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FARMFEST**
August 4-6, 2026 | Redwood County, MN

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**MINNESOTA
FARMFEST
AUGUST 4-6**

PAGES 6-7, 12-20



SENATE AG COMMITTEE RELEASES FARM BILL DRAFT

Minnesota Farmers Union

Senate Agriculture Committee Chair John Boozman, R-Ark. on June 23 released a 900-page draft of the federal Farm Bill.

“Farm bills are important rural economic development engines, providing funding not only for commodity programs but also for research, conservation, nutrition, credit, rural development and crop insurance,” said Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) President Gary Wertish. “I appreciate the committee’s work to get the bill to this stage and look forward to working with committee members, including Chairman Boozman and Ranking Member Sen. Amy Klobu-

char, D-Minn., to improve this bill in the weeks ahead to meet the many challenges facing farmers, including trade disruptions, rising input costs and corporate consolidation.”

National Farmers Union (NFU) President Rob Larew issued the following statement reacting to the release of the Farm Bill draft.

“While the bill includes meaningful improvements, it needs to go further to meet the scale of the crisis facing family farmers and ranchers across this country.

“What we need is a true safety net that moves away from ad hoc assistance, keeps pace with rising production costs and delivers real stabili-



ty in the marketplace. That means strengthening and modernizing core farm programs to reflect today’s economic realities and withstand tomorrow’s shocks. It means building a dedicated structure and funding stream for disaster assistance that is fast, consistent and doesn’t require farmers to wait on Congress to act. These reforms would give farmers more predictable risk management tools, reduce uncertainty and end the cycle of repeated emergency interventions.

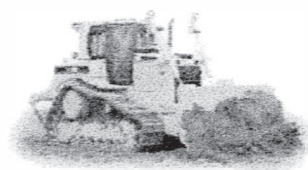
“We urge the committee to go fur-

ther on priorities that matter to farmers and consumers: mandatory country-of-origin labeling for meat and poultry, year-round nationwide E15, local food procurement funding, and stronger Packers and Stockyards Act enforcement.

“If we don’t take decisive action now, we risk losing the next generation of farmers and ranchers. NFU will continue working with the committee and the full Congress to fight for the long-term, structural changes farm country deserves.”

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FARMERS UNION MOURNS PASSING

of General Counsel David Velde

Submitted

National Farmers Union (NFU) and Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) mourn the passing of David Velde, a long-time Farmers Union leader and General Counsel for the organizations.

Velde, 74, of Alexandria, died June 26.

Dave's connection to Farmers Union ran deep. He grew up in a Farmers Union family and was the director of public affairs for Minnesota Farmers Union before serving as NFU and MFU General Counsel. He presided over countless member-driven policy-setting deliberations and provided steady counsel to the organization for decades. Dave also co-managed his firm, Velde Moore, Ltd., where he practiced law alongside his wife, Brenda Velde.

"Dave Velde was a gifted counselor in the fullest sense: sharp enough to see every angle of a difficult problem, and human enough to know it often took a little lighthearted banter to



DAVE VELDE

get through a tense debate. That skill was never more evident than at our national convention, where he chaired the grassroots policymaking process that is at the heart of this organiza-

tion; he made sure every delegate felt heard even in disagreement," said NFU President Rob Larew. "His legacy will endure as a steady, trusted steward within Farmers Union — one who helped reshape how we deliver results for the people we serve and our partners around the world. The wit and warmth he brought into every room will be impossible to replace. We are a stronger organization for his service, and I am a better person for having worked beside him."

"Dave Velde spent his entire career championing family farmers and rural communities," said MFU President Gary Wertish. "He advocated for policies that supported family farmers as director of public affairs for Minnesota Farmers Union, deputy commissioner for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and board member for the Minnesota Rural Finance Authority. He served as General Counsel for the Minnesota Farmers Union and the National Farmers Union. He was the voice of the Minnesota Farmers

Union State Convention for decades, skillfully guiding the policy debate with both humor and purpose. He also presided over policy debate at the WFU and NFU annual conventions and the World Farmers Organization general assemblies, where he previously served as a board member.

"On behalf of all Farmers Union members, I offer my deepest sympathy to the Velde family as I join them in celebrating Dave and the many contributions he made to family farm agriculture in Minnesota, the United States and around the world," Wertish said. "He will be sorely missed."

NFU and MFU extend their deepest condolences to Velde's family and to the many Farmers Union members and staff whose lives he touched through decades of dedicated service.

An obituary can be found online at <https://www.andersonfuneral.net/obituaries/dave-velde>



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MPCA WILL NOT REQUIRE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR RIVERVIEW DAIRY EXPANSION

Minnesota Farmers Union

Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) leaders expressed disappointment that the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) decided to forego an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed expansion of Riverview's West River Dairy.

Riverview LLP proposes to expand its West River Dairy in Stevens County from 7,855 cows to 18,855 cows. This scale of expansion is unprecedented in Minnesota and MFU supported a fuller examination of its environmental, economic and social consequences through an EIS. An EIS

provides detailed information about the environmental impacts of a proposed project, presents project alternatives and identifies ways to reduce adverse environmental impacts.

During the 2026 legislative session, MFU supported legislation (HF3940/SF4275) to require an EIS be prepared before animal feedlots with a capacity of 10,000 animal units or more be constructed.

"When we established our current regulatory framework for feedlots in the late 1990s, no one contemplated a nearly 19,000-cow dairy operation. That is more than 60 times the aver-

When we established our current regulatory framework for feedlots in the late 1990s, no one contemplated a nearly 19,000-cow dairy operation. That is more than 60 times the average size dairy herd in our state.

