

SEPT/OCT 2025



Wisconsin  
Farmers  
Union

# NEWS

UNITED TO GROW FAMILY AGRICULTURE



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# Editor's Column: Pumpkin Spice and Policy Season



Fall is here, which means two things: pumpkin spice everything and Farmers Union chapter meetings. One may give you heartburn

while the other may change farm policy in Wisconsin.

In this issue you will find stories of members pushing forward in all sorts of ways. From creative approaches to conservation and local food to the energy of grassroots democracy at chapter meetings, our organization is full of people who see challenges and decide to

get to work. That is what makes Wisconsin Farmers Union more than the sum of its parts. As we head into convention season, take a moment to notice the role you play in it all.

So grab a coffee, maybe with or without the spice, and dig in.

*Tommy Enright*

WFU Communications Director

## Survey: 2025 Board Evaluation

Introduced at Summer Conference, this survey is intended to evaluate the effectiveness of the WFU Board in their duty of representing and serving the WFU membership. The survey itself is anonymous. All members are invited to fill out this form.

**TAKE  
SURVEY**



Please contact WFU Executive Assistant Camryn Billen with any questions. She can be reached at [cbillen@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:cbillen@wisconsinfarmersunion.com) or 715-382-6330.



The graphic features a plaid background with a dark green rounded rectangle at the top containing the Wisconsin Farmers Union logo and the text "WE'RE LOOKING FOR". Below this is a blue rounded rectangle with the text "ACCOUNTING MANAGER" and "Find the full position description and more information on our website!". At the bottom is a dark green rounded rectangle with the URL "WisconsinFarmersUnion.com/Employment".





# From the President's Desk: Policy Starts With You

As fall approaches, many of us are already looking ahead to December, when we will gather for Wisconsin Farmers Union's 95th annual state convention. This year, we are excited to welcome Wisconsin Foodie host Luke Zahm as our Saturday evening banquet emcee and keynote speaker. Luke will walk us through the meal, lifting up the meaning of the food on our plates and reminding us of the connection between farmers, eaters, and community.

As farmers, we know firsthand the value of that connection. Yet, too often, our food system pushes us in the opposite direction. We have seen consolidation drive diversity out of the marketplace, until so many products look and taste the same. That might make sense for corporate efficiency, but it is not necessarily what the public wants, and it certainly is not the recipe for a resilient, sustainable food system. Our convention will be a chance to reflect on these challenges and to lift up a vision for something better.

Leading up to convention, it is also the season for annual chapter meetings. These gatherings are more than routine business. They are the foundation of our grassroots policy process.

Chapters will begin drafting and introducing policy resolutions that may guide the direction of our organization in the year ahead, and in turn, shape the debates at both the state and national level. This is democracy at work, rooted in the voices of our members.

With another election cycle approaching, I also encourage chapters to invite candidates to your meetings. This is not about giving anyone a platform to campaign. It is about creating space for them to listen. When candidates hear directly from our members about the issues that matter in rural Wisconsin, they have a chance to understand our values and hopefully carry some of that perspective with them into office.



I look forward to seeing the ideas, energy, and vision that will emerge from your meetings this fall, and to celebrating them together at our convention in December.

*Darin Von Ruden*

WFU President

# GRASS STOCK!

## AT BOURESSA FAMILY FARM

N3775 Ritchie Rd New London, WI 54961

### LIVE Music!

**ADAM GREUEL AND THE SPACE BURRITOS!**  
**IRONSTILL!**  
**BABA GHANOOJI**

Field of Discovery  
Vendor Village  
Farmers Market  
TONS of Activities  
Farm Tours  
Food Trucks  
Guns & 50/50 Raffles  
Camping ... and more!

A Celebration of Conservation and Agriculture - great tunes and times!

