



WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION NEWS

UNITED TO GROW FAMILY AGRICULTURE

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for Wisconsin Farmers Union

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Cheers to the Caretakers

The elevator doors popped open and I stepped inside, joining the handful of souls already gathered, sporting their name badges, along with telltale seed dealer hats, implement dealer jackets, and Farmers Union swag. It's never too hard to spot fellow Farmers Union members at the National Farmers Union Convention.

As the elevator jetted downward, I couldn't help but smile at one little visitor, who clung to her dad's arm and was already dressed for pool time and brimming with excitement in the early morning hours. She looked up at her dad inquisitively, noting, "There are a lot more people here today."

He nodded, noting, "There's a conference and a lot of farmers here. These are the people who take care of us."

That earned a heartwarming wide-eyed stare of adoration as her gaze swept back around the elevator. A heartbeat later, the doors jarred open and the crowd shuffled on into their day, but I let the words wash over me a bit. The whole exchange lasted mere seconds, but those few words provided an inspirational start to the convention. The moment encapsulated farming but also so much of what Farmers Union is all about.

Back home in Wisconsin, we have some big projects brewing that aim to fulfill those high words of praise, as you'll see in this issue.

Farmers Union leaders and members are leading the charge on projects that aim to better connect consumers with regional food systems and secure fair prices for farmers. We're also serving as a strong, common-sense voice for smart reforms that would help farmers in the 2023 Farm Bill, not the least of

which is the farmer-led Dairy Together movement that you can learn more about on page 10.

Don't miss the major announcement on page 4 about our exciting new riverfront building project in downtown Chippewa Falls, which will offer ample space for exciting opportunities to market Farmers Union member products and connect consumers with farmers. We're seeking input from members and local businesses on what endeavors might best fit the space.

In 2022, WFU is also working on a revamped strategic plan and will be providing opportunities for member input. Save the date for Thursday, July 21st for the WFU Summer Conference, and a chance to help shape our work in the future.

I recently picked up a copy of *Four Thousand Weeks*, in which author Oliver Burkeman notes that the average human, has a mere 4,000 weeks on this earth. It's a common sense calculation, but a sobering one, especially considering how quickly a week can slip by. Of all the pursuits in life, though, the work of Farmers Union feels a worthy one to engage in with that precious time. I was refilled with that sense of purpose as I stepped off the elevator and reminded of it again as I filled the pages of this magazine with the good works of members throughout the state.

We're digging in on the deep work and striving each day to improve life for farmers and our rural communities. It's easy to get mired down in the challenges of the day – especially in this dreadful mud season – but I find hope is how WFU is fixed on a long-term vision. I hope you can feel the same sparks of hope and ignited determination that I feel as you flip through the following pages.

– Danielle Endvick
Communications Director



NFU seeks Next Generation Advisory Representative

National Farmers Union (NFU) is searching for a Next Generation Advisory Representative (NGAR) to assist with the organization's outreach and engagement with young and beginning farmers. This is a three-year term.

Key responsibilities include participating in NFU Board of Directors meetings as a non-voting member; serving on committees to review programmatic and policy proposals; bringing an informative, innovative perspective; providing input on industry trends and helping to develop organizational strategies designed to engage the next generation of America's family farmers; assisting at events like the convention, fly-in, and NFU Foundation programming; engaging with NFU following the NGAR term and promoting organizational opportunities to emerging leaders.

The NGAR would attend quarterly NFU Board of Directors meetings, including at least 3 in-person meetings per year. The average time commitment for non-meeting months would be 10-15 hours.

Applicants should submit the following documents by May 13th: Resume detailing professional and personal experiences, personalized introductory letter describing connection to Farmers Union and interest in the position, letters of recommendation(s), and description of farm operation or experience.

Applications should be submitted to Abby Ferris, aferris@nfudc.org. Applications will be reviewed by NFU and notified of their status by Aug. 1. Costs associated with meetings (including travel, meals, and incidental expenses) will be reimbursed by NFU.

WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION NEWS

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WFU NEWS COVER PHOTO CONTEST

SUBMIT YOUR BEST RURAL LIFE PHOTOS!



The winning photo earns a Farmers Union hat! High-resolution vertical photos preferred. Send your photo entries and a brief description to Danielle at dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

On this month's cover: It's calving season at the Runamuck Ranch, owned by Chippewa County Farmers Union members Jesse and Danielle Endvick and their sons near Lake Holcombe.

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New Horizons for Wisconsin Farmers Union



Julie Keown-Bomar
Executive Director

The Wisconsin Farmers Union Service Association is the new owner of a historic riverfront building in downtown Chippewa Falls. The property will become the new state headquarters, offer opportunities for members to hold meetings, and provide retail opportunities for members to market products.

We recently completed the purchase of the stately three-story structure at 128 W. River St. The large brick building is in a highly visible downtown location, directly across the street from the Chippewa River and a newly developed park and amphitheater. The current Wisconsin Farmers Union state office, at 117 W Spring St., is just across the alley.

Wisconsin Farmers Union is in the process of planning a large-scale renovation of the new property which will include opportunities for WFU members, provide high visibility for our organization, and serve as an investment. There is room in the building for retail operations, conference space, and residential apartments. We envision our properties on the block as part of the revitalization plan for this area of the central business district. We are working with city planners and economic development professionals at the local, regional and state levels and will hold discussions with interested, like-minded co-ops and businesses. Farm Technology Days is coming to Chippewa County in 2024 and that gives us a great date to shoot for renovation completion.

The need for new office space has been an ongoing issue. Staff uncovered architectural drawings from the 1960s detailing a new office building. In the last few years the need has elevated as the organization grew.

Deciding to stay in Chippewa Falls was an easy decision

because of our long history in the area. Not only has the state office been in Chippewa Falls since the 1940s, but WFU also owns Kamp Kenwood on Lake Wissota. Farm families and local cooperatives helped build the rustic camp, wanting to offer a place for people of all ages to come together to celebrate, to learn, and to enjoy family, friends, and nature. WFU also maintains an office in Madison for legislative and membership staff.

The recently acquired building on River and Island streets housed Leslie Willson's Chippewa Valley Mercantile, founded in 1904. It was later home to several shoe manufacturers. Most recently, owners Scott and Mary Kauphusman, utilized it for Machine Tool Camp (MTC), a machine-tool manufacturing business. They hosted the Chi-Hi Robotics Team, opened Club-MTC, a maker's space, and offered working space to "The Spirit of Christmas," a local non-profit organization. Over the years, MTC outgrew the building, paving the way for Scott and Mary to expand the business on International Drive in Eau Claire. Before putting it up on the market and potentially selling it to a big private developer, they approached WFU. We've had a good neighborly relationship and they knew of our interest and values. The board was interested, so we began to investigate buying the building. After many inspections, appraisals, feasibility studies, and conversations, we closed the deal on April 14, 2022.

Like other Farmers Union states, we are looking at investments that expand markets for members and grow membership. This property could house a farm-to-fork restaurant featuring products from local makers, offer retail space for cooperatives, or help attract new members through other endeavors. There are many possibilities and I'd like to hear from members who might have interest in starting a business in Chippewa Falls, especially one that would utilize products from our members.

We would like to have members experience the facility if you are in the neighborhood or come to a WFU event. Summer Conference is right around the corner on Thursday, July 21st, so plan on hanging out at 128 W. River St. and dreaming with those of us thinking about new horizons for the organization.

The new riverfront property, at left, with the current state office, home of WFU since the 1940s, in the background.



Bringing Back The Golden Rule



Rick Adamski
President

The war in Ukraine is the biggest news item of the past two months. My heart is with the more than 10 million people forced to leave their homes because some still believe that favorable long-term solutions can be achieved by war. It is incomprehensible to me. I asked my 98-year-old father if he was ever even in a fight, because I have never been in a fight. He said that he never did fight with anyone. To believe that a solution can be accomplished through violence is insane to me.

As a sign of shared concern for the people, especially the farmers of Ukraine, Farmers Union Enterprises and the National Farmers Union Boards of Directors have agreed to send a combined contribution \$125,000 of humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

The 120th National Farmers Union Convention (NFU) was held in Denver in February. The NFU Board, on which I serve as your state president, met two days before the convention to plan for the coming year. A highlight throughout the convention was reuniting with friends that we had not seen for the past two years. All attending were impressed with presentations by Montana Senator Jon Tester, USDA-FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux, and a robust virtual presentation and Q&A session with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. The convention included disappointing news that Wisconsin's Patty Edelburg was not successful at winning a third term as Vice President of NFU. I'd like to take a moment to thank Patty for her excellent service and work on behalf of farmers in her time serving in that role.

In recent weeks, I have met with state and federal agriculture program administrators and with Wisconsin elected representatives to develop a relationship with them or to renew existing relationships. Together with WFU staff and members, I have shared stories and encouraged action from these critical individuals to strengthen the positions raised by our members.

The Dairy Revitalization Plan meetings held in March also created opportunities to work with Farm Bureau members to improve dairy policy in the next farm bill. I will continue to build bridges and work with organizations that support our policy positions. Collaboration is essential to create the changes that



WFU President Rick Adamski, left, met with DATCP Secretary Randy Romanski and other officials to talk about efforts to improve meat processing during a visit to Roskom Meats on National Ag Day.

we want and to reinforce the positions that need to be strengthened.

Given that the most powerful are striving to maintain and expand their power, we could easily concede to their dominion and the status quo. There are great possibilities created by the troubles of the moment. As I look to the path ahead, I can clearly see the need for the strong values our predecessors highlighted with the Farmers Union triangle. Cooperation becoming more prominent than competition will be a step in the right direction. Education can yield a quantum leap of progress. Legislation will be far more successful than any attempts to discipline destructive actions.

WFU Government Relations Director Nick Levendofsky once told me that NFU initially had the 'Golden Rule' in its original mission statement. I strive to maintain the 'Golden Rule' – of treating others as I myself would like to be treated – as my own mission statement. That explains why my dad and I have not fought with others. It reveals why I am aligned with the values and principles of Farmers Union. The solutions that WFU strives for will not be accomplished by fighting with others. They will be accomplished by listening to our opponents so that they can listen to our concerns and by cooperating with all who share our values.

Rick Adamski is the president of the Wisconsin Farmers Union. He and his family run Full Circle Farm near Seymour.





MEAT PROCESSING CO-OP TAKING SHAPE

For more information, visit www.MeatsmithCoop.com.

Submitted photos
Three entrepreneurial women are the leaders of the Southern Wisconsin Meat Cooperative, a group that is making plans to open a meat-processing facility in Argyle in Lafayette County. Left to right are Heather Oppor, co-op vice-president; April Prusia, president; and Heidi Hoff, secretary-treasurer.

Jim Massey
Rural Voices Correspondent

ARGYLE - Livestock farmers across Wisconsin and the country have been dealing with a lack of meat-processing capacity in recent years, but the issue came to a crescendo during the pandemic.

Many farmers scrambled to find a meat plant that had slots available to slaughter their animals, while others were forced to make long-into-the-future processing reservations for animals not yet born.

A group of entrepreneurs in southern Wisconsin decided to take matters into their own hands with the development of a cooperative to provide another local meat-processing option. The Southern Wisconsin Meat Cooperative came into fruition within the past year, and organizers are taking steps to provide a much-needed service for small-scale livestock farmers.

April Prusia, a Blanchardville hog farmer and president of the newly formed co-op, says organizers are moving ahead with a plan to convert a former grocery store in downtown Argyle into a facility that would process animals slaughtered on area farms. At the outset the co-op would contract with custom operators who would drop carcasses off at the facility for processing, with the eventual plans calling for the purchase of a co-op-owned mobile slaughter unit to be used by the organization.

Prusia has been working on the concept for years, and at one point received a federal Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education grant with two other farm women to explore meat-processing options for southern Wisconsin farmers. The plan developed legs

during the throes of the pandemic when the demand for local meat exceeded the processing capacity of area meat plants.

"After our initial study nobody was really taking the bait (to get a project off the ground), but then Covid hit and everybody was like, 'What were you talking about with this meat-processing idea?' People could see the need was there," Prusia says.

Prusia began conversations with Heidi Hoff, who had moved to the Mt. Horeb area from Canada and joined Prusia and others in the "Soil Sisters" network of entrepreneurial southern Wisconsin women farmers. With a background in veterinary science and an interest in animal agriculture, Hoff enrolled in the Artisanal Modern Meat Butchery Program at Madison College, where she learned the skills necessary to work as a meat-cutter.