- MFU President Gary Wertish



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age size dairy herd in our state," said MFU President Gary Wertish. "We support an EIS for animal feedlots with a capacity of 10,000 animal units or more because we believe in robust rural economies centered on people in agriculture. It's the people who attend schools and churches, shop at local businesses and build strong communities. People across the state deserve access to clean water and clean air and that's why MFU supports the thorough project review an EIS would

provide."

"Consolidation is reshaping our dairy sector, and the trend has implications for land access, local economies and the next generation of farmers," said MFU Vice President Anne Schwagerl. "We cannot ignore these dynamics, but neither shall we accept them without careful consideration. Requiring an EIS is a measured, reasonable step. It ensures that when we make decisions, we do so with eyes wide open."

REGISTER NOW for the Strip-Till Expo Sept. 9 at the Lamberton SWROC

Submitted

Are you or farmers you work with looking for ways to reduce input costs while maintaining yield and improving resilience?

Research and on-farm experience has shown that strip tillage can result in economic, environmental, and soil health benefits. Strip tillage can reduce soil loss by approximately two tons per acre while maintaining or improving profitability compared to conventional systems. Fewer field passes also mean lower fuel use, reduced labor, and less equipment wear.



Join us on
Wednesday, Sept. 9, 2026,
from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

at the Southwest Research and Outreach Center in Lamberton to hear from experienced strip-tillage farmers and University of MN researchers about this conservation tillage system.

Attendees will also be able to compare multiple systems in side-by-side demonstrations in the same field and under the same conditions.

The event is free to attend, thanks to sponsor support, but pre-registration is requested to assist with meal planning. For more information and to register, visit: z.umn.edu/Stexpo.



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FINALISTS

Woman Farmer of the the Year



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FINALISTS CHOSEN

FOR FARMFEST WOMAN FARMER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Submitted

The top five finalists for the 2026 Farmfest Woman Farmer of the Year Award have been selected. IDEAg Group, LLC., producers of Minnesota Farmfest, will present the seventh annual award on Thursday, Aug. 6 during the 2026 event in Redwood County.

Selected by a panel of judges, the finalists were recognized for their commitment to their farms and rural communities. Applications were evaluated based on dedication to their operations, contributions to profitability and diversification, ability to overcome challenges, community involvement and passion for agriculture.

The 2026 finalists, listed in no particular order, are:

- Trisha Zachman, Belgrade
- Erica Sawatzke, Kensington
- Christina Traeger, Avon
- Meg Stuedemann, Belle Plaine
- Mary Joyer, Lino Lakes

Detailed biographies and event information are available at Farmfest.com.

The finalists will be recognized during the Women in Ag Event on

the morning of Thursday, Aug. 6 at the Wick Buildings Farmfest Center stage. The event includes a keynote presentation and concludes with the announcement of the 2026 Woman Farmer of the Year.

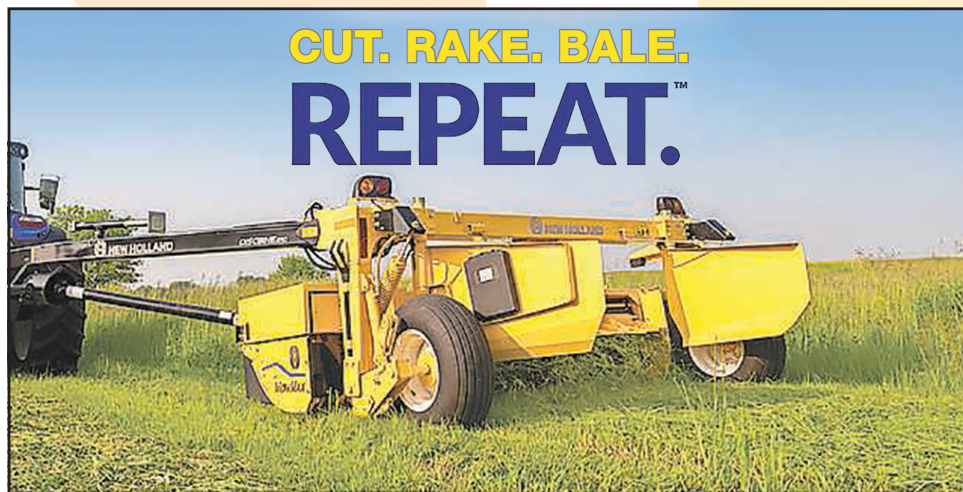
"Each year, we're inspired by the dedication, resilience and leadership our nominees bring to agriculture," said Niki Jones, event marketing director for IDEAg Group. "The 2026 finalists represent the strength and diversity of Minnesota farming, and we are honored to celebrate their contributions."

Farmfest will take place Aug. 4-6, 2026, bringing together farmers and agricultural professionals from across

the Midwest. Attendees are encouraged to join the Women in Ag Event on Aug. 6 to support the finalists and hear from the winner.

The Farmfest Woman Farmer of the Year Award is sponsored by Minnesota Soybean Research & Promotional Council, AgCountry Farm Credit Services, Common Ground Minnesota, Farm Bureau Financial Services and the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program. For tickets and more information, visit Farmfest.com.