# SEPTEMBER 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025

## 3:00pm - 11:00pm

**TICKETS - \$20 in advance - \$25 at the farm - KIDS are FREE**

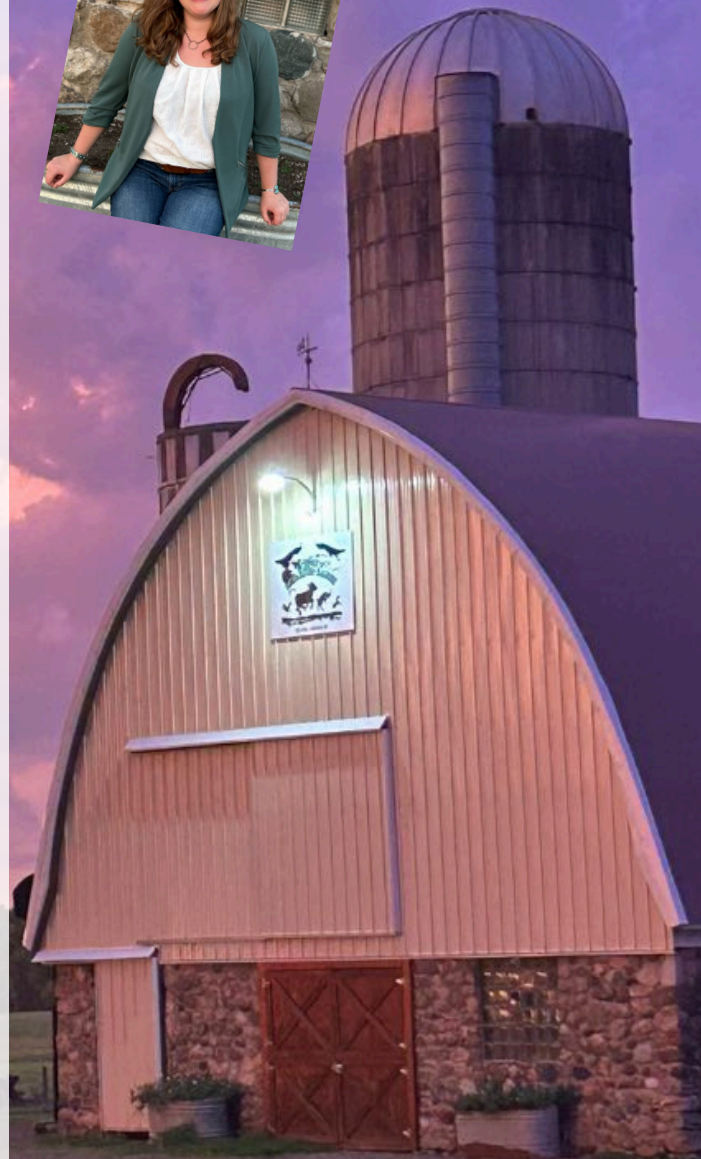
**FOR MORE INFO AND TICKETS go to the Facebook Event Page**  
**Scan the QR Code or contact Bouressa Family Farm**

GranoWorks Inc. NRCS Wisconsin Farmers Union Golden Sands Pigeons Forever Upper Fox Wolf  
Michigan Fields Agricultural Institute grassLAND Fox-Wolf Audubon



# NOT READY TO TURN OUT THE LIGHTS

*By Danielle Endrick*



**E**arly in my career at Wisconsin Farmers Union, past Executive Director Tom Quinn handed me an ad from his work during the 1980s farm crisis. A lonely farmhouse sat silhouetted in the dark, with bold text across the page: “*Will the last family farmer to leave rural America please turn out the lights?*”

Tom knew that image would strike a chord with me; I grew up with the beckoning glow of light spilling out of the stone barn at chore time and also knew the heartbreak of seeing those lights go dark after the cows were sold.

Too many barns have gone dark in our communities in recent decades. In an August 11 article in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Rick Barrett—award-winning journalist and WFU Friend of the Family Farmer—noted that Wisconsin has lost more than 70 percent of its dairy herds since 2000. As of Aug. 1, there were just 5,222 licensed milk cow herds in the state, down nearly 26 percent in only five years. Economics, shifting work ethics, and the absence of successors to carry on the farm were all cited as reasons for the decline.

What doesn’t make the list are the decades of Earl Butz-era farm policy that, under the guise of “progress,” systematically pushed family farmers out while opening the door to corporate consolidation.

Yet consumers are beginning to wake up. More people are asking hard questions about what kind of food system we want and how we can shape it. With family farm numbers dwindling, the need for community, advocacy, and action has never been greater.

From tagging along with my dad at the local feed mill, to conversations on the barnwalk, to 17 years working in Wisconsin agriculture, I’ve heard enough stories of loss and heartbreak to leave me wringing my hands over the future. But I’ve also witnessed bright signs of resilience and hope.

Within these pages, you’ll read stories of WFU members reimagining the food system—and find ways you can be part of building a better future, one where more family farms are on the land, not fewer.