Hoff recruited Heather Oppor, an instructor in the Madison College meat program and a former meat department manager at the Willy Street Co-op, to join the effort.

"We formed a (co-op) board in March (of 2021), I sold my (Madison) house in August of last year and moved to Argyle," Oppor says.

In other words, she is all in.

Oppor will be the head meat cutter and general operations manager of the Argyle facility when it opens this fall. Between now and then, the management team will be attempting to raise money and retrofit the inside of the building into a meat-processing plant.

During phase one, the facility will be operated as an uninspected plant to handle beef, swine, sheep and

goat carcasses brought in by custom slaughterers. The uninspected products could not be sold but would instead be consumed by the animals' owners.

The next step would be to receive a license for state inspection, which would allow end products to be sold in Wisconsin. Phase three would be to apply for the state's interstate meat shipment program, which would allow the meat to be sold anywhere in the U.S.

There are no plans for animals to be slaughtered on site at the Argyle processing facility, which made approvals by the Argyle Plan Commission and Argyle Village Board relatively easy to attain. Animal carcasses will be delivered to a loading dock in the back of the building, eliminating the traffic problems caused by livestock trailers and the sounds and smells associated with livestock about to be slaughtered.

The co-op board is planning to launch a "Kickstarter" fundraising effort this spring and seek memberships to help pay for the initial renovations. For starters, the building needs walk-in coolers and a rail system to hang carcasses.

Organizers hope to attract at least 40 farmers to become co-op members with a membership fee of \$1,000.

Prusia says the Wisconsin Farmers Union has been helpful in the effort by bringing visibility to the meat-processing issue. WFU recently prepared a Meat Processing Report that called for increased funding to train the next generation of meat processors, and identified Meat Processing Infrastructure as a Special Order of Business at the organization's state conventions in 2020, 2021, and 2022.

The state Legislature made meat processing a priority by including \$200,000 a year in the 2021-23 biennial budget for new meat pro-

cessor grants. But the grant money didn't come close to the \$4.6 million requested by more than 100 applicants.

Jeff Swenson, livestock and meat specialist at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, says the number of grant applicants demonstrates the widespread interest in expanding meat-processing capacity in the state.

"There's a big demand for people wanting to improve infrastructure at their local plants," Swenson says. "I think some of the frenzy is subsiding after the dust has settled from the problems we saw in 2020, but waiting lists are still long and there is still a need for more slaughter capacity."

Swenson says the Southern Wisconsin Meat Co-op plan is interesting and he hopes it will be successful.

"I think the co-op concept is always interesting, having producers and processors working together," he says. "I also think mobile pro-



Submitted photo April Prusia raises heritage pigs on her farm near Blanchardville, and is president of the new Southern Wisconsin Meat Cooperative.

cessing is going to become more and more common as we build capacity moving forward."

Hoff says there is widespread interest in expanding meat processing capacity in the state.

"Small meat processors are the answer for small producers," she says. "It's all about keeping family farms viable."

Oppor is about a month away from graduating from the two-year UW-Madison Master Meat Crafter Program, a program designed to provide participants with a well-rounded, in-depth and comprehensive knowledge of meat science, food safety and meat-processing principles.

"We really need to get more butchers out there," Oppor says. "Every time I talk to colleagues they say they can't find employees with the skills they need."

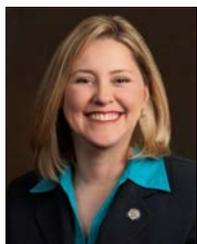
Her experience at Madison College and with the Meat Crafter program will be invaluable to her as she oversees the meat cutting at the co-op, she says.

Other co-op board members include Jackie McCarville, a UW-Extension agriculture educator in Green County; Sarah Boyd, a trained chef who is training as a butcher; Pete Lammers, an associate professor of animal and dairy sciences at UW-Platteville; and Jeff Werner, a student in the Madison College Modern Meat program

Part of the board's master plan is to introduce the co-op meat-processing concept to farmers and entrepreneurs in other parts of Wisconsin.

"We hope to make this a cookie-cutter-style project where we can share everything we've learned with other co-op startups," Prusia said. "We did all this work, we don't think others should have to reinvent the wheel. We all do better when we all do better."

'Meating' Processor Expectations



Julie Lassa
*USDA Rural Development
 Wisconsin State Director*

I grew up on my family's small dairy farm in central Wisconsin. It is there that I learned the value of hard work and the importance of neighbors helping neighbors. These values led me to public service on the local town board and state legislature where I represented central Wisconsin residents. Under the leadership of President Biden and U.S. Secretary of Ag Tom Vilsack, I am honored to continue working on ways to help rural residents and strengthen communities through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

USDA is working to provide equitable access to federal resources. That means making more things here at home, strengthening supply chains and lowering costs for working families. It means giving people opportunities to make a good living without having to leave the towns they know and love.

One way USDA is expanding opportunities is by making \$215 million available for the expansion of meat and poultry processing by eligible processors.

When we think about building a more equitable food and agriculture system, we need to consider the needs of everyone, including those in rural and remote communities. It's become increasingly clear that local and regional food systems are largely supported by rural communities. To help our nation thrive in the wake of the pandemic, we need rural communities filled with jobs, businesses, good housing, and opportunities for growth. That is where small and midsize meat processors can help uplift rural economies.

The new Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP) provides grants to help eligible processors expand capacity. USDA Rural Development designed the MPPEP to encourage competition and sustainable growth in the meat processing sector and to help improve supply chain resiliency.

When the pandemic disrupted food and agriculture systems, USDA Rural Development was there, supporting critical infrastructure and small busi-

nesses with essential programs designed to fund great projects.

Sole proprietor businesses or other entities that engage – or want to engage – in meat and poultry processing may apply for MPPEP grants. Businesses and entities that may apply include federally recognized tribes, for- and nonprofit entities, corporations, producer-owned cooperatives and corporations, certified benefit corporations, and state or local government entities. Private entities must be independently owned and operated. All entities must be domestically owned, and their meat and poultry processing facilities (existing or planned) must be physically located and operated within the U.S. or its territories.

Grant funds can be used to expand processing capacity by supporting activities such as building new processing facilities, modernizing facilities, developing, installing, or modernizing equipment and technology. Grants may also be used to ensure compliance with packaging and labeling requirements, to pay for voluntary grading services on value-added processed products, and to support workforce recruitment, training, and retention.

As part of the American Rescue Plan Act, USDA announced last December that approximately \$1 billion in loan guarantees are also available for meat and poultry processors and food supply chain infrastructure. These loan guarantees will back private investment in processing and food supply infrastructure. Learn more about the program at www.rd.usda.gov/food-supply-chain-guaranteed-loans

The deadline to apply for a MPPEP grant has been extended to May 11, 2022. I encourage interested applicants to reach out to our local program contact Judy Clendenning at judy.clendenning@usda.gov with any questions or for application assistance.

For assistance on any of the other 50+ programs that Rural Development offers, you can contact our local agency staff. USDA Rural Development stands ready to work with you because we understand that when Wisconsin's rural communities have a stable food supply chain, clean water, affordable homes and good jobs, our nation is more secure.



Big Food makes Big Ag look like A Piker



Alan Guebert
Correspondent

If you think Big Ag has too few suppliers, too few buyers, and too few farmers and ranchers, you need to meet Big Food. It is bigtime big.

Who is Big Food?

That straightforward question was tackled by academics, journalists, and legal professionals in a day-long conference on March 12, titled “Reforming America’s Retail Food Markets,” at the Yale University Law School. The conference’s five panels examined everything from how food-selling firms share market information to antitrust enforcement to challenging today’s food giants with regional food hubs.

The panel I moderated, a 75-minute, four-presentation discussion of “Competition Issues” in food retailing, offered a guide to how food manufacturers and retailers have developed a mutually beneficial relationship since the 1990s to maximize their efficiency and profit while limiting, or even excluding, competitors from stores and entire regions.

The panel’s various presentation titles allude to their eye-opening revelations: “Anticompetitive Challenge: The Power of Category Captains,” “Kickbacks and Corporate Concentration: Exclusionary Discounts,” and “Strategies to Combat Exclusionary Slotting Fees in Grocery Retail.”

I know, what’s a category captain, slotting fee, and “exclusionary discount”?

Exactly the conference’s point: Few Americans would know a category captain from Captain Kirk and yet arrangements like these dominate the U.S. food retail market.

For example, according to authors Claire Kelloway and Matthew Buck, four retailers sold 21 percent of all U.S. groceries in 1991. In 2019, the top four sold 69 percent of all groceries. Also, the pair noted, four firms “claimed” more than 60 percent of the top “55 grocery categories” and “that many top conglomerates such as Kraft Heinz, General Mills, PepsiCo, and Unilever were among the top four leaders in more than five different categories.”

That widespread presence is fertile ground for “exclusive dealing and other forms of exclusionary payments or arrangements.” One such arrangement has big food makers “offering rebates [to retailers] tied to reaching a set sales volume...”

In short, the sheer size of the big food makers puts them in a position to limit or keep their competitors off retailers’ shelves by offering “exclusionary deals” that can “leave less than 25 percent of a given category’s spending open to competitors and new entrants.”

And-so far, anyway-it’s legal because “Retailers’ reliance on revenue or savings from fees and services” from these arrangements “... also means that these payments do not have explicit, contractual exclusionary agreements...”

That’s as equally clever and profitable for Big Food as it is hidden and costly for little you and me.

Equally revealing is the idea of a grocery store or retail chain turning over its produce or meat department to a “category captain.”

Two of the Yale presenters, Riley Krotz, a professor at Texas Tech University, and Gregory Gundlach, both an attorney and professor at the University of Northern Florida, described a category captain (CC) as a vendor that “offers its expertise and resources in return for the ability to actively participate and influence decisions in the planning and management of a retail category-including decisions involving rival competitors.”

Imagine how valuable it would be for Tyson Foods to operate your local grocery store’s meat department or for General Mills to manage a grocery chain’s breakfast shelves.

Now stop imagining: “Today, CCs are common in the \$635 billion U.S. consumer goods and food retail market where their role is expanding to include adjacent categories, entire aisles... and in e-commerce where their retail [presence] is expected to grow...”

As these two small snippets from just one panel of the Yale conference show, what we eaters don’t know about today’s massive food retailing sector would kill a bull. Worse, that ignorance costs every American every time they enter a grocery store or shop online.

That goes double for farmers and ranchers who often are blamed for increased food costs even though-like today-they get nicked on the front side by increased production costs and on the back side by increased grocery costs.

Links to the conference’s presentations and papers are posted at farmandfoodfile.com.

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Defined by Dairy

Farmers Union, Farm Bureau members pulling together for growth management



Brittany Olson
Rural Voices Correspondent

It's all too easy to look at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange right now and think, "Wow, class III is \$23/cwt! It's about time dairy farmers got a break."

While \$23 looks nice on the surface, there's a whole iceberg of volatility underneath in the forms of astronomically high input costs, inflation, war, weather, and the gnawing realization that what goes up must come down.

When milk prices are that high (and so is the price of everything else), who doesn't want to put as much milk in the bulk tank as possible? Inevitably, we'll see another 'market correction' like we did in the wake of 2014's banner year and it'll be back to hearing about foreclosures, the filling of sale barns, and farmer suicides.

We'll hear all the experts and other talking heads in our industry saying that the problem is too much supply, while continuing to dance around tapping the brakes of milk production as a solution.

I'll say it once and I'll say it again because nothing is more free market than supply balanced with profitable demand, especially with another Farm Bill looming: it doesn't have to be this way.

During the winter of 2020-21, a group of Wisconsin Farmers Union and Wisconsin Farm Bureau members composed of active and former dairy farmers began to collaborate on possible growth management scenarios. To create a workable program that was simultaneously farmer-led and rooted in science, such a pricing structure would have to adhere to 11 core guidelines:

Growth Management Core Tenets

1. The program shall be mandatory and national in scope including all producers of bovine dairy milk in the U.S.
2. The plan will provide an entrance into the industry for beginning dairy farmers and a strategy for producers to exit the business.
3. The plan will be managed by dairy farmers.
 - a. A board of elected farmers will serve as directors to guide the implementation of the growth management plan.
 - b. In order for the plan to be national and mandatory, it will require government authorization but will not involve government control. The plan will be administered through the USDA and governed by a dairy farmer board.
 - c. Dairy economists and processors will also serve the board in an advisory capacity.
4. The plan will be flexible and responsive to market growth and economic factors.
5. The plan shall reduce risk to price volatility.
6. The plan will allow for dairy imports and exports without conflicting with existing trade agreements.
7. Dairy producers shall be assigned a base volume determined by their historic production.
 - a. Base is not sold and does not carry value.
 - b. Base remains with facilities.
8. This plan shall provide growth opportunities for dairy producers.
 - a. A producer wishing to increase production beyond their allowable milk marketing will pay a market access fee for the new milk (measured in pounds) they wish to produce.
 - a. The market access fee shall be tiered. The greater the increase desired, the greater the market access fee. This fee shall be determined by the board.
 - b. Once a producer's market access fee has been satisfied, a new base will be established.
9. The plan shall cause no significant increase in cost of dairy products to consumers.
10. The plan shall reduce or eliminate government subsidies to the dairy industry.
11. This plan shall function within any milk pricing system.