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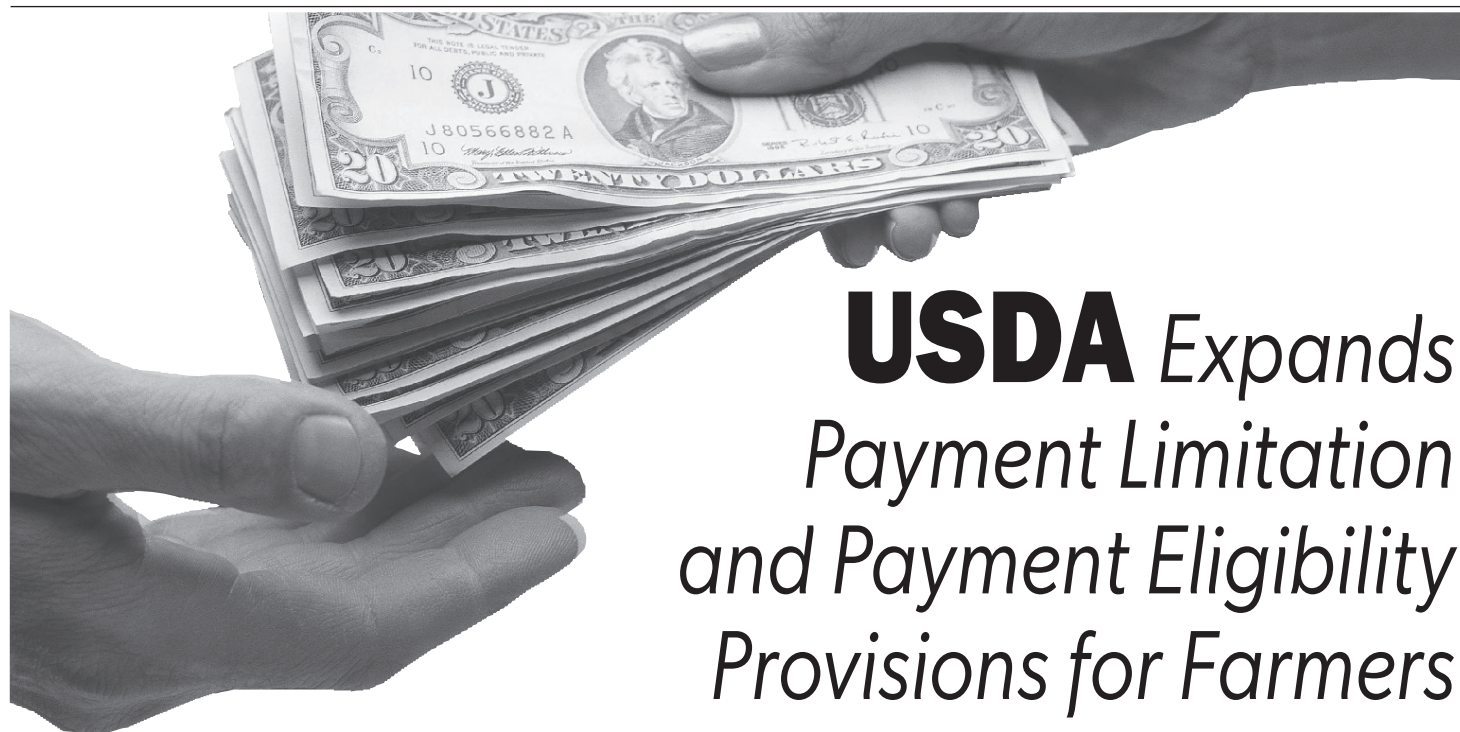
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USDA Expands Payment Limitation and Payment Eligibility Provisions for Farmers

United States Department of Agriculture

Update Farm Operating Plans by Sept. 15, 2026

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is expanding payment limitation and payment eligibility provisions that affect program payments including allowing for the equitable treatment of business entities. Additionally, producers will benefit from an increased payment limitation for certain programs, and a broader definition of farming income that will result in more exceptions to income limitations.

"The 2026 program year will be a monumental change for farmers and ranchers who can now structure their farm entities to benefit from the legal protections of certain business structures without limiting their access to the farm safety net," said Bill Beam, FSA Administrator. "Producers have had to make difficult decisions for far too long when it comes to structuring their operations. The administration is proud to give farmers and ranchers more options to build and protect their legacy for generations to come while receiving full support from USDA."

These changes were outlined in the Working Families Tax Cuts Act which provides a large investment in American agriculture by improving

eligibility provisions, the farm safety net, disaster assistance, and price support programs. USDA previously announced that this fall, producers will benefit from increased reference prices for major commodities. Today's announcement gives producers more flexibility in structuring their operations and provides a stronger safety net.

Payment Eligibility

Starting with the 2026 crop year, for payment eligibility purposes, FSA will treat applicable limited liability companies (LLCs) and S-Corporations (S-Corps), and other similar entities, as "pass through entities." Each member of the qualified pass-through entity who meets actively engaged in farming criteria will help qualify the entity for expanded payments.

Previously, farm operations that were structured as an LLC or an S-Corp were limited to a single payment limitation, which varies by program. Now, partnerships, S-Corps, qualifying LLCs, and joint ventures or general partnerships will be treated the same.

For program year 2026 only, farm operations that are structured as LLCs or S-Corps or one of the new qualified pass-through entities must file updated farm operating plans with FSA for program year 2026 by Sept. 15, 2026. After program year

2026, FSA will continue to use June 1 as the date for determining ownership interest in an entity. Producers who have crop insurance or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Pro-

gram coverage should contact their crop insurance agent or local FSA office before restructuring their farm operation to ensure appropriate timing for restructuring without impacting current insurance coverage.

Members of qualified pass-through entities must provide contributions and be engaged in farming for the entity to be considered actively engaged in farming.

An additional change allows members of all entity types to receive compensation for labor and management contributions and use the same contribution to qualify as "actively engaged in farming." This update provides consistent treatment of member contributions across all entity types.

Payment Limitation and Attribution

Payment limitation changes include an increased payment limit for the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) program. Starting with crop year 2025, the

USDA SEE PAGE 11 ►

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Steven Roehl Vice President of Agriculture

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Roehl formally assumed the Vice President position on June 1, 2026

Steve brings a passion for growing
crops and a proven track record in
production agriculture.

