price for the 2025-26 marketing year at \$3.90 per bushel, which is unchanged from the August report. The 2024-25 national average corn price, which will be finalized on September 30, 2025,

is estimated at \$4.30 per bushel, which compares to previous final average prices of \$4.55 per bushel in 2023-24, \$6.54 per bushel in 2022-23, \$6.00 per bushel in 2021-22, and \$4.53 per bushel in 2020-21.

The recent WASDE report projected 2025-26 soybean ending stocks at 300 million bushels, which is an increase of 10 million bushels from the August estimate. The 2025-26 estimated soybean ending stocks are slightly lower than the final estimated 2024-25 ending stocks of 330 million bushels and the

2023-24 ending stocks of 342 million bushels. Other recent soybean ending stocks levels of 264 million bushels for 2022-23 and 274 million bushels in 2021-22. Soybean exports for 2025-26 are projected at 1.68 billion bushels, which would be down from the estimated 1.87 billion bushels for 2024-25 and compares to 1.7 billion bushels in 2023-24. There is some concern that the 2025-26 export level could drop even lower, unless China starts to book purchases of the 2025 U.S. soybean crop.

USDA is projecting the average on-farm soybean price for the 2025-26 marketing year at \$10.00 per bushel, which is \$.10 per bushel lower than the August price estimate. The 2024-25 estimated final national average soybean price is also \$10.00 per bushel, which compares to national average prices of \$12.40 per bushel in 2023-24, \$14.20 per bushel in 2022-23, \$13.30 per bushel in 2021-22, and \$10.80 per bushel for 2020-21.



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# Flanagan and Peterson tour Lower Sioux Industrial Hemp Campus

Submitted

Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan and Minnesota Ag Commissioner Thom Petersen visited Lower Sioux and took a tour of the industrial hemp campus and the Patagonia house. The Lower Sioux Hemp Program and Housing Project is providing affordable, sustainable building materials that benefit communities and prioritize the environment.



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# 2025 Farm Families of the Year recognized at Farmfest

## Farm Family recognition program

The University of Minnesota Farm Family Recognition Program honored farm families from throughout Minnesota in August during Farmfest for their significant contributions to the agriculture industry and their local communities.

The Farm Family Recognition Program has honored Minnesota farmers since 1979. It is coordinated by University of Minnesota Extension, the College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences, and the College of Veterinary Medicine. Visit <https://extension.umn.edu/farm-families> for the full list.



Brown County Farm Family: Fischer Family



Lyon County Farm Family: Olson Family



Watonwan County Farm Family: Koval Family

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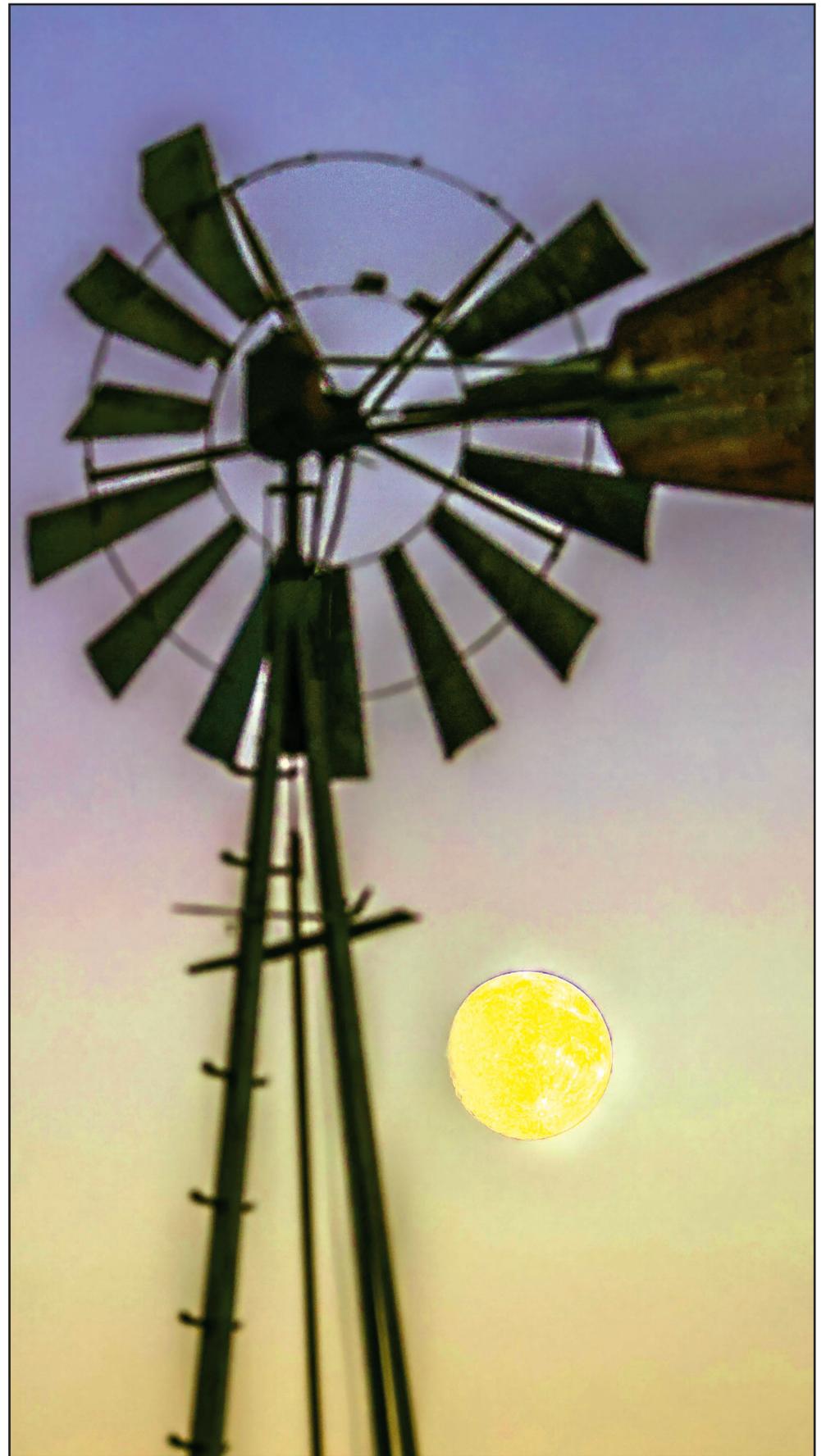
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# State Expands Ag Weather Network with New Station Near Viking