What emerged from this framework was a 2021 study by UW's Chuck Nicholson and Mark Stephenson titled "Analyses of Proposed Alternative Growth Management Programs for the U.S. Dairy Industry." Farmers from across a variety of organizations including WFU, WFBF, and NFO were appointed to steer the direction of the project, truly giving farmers a voice in the research that ensued.

Key findings from the study showed that overall price volatility would decrease while average milk prices would increase in addition to margin-over-feed costs. As a result, average net farm operating income would increase for farms that stayed within their allowable production increase of 999,999 pounds per year or less – and average milk revenue would be higher by \$1.15 to \$2.13/cwt from market access fee payments incurred by farmers who decided to exceed their allowable production increase.

The Dairy Revitalization Plan plan encourages slow but measured growth. If a farmer wishes to grow their operation without paying a market access fee, they could add up to 999,999 pounds of milk each year and potentially receive MAF payments. Compared to baseline (aka the reality we live with today with no growth management), annual growth in milk production in the U.S. would slow while allowing for measured but continued annual growth of American dairy exports.

Even with slowed production and reduced supply, the study showed negligible increases of 9 to 15 cents per gallon of milk in addition to price increases of 3 to 11 percent of other dairy products.

Furthermore, government expenditures on direct payments and insurance payouts to dairy farmers would be reduced by as much as \$2.5 billion. Yes, billion with a B.

Growth management has garnered interest, most recently at a March series of Dairy Revitalization Plan meetings organized in western Wisconsin by local chapters of the Farmers Union and Farm Bureau. Some may find it absolutely inconceivable that Farmers Union and Farm Bureau could agree on anything, especially on dairy policy. Those individuals would do well to open policy books for both organizations and discover for themselves that the two groups are in near perfect alignment on dairy and often have more in common than not. As a member of both organizations myself, I've witnessed and experienced this togetherness firsthand.

After all, and most of all, we are not defined by the organizations we pay dues to, but we are defined by our love for dairy farming – and loving it enough to know that it needs to change.

To learn more about the Dairy Revitalization Plan, visit dairymarkets.org/GMP.

Olson is a Chetek dairy farmer, writer, photographer, and advocate for common sense dairy policy reform.

Sparking Hope

As Unity Grows Among Dairy Farmers, Eyes Turn Toward the 2023 Farm Bill



Nearly 100 farmers and stakeholders gathered for a Dairy Revitalization Plan meeting in Chippewa Falls March 25th.

Danielle Endvick
WFU Communications Director

Dairy farmers from throughout western Wisconsin gathered in late March to envision how the Dairy Revitalization Plan could boost farm income and slow the exodus of dairy herds in America's Dairyland. Over 200 farmers attended a series of meetings organized in Abbotsford, Cashton, and Chippewa Falls. The events were hosted by local dairy farmers, with support from 31 chapters of the Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation and Wisconsin Farmers Union, and highlighted a farmer-led, research-backed growth management plan for the U.S. dairy industry.

"We've lost an average of one to two dairy herds a day in Wisconsin in recent years," said Dairy Together Organizer Bobbi Wilson. "This program does not seek to pit small farms against large farms; instead, we're looking at how we can pull together to create meaningful dairy policy reform in the next farm bill."

Buffalo County Farm Bureau leader Joe Bragger noted that only 30,000 U.S. dairy farms remain – roughly as many dairy farms as Wisconsin alone boasted in the 1990s. Wisconsin has dropped below 6,500 herds.

"I'm proud of the grassroots of Farm Bureau and Farmers Union and the fact that we're in the room here together," Bragger said. "As we move into this next farm bill cycle, someone will be making decisions on dairy policy. We need to be at the table."

Dairy economists Chuck Nicholson and Mark Stephenson provided an overview of what could have been accomplished if growth management was implemented in the 2014 Farm Bill. The presentation was based on their "Analyses of Proposed Alternative Growth Management Programs for US Dairy," which was funded by the University of Wisconsin "Baldwin Wisconsin Idea" program, the **See page 12 ► DAIRY**



Grassland 2.0 project, the Wisconsin Cover Crops Research and Outreach Program, and UW Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems. The study focused on a program in which each dairy farm would start with a base level of milk production, determined by historic production. A rate of allowable production growth would be set based on demand; those choosing to expand beyond allowable growth would pay a market access fee.

"Farms that stay within their allowable growth wouldn't pay a market access fee and would receive money from a pool

ly in half. Domestic dairy product sales were projected to continue to grow, with a drop of only a few percentage points compared to a baseline comparison without growth management.

Time for Change

Nicholson stressed that he was not telling farmers which path to take.

"What I'm trying to do is help folks have a conversation," he said. "The question becomes, do we want to live in this world we have now or in this world over here?"

The answer for many of those in attendance is that it is time for change.

Clark County Farm Bureau President

— Bobbi Wilson
Dairy Together Organizer



From left, Buffalo County Farm Bureau leader Joe Bragger; farmers gather at the Cashton event; Barron County Farm Bureau member and former dairy farmer Karyn Shauf stresses the urgency behind the movement for growth management.

of expanding farms," Nicholson explained. That payment acts as an incentive for farmers to coordinate production to match growth in demand.

Stephenson pointed out that the concept of growth management is becoming less radical, as cooperatives have implemented their own growth management efforts. "We've gotten some real-life experience with these programs as co-ops implemented them over the past few years. We realized, first off, that no one died, and they did have an impact on the price," he said.

Stephenson and Nicholson's research showed that growth management would increase average net farm income for operations staying within allowable growth rates.

"If we would have had such a program implemented, the average increase in price from 2014 to 2021 would have been \$1.41 per hundredweight," Nicholson noted, stressing the research shows farmers would have seen less price variation on their milk checks.

The impact on consumer prices would be minor, with costs rising 15 cents for fluid milk prices and 11 cents per pound for wholesale American cheese.

"Exports continue to grow; they do grow more slowly, but also more steadily, with stabilized prices in the U.S. market," Nicholson noted.

The plan would also reduce the need for government safety nets for dairy farmers, cutting expenditures near-

Clark Turner milks 120 cows on his Withee dairy farm. He wonders about the future for the next generation of farmers, including his sons.

"Right now we're in an uptick for prices, and you think 'oh boy, this is gonna help us,' but then we see the cost of inputs skyrocketing," he said. "It's bleak. We just never seem to be able to dig out of the hole."

"It does look like this plan could provide that stability that we all long for," Turner said. "We all want to know that we're going to be okay and the bills are going to be paid going forward. This is a step in the right direction to get there."

WFU District 6 Director Sarah Lloyd has been involved in the conversation around growth management in her roles as a rural advocate and researcher. She farms near Wisconsin Dells with her husband and his family on a 400-cow dairy farm and, in her role with the UW Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems (CIAS), helped convene a stakeholder group to provide input on growth management research.

"We were that farm that was at 125 cows in 2002 and doubled the herd in order to have all 3 families draw a salary from the farm," Lloyd said. "We've been running on the treadmill ever since."

She views the work of stabilizing prices as crucial for the communities that have been hit hard by dairy's decline.

"We all know those neighborhoods where there used to be dairy farms all down the road, but they're gone now,"

she said. "When you lose those farms, they stop buying from suppliers. Growth management has the potential to help not only my farm business but also a whole web of economic interactions between the businesses we work with and the social vitality of our towns."

"We're seeing processors owning farms," added Bruce Gumz of Tri-G Farms in Dorchester. "We've got a clear picture, looking at what happened with chickens and hogs, of what could happen. We're following that pattern of consolidation, pedal to the metal."

For the Next Generation

WFU Vice President and Westby dairy farmer Darin Von Ruden said he takes growing support for growth management as a positive sign. "It's exciting to see different groups coming together around this plan," he said. "I've been involved in dairy issues for 20 years and have seen crowds gather around an idea and then die down, but there's a lot of hope and momentum here."

As he nestled his young grandson in his arms at the Cashton dairy meeting, he stressed, "My work today is really about looking ahead to 20 or 25 years. What future is there for our kids and grandkids if we continue down this path we're on?"

Monroe County dairy farmer Jack Herricks agreed. "This discussion has had a longer lifespan than any other effort made in the past," said Herricks, a Farm Bureau member from a century farm near Cashton. "The fact that it continues

to gain support and more discussion and consideration speaks to the interest and work being done to flesh it out and make it work for the majority."

Von Ruden added that addressing farm loss is critical for U.S. food security.

"As chaotic and painful as the COVID crisis was over the past few years, it was an important lesson in the need for resilience so we can better withstand future shocks to our food system," Wilson said. "I hope this can be the turning point to not only think about economic efficiency but also economic resilience."

Since launching in 2018, Dairy Together has built a strong coalition of farmers and stakeholders, secured growth management research, and empowered farmer-led solutions – but the work isn't done.

"The opportunity we have is the 2023 Farm Bill, and those conversations are happening right now," Wilson said. "The strength we can bring as a community of dairy farmers and allies is a demonstration of what can be done. Now we have the benefit of hindsight, of knowing what would have happened if we had implemented growth management in 2014, and we can see clear benefits."

She called on attendees to advocate for growth management to fellow farmers, co-op leaders, consumers, and legislators.

"Changing federal dairy policy is a huge task, but if we don't get this done in the next farm bill, there are not going to be enough dairy farms left to support a sustainable industry," Wilson said. "We need diversity in herd sizes - we need large farms to supply a bulk of milk but also small farms to provide resilience - and growth management is the path toward striking that balance."

Dairy Together is a farmer-led effort to improve the economic viability of family dairy farms in Wisconsin and across the country.

Together we can create a stable and profitable future for family dairy farmers and rural communities.

Take action today!

- Subscribe to the email list at dairytogether.com to receive updates and action alerts.
- Share Dairy Together videos and articles on social media. Use the #DairyTogether hashtag to keep it trending.
- Join the Dairy Together Facebook group.
- Educate yourself. The Dairy Together website features a 25-minute video that explains how a growth management plan could work and how it would impact farmers, consumers, and the industry.
- Share your thoughts with your members of congress! Call, write, or email them about the state of dairy farming and urge their support for growth management. Congress is working on the farm bill right now - they need to hear from you! Use the template at dairytogether.com to craft your message
- Speak in favor of growth management at a Town Hall or listening session organized by your Representatives or Senators. These are usually announced about a week before they happen.
- Write an op-ed or letter to the editor to share your story and propose solutions. Contact your local newspaper for deadlines and word limits. WFU Communications Director Danielle Endvick can help with ideas and outreach: 715-471-0398 / dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com



Photos by Danielle Endvick
Above: From left, Dairy Together Co-ordinator Bobbi Wilson and Cashton panelists Jack Herricks, Travis Klinkner, and Darin Von Ruden. Right: Von Ruden, holding grandson James, stressed that his focus for dairy policy is on future generations.



Sign up today for Farmers Union Camp!

Each summer, hundreds of youth from throughout the Midwest participate in summer camps at Wisconsin Farmers Union's Kamp Kenwood on the shores of Lake Wissota near Chippewa Falls.

Farmers Union Camps started in the 1930s, when the organization developed leadership and cooperative training, believing that education was the cornerstone of a better future for rural communities.

"For over 85 years Farmers Union Camps have focused on leadership development with a cooperative approach," said WFU Education Director Cathy Statz. "Youth learn about the Cooperative Principles and the benefits of cooperatives to family farmers and communities."

Campers create their own Camp Co-op Store, elect a board of directors, buy shares and receive patronage dividends. They also enjoy traditional summer camp activities like swimming, sports, arts and crafts, and hiking.

Sessions are open to ages 7-17 and available June through August. New this year is a Co-op Kids Camp, open to youth ages 7 to 11 who are looking for an overnight experience geared toward the beginning camper.