- Luke Rust, SMBSC President and CEO

Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative

Southern Minnesota Beet Sugar Cooperative (SMBSC), a shareholder-owned producer of refined sugar and sugar products, has named Steven Roehl to be its next Vice President of Agriculture.

With more than three decades of experience in agronomy, crop production, and agricultural research, Roehl brings a proven track record of advancing crop performance, supporting growers, and driving innovation across the industry. Most recently serving in Agronomy Technical Service and Support for Loveland Products, Inc., Roehl leverages deep technical expertise to educate sales teams and enhance the adoption of crop nutrition solutions.

Loveland Products manufacturer of agricultural and non-crop input products, offering crop protection, plant nutrition, seed treatment, and adjuvant solutions to customers worldwide.

Previously, he served as SMBSC's Ag Strategy Manager, where he led data-driven initiatives to improve production practices and processing outcomes. This work included developing a novel mathematical standard to evaluate production inputs, as well as identifying best-management approaches to support cooperative success.

Roehl has also held technical and

research roles with Loveland Products, West Central Distribution, and Dow AgroSciences/Mycogen, consistently contributing to product development, field research, and agronomic innovation. Earlier in his career, he spent over a decade with SMBSC in roles ranging from Production Agronomist to Research Agronomist and Agriculturist, providing direct support to shareholders, leading research trials, and managing agronomic data and fertility programs. These experiences established a strong foundation in cooperative operations and grower relations.

Raised on a livestock and crop farm in central Minnesota, Roehl brings practical, firsthand knowledge of production agriculture. He holds a Master of Science in Weed Science from North Dakota State University and a dual Bachelor of Science in Soil Science and Agronomy from the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

"Steve brings a passion for growing crops and a proven track record in production agriculture. His leadership and connection to our shareholders will be key in producing a consistent crop year after year. The depth and breadth of his agronomic expertise position us well as we continue advancing sugar production and tonnage growth across our cooperative," said Luke Rust, SMBSC President and CEO.

► USDA FROM PAGE 9

ARC and PLC payment limit will increase from \$125,000 to \$155,000. This payment limit will be adjusted going forward annually based on inflation.

Payment limitations are the maximum amount that a person or legal entity can receive for any crop year, directly or indirectly, through certain USDA programs. The same maximum payment limitation that applied to joint ventures and general partnerships will apply to qualified pass-through entities.

The policy change to payment limitation calculations takes effect beginning with program year 2026 for all qualified pass-through entities.

Average Adjusted Gross Income

The Working Families Tax Cuts Act broadened the definition of farming income to be more reflective of modern agricultural business practices. As a result, diversified producers will not be penalized under USDA's requirements for average adjusted gross income (AGI).

Producers are exempt from the \$900,000 AGI cap for conservation and disaster programs if at least 75% of their average gross income is from farming, ranching, or silviculture, which now includes agri-tourism, direct-to-consumer sales, and certain equipment sales.

Additionally, qualified pass-through entities are not required to certify compliance with the average AGI limitation at the entity level. However, members individually must meet average AGI requirements, which is the same requirement for joint operations.



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insightful educational sessions and organize fun family activities to not only help farmers grow their family businesses but also to celebrate farming and the rural lifestyle.

Farmfest is “The Community that Keeps You Growing” because there’s

nothing like gathering with the people who understand your work, and your way of life. The Farmfest tradition is to bring together farming families from across the upper Midwest to not only do business, but also to eat, explore and have fun celebrating what you grow and who you grow it with.

- Take in livestock cattle chute demonstrations, livestock seminars and product presentations.

- Participate in political forums and debates.

- Register to win huge prizes at the gate and from dozens of exhibitors.

**Top Reasons to Attend
Farmfest 2026**

- Network with hundreds of exhibitors showcasing the latest in agriculture.

- See displays that include farm machinery, livestock equipment and thousands of ag products and services to assist your farm operation.

- See live demonstrations or get behind the wheel for a ride and drive demo.

- Enjoy meeting ag celebrities, listening to live music and having a drink with friends at the Music and Entertainment Tent.

- Explore specialty crop demo plots, exhibits and learning sessions.



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MINNESOTA
FARMFEST

August 4-6, 2026 | Redwood County, MN

MINNESOTA FARMFEST

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS AUG. 4-6

Location: 28366 County Highway 13 • Morgan, MN 56266 • Attendees enter from MN-67 on 1st St.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4

- All Day Can-Am Ride & Drive Demonstrations
Can-Am Booth #706
- All Day Ziegler Ride & Drive Demonstrations
Ziegler Ag Equipment Booth #1034
- All Day Drone Demonstrations
West of the Ag Tents
- All Day Farmfest 250 Antique Tractor Display Booth #215
- 9:00 a.m. 2027 Profit Roadmap: Practical Tools for Navigating Tight Farm Economics Music & Entertainment Tent #712
- 9:15 a.m. Farm Succession Planning, presented by Hellmuth & Johnson
Wick Buildings Farmfest Center
- 10:00 a.m. Crop Talk, presented by Farm Bureau Financial Services
Farm Bureau Hub (Tent #7)
- 10:00 a.m. Cattle Chute Demonstrations
Livestock Tent LT203
- 10:30 a.m. Congressional Candidate Forum – MN1 & MN2 Districts
Wick Buildings Farmfest Center
- 11:00 a.m. Live Music by Tyson Schulte Farm Bureau Hub (Tent #7)
- 11:15 a.m. Strategies to Prevent and Manage New World Screwworm
Livestock Tent LT203
- 11:30 a.m. Skid Steer Rodeo
Rodeo Course #205
- 11:30 a.m. Music: Jeremy Poland & Lendon James Perform
Music & Entertainment Tent #712
- Noon Linder Farm Network Noon Show
Wick Buildings Farmfest Center
- Noon Changing Hands, presented by Farm Bureau Financial Services
Farm Bureau Hub (Tent #7)
- 1:00 p.m. Pedal Pull