## Minnesota Department of Agriculture

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is expanding the Minnesota Ag Weather Network (MAWN) with a new weather station just west of Viking. The station, called Viking 1SW, will deliver localized weather data to farmers in Marshall and Pennington counties—areas that have until now fallen outside the network's reach.

Another station near Foston in Polk County is slated to go online later this month, bringing the total number of weather stations operated by MDA and its lo-

cal partners to 58 across the state.

The Viking site was developed in partnership with Pennington County Ag Services, which helped secure a host location. By filling this coverage gap, the Viking 1SW station advances MAWN's goal of ensuring farmers statewide have access to reliable data within a 20-mile radius—information that supports more informed decisions about irrigation, crop health, soil management, and water conservation.

"This station will finally give farmers in Northwest Minnesota access to the

weather data they've been missing," said Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen. "It's about providing tools that help producers protect their land, use water wisely, and adapt quickly to changing conditions."

MAWN weather stations provide an array of real-time environmental data:

- Rainfall
- Air temperature
- Wind speed and direction
- Dew point temperature
- Soil temperature (to 7.5 feet)
- Soil moisture (to 40 inches)

**WEATHER**  
See Page 15



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**WEATHER**  
From Page 14

Solar radiation  
Snow depth and snow water equivalent

In addition, the network offers tools and modeling resources, including:

Daily estimated crop water use

Disease risk forecasts  
Irrigation scheduling recommendations

Runoff risk predictions

MAWN collaborates with the North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network (NDAWN) to make weather information freely available to the public. Data from Viking 1SW and other Minnesota stations can be accessed through the NDAWN Inversion App, the North Dakota Ag Weather Network, and the NDAWN Central Minnesota Weather Network. Additional program partners include the University of Minne-

sota and soil and water conservation districts across the state.

In 2023, the MDA received \$3 million from Minnesota's Clean Water Fund to expand the reach of MAWN. This investment supports the installation of about 40 new weather stations over three years, developed in collaboration with local partners. Given Minnesota's climatic variability, up to 80 stations may be needed to provide all agricultural regions with accurate, localized weather insights.

The MDA this year installed 12 new stations in Southern Minnesota, located near:

Cologne (Carver County)

Eyota (Olmsted County)

Fairfax (Renville County)

Geneva (Freeborn County)

Godahl (Brown County)

Hastings (Dakota County)

Kenyon (Goodhue County)

Madison (Lac qui Parle County)

Murdock (Swift County)

Pine Island (Dodge County)

Willmar (Kandiyohi County)

Windom (Jackson County)

These stations are already collecting data, which is publicly available through the NDAWN platforms.

To view real-time weather data or learn more about the Minnesota Ag Weather Network, visit: [www.mda.state.mn.us/minnesota-ag-weather-network](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/minnesota-ag-weather-network).