Family camps, open for families with children of all ages, will be July 22-23 or August 5-6.

Co-sponsored by a grant from the CHS Foundation, Farmers Union Camps are affordably priced at \$115 to \$125 per camper for WFU members. (Non-members add \$30 for a one-year Farmers Union family membership.) To register or see camp dates, visit www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/youth-camp.

COVID-19 precautions will be in place and guidelines may be adjusted as conditions change. Presently all participants (campers, staff, & volunteers) will need to show proof on arrival at camp of a negative PCR/Molecular COVID test administered within 72 hours prior. (Rapid antigen tests are not permitted.) Campers are strongly recommended to be up-to-date in their COVID-19 vaccination. Documentation of 14-day pre-screening is also expected. If you have questions, please contact Cathy at camp@wisconsinfarmersunion.com before proceeding with your registration.

Campers are permitted to register for only 1 (one) youth camp session per summer. (Campers may, however, register for both a youth camp session and Family Camp.)

WFU is also hiring summer staff. Learn more at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/youth-camps or by contacting Cathy Statz at camp@wisconsinfarmersunion.com or call 715-214-7887.



The best summer memories happen here.



Located along beautiful Lake Wissota near Chippewa Falls, our affordable camps pair the traditional fun of hiking, swimming, camp fires, and more with lessons on cooperatives, sustainability, and leadership.

Proudly accredited by the American Camp Association!
COVID precautions will be implemented

REGISTER ONLINE TODAY!

www.kampkenwood.com
Follow us on Facebook!



Made possible with support from local co-ops &



Beginning Farmer Institute Announced

National Farmers Union is pleased to announce the members of the 2022-2023 Beginning Farmer Institute: Ariel Zakarison, WA; Brandon Runge, IL; Dolores Miller, OR; Elisana Judovsky, MN; Kellie Parker, TX; Matthew Torgesen, ID; Ray Mooney, CT; Sara Mayer, CO; Sara Thornton, MI; Taylor Muglia, CO; and Tyrean Lewis, MO.

BFI is a free, year-long training program intended to improve the health of beginning farmers' farm or ranch business. Applications for the 2023 program will open during the fall of 2022. Learn more about BFI at nfu.org/beginning-farmer-institute/

New Online Tool Allows Farmers to Report Anticompetitive Practices

Farmers can now anonymously report potentially unfair and anticompetitive practices in the livestock and poultry sectors using a tool from the U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Justice (DOJ).

"This new online tool will help USDA and the Justice Department address anticompetitive actions and create livestock and poultry markets that are fairer to our nation's producers," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "I encourage producers who are aware of potential violations of competition laws to submit information to the portal so we can take appropriate action to create more competitive markets in the agricultural sector."

Users can submit information under their names or may submit anonymous complaints at farmerfairness.gov. If a complainant provides personal information, DOJ or USDA staff will only contact them if additional information is needed.

Complaints or tips about potentially anticompetitive practices can also be submitted by emailing PSDComplaints@usda.gov; calling (833) 342-5773; or mailing Stop 3601, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, D.C., 20250-3601.

Register Livestock Premises by July 31

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP), in partnership with the Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium (WLIC), reminds livestock owners that it time to renew livestock premises registrations. State law requires that all livestock owners register where their animals are kept; current registrants must renew their premises registration by July 31.

Livestock owners must register their premises regardless of the number of animals they keep; there is no

cost to register. DATCP uses the information to rapidly respond to animal disease outbreaks to protect animal health, the food supply, public safety, and Wisconsin's agriculture economy.

Registration renewal is required every three years. Current registrants can renew their premises registration - or, as required, report that they no longer house livestock - by reviewing the information on the renewal form and returning the application to WLIC.

Failing to register a premises can result in fines and ineligibility for state indemnity payments if animals are condemned due to disease exposure.

Livestock owners can register new premises or renew previous registrations by visiting <https://wiid.org/premises-registration-renewal/> or emailing WLIC at info@wiid.org or calling WLIC at (888) 808-1910.

Chippewa County host sought for FTD

The 2024 Wisconsin Farm Technology Days show will be held in Chippewa County. Dates for the 2024 show and the host farm will be selected at a later date.

The show, which is the largest outdoor farm show in Wisconsin, is proud to continue the 65 plus year tradition. Organizers are currently looking for a host farm with 400 to 500 tillable acres. Anyone interested in applying to host can fill out a form online. Organizers are also seeking committee members and volunteers. Learn more at chippewa-wi.com/farm-technology-days-2024/

The 2022 Wisconsin Farm Technology Days will be held July 12-14 in Clark County and be hosted by Roehl Acres Farm and Rustic Occasions in Loyal, Wisconsin.

The 2023 Wisconsin Farm Technology Days will be held July 18-20 in Sauk County at the Badger Steam and Gas Engine Club Grounds at S3347 Sand Rd. Baraboo, Wisconsin.

WFU Meat Processing Report is Online

WFU's special report, "Meat Processing in Wisconsin: Challenges and Opportunities," investigates the effects that consolidation in meat processing has had on family farms, small and mid-scale processors, and consumers is available to view online.

The report includes viewpoints and resources collected from key stakeholders, including state agencies, farmers, processors, and labor organizations.

View the report and learn more at wisconsinfarmersunion.com/processing





St. Croix County Farmers Union to host Inga

St. Croix County Farmers Union welcomed Inga Witscher, host of *Around the Farm Table* on PBS for a special event on Saturday, March 26th in Deer Park. Inga spoke and gave a cooking demonstration. The event was coordinated in partnership with Table 65, Home Education Community (HEC), Amery Warriors Catering, and the Deer Park Library.

WELCOME NEW FARMERS UNION MEMBERS!

New Membership

Tracy Matthews, Milwaukee
 Tarah Nelson, Mazomanie
 Kristin Adler, Milwaukee
 Rachel Christiansen & Ari Singh Anand, Eau Claire
 Diana Schoberg & Craig Nickels, Milwaukee
 Malinda Eskra, Milwaukee
 Nancy Fawcett, Madison
 Paul Meinertz, Chippewa Falls
 LindaDee Derrickson, Monticello
 Melissa & Mike Mahon Stein, Soldiers Grove
 Brendan Nashold & Terrell Hyde, Fall River
 Denise & Patrick Grabowski, La Crosse
 Robert Galdi, Brandon
 Julia Kauffman, Chippewa Falls
 Brian Lambert Family, Eau Claire
 Kassandra McKinnon & Clint Freund, Amery
 Diana Sullivan, Milwaukee
 Josh & Esme Pearson, Bayfield
 Don Gerou, Waterford
 Harvey & Marilyn Fifield, Cecil
 Eliot & Michelle Bergeland, Brooklyn
 Richard & Michelle Joseph, Belleville

Recruited by

2022 Camp Program
 Julie Keown-Bomar
 Kriss Marion
 Kirsten Slaughter
 2022 Camp Program
 2022 Camp Program
 Nolan Insurance Agency LLC
 Camryn Billen
 2022 Camp Program
 Emily Hanson
 2022 Camp Program
 John Adams
 Mangold Insurance, Inc.
 WPS Farm Show
 Richard Straub
 Penny Molina

FARMERS UNION HAPPENINGS

Local Initiative Grant Deadline
 May 15

**Agricultural Tourism:
 What's Possible**
 South Central Chapter Event
 May 19, 5-7:30pm
 Hop Garden Brewery, 6889
 Canal St., Belleville.

**July/Aug WFU News
 Chapter Chatter Deadline**
 June 15

WFU Summer Conference
 July 21

**Deadline to notify WFU of
 annual meeting date**
 August 12

Local Initiative Grant Deadline
 August 15

**WFU Policy & Bylaw
 Resolutions Due**
 October 1

Chapter Reports Due
 October 31

Chapter Presidents Meeting
 November 12

Local Initiative Grant Deadline
 November 15

WFU State Convention
 December 10-11
 Chula Vista, Wisconsin Dells



Farmers Union Emerging Leaders Retreat

A wonderful group gathered for the Wisconsin Farmers Union Emerging Leaders Retreat in February in Appleton. Pictured, left to right, are (back row) Ingrid Ellringer, Aaron Ellringer, Kirsten Slaughter, Ramona Rothman, Shelly Rothman, Joe Kock, Lance Girard, Rick Adamski, Forrest Humphrey, Tommy Enright; (middle row) Sky Harnsberger, Julia Kauffman, Kristy Allen, Becky Brathal, Camryn Billen, Olivia Roth, Jess Ryba, Allison Hellenbrand, Ryan Hellenbrand, Nick Levendofsky; (front row) Dylan Bryce, Tilia Browne, Lindsey Baris, Alicia Razvi, Leah Forseth, Addison, Julie Keown-Bomar, and Cathy Statz. Not pictured Anna Hinchley-Skadahl and Kevin Skadahl.



MEMBER BENEFITS

Get the most value out of your WFU membership by taking advantage of the discounts available to you.

wisconsinfarmersunion.com/benefits
nfu.org/benefits



FUEL program fosters friendships and self-awareness

Ryan & Becky Brathal
St. Croix County Farmers Union

The Farmers Union Enterprises Leadership program has been a greater experience than we thought possible. After being Farmers Union members for only a short time, we were approached by our county president a couple years ago and encouraged to apply to the program. We were not quite sure what we were getting into. Everyone has busy lives and we were no exception, so naturally there were concerns about time commitments. We knew FUEL is a leadership program and after asking around, everyone who had gone through it spoke very highly of it. So, we decided to throw our hat in the ring and apply to see what ad-

ventures the program offered.

The FUEL cohort is comprised of 2-4 people from each of the Farmers Union Enterprises states, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. There is an application and selection process for each state to pick its participants. Those who are selected attend a few education sessions sponsored by the states where the events are held. In addition to these state sponsored learning events, participants get the thrill of attending the annual National Farmers Union Convention and ultimately end up at the pinnacle event, the Washington D.C. Fly-in, where members get to see and hear how Farmers Union representatives interact with our policy makers.

Our first event of the FUEL program was in South Dakota. We met the program organizers from South Dakota and participants from the other states. It didn't take long to feel comfortable with all the great folks that made the trip to participate. Over the next few days of indulging in South Dakota agriculture, bonds grew and friendships quickly developed. The dynamics of the group were extremely compatible, care-free, and just plain fun.

Our second event was the National Farmers Union Convention in Denver, Colorado. Many of us had kept in touch since the event in South Dakota, and it was wonderful to see everyone again in Denver. We found ourselves making even more friends and more memories and strengthening our relationships with the other FUEL participants while also learning so much about them, ourselves, and Farmers Union. The national conference was just as intriguing and stimulating as our state convention!

What a wonderful experience it has been meeting farmers and ranchers from the Farmers Union Enterprises states, interacting with them and learning from each other. While we learned so much about the differences in what farmers around the country are doing, growing, and raising, what stuck with us the most is how we are so very much the same. This experience has given us encouragement, self-reflections, learning opportunities, great memories, and most importantly, life-long friends.



Photo submitted by Jessica Haak

The 2021-2022 Farmers Union Enterprises Leadership class at the National Farmers Union Convention in Denver in March. Becky Brathal, fourth from right, and Ryan Brathal, third from right, represented Wisconsin Farmers Union in the FUEL cohort.



The 2022-2023 FUEL cohort kicked off their year-long program at the NFU Convention in Denver.

FUE Announces 2022-2023 Leadership Class

The 2022-2023 class of the Farmers Union Enterprise Leadership (FUEL) Program convened in Denver in March. The group attended the National Farmers Union Convention and took part in leadership programming.

Representing Wisconsin Farmers Union in the 2022-2023 cohort are Dane County Farmers Union members Allison and Ryan Hellenbrand, Anna Hinchley-Skedahl, and Kevin Skedahl.

The FUEL program is intended to empower future leaders in the Farm-

ers Union Enterprise states of North Dakota, Montana, Wisconsin, Minnesota and South Dakota.

Each year, four members from each state are selected to represent their state organization in the program, which provides experiences to enhance their knowledge of cooperatives and Farmers Union's work.

Interested in being considered for the next FUEL program group? Contact your chapter leader or the WFU State Office at 715-723-5561.

Event probes dairy industry connections to immigration

An upcoming virtual event will examine the role of undocumented immigrant workers in the Wisconsin dairy industry. Set for 7pm on Tuesday, May 3rd, the webinar will feature a conversation centered on the short documentary "Los Lecheros." Registrants will receive a link to view the documentary in advance.