MINNESOTA FARMFEST

August 4-6, 2026 | Redwood County, MN



- Near Entrance Gate 2*
- 1:00 p.m. Cattle Chute Demos and Company Presentations
Livestock Tent LT203
 - 1:00 p.m. Live Music by Tyson Schulte Farm Bureau Hub (Tent #7)
 - 1:15 p.m. Congressional Candidate Forum – MN6, MN7 & MN8 Districts
Wick Buildings Farmfest Center
 - 2:00 p.m. Crop Talk, presented by Farm Bureau Financial Services
Farm Bureau Hub (Tent #7)

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 5

- All Day Can-Am Ride & Drive Demonstrations
Can-Am Booth #706
- All Day Ziegler Ride & Drive Demonstrations
Ziegler Ag Equipment Booth #1034
- All Day Drone Demonstrations
West of the Ag Tents
- All Day Farmfest 250 Antique Tractor Display Booth #215
- 8:00 a.m. Minnesota Farm Bureau Pancake Breakfast
Farm Bureau Hub (Tent #7)
- 9:00 a.m. Ag Outlook Forum
Wick Buildings Farmfest Center
- 10:00 a.m. Cattle Chute Demonstrations
Livestock Tent LT203
- 10:00 a.m. Autonomous Tractor Tillage Demonstration, presented by Kibble Equipment
East Side of Hwy 13
- 10:30 a.m. Governor Candidate

- Forum**
Wick Buildings Farmfest Center
- 11:00 a.m. Live Music by Tyson Schulte Farm Bureau Hub (Tent #7)
 - 11:15 a.m. Profit Strategies in the Future Cattle & Hog Markets
Livestock Tent LT203
 - 11:30 a.m. Skid Steer Rodeo
Rodeo Course #205

- 11:30 a.m. Music: Kayla Daniels & Jake Moravetz Perform
Music & Entertainment Tent #712
- Noon Linder Farm Network Noon Show
Wick Buildings Farmfest Center
- 1:00 p.m. Pedal Pull
Near Entrance Gate 2
- 1:00 p.m. Cattle Chute Demos and Company Presentations
Livestock Tent LT203
- 1:00 p.m. Live Music by Tyson Schulte Farm Bureau Hub (Tent #7)
- 1:15 p.m. U.S. Senate Candidate Forum
Wick Buildings Farmfest Center

SCHEDULE SEE PAGE 17 ►

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FARMFEST
August 4-6, 2026 | Redwood County, MN

Welcome to Farmfest 2026! We're excited to once again bring together farmers, agribusiness professionals, and rural communities from across Minnesota and beyond for three days of connection, education, and innovation.

This year's show comes at an important time for agriculture. As producers navigate tight margins, evolving markets, and ongoing policy discussions, Farmfest remains committed to delivering timely insights, practical tools, and meaningful conversations to help move your operation forward. From our 2027 Profit Roadmap sessions to the Ag Outlook Forum, you'll find expert perspectives focused on helping you plan for the year ahead and beyond.

Our Farmfest Forums and candidate discussions continue to be a cornerstone of Farmfest. With congressional, gubernatorial, and U.S. Senate candidate forums, attendees will have the opportunity to hear directly from leaders and candidates on the issues shaping agriculture and rural communities.

We're also proud to showcase the innovation driving agriculture forward. From ride-and-drive equipment demonstrations and drone technology displays to hands-on learning in our livestock tent and education building, there are countless opportunities to see the latest advancements in action and gain practical knowledge you can take back to your farm.

At the same time, we're taking a moment to reflect on agriculture's rich legacy as part of America's 250th celebration. Be sure to visit the Farmfest 250 Antique Tractor Display, honoring the generations of farmers and innovations that have shaped our industry and rural way of life.

Farmfest is also about community. Whether you're enjoying live music, attending the Women in Ag event,



celebrating the Farm Family of the Year, or simply reconnecting with friends and neighbors, we hope you'll take time to experience everything the show has to offer.

Thank you for being part of Farmfest 2026. We appreciate your dedication to agriculture and look forward to another great year together in Redwood County.

The Farmfest Team

Where to Go

Searching for a specific service or information? Look no further! The Farmfest show site has everything you need to get the most out of the show. Here's a short list of what's available on site:

Show Staff

If you have any questions or need assistance during the show, please feel free to ask anyone wearing a bright T-shirt or Farmfest branded polo. We are happy to help!

Show Office

The show office is centrally located

just off Main and 5th Streets. Look for the giant American flag flying proudly over the grounds.

Restrooms

There are two air-conditioned restroom trailers located near the show office and the Minnesota Farm Bureau tent. A number of portable toilets are located throughout the grounds.

Lost & Found

Lost items will be brought to the show office.

Handicapped Parking

Handicapped parking is available in the first row of the south attendee parking lot, just outside Entrance Gate 2.

Lost Children

Please check in at the show office for lost children. In the event of a lost child, the staff at the show office can make an announcement over the PA system to help locate your child.

First Aid

The First Aid Station is on the west side of the grounds between the Exhibitor Entrance and Gilfillan Estate.

In case of an emergency, alert a member of our staff immediately.

No Pets Allowed

While we love our furry friends, we can't allow pets on the show grounds—with or without leashes. ADA approved service dogs are permitted.

Parking

The Farmfest parking lots are located on the south and west sides of the show grounds. All attendee parking is free of charge.

Getting Around

There are plenty of ways to get around the 50 acres of Farmfest. Take advantage of the convenient transportation options provided.