Landowners interested in hosting a weather station can complete the Minnesota Ag Weather Station Host application at: [www.mda.state.mn.us/weather-station-host](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/weather-station-host).

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# MDA Awards over \$560,000 to Support Meat Processing Workforce and Education

## Minnesota Department of Agriculture

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has awarded more than \$560,000 in grants to support workforce development and hands-on training in meat processing across the state. Funding was made available through two complementary programs: the Meat Processing Train and Retain Grant program and the Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) Meat Education and Training (MEAT) Grant program.

Through the Train and Retain Grant program, the MDA awarded \$341,690 to three organizations working to build and strengthen

the workforce for small- to medium-sized meat and poultry processors. This one-time funding supports hiring and employee retention efforts through eligible activities such as tuition reimbursement, sign-on and retention bonuses, and childcare stipends. These investments are designed to help address critical workforce shortages in the meat processing industry.

### Train and Retain Grant Recipients

Latino Economic Development Center – Will support a new meat processor in Lismore and up to five additional facilities with hiring and employee training.

Region Five Development Commission – Will

fund meat processing course tuition and sign-on bonuses to assist processors within a 60-mile radius.

Mapleton Economic Development Authority – Will help hire and train two full-time employees at a new processing facility in the area.

In addition to the Train and Retain Grant program, the MDA awarded \$222,360 in fiscal year 2025 through its AGRI MEAT Grant program. This program helps schools establish or expand meat cutting and butchery training programs by funding equipment purchases, facility renovations, curriculum development,

**MDA See Page 17**

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**MDA From Page 16**

and faculty training for both new and existing butchery programs. Six schools across Minnesota received funding through this program. See awardees and project descriptions below.

“These grant programs are part of our ongoing efforts to support workforce development and ensure a thriving meat processing sector,” said Agriculture Commissioner Thom Petersen. “By investing in both industry training and education, we’re helping to meet growing demand while creating meaningful career opportunities for the next generation.”

The AGRI Program administers grants to farmers, agribusinesses, schools, and more throughout Minnesota to advance the state’s agricultural and renewable energy sectors.

**2025 AGRI Meat Education and Training (MEAT) Awards:**

School Name Award Total Proj-

ect summary

**Battle Lake High School (\$66,069.96):** Development of a hands-on meat science curriculum that prepares students for careers in meat processing. The project will provide critical skills in meat handling, processing, safety, and industry regulations. The meat science course will be housed within the existing agricultural program.

**Dover-Eyota Schools (\$11,716.12):** Incorporation of hands-on wild game processing into existing natural resource courses. The project will equip students with skills in meat handling, food safety, and introduce them to career opportunities in the meat industry.

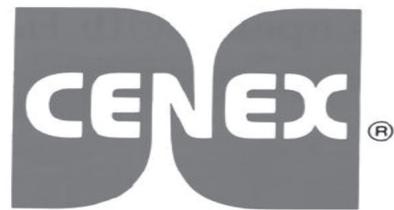
**Holdingford Schools (\$28,010):** Multi-phase development of meat processing coursework that uses collaborative relationships with local lockers and creates a workforce pipeline. One ag classroom will be converted into a meat processing area, and students will

have processing units incorporated into existing ag classes.

**Little Falls Community Schools (\$37,911.84):** Incorporation of meat processing education into an existing ag science program. Students will learn about food safety, meat cutting skills, and a meat industry career path through hands-on learning and guided instruction.

**Staples-Motley High School (\$53,416.67):** Establishment of a meat cutting and butchery curriculum that provides high school students hands-on learning and career pathways. Students will gain skills in meat processing, food safety, and business development.

**Wabasso School District (\$25,235.66):** Establishment of a meat science course offered twice per year, introducing over 30 students to the meat industry yearly. The course will incorporate training in meat processing and learning from the many local lockers in the area.



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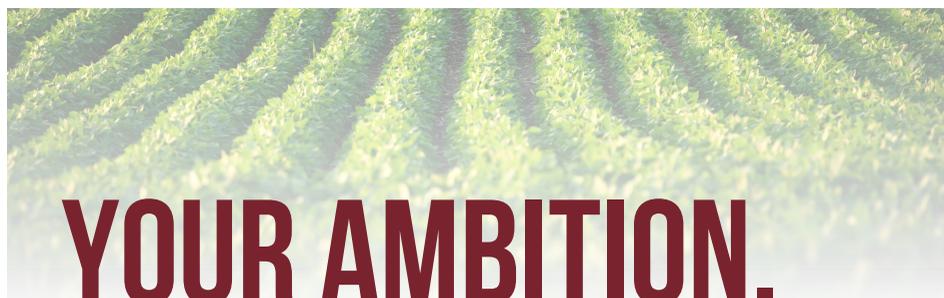
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