A collaboration between Twelve Letter Films and the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism, "Los Lecheros" focuses on some of the workers and farmers struggling to survive amidst shifting policies. Immigrants make up over half of U.S. dairy workers. Many Wisconsin farm owners, like film protagonist John Rosenow, insist that immigrants are critical to the success of their farms. Workers, like Miguel Hernandez, who spent 16 years on a Wisconsin dairy farm, and Guillermo Ramos, who manages a 1,000-cow farm, are weighing the options for their families and their jobs amidst fears of deportation and family separation.

The webinar will feature a panel, moderated by Dee Hall of Wisconsin Watch. Panelists will include John Rosenow, Buffalo County dairy farmer; Nick Levendofsky, Wisconsin Farmers Union government relations director; and Ruth Conniff, journalist and author of *Milked*. The panelists will discuss policies and new developments around work visas, as well as the powerful personal relationships farmers in Wisconsin are building with families in Mexico.

This event is being organized by the Southwest Wisconsin Area Progressives, The Farley Center, and Wisconsin Farmers Union. RSVP at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events.



Gaveled Out

Wisconsin Legislators Leave Work Left Undone in Disappointing Session

Nick Levendofsky

Government Relations Director

Well, that's a wrap.

The Wisconsin Legislature gaveled out of its 2022 session March 8th, leaving Madison early to return to districts to run for reelection or another office, or to prepare for the next phase in their life. Sure, some will come back occasionally for committee hearings or meetings, but for the most part, their work is done until January 2023.

As WFU looks back at this session, the legislative "wins" are few and far between. We opposed 30 different bills during the last session, 15 of which were vetoed by Governor Evers and 14 of which are still sitting in committee or waiting to be scheduled. The one bill that passed was the state budget, which WFU initially supported after Gov. Evers introduced it in February 2021, but opposed after drastic changes made by the Joint Committee on Finance. The state budget passed the legislature and was signed into law by Gov. Evers in July 2021.

WFU supported 39 different bills in the last session, 32 of which are still in committee or available for scheduling. Only four of those bills have been signed into law by Gov. Evers at this time, but we expect at least one or two more to be signed into law by the end of April.

When WFU members gathered virtually to lift up priorities at Farm and Rural Lobby Day in mid-February, we asked legislators' positions on key bills. In Assembly meetings, legislators or staffers responded favorably to food security and farmer mental health legislation by 67%, clean water bills by 81%, and ag and climate change legislation by 57%. On the Senate side, numbers were even better. Support landed at 76.5% for food security and farmer mental health legislation, 94% for clean water bills, and 82% for ag and climate change legislation.

Of the priorities we championed on Farm and Rural Lobby Day, only one bill, AB727, passed both the Assembly and Senate, and is now awaiting the Governor's signature. All other priority bills are stalled in committee, and many have not received a hearing.

What does all of this mean? More than likely, the bills we lifted up at Lobby Day will get reintroduced in January, this time by Republicans, with minor tweaks to the bill language. Unhindered by election season, we will be more likely to see a flood of support from other legislators and bills scheduled for committee hearings, where they will pass with flying colors, move on to the Assembly and Senate, and land on the Governor's desk.



Levendofsky testifying at the Assembly Ag Committee in support of the clean water bills authored by Reps. Shankland & Kitchens and Sen. Cowles.

So, why is it we can't get anything done in Madison, and why can't good bills with obvious bipartisan support get a hearing, let alone pass? The answer is politics, plain and simple. We've heard all along that some in the Legislature don't want to give Governor Evers anything that looks or smells like a "win" during an election year, so those in power are willing to do nothing and wait until they come back in January.

Most Wisconsinites don't care who gets the "win" when it comes to good legislation. The only "win" that matters is whether the legislation does the most good for the most people, and that's what many of the bills we support would do.

We elect our legislators every couple of years to represent us in a full-time legislature with salary, benefits, and staff. Working two months out of the year, then going home without getting much of anything done is a slap in the face to Wisconsinites who expect more from their elected officials. It reminds me of a quote from comedian Charlie Berens, "I'm under the philosophy that if you set the bar low enough, you can just walk over it." That's Wisconsin politics in a nutshell these days, I'm afraid.

When you're out and about this spring and summer, and you see those who are running for elected office kissing babies and shaking hands, don't be afraid to ask about those good bills referenced above and why they haven't gone anywhere. If you get an answer you don't like, hold that person accountable, tell them you're paying attention to what is – and is not – happening in Madison, and that you expect better representation if they get elected or reelected.

Meanwhile, we'll keep our focus on the future and look forward to a more productive 2023 legislative session.

OUT & ABOUT



The Wisconsin Farmers Union staff has been busy attending events, recruiting members, and speaking up for rural Wisconsin. Clockwise, from top left: WFU Government Relations Director Nick Levendofsky spoke to agriculture students at Sun Prairie High School about climate change and how to connect with members of Congress; WFU President Rick Adamski greeted visitors at the WPS Farm Show in Oshkosh; WFU testified on behalf of Marathon County Farmers Union and WFU at the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee in support of SB968, which deals with funding for the Fenwood Creek Watershed Pilot Project; the membership team, from left, Shawn Bartholomew, Alicia Razvi, and Kirsten Slaughter, at the MOSES Organic Farming Conference in La Crosse.



Catch us at upcoming events!
www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events

Wisconsin Farmers Union
KAMP KENWOOD
SPRING FLING CLEAN-UP

Save the Date!
 Saturday, May 7
 19161 79th Ave.
 Chippewa Falls, WI

Volunteers needed. Food served.
RSVP to Brad - 715-214-7244



Wisconsin Farmers Union
Summer Conference
 JULY 21ST

Join the WFU staff and board in envisioning the future, as we update our organization's strategic plan. Chapter leaders & members encouraged to attend, as we build a strong future from the grassroots!

RSVP today!
wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events

Farmers Organize Through Farmer-Led Watershed Effort

Tara Daun
Watershed Coordinator

The Farmer-Led Watershed Councils of the St. Croix and Red Cedar Rivers had a busy winter and spring meeting season, promoting adoption of conservation agriculture within four watersheds in western Wisconsin. The effort includes farmers from the Horse Creek Watershed (Polk County), Dry Run Watershed (St. Croix County), South Kinni watershed (Pierce County) and Hay River Watershed (Dunn County).

In February, the councils co-hosted farmers Ray Archuleta and Joe Bragger for over 120 people to learn about integrating soil health on their farms. Ray spoke about using regenerative practices to increase productivity. Joe showed how he has used cover crops and limited tillage to improve his farm profits.

The South Kinni Farmer-Led Council hosted a session for non-operating landowners who rent land to farmers. Extension agent Michael Geissinger spoke about lease design and the importance of a good lease. Land conservation technician and farmer Dan Sitz reviewed conservation practices that benefit landowners, farmers, and the land.

In March, the Hay River and Dry Run councils hosted 60 people for a Rick Clark presentation on how cover crops and reduced tillage increased profits on his 7,000-acre Indiana farm.

The Horse Creek area farmers hosted Dennis Busch who presented research on how tillage and cover crops affect rainwater infiltration and runoff using data from our own test site. It is clear that more rainwater is infiltrated and less sediment is lost on sites with covers and reduced tillage. Dane Christensen also presented findings from the Horse Creek test plot, which revealed no loss of yield on plots with no-till and cover crops when looking at the 7 harvests on the site. More details and presentations can be found at farmerledwatershed.org.



Farmers Discuss Reducing Input Costs with Soil Management



Tara Daun
Watershed Coordinator

On March 10th, over 50 farmers met at the Phoenix Grill & Event Center in Baldwin, WI to hear from renowned Indiana farmer, Rick Clark. This event was sponsored by the Hay River Farmer-Led Watershed Council, the Dry Run Farmer-Led Watershed Council, and St. Croix County to give farmers a venue to discuss rising input prices and how soil management can help control their costs.

After a casual lunch, Clark shared how he uses soil health principles and testing to reduce his equipment, diesel and horsepower costs on his 7,000 acre operation. Clark then started showing the value of the organic matter produced by his cover crops noting that the best ROI on his now organic farm occurred when they were minimizing synthetic chemical use, but still using small amounts as needed. One main takeaway was the value of letting cover crops grow in spring as long as possible, by interseeding covers, planting green in the spring and terminating the covers as late as possible, sometimes over a month after planting soybeans.

Tara Daun, who organized the event at the direction of the Farmer-Led Councils, said "Rick's information is all over YouTube and his website, so we weren't trying to just have him give his spiel again. Our goal was to allow local farmers in Wisconsin to really ask practical, specific, and detailed questions of how to incorporate his successes onto their farms. And we achieved that goal! I'm please that we had so many questions, we went over time and didn't even get to Rick's last slides."



Rick Clark spoke on March 10th in Baldwin to a group of farmers and industry professionals on how he has reduced input costs on his 7,000 acre farm using soil health management principles.

Farming in a New World of Uncertainty

Russia's aggressive invasion of Ukraine has and will continue to rile markets, affecting not only U.S. farmers but agricultural commodity markets worldwide.



Michael Slattery
WFU Grain Committee

With the turmoil overseas, farm inputs can be expected to continue to rise, particularly fuel and natural gas. Fertilizer prices, especially potash because of its production and export from Russia and Belarus, are expected to rise. Grain prices too have been affected.

Russia and Ukraine are the two largest producers and exporters of wheat in Europe and Eurasia Union. They are considered the bread basket for Europe, Eurasia Union, and the Mediterranean. Ukraine since 2012 has exponentially increased wheat production.

Russia and Ukraine in 2021 exported 45 MM MT and 16 MM MT (24 percent and 9 percent), respectively, of global wheat exports. Ukraine is also a major world producer and exporter of seldom recognized grain crops like barley, corn, sunflower, and rapeseed.

Ukraine actually grows and exports more corn than wheat. EU countries, China (which imported more from Ukraine than the US), Spain, Netherlands, Iran, and South Korea are principal importers of Ukrainian corn.

Virtually all Ukrainian exports are from 18 ports in the Sea of Azov or Black Sea. Cargill owns part of a port west of Crimea; CHS exports out of three ports. Ukraine's largest and busiest port, Mariupol, in the Donetsk north-east region is on the Sea of Azov, where ships must pass through the Kerch Straits to access the Black Sea, controlled by Russia since 2014.

Prior to the start of the Russian invasion, Ukraine ordered its ports to shut down. As long as Russia is unable to attain control of Ukraine, it is doubtful that Russia will reopen the ports and squeeze Ukraine commercially.

It seems probable that Ukraine will be unable to grow and export crops. Increasing sanctions on Russia because of the invasion have largely been financial – freezing foreign currency reserves. The sanctions also deter Russia's ability to settle trade and inter-bank transactions, making it difficult for Russia to export not just oil and gas, but also grain.

Russia will be able to redirect only part of its lost wheat exports by China's unexpected agreement to purchase wheat from any Russian region, despite years of China's embargo because of phytosanitary disease of dwarf bunt fungus. China is expected to use these wheat imports for livestock feed, reducing its demand for imported feed corn.

Thus, clearly world supply for wheat and corn primarily will be reduced by at least Ukraine's usual share of exports and by a significant reduction on Russian export of wheat. This will continue to drive grain prices higher not just for wheat and corn but for other grains as well, as they follow market leaders. While the wheat market had already begun in early February to increase prices from \$7.54 per bushel in view of an expected invasion, prices have risen 33 percent and exceed \$10 and can go higher yet for the aforementioned reason and unpredictable risk, and remain volatile for some time to come. Corn likewise has risen nearly 19 percent from \$6.22 over the same period. The flight from risk to the US dollar may be a drag on US export competitiveness, but does not seem to be more powerful than the pull of the demand.

Given droughts in Iraq, Syria, and Iran and the politically sensitive high demand for wheat in countries of the Middle East and Africa, it is difficult to foresee serious drag on prices.

As farmers, we do not wish to capitalize upon another fellow farmer's misery, whether here or abroad, but we may and will benefit from increases in prices and markets. We are not just takers, we are givers too. As in years' past, when a farmer neighbor suffered hardship – a barn fire, a death or injury in the family – we would help with chores, barn raising, planting or harvest till they regained stability. This is an opportunity for us to voluntarily set aside some of the unexpected profits to set up a non-profit fund to help rebuild farm buildings, acquire equipment and working capital, and identify Ukrainian relatives, acquaintances or farm groups for the days when our Ukrainian neighbor farmers can once again farm their land in peace and freedom.