Courtesy Shuttle

A complimentary on-site shuttle sponsored by Farm Bureau Financial Services will be circling the grounds. Look for the FARMFEST SHUTTLE STOP signs and hop on the shuttle for a ride around the perimeter.

Parking Lot Shuttle

Shuttles run through the parking lot during the show to help you get from your car to the entrances and back again. Shuttles will make multiple stops throughout the parking lot.

Courtesy and Parking Lot Shuttle Safety

- As they say at the amusement park, "Keep your hands and feet inside the ride." For your safety, please keep your arms and legs inside the on-site and parking lot shuttles.

- Please secure your belongings and hold on to young children to avoid injury.

- Please wait for the shuttle to come to a complete stop before boarding or departing the shuttle.

Golf Cart Rental

Golf carts are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. All golf cart drivers must have a valid driver's license. Golf cart rental is located in-

WELCOME SEE PAGE 18 ►



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FOUR CANDIDATE FORUMS SCHEDULED AT FARMFEST

This year could be the biggest year yet for Candidate Forums at Minnesota Farmfest, featuring four candidate forums during the event on Aug. 4, 5 and 6 at the Gillfillan Estate near Redwood Falls, Minn. In every even numbered year since 1990, Minnesota Farmfest has featured candidate forums for the Minnesota election races for Governor, U.S. Senate, and the Congressional seats in Greater Minnesota. Several other interesting forums on timely agricultural topics have also been planned during the three-day event. Farmfest is coordinated by IDEAg Group, LLC, which is a subsidiary of the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Tuesday, Aug. 4 will feature two Congressional Candidate Forums in the Wick Buildings Farmfest Center. Minnesota's first and second congressional districts will take the stage at 10:30 a.m., followed by Minnesota's sixth, seventh and eighth congressional districts at 1:15 p.m.

Wednesday, Aug. 5 will feature two special candidate forums at Farmfest, the Minnesota Governor's Candidate Forum at 10:30 a.m. and the U.S. Senate Candidate Forum at 1:15 p.m.

For the first time in many years,

Minnesota has no incumbent running in either the Governor or U.S. Senate races. The focus of all the Farmfest forums will be on current agriculture and rural issues in Minnesota. The Minnesota Farmfest Candidate Forums are sponsored by the Minnesota Foundation for Agriculture.

The Farmfest "Ag Outlook Forum" is scheduled for Wednesday, Aug. 5 at 9:00 a.m., which will feature an overview of current crop conditions, commodity prices, the ag economy, and other ag-related topics.

The 2026 Farmfest "Women in Ag Event" will be held on Thursday, Aug. 6 at 10:45 a.m., and the **University of Minnesota "Farm Family of the Year" recognition program will be held at 1:15 p.m. on Aug. 6**, all held in the Wick Buildings Farmfest Center. There will also be special livestock-related sessions held daily at 11:15 a.m. in the Livestock Tent sponsored by Livestock Equipment and Manufacturing.

For more information on the Farmfest forums contact Kent Thiesse, Minnesota Farmfest Forum Coordinator (507-381-7960). For more details on exhibitors, food vendors, and other activities during Farmfest, go to: Farmfest.com



► **SCHEDULE** FROM PAGE 13

2:40 p.m. Protecting the Farm: Estate, Asset Protections & Succession Planning
Wick Buildings Farmfest Center

THURSDAY, AUGUST 6

- **All Day Can-Am Ride & Drive Demonstrations**
Can-Am Booth #706
- **All Day Ziegler Ride & Drive Demonstrations**
Ziegler Ag Equipment Booth #1034
- **All Day Drone Demonstrations**
West of the Ag Tents
- **All Day Farmfest 250 Antique Tractor Display**
Booth #215
- **8:00 a.m. University of Minnesota Manure Applicator Certification Program**
Wick Buildings Farmfest Center
- **9:00 a.m. 2027 Profit Roadmap: Practical Tools for Navigating Tight Farm Economics**
Music & Entertainment Tent #712
- **9:00 a.m. Cattle Chute Demonstrations**

Livestock Tent LT203

- **10:00 a.m. Beef Quality Assurance Training & Certification**
Livestock Tent LT203
- **10:00 a.m. Pedal Pull**
Near Entrance Gate 2
- **10:45 a.m. Women in Ag Event & Woman Farmer of the Year Award**
Wick Buildings Farmfest Center
- **11:30 a.m. Skid Steer Rodeo**
Rodeo Course #205
- **Noon Jake Nelson Music**
Music & Entertainment Tent #712
- **Noon Linder Farm Network Noon Show**
Wick Buildings Farmfest Center
- **12:30 p.m. Behind the Scenes: A Candid Q&A with the Woman Farmer of the Year Finalists**
Farm Bureau Hub (Tent #7)
- **1:00 p.m. Cattle Chute Demos and Company Presentations**
Livestock Tent LT203
- **1:15 p.m. University of Minnesota Farm Family Recognition Program**
Wick Buildings Farmfest Center
- **2:30 p.m. Live Drawing for Yeti Cooler & \$750 in Groceries**
Farm Bureau Hub (Tent #7)

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► **WELCOME** FROM PAGE 15

side Entrance Gate 2. Golf carts can be reserved by contacting NB Golf Cars at 605-275-4653.

Golf Cart Safety

Please operate your golf cart responsibly. The Farmfest grounds are busy with foot traffic and other vehicles.

- Always be aware of your surroundings and keep your speed to a minimum.

- Golf carts may not carry more passengers than available seating.

- Please do not enter an exhibit with your golf cart. Park them on the side of the street and don't forget to remove your key when you exit. Anyone found not following these rules will be asked to return their golf cart for the day.

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Blue Loon Concessions #C616

Burgers, Polish sausage, Italian sausage, corn dogs, cheese curds, french fries

Blue Loon Concessions #C810

Corn dogs, cheese curds, buffalo cheese curds, cream cheese wontons, raspberry cream cheese wontons, mini donuts, beverages

MN Farm Bureau #C8

Pork chop on a stick, pork chop sandwich, pickle on a stick, chips, beverages

MN State Cattlemens #C513N

Beef sandwich meal with baked beans, chips, pickles, and beverage

Miss Becky's BBQ #C127

Beef brisket sandwich, pulled pork sandwich, potato salad, chips, break-

fast sandwich, rolls, coffee

Pizzeria 201 #C509A

Wood fired pizza

Roadhouse Bar & Grill #C714

Burgers, mac & cheese bowls with smoked brisket or BBQ pork, potato salad, coleslaw, macaroni salad, variety of hot hogs, beer, White Claw, beverages

FARMFEST TREATS

A Good Lemon #C428

Big Ben's Kettle Corn #C3

Blue Loon Mini Donuts #C2

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#C1001S Shakes and Malts: Vanilla, Strawberry and Chocolate

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Wednesday, Aug. 5

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11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. – Meet CHOMP, the PowerUp Super Hero Carrot who loves vegetables!

Thursday, Aug. 6

All Day – FREE Blood Pressure Checks All Day

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Redwood County, MN — As farmers face tightening margins, rising input costs, and ongoing market uncertainty, a new seminar at this year's Farmfest will deliver practical tools to help producers strengthen their operations and plan ahead.

Titled "Profit Roadmap: Practical Tools for Navigating Tight Farm Economics," the interactive session will take place from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 4 and Thursday, Aug. 6 in the Music & Entertainment Tent at Farmfest.

The seminar brings together agricultural economists, financial experts, marketing specialists, and mental health advocates to provide actionable strategies and real-time insights farmers can apply immediately.

Speakers include economists, accountants, and industry specialists from organizations such as the American Farm Bureau Federation, StoneX, and North Dakota State University, offering expertise in farm policy, commodity markets, and financial management.

"Farmers are navigating one of the most complex economic environments we've seen in decades," said Faith Parum, PhD, economist with the American Farm Bureau Federation. "This seminar is designed to help producers cut through that uncertainty and make confident, informed decisions now for next year and future seasons."

The program will cover key topics affecting profitability, including the impact of policy and political shifts, lessons from past farm downturns, and strategies to better evaluate financial performance.

Farmers will gain practical guidance on:

- Assessing their operation using cash receipts and tax returns
- Managing production costs and input decisions
- Preparing for lender conversations and securing operating capital
- Strengthening grain marketing strategies to protect revenue

In addition, the session will address the mental and emotional challenges facing farm families today, with resources to support resilience during difficult periods.

Pre-registration is encouraged for access to seminar materials and giveaways, though walk-up participation will be available. For more information, attendees are encouraged to visit farmfest.com/profit-roadmap.

Minnesota Farmfest runs from Aug. 4-6, 2026. Attendees are encouraged to take advantage of this session to improve decision-making and prepare for the 2027 season. The Profit Roadmap seminar is free with Farmfest admission, and attendees can reserve a seat when purchasing their ticket at Farmfest.com.



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MDA AWARDS MORE THAN \$1.3 MILLION TO EXPAND FARM-TO-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Minnesota Department of Agriculture

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) has awarded more than \$1.3 million to schools and early care providers through its Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) Farm to School and Early Care grant programs to increase purchases of Minnesota-grown and -raised foods.

"Since becoming Commissioner in 2019, the MDA has awarded more than \$9 million through Farm to School grants and cost-share funding," said MDA Commissioner Thom Petersen. "These investments create new market opportunities for Minnesota farmers and give Minnesota kids access to local meals that support their learning, growth, and understanding of where their food comes from."

The MDA received over \$2.1 million in requests and awarded \$1,154,532.11 to 59 school districts and 11 early childhood education (ECE) centers located in 40 of Minnesota's 87 counties. The awarded amount includes a total of \$137,464.71 for equipment purchases to support farm to school initiatives. Recipients were awarded one of two grant types:

Farm to School First Bite Grant: For school districts and ECE centers new to local purchasing and looking

to start small.

Farm to School Full Tray Grant: For school districts and ECE centers with some Farm to School purchasing experience that are ready to expand their efforts.

The individual grant awards range in size from \$2,500 to \$30,000 and when combined with required matching contributions from grantees, the program's total investment in local foods will exceed \$1.9 million, providing a significant boost to Minnesota's local food economy.

In addition, the MDA awarded just over \$199,000 to 311 family daycare providers through the Local Tots Cost-Share program. Each provider received up to \$647 to serve more Minnesota-grown and raised-foods as part of their meal and snack programs. This is the second year this program has been offered.

A list of all grant and Local Tots Cost-Share recipients can be found on the Farm to School and Early Care programs webpage. Funding for this program is made available through the MDA's Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) program, which administers grants to farmers, agribusinesses, schools, and more throughout Minnesota to advance the state's agricultural and renewable energy sectors.



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MINNESOTA HELPS FARMERS TO BUY THEIR FIRST FARM

Minnesota Department of Agriculture

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is helping more people get into farming through a new round of our Down Payment Assistance Grant program.

The grant program offers eligible farmers up to \$20,000 to help buy their first farm. There is \$1.64 million available for the program this year. The Walz-Flanagan Administration has helped 130 farmers purchase their first farm in the five years of the Down Payment Assistance Grant program.

Applications for this round of funding are open July 6 to August 31. Eligible applicants must make less than \$250,000 per year in gross agricultural sales, and they must match the award with at least \$8,000 of other funds (e.g. loan, contract for deed, cash, or other financing) to unlock the full award amount.