Farm & Industry Short Course Future In Flux



Michelle Ramirez-White
Policy Coordinator

The University of Wisconsin College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) recently made the decision to make major changes to the oldest agriculture course in the country. CALs has proposed removing the on-campus aspect of the Farm & Industry Short Course (FISC) and moving to a non-credit version.

Since 1886, the UW has been offering an in-person agricultural program. In recent years, the course has been 16 weeks long and timed for the non-growing season, providing people the opportunity to have a college experience at the UW-Madison campus and earn credits towards a bachelor's degree. In the fall of 2023, this is all set to change.

On March 22, representatives of CALs presented proposed changes to the Joint Agriculture Committee in the Wisconsin legislature, pointing to dwindling enrollment numbers as the overarching reason for shifts. UW-Madison reported a loss of \$200,000 from the FISC program in 2022, with only 32 students enrolled. While the COVID-19 pandemic did cause a dip in 2020, the program has struggled to attract students for almost a decade. With 20 students estimated for the 2023 school year, they could not continue with the program as-is. Further, the student housing for FISC, Lowell Hall, was reallocated to freshman housing until at least 2024.

The UW does not see this as the end to short-course, but as a way to reinvent the program and make it “bigger and better,” says Associate Dean for Extension and Outreach Douglas Reinemann. He feels the change to non-credit courses will give professors more flexibility on the type of classes that can be taught, as there are more requirements to meet and often slower progress in a for-credit model. Teachers potentially could run week-long in-person classes on specialized topics with fewer students. Reinemann and outgoing CALs Dean & Director Kate VandenBosch testified it provides a better ability to work with UW Extension and Dairy Innovation Hub.

They are looking at tactics to boost enrollment, like a blended model of learning to reach a wider audience. But what could be lost by straying from the on-campus experience?

Rep. Travis Tranel questioned how changes could impact the quality of experience for students, “They enroll in this because one, it is UW Madison, and two, because they want the college experience that comes with it.”

Farmers have raised concerns about how the shifts could discourage youth from a future in farming.

The Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation (WFBF) was invited to give testimony at the Agriculture Committee hearing. Chris Pollack, a member of the Fond du Lac County Farm Bureau, said he had always wanted to be a Badger, but the four-year commitment did not work with his farming schedule. Short Course gave him the opportunity to be on cam-

pus, and have a coming of age college experience.

WFBF Government Relations Director Keith Ripp expressed “sincere disappointment” regarding the decision. He stressed the value of “face-to-face learning,” and “the ripple effect in the agriculture and farming community for decades to come.”

On April 12, the conversation continued with CALs, WFBF, and the Professional Dairy Producers of Wisconsin (PDPW) co-hosting a listening session for affected parties.

Jennifer Blazek, director of the Farm and Industry Short Course, and Reinemann emphasized intentions to modernize the program to attract more students. They explained that FISC was not originally designed to be a program for degree-seeking students; a very small percentage of Short Course students go on to obtain a full degree. They added that moving the program to the Office of Outreach and Extension gives Blazek room for creative ideas.

CALs proposes obtaining more students by collaborating more with technical colleges, keeping the cohort ‘feeling’ by meeting in remote locations like farms and agribusinesses, looking at hotels for student lodging, and creating a digital badging system to replace the for-credit model to still provide the verification of an educational experience.

The ideas presented by CALs were largely met with displeasure from stakeholders, alumni, and prospective students. A point of contention was around the lack of communication about dwindling enrollment; multiple questions arose on why the department did not reach out to stakeholders until 2020, when they reported 10 years of decline.

Blazek testified to reaching out to FISC stakeholders in April 2020 with a 6-question survey, which received a 50 percent response rate; however, there was no budget for follow-up. WFU is not aware of receiving a survey in this period. Recipients were determined internally by a CALs committee.

The FISC program losing the on-campus housing aspect to the program was a huge concern. Many individuals questioned how FISC will attract prospective students and compete with local technical colleges when they will no longer host students in Madison and it is no longer accredited.

As a UW-Madison alum, I agree that the value of on-campus education cannot be dismissed. As a Farmers Union staff member, it saddens me to see a historic program that works to provide farmers a way to experience “college life” – while respecting their lifestyle and providing working knowledge – leaving our flagship land-grant University.

WFU looks forward to being a part of the continuing conversation. We encourage Short Course alumni to share their thoughts on the future of this program.

My hope is the program works with stakeholders and alumni to find a way to give students the valuable experiences the program is known for in this new blended teaching model.

Questions can be directed to fisc@cals.wisc.edu or 608-263-3918. Learn more at go.wisc.edu/FISC

Wolf Management Plan Anticipated 'This Spring'

Laurie Groskopf
Guest Contributor

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is again delaying the release of the draft Wolf Management Plan. This is not a surprise, as the DNR has made three attempts to review and modify the wolf management plan (2010, 2012-2014, and currently) without completion.

The latest release date is "this spring." Producers and other rural residents need to keep their eyes and ears open, because the release may come with no warning. Thankfully, the DNR has agreed to provide a 30-day public comment period. Public hearings may also be held.

What might producers watch for in the new plan? First, all management decisions regarding wolves will flow from the wolf goal. Previous plans (1999, 2007) established a wolf goal of 350 in the state. DNR staff repeatedly promoted having no set goal, similar to bear management. However, many organizations, both wildlife and agricultural, have drafted policies promoting continuing a wolf goal of 350 for Wisconsin; some are calling for 350 or less.

At the recent Wisconsin Conservation Congress Spring Hearings, voters in 66 counties approved a wolf goal of 350 or less, with 4 counties sitting on the fence and 2 (Dane and Milwaukee) voting against a goal of 350 or less.

County board resolutions have also been drafted on the matter. Between 2010-2017, 36 county boards (half the counties in Wisconsin) passed advisory resolutions approving a wolf goal of 350 or 350 or less. Some counties have been working on reviewing those recommendations, and between December 2021 and present, 26 counties (one-third) have referred to previously passed resolutions (9) or a new resolution promoting a wolf goal of 350 or 350 or less (17). Other counties are waiting for the release of a draft wolf management plan or their county board chair is not allowing the resolution to be heard.

The large nature of current zones does not allow for harvest controls on problem-causing packs.

Since 2014, the DNR has not allowed a functioning advisory committee to assist in making wolf management decisions. There were two temporary committees convened to make recommendations on the fall wolf season – that never happened – and on the draft wolf management plan. Both committees have been disbanded, and decisions are being made internal to DNR. Agriculture held only four seats on the wolf management plan committee (7%). Tribes held 27.5% of the seats, while wolf expansionist groups held 21%. A functional advisory committee must be a requirement to advise the DNR, with adequate representation by rural people exposed to wolves and agricultural concerns. No defense of Wisconsin's

right to manage wolves was provided by the State's Attorney General in the last court challenge to delisting. We are seeing the results of that decision, which was not appealed.

Bills have been introduced in Congress to delist wolves, as was done in 2011 for Idaho and Montana and portions of surrounding states. There may also be action on revising the Endangered Species Act at the federal level. The US Department of Interior could appeal the judge's decision to relist wolves or rewrite the delisting plan to address what will happen in areas where wolves are scarce or absent. The fastest way to regain control of wolf management in Wisconsin is through Congressional action.

Wisconsin has the highest human population density in wolf recovered areas in the lower 48. It also has the second highest wolf population estimate in the lower 48. Rural residents, farmers, deer hunters, families, and pet owners have been concerned about the large presence of wolves, which has impacted many facets of their lives and livelihoods. In every survey of public attitudes, where rural people who are directly impacted, attitudes deteriorate when exposed to more wolf presence. That outcome is not healthy for the rural population, nor is it healthy for wolves. A strong wildlife program requires satisfaction by those most effected, or the system is broken.

Those experiencing conflicts with wolves need to contact the USDA Wildlife Service, northern district 1-800-228-1368 or southern district 1-800-433-0663 and leave a message. Lethal control is still possible in conflicts that involve a threat to human safety, particularly if there are repeated issues. A permit is required, but these have been used in the past in a few situations.

Feel free to contact WFU member Laurie Groskopf, Tomahawk, at 715-453-6301 for more information.

Groskopf is a WFU member from Lincoln County and a wolf control advocate who has been active in wolf management discussions.





Kriss Marion
WiWiC Communications Specialist

Wisconsin Women in Conservation (WiWiC) celebrated Earth Month in April by kicking off their jam-packed 2022 event schedule with Climate Smart Soil Solutions gatherings in Stevens Point on April 26 and New London on April 27.

Kathy Turner, Area Resource Soil Scientist with the USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service, presented on building healthy soil amidst an increasingly challenging weather environment. She discussed climate-smart practices that sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and mitigate the impacts of climate change, while building the resilience that strengthens farm bottom-lines.

WiWiC is a state-wide collaboration between Wisconsin Farmers Union, Michael Field Agricultural Institute, Renewing the Countryside and the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES). This three-year multi-faceted project, funded by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), brings together Wisconsin women landowners to network and learn about conservation practices, resources, and funding opportunities. In 2021, the program launched in February and engaged 1,337 participants with 17 Zoom Events and 5 Field Days, as well as 2,300 on social media through Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest. For 2022, the group plans 12 learning circle gatherings, 6 on-farm field days, 4 Conservation Summer Camp Lunch Zooms, and various happy hours and virtual events. Sign up for "The Buzz" monthly newsletter at WiWiC.org to stay abreast of all events and opportunities.

"We launched WiWiC in 2021 as a primarily on-line forum of events out of necessity because of COVID. But our intention was always to build in-person regional networks of women landowners and farmers interested in conservation. I am so excited to be fully implementing that in 2022 - with in person events starting in April and on-farm field days starting in August," said Kirsten Slaughter, WiWiC Regional Coordinator for the North West and North Central cohorts. "Our gatherings are such a wonderful way to connect and learn together. We will also be holding our popular virtual Conservation Summer Camp again this year which allows women

WIWIC UPCOMING EVENTS

EAST TROY

Tuesday, May 3, 10am-1pm
 South East Spring Gathering
 Michael Fields Ag Institute

AMERY

Friday, May 6, 4-7pm
 North West Spring Gathering
 Farm Table Foundation

FOUNTAIN CITY

Friday, May 20, 1-5pm
 West Central Spring Gathering
 Kinstone

LA FARGE

Friday, June 3, 1-5pm
 South West Spring Gathering
 Kickapoo Valley Reserve

GAYS MILLS

Friday, July 15, 2-6pm
 South West Farm Field Day
 Sweet Springs Farm
 Hosted by Harriet Behar

JEFFERSON

Thursday, August 11, 3-6pm
 South East Farm Field Day
 Brattset Family Farm
 Hosted by Kirsten Jurcek

MONDOVI

Friday, August 12, 1-5pm
 West Central Farm Field Day
 Together Farms, Mondovi
 Hosted by Stephanie Schneider

AMERY

Saturday, September 10, 1-4pm
 North West Farm Field Day
 Blackbrook Farm, Amery
 Hosted by Ayla Dodge

**RSVP TODAY AT
WWW.WIWIC.ORG**

across the state to access the content and connect.”

The WiWiC project has been so successful that WFU Membership Coordinator Alicia Razvi recently joined Slaughter as a Regional Coordinator for the North West and North Central regions. Seven Regional Networks have been convened across the state through WiWiC, with the goal of providing women’s peer-to-peer “Learning Circle” opportunities throughout the year in a variety of settings. These events are structured to provide ample networking time, as well as access to local conservation professionals and resources. Experienced women Conservation Coaches provide regional mentorship. WiWiC prioritizes and funds landowner site visits and custom Conservation Plans by local women conservation professionals.



Razvi

“Everything we do in WiWiC is planned around the Learning Circle model, which is an outcomes-based design that takes into account research on how women learn and lead,” said Kriss Marion, WiWiC Communications Lead. “We’re certainly not the only ones doing it - you can see similar approaches with Lean In Circles for corporate training and the Brene Brown movement - but it’s powerfully effective for women in agriculture. Basically, there is more sharing with each other and less listening to an up-front speaker, though we’re still making lots of technical information available.”



Conservation Summer Camp Returning in 2022

Back by popular demand, the WiWiC Women’s Conservation Summer Camp will be back online every fourth Thursday of the month May through August. These virtual events are short one-hour topical presentations over the lunch hour. We pair a conservation professional with a women farmer or landowners who is experienced in the subject.

We’ve surveyed participants to find out what their top issues are, and we’ve recruited speakers to address them. The Chat in these lively events is always a big part of the benefit, as participants share questions, answers and resources. Sign up for FREE at WiWiC.org.