The MDA will award grants using a random lottery process, with priority

given to eligible applicants who:

Have earned no more than \$100,000 in annual gross farm product sales, or;

Are producers of industrial hemp, cannabis, or specialty crops.

The MDA will notify applicants of award decisions in mid-September.

Farm purchases from direct family (e.g. parents, grandparents, or siblings) are not allowed. Purchases from extended family (e.g. aunt/uncle, cousins) will be allowed.

Farm purchases must take place after approval of the application. The MDA cannot award grants for purchases that have already taken place.

Awardees have six months from the award notification to close on land purchases. The MDA will consider a deadline extension if the awardee can provide a signed purchase agreement or written commitment from an approved technical assistance provider stating that the applicant is looking for land and financially prepared to buy.

FARMERS UNION PROCESSING + MEATS OPENED JUNE 2

Submitted

Farmers Union Processing + Meats opened for business June 2.

The more than 10,000-square-foot meat processing facility slaughters cattle and hogs. The facility is available for custom-exempt processing and is working toward gaining USDA certification in July.

"We are proud to be part of the Staples community and look forward to working with farmers to process their livestock locally and provide them with a high-quality product they can take home and enjoy," said Robb Kasal, plant manager.

The plant grew from a need identified by livestock producers in the five-county region of Cass, Crow

Wing, Morrison, Todd and Wadena counties. The region lacks USDA-inspected meat processing capacity and custom-exempt processors, causing bottlenecks for producers to harvest their livestock and limiting their marketing opportunities. The plant took several years to come to fruition and brought together several partners, including:

- Minnesota State Agricultural Centers of Excellence
- Region 5 Development Commission.
- United States Economic Development Administration
- United States Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service

UNION SEE PAGE 27 ►



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MINNESOTA FARMERS SEE SEVEN STRAIGHT YEARS OF HIGHER PROFITS

Minnesota Department of Agriculture

Farmers enrolled in the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) continue to show stronger and more reliable profitability than non-certified farms, according to new data from the Minnesota State Agricultural Centers of Excellence. The findings reinforce a clear, long-term trend: For the seventh consecutive year, MAWQCP-certified farms reported higher gross cash farm income and higher net farm income than comparable non-certified operations.

The 2026 Influence of Intensified Environmental Practices on Farm Profitability study analyzed financial and production data from farms participating in the Minnesota State Farm Business Management program. The results show that efficient input use, diversified cropping systems, and conservation practices that reduce risk and improve long-term productivity all contribute to stron-

ger financial performance. These approaches help stabilize yields, build resilience, and support more consistent profitability over time.

In 2025, certified farms earned an average net income of just more than \$197,500, compared to \$129,400 for non-certified farms. Median net income followed the same pattern, demonstrating that the financial advantage holds across farm sizes and sectors.

“Seven years of data make one thing unmistakably clear: conservation is a long-term profitability strategy. Certified farms aren’t just seeing better results in good years — they’re holding strong in the tough ones, too,” said MDA Commissioner Thom Petersen. “That kind of steady, repeatable return is invaluable in today’s farm economy. I strongly encourage Minnesota farmers to explore certification and see how this program can strengthen both their operation and the natural resources we all depend

on.”

Keith Olander, executive director of AgCentric and Agricultural Partnerships, noted the resilience of certified farms during a challenging year. “Row crop producers faced real financial pressure in 2025, yet water-quality certified farms continued to come out ahead. Livestock operations in particular saw notable gains. The management approach required for certification continues to translate into stronger financial performance year after year.”

MAWQCP began as a Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) initiative to protect water quality statewide. Since launching statewide in 2016 with Clean Water Fund support, the program has enrolled more than 1.25 million acres across 1,800-plus certified farms. Those farms have implemented conservation practices that prevent more than 1.25 million pounds of nitrogen, 60,500 tons of sediment, and 78,000 pounds of phos-

phorus from entering Minnesota waters each year.

Certification starts with a one-on-one, field-by-field review conducted by local conservation experts who walk the operation with the farmer to identify potential water-quality risks. Together, they develop a customized conservation plan that fits the farm’s goals and addresses those risks with practical, effective solutions.

Farmers receive priority access to technical and financial assistance to complete any needed improvements. Once all risks are resolved, the farm is certified and granted 10 years of regulatory certainty, recognizing it as fully in compliance with Minnesota’s water-quality laws.

Farmers and landowners interested in learning more about MAWQCP or enrolling in the program can contact their local Soil and Water Conservation District or visit My Land My Legacy.

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► **UNION** FROM PAGE 25

- Agricultural Utilization Research Institute
- Happy Dancing Turtle
- Minnesota Department of Agriculture
- Central Telephone Company
- The Small Business Development Center

Ground was broken for the facility in June 2025. Hy-Tec Construction of Brainerd was the lead contractor on the \$8 million project and Widseth was the project architect.

"This project started when members in several counties identified a

lack of meat processing capacity," said Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) President Gary Wertish. "A meat processing facility is a critical asset for farmers who want to add value to their farm by adding livestock. The opening of Farmers Union Processing + Meats is a celebration of persistence

and working together to create a more resilient local food system."

To learn more about Farmers Union Processing + Meats or to book your slaughter dates, call 218-895-MEAT (6328).

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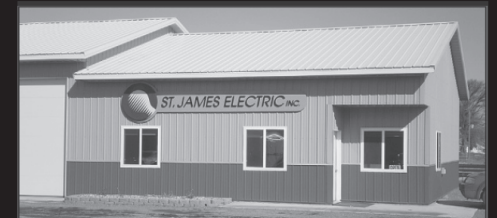
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