- Thursday, May 26, 12-1pm, Zoom, Creating Prairie Habitat: Native Grasses and Flowers
- Thursday, June 23, 12-1pm on Zoom, Enhancing Pollinators: Bees, Butterflies and More!
- Thursday, July 28, 12-1pm on Zoom, Managing Weeds and Pests
- Thursday, August 25, 12-1pm on Zoom, Tools to Manage Your Land Legacy

WiWiC launches podcast: 'Queen Bee Sessions'

Wisconsin Women in Conservation has launched a podcast, the Queen Bee Sessions, featuring Wisconsin women farmers, landowners and conservationists who are making strides to protect soil, water, and wildlife in our fair state. The sessions are hosted by WiWiC Communications Lead Kriss Marion, who practices managed grazing with sheep and hosts a farm stay at Circle M Market Farm in southwest Wisconsin. WFU member and president of the Southeastern WFU Chapter, Kirsten Jurcek, was a guest on the podcast in April, talking about Brattset Family Farms history of regenerative agriculture. Jurcek, a WiWiC Conservation Coach, joined WFU Board Member Rachel Bouressa, also a WiWiC Conservation Coach, on Wisconsin Public Radio for an Earth Day program about Regenerative Grazing. Jurcek will be hosting a WiWiC Field Day in August. Listen on Spotify or watch the video at WiWiC.org/blog.



Blazing Their Own Trail

Siren Shrub Co. Creating Something for Everyone

Tommy Enright

Communications Associate

Siren Shrub Company is a women-owned beverage company based out of Central Wisconsin focused on creating an inclusive drinking experience for everyone around the table regardless of their beverage preferences.

Founders Mindy McCord and Layne Cozzolino met back in 2010 working at a coffee shop in Stevens Point. Their relationship was incubated amidst a unique environment of local food and community connectivity.

"We have always been makers," McCord says. "Our friendship has revolved around cooking, canning, fermenting, and now shrub making."

What is it?

Shrubs are a sophisticated mixer dating back to the 1800s; made from apple cider vinegar, a natural sugar and a fruit, root or herb that create a concentrate. Shrubs are used a splash at a time to craft complex delicious flavors with or without the addition of alcohol.

McCord and Cozzolino make tangy shrub mixers that are best served in sparkling water or splashed into a cocktail or mocktail for a complex and exciting taste

experience. They also use mixers to create a ready to drink, canned Siren Sparkling Shrub that can be cracked open and enjoyed anytime, anyplace.

Each shrub that Siren Shrub Co. creates has just three ingredients, and one of those ingredients is rooted in a Wisconsin farm partnership. Sourcing directly from Wisconsin farmers is one of the company's values; some of their farm partners include WFU member farms such as Whitefeather Organics, Bird and the Bees, and Tapped Maple Syrup.

"Siren Shrub Co. is built on relationships. Our decision-making revolves around valuing the entire process from the field to your glass. We are committed to not cutting corners, but instead focused on building community wealth one shrub at a time!"

How it started

In the summer of 2015, the duo stumbled upon a shrub recipe and started playing around. The next summer, when Cozzolino found out she was pregnant; they realized that shrubs are the perfect replacement for alcohol. McCord started making shrub recipes with all the local produce she could get her hands on. Soon after, their fridges were brimming with shrubs.



Submitted photo
Siren Shrub Co. founders Layne Cozzolino, left, and Mindy McCord.

"I've always been into preserving the season's bounty," says McCord. "Somehow over the years word got out that I was interested in canning and I'd often find myself with mountains of produce from neighboring gardeners that didn't want to see the fruits of their labor go to waste, but they had no desire to can themselves. Shrub making felt kind of like that: what is available, seasonal and might taste good as a shrub."

They found out rather quickly that most things shrub well ... but not all things, so the shrub experiments are ongoing and the flavor possibilities seem endless.

"Interestingly enough, sometimes flavors are born from suggestions of our neighboring farmers ... so everything leading up to becoming a shrub maker has been full circle."

The pair knew they were onto something.

"Shrubs felt new and different from anything else we were seeing at the grocery store. It doesn't take but a glance to see that the salsa, jam and other typical farmers market staple categories are a dime a dozen. Of

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course, people can succeed in these categories, but the competition is steep. The differentiation and uniqueness of shrubs was clear, so we decided to really go for it....low and behold Siren Shrub Co. was born."

Prior to launching their business, Cozzolino was the executive director of Central Wisconsin local food community hub, Central Rivers Farmshed, whose mission is to grow a resilient local food economy. Cozzolino is also a longtime member of the Wood-Portage-Waupaca chapter of WFU, representing the chapter multiple times as a delegate at convention. She also represented Wisconsin as a participant in the 2015-2016 cohort of National Farmers Union's Beginning Farmer Institute.

"In many ways, Farmshed was my first start-up experience, growing upon something from the ground up," says Cozzolino. "My time spent building relationships, developing programming, and honing my skills at Farmshed absolutely crossed over to Siren Shrub Co. The most clear correlations are related to sourcing from local farms and understanding how to navigate food licensing and production but it goes so much deeper than that...most of my business acumen was crafted during my time there."

Siren Shrub Co. was established in August of 2018. At this time both McCord and Cozzolino had full-time jobs and were building Siren Shrub Company in the off hours. In October of 2019, Layne took the leap to work for SSC full time. McCord followed suit in September of 2021 after transitioning out of her position as the Administrative Assistant to the Portage County Executive. Together with their community connections and complimentary, but different, expertise they are now able to focus on growing the company full time together.

"We are very committed to continuing to grow with a small to small focus. We are interested in growing as a national brand, but much more in a niche way. We are not ready or necessarily interested in mainstream markets and want to continue pushing back against most of the traditional models of growth. Something we are really jazzed about is our limited release collaboration flavors. These limited release flavors are produced bimonthly in partnership with a business or organization that we love, and a portion of the proceeds go to support our collaborating partner. It is also an opportunity for us to get back into the kitchen to craft flavors that we love that will likely never make it to the mass market."



Harvest of Hope Funds Available

Roger T. Williams

Dane County Farmers Union

The last five years have been difficult for farm families. Prices for agricultural commodities have been depressed and rapidly escalating costs of farm inputs like seed, fertilizer, fuel, machinery, and land have resulted in thin margins or losses for many farms. Drought has also been a huge problem in some areas of Wisconsin. If this describes your situation, the Harvest of Hope Fund may be a resource for you.

The Harvest of Hope Fund provides financial help and hope to Wisconsin farm families in difficult financial situations. The fund offers gifts of up to \$2,000 to address common farm financial problems: power cut-offs or threatened power cut-offs, medical or veterinary bills, house or barn fires, feed for cattle, machinery repair, farm accidents, supplies for spring planting, climatic conditions (floods, drought, frost, hail) or simply putting food on the table or fuel in the tank.

The Harvest of Hope was launched in 1986 and has given over 1,740 grants totaling more than \$1,210,000 to farm families in difficult situations in Wisconsin. Five principles we follow include: 1) Our goal is to keep Wisconsin family farms in the hands of family farmers; 2) We respond to families in difficult situations, at times that could turn into disaster; 3) We respond quickly, usually in 2-5 days; 4) We are especially sensitive to needs of farm families with small children; and 5) We link farm families with local resources for financial or management assistance, as we think this is in the best interest of the farm family and the fund.

The fund was created by the Madison Christian Community. To apply, visit madisonchristiancommunity.org, click on "Serving," then "Harvest of Hope." Simple application forms and financial planning statements are available on the website; both must be submitted to process the request.

If you have questions, call 608-836-1455 and press 8; your call will likely go to voicemail which helps reduce costs and allows you to call anytime. Please provide the reason for your call and your complete name, address and phone number. Harvest of Hope may be a resource you find to be helpful!



Young children want you to be their farmer

Deb Moses

Farm to Early Care and Education Specialist, Rooted

When children are young, they are in awe of everything. You can look a 4-year old in the eyes and say “I get to do one of the most important jobs in the world. I get to be a superhero. I feed my community and the things I grow actually become people’s muscles and bones. The food I grow helps children run and jump and gives them fuel to ask lots of questions. What an amazing job I have!”

And here’s the best part, they stare up at you and smile and start to really feel how awesome that is, because... they get it. They totally get it. Maybe the rest of the world and even you have forgotten why this work is so important, but these kids share in your excitement, and they can remind you why the hell you wanted to do this grueling work in the first place.

This past summer I provided veggies occasionally to a local child care center. I only interacted with the children a little while making deliveries but even having them ask “Wow, are those *real* vegetables?” or hearing one say “Hey, that farmer lady is here!” added a much-needed spark to my day. As a small-scale farmer (1/4 acre), doing a \$100 or \$200-worth delivery from time to time helped my bottom line.

I am spreading the word about Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE). Have you ever considered child care/ECE programs as a potential marketing option? As I am learning, we small farmers have much in common with child care providers, more than one may realize.

Like small farmers and food producers, ECE providers do their work as a labor of love. It is physical and emotional work, with regulations, safety measures, and continuing education to keep up with. They are overworked and underpaid, and usually don’t have health benefits. These folks

weather all the stresses of owning a small business, while being on the frontlines of witnessing difficult family situations and understanding how crucial love, care, and community are for small minds and bodies. Their hearts are on their sleeves. I have been brought to tears more than once while attending ECE conferences as I hear teachers and early childhood partners speak of the concern they have for children and their desires to help them heal from trauma and thrive while also providing the food and care they need to flourish and grow.

Farm to ECE is about much more than getting kids some fresh, local carrots. It’s about creating a network of support for child care providers and farmers who are giving their all to our future. It’s about helping make sure children, some of whom spend a majority of their waking, young lives in child care, get the quality calories they need. It’s about helping

them know that those calories come from somewhere and are grown for them with love, respect for their culture and food preferences, and with joy for celebrating exactly who they are. Ideally children can access on-site or nearby gardens or a farm,

allowing them to get their hands dirty and connect with the Earth. Young children need to know they are not only seen and heard but also worthy of good food and investment from their community. Farm to ECE touches on all of these things.

Sometimes we forget about this young age group because we have literally forgotten these years in our own lives, but this time is so important. The neural networks are forming, including the wiring for belonging. Children may not remember years from now that a farmer came and read them a book, but somewhere in their brain, it made a difference to them that someone looked them in the eyes, smiled, and connected a concept in a book with the carrot they are crunching. What happens for children in these early years makes all the difference.

If the idea of Farm to ECE intrigues you, I encourage you to read *Farm to Child Care: A Detailed Guide for Farmers and Food Producers*, which describes what the ECE landscape is like, how it is different from K12, how to find programs to work with, and questions you will want to ponder when considering if this kind of partnership is a good fit for your business. Meanwhile, thanks for all you already do to fuel our future!

Deb Moses works as a Farm to Early Care and Education Specialist at Rooted in Madison, Wisconsin. She also stewards and operates Cliffbrake Farm in Sauk County.

Maybe the rest of the world and even you have forgotten why this work is so important, but these kids share in your excitement, and they can remind you why the hell you wanted to do this grueling work in the first place.



Learn more at <https://bit.ly/FarmToChildCare>

New Effort Targets Rural Financial Issues

Shawn Sebastian

Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) has launched a new initiative to focus on financial issues facing rural America. The effort will initially focus on rural banking deserts, discriminatory and predatory ag credit, and manufactured housing.

There is no single rural America – from Appalachia and the Deep South to Alaska, rural places have a wide range of diverse people, economies, and ways of life. Rural people are deeply committed to the places they live, but face real challenges in accessing reliable services and good jobs, keeping up with household expenses, maintaining farming, and finding affordable housing.

It is well-known that larger economic trends uniquely affect rural communities. The number of jobs in rural areas have still not fully recovered from the shock of the 2008 financial crash and job growth in rural areas has been less than a third of the rate in urban areas. Rural wages are lower. Rural poverty rates are higher than in non-rural areas, and the gap is growing. Increasing corporate consolidation across the economy has hit rural areas particularly hard, suppressing wages and leaving rural people with fewer employment options. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on rural populations have been severe, with significant negative impacts on the economic outlook.

We have a responsibility to pay attention to the challenges rural communities face as they work to build and maintain financial resiliency. Last month, CFPB Director Rohit Chopra invited over 50 people from organizations representing rural people across the country to share their stories and concerns. What we heard is that larger economic trends are affecting the financial resilience of rural families. The issues surfaced include:

Rural Banking Deserts: Stakeholders described how stark declines in the number of banks in rural areas have had a particularly negative impact on rural communities. The decline in banks has led to non-bank alternatives that charge higher fees and interest rates, resulting in more money leaving rural communities. Trends of bank consolidation also result in the loss of local, on-the-ground knowledge of how rural communities operate. As banking relationships and credit disappear, they are followed by small businesses and jobs.

Discriminatory and Predatory Agricultural Credit: We heard from farmers who described the important role that agricultural credit (or the lack of such credit) plays in their overall financial stability. Stakeholders working closely with Black farmers described a long history of credit providers discriminating against Black farmers contributing to the

decline of Black farmers and Black land loss. In 1920 there were nearly one million Black farmers, representing 14 percent of all farmers; today there are fewer than 50,000, representing about 1.5 percent of all farmers. Black farmers have lost more than 12 million acres of farmland over the past century, mostly since the 1950s. We heard from people working on the ground with Black farmers that discrimination in lending to Black farmers persists.

We also heard from farmers that obligations to banks can trap them in exploitative arrangements with dominant agriculture firms. We heard from a former chicken farmer who described how consolidated poultry integrators steer farmers to take out large loans of nearly a million dollars while chicken farmers only get paid on short-term 60-day contracts that provide inconsistent, unpredictable pay. Farmers described the downstream consumer finance impacts of trying to subsist and hold onto their families' homes and farms under these arrangements by cobbling together off-farm income, taking out credit card debt, personal loans, and other forms of credit to make ends meet.

Manufactured Housing: We heard from people living in rural areas that quality, affordable housing is hard to come by in rural areas and there are too few rental properties available. People depend on manufactured housing – more than half of all manufactured homes are in rural areas which is particularly important to older people on fixed incomes. Residents told us that manufactured home parks are increasingly being bought up by private equity firms that have, in some cases, dramatically increased rents and tacked on fees in short periods of time. Some feel trapped in the arrangement because they're still paying off their home-only loan and don't want to lose the equity invested. Manufactured home owners told us about examples when their neighbors could no longer afford increased lot rents and were forced to move and leave their house behind because it is usually cost-prohibitive to move a manufactured home. Stakeholders reported that sometimes the private equity firm that owns the lot both forces the eviction and takes possession of the manufactured home as abandoned property without paying the owner.

We are concerned about these threats to financial resiliency and committed to using our tools and authorities to ensure that rural communities, and the people who live in them, have opportunities to build wealth and thrive.

If these issues resonate with your experiences, or you have other challenges you are facing in your rural area, please share your story at story.consumerfinance.gov and – as always – if you have a problem with an auto loan, credit card, collections, mortgages, debt collector, or another consumer financial product, you can submit a complaint at www.consumerfinance.gov/complaint/.





Representing WFU at the NFU Convention were left to right (front row) Katie Loehrke, Weyauwega; Trish Nieland, De Pere; Angela Edelburg, Amherst; Becky Brathal, Woodville; Danielle Endvick, Holcombe; (middle row) Anna Hinchley-Skedahl; Dave Rosen, Glenwood City; Linda Ceylor, Catawba; Jen Schmitz, Cashton; Darin Von Ruden, Westby; Sarah Lloyd, Wisconsin Dells; Rick Adamski, Seymour; Rachel Bouressa, New London; (back row) Lucas Edelburg, Amherst; Catie Weiss, Glenwood City; Gary Edelburg, Amherst; Jessica Ryba, Cadott; Patty Edelburg, Amherst; Michelle Ramirez-White, Madison; Ryan Brathal, Woodville; John Skoug, Osseo; Kevin Skedahl, Cambridge; Shawn Bartholomew, Elk Mound; and Nick Levendofsky, Madison.

Farmers Gather for National Farmers Union Convention

Danielle Endvick
Communications Director

DENVER – Twenty-five Wisconsin Farmers Union (WFU) members were in Denver in early March for the 120th Annual National Farmers Union (NFU) Convention. Nearly 500 family farmers and ranchers convened to set policy that supports farm families and strengthen rural America.

“Our annual convention is an exciting opportunity for Farmers Union members to gather together, in person, to work towards our shared goal of economic prosperity and social justice. With all the challenges we face today, our grassroots organization is needed more than ever to confront these obstacles,” said NFU President Rob Larew.

Larew, who grew up on a West Virginia dairy farm and has served as NFU President since 2019, was re-elected. In a rousing State of the Farmers Union address, he committed to continue to push for fairness for farmers and called on members to engage in NFU’s work.

“Time and time again over Farmers Union history, when faced with challenges, we rise to the task and we get it done,” he said. “Farmers Union is strong and we are steadfastly in the fight.”

The convention highlighted NFU’s advocacy efforts around competitive markets through the Fairness for Farmers campaign, with featured speakers including U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Senator Jon Tester of Montana, Farm Service Agency Administrator Zach Ducheneaux, Colorado Governor Jared Polis and Colorado Agricultural Commissioner Kate Greenberg.

“We need to make production agriculture for family farmers vibrant once again,” said Sen. Tester, who was presented with the Fairness for Farmers Champion Award for

his work on fair markets, meat processing infrastructure, and other rural issues.

Both Vilsack and Ducheneaux touched on how the extractive economy present in rural America is not serving family farmers or their communities.

“It sure seems to me as though we all work so hard to try and fill a gap,” Ducheneaux said. “What if we addressed why there is a gap? Why don’t we start treating agriculture like an infrastructure investment?”

“What we’ve had in rural America for far too long is an extraction economy, where essentially things are grown on the land and taken to be processed someplace else,” Sec. Vilsack said. “We need to move away from this extraction economy that benefits only a small percentage of the people to a circular economy that takes full advantage of the natural resources we have and creates wealth in rural America.”

Breakout sessions were held on NFU’s history of fighting for fair markets, engaging the next generation of agriculture leaders, addressing confusion on carbon markets, and the potential of biofuels. Those conversations set the stage for the organization’s annual policy review and approval of special orders of business, including one on dairy policy reform that was championed by WFU.

Farmers from throughout the country deliberated on a diverse array of policies covering conservation, markets, farm support programs, immigration, and more. Representing WFU as delegates were President Rick Adamski, Seymour; District 4 Director Jen Schmitz, Cashton; District 6 Director Sarah Lloyd, Wisconsin Dells; At-Large Director Rachel Bouressa, New London; and John Skoug, Osseo.

At the convention, Ryan and Becky Brathal of Woodville,



Time and time again over Farmers Union history, when faced with challenges, we rise to the task and we get it done. Farmers Union is strong and we are steadfastly in the fight.

— NFU President Rob Larew



Allison Hellenbrand of Madison, and Anna Hinchley-Skedahl and Kevin Skedahl of Cambridge took part in the Farmers Union Enterprises Leadership Program.

Wisconsin dairy farmer Patty Edelburg ran for re-election as NFU Vice President but was ousted by fifth-generation crop and cattle rancher Jeff Kippley of South Dakota.

“Patty did a tremendous job in her service in that role; we are so appreciative of all the work she accomplished in her time as vice president,” Adamski said.

WFU Vice President Darin Von Ruden of Westby received the Bruce Miller Membership Award. Created in honor of late WFU member and Minnesota Farmers Union Membership Director Bruce Miller, the award honors members who demonstrate outstanding leadership. Dunn County Farmers Union was also recognized for excelling in membership growth.



Adamski noted the significance of the passage of the Dairy Policy Reform language. “The level of agreement and solidarity we’re seeing among dairy farmers, not just in Farmers Union but in other farm organizations, is critical for the needed change in U.S. dairy, and I think it’s directly attributable to the important Dairy Together work that WFU has been leading in the past several years,” he said. “We look forward to continuing to move that effort forward within NFU and collaboratively, especially as we move toward the 2023 Farm Bill. At the rate we’re losing dairy farms, dairy policy reform cannot come soon enough.”



The language on dairy policy reform calls on Congress to establish a mandatory program for managed growth based on market demand and price stability in the 2023 Farm Bill. Specifically, the special order states such a program should increase farmer profitability by elevating milk prices, preventing overproduction, and reducing milk price volatility. It also must allow for beginning farmer entry, reduce government expenditures, respond to global market conditions, be national and mandatory, allow for planned growth, be designed in a way that any production base does not acquire value, and have meaningful farmer input in development, implementation, and governance.

Darin Von Ruden receives the Bruce Miller Membership Award; WFU delegates gear up for the policy discussion; Jackson-Trempealeau member John Skoug on the policy floor; At-Large Director Rachel Bouressa and Skoug show some Wisconsin pride.

Special orders passed included language around Fairness for Farmers, Supply Chains, Agricultural Workforce and Food Processing Reform, Climate Change, and Dairy Policy Reform.

Learn more about the convention and view policy at nfu.org.

Meet Joe Koch



Photos submitted by jkoch

Alicia Razvi
Regional Membership Coordinator

In early March, Wisconsin Farmers Union held our annual Emerging Leaders Retreat. This is a weekend-long, family-invited, training focused on chapter engagement, leadership development and networking. This year, Emerging Leaders had over 20 members and staff in attendance.

Among them was Joe Koch, of Woodville. Joe is a farmer and rancher using Agroforestry to raise Black Angus cattle for replacement heifers and cow-calf pairs, commercial beef, hay, horses, apples, and garden vegetables. He is a Veteran of the U.S. Army and helped launch the Farmer Veteran Coalition of Wisconsin. Joe shares, "When I left to join the military, I always had a calling to return home to work the land and so I did that. I come from a long line of farmers and agriculture professionals; however I am the first-generation cattle rancher on my land and hope to pass it along in my family when I retire."

Joe joined WFU in 2019 because he was drawn to like-minded people that originate grassroots movements on issues that affect farmers and ranchers in our communities. He says, "I enjoy teaming up with active ag professionals, scholars, community leaders, beginning and underrepresented BIPOC aspiring farmers, Veterans and friends in order to work together on farm issues facing all of us. There are opportunities and activities for everyone to take part in."

The interaction among grass-roots communities that flows all the way up to National Farmer Union advocacy of ag issues and viewpoints being told in Washington make it all worthwhile, he adds.

“The shared values that I see and relate to are awareness of climate change, an innate calling to mitigate the damage being done to our earth, seek out the truth and provide fair markets to local farmers. I value our state conventions that allow people to get involved, speak on either side of a topic and change those things that need it. I am thrilled to know people that care about it as deeply as I do.”

**Give a Stronger Voice to Rural America
Join Wisconsin Farmers Union and
help preserve the economic health and
sustainability of our rural communities.**

"Wisconsin Farmers Union has given me the opportunity to attend the MOSES conference in 2020, which turned out to be serendipitous. I ended up meeting with Caynan Sherrod, the representative of the National Farmer Veteran Coalition and he provided me with the contacts to start the Farmer Veteran Coalition of Wisconsin. The membership has grown to over 540 since it was incorporated as a non-profit organization less than a year ago." Joe is currently the president, however, he plans to take on a different role in the future and let the organization and leadership continue to grow in many ways.

When the opportunity to attend the Farmers Union Emerging Leaders retreat came up, Joe was nominated to attend by his St. Croix chapter officers. He readily agreed to devote the weekend because it seemed appropriate on many levels in his quest for knowledge on managing an upstart non-profit organization. "This directly benefits my ability to initiate membership activities and growth for county chapters around the State, even beyond my home county. One of the best takeaways was developing a plan to match resources from the WFU and FVC of Wisconsin to sit down at the table and find common ground and issues," Joe says. His most enjoyable takeaway was working with diverse people with a wide variety of age, experiences and learning about the paths that brought them to the Emerging Leaders retreat. "I was probably the oldest one in the group and so listening to each participant was insightful."

"Wisconsin Farmers Union has given me a louder voice on a larger stage by affiliating with neighbors that have similar concerns and are doing something about it," Joe says. He is particularly passionate about Fairness for Farmers and the movement to identify those practices that are in favor of corporations, which affect all parts of the ag industry. There are particularly large problems with climate change, anti-trust laws being overlooked in favor of corporate control, foreign ownership of food producers that weaken our food security, collusion among a handful of large corporations to the benefit of themselves, and losing the ability to work on our privately owned farm equipment. In working with WFU, Joe says, "The active teams among the membership of the Farmers Union give me hope and encouragement to keep engaging those issues far greater than myself."



Membership Application

Name: _____

Spouse's Name: _____

of Children under 21: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____

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Phone: _____

Household Type:

Farm Rural Small Town Urban

Type of Farm: *Check all that apply.*

Dairy Poultry Vegetables or Fruit
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Membership: *Fee includes family unless student or organization is checked.*

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