That’s what Farmers Union is all about. It’s the place where we pull together to turn the tide. I’ve seen the power of our members when they stand up and speak out. In September, WFU members will travel to Washington, D.C., to advocate for rural policy. At the county level, members will gather this fall to shape grassroots policy that advances to our state convention at Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells in December (see page 7 for details – consider joining us!)

Farmers Union has always been a place to celebrate Wisconsin agriculture—while also acknowledging its struggles and working for something better for future generations. My hope is we can collectively put a few lights back on out there in farm country.



# Gathered, Grounded, Growing

## Farmers Union Members Gather for Inspiring 2025 Summer Conference at Kamp Kenwood

On July 18th, Wisconsin Farmers Union (WFO) members from across the state convened at Kamp Kenwood for the organization's 2025 Summer Conference, an annual tradition celebrating grassroots leadership, rural advocacy, and community connection.

This year's event featured a full day of engaging programming, from policy updates and keynote speeches to a lively pie contest and youth day camp. Members gathered to reflect on accomplishments, share stories, and lay the groundwork for continued progress in the year ahead.



*Governor Tony Evers greets youth participants from the Wisconsin Farmers Union Summer Day Camp following his remarks.*

WFO Executive Director Danielle Endvick opened the day by honoring the legacy of the organization and the historic lodge where members gathered. "In our archives, we have photos from the 1950s of Farmers Union members building this lodge with their own hands," Endvick said. "It's awe-inspiring to think about what they were building—not just a space, but a movement."

President Darin Von Ruden's "State of the Farmers Union" address spotlighted key wins from the past year, including membership growth, increased legislative engagement, and awarding conservation stipends to family farms, emphasizing the power of grassroots advocacy. "We're doing big things, and we're doing them together," Von Ruden said.

Governor Tony Evers provided the keynote address, applauding WFO's leadership and highlighting the shared progress made for rural communities in the recently signed bipartisan state budget. He noted increased funding for meat processing, watershed protection, mental health services, rural roads, and food security, while calling attention to the harms of federal funding freezes and USDA staffing cuts.



*Kristy Allen of the St. Croix Valley Food Alliance speaks during a panel discussion on collaborative solutions for local food systems.*

*Continued on page 10>*



## NEW LOOK FOR “POLICY & ACTION” PAGES ON WFU WEBSITE

We're excited to introduce a dynamic new Policy & Action dropdown menu on our website, featuring Policy & Key Issues, Special Orders of Business, Member Committees, and more. Rooted in grassroots advocacy, this section connects members directly to the resolutions adopted at our annual convention, highlights top-line policy priorities, and provides resources for our advocacy efforts. It is designed to help members like you stay informed and engaged every step of the way.

## WFU BOARD & NFU DELEGATE NOMINATION FORMS

This year, we will be electing board directors for the following districts:

- District 1 (Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Iron, Lincoln, Oneida, Polk, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, Vilas, and Washburn Counties)
- District 4 (Buffalo, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Trempealeau, Richland, Vernon, and Crawford Counties)
- District 5 Special Election/2-year Term (Iowa, Grant, Rock, Green, and Lafayette Counties)
- At-Large

We'll also be electing 2 delegates to represent WFU at the National Farmers Union Convention.

WFU Board Nomination:  
<https://bit.ly/WFUBoard25>

NFU Delegate Nomination:  
<https://bit.ly/NFUDelegate25>



## POLICY 101 WEBINAR AVAILABLE ON WFU YOUTUBE CHANNEL

Interested in getting involved with Wisconsin Farmers Union's policy involved process? View this Policy Process 101 webinar from August 2025 to find out how you can be part of our grassroots policy creation process!

The webinar covers:

- How to write policy resolutions,
- When and how to submit your resolutions
- How resolutions are reviewed
- Gathering chapter input
- What happens at the WFU State Convention

Find it at [youtube.com/@WisFarmersUnion](https://youtube.com/@WisFarmersUnion)

**Be a vendor at the Market at MOR**  
MARKET ON RIVER

To claim your vendor spot, email [jboos@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:jboos@wisconsinfarmersunion.com)

**\$50 for WFU Member | \$60 for non-members**

UPCOMING MARKET DATES:  
October 18, November 15 & December 20





# 95TH ANNUAL STATE *Convention*

## CHULA VISTA RESORT, WISCONSIN DELLS

DEC | 12-14<sup>th</sup> | 2025

FRIDAY: GROUNDSWELL & FUNDRAISER  
SATURDAY & SUNDAY: WORKSHOPS,  
BANQUET, POLICY, & NETWORKING

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

LEARN MORE AT

[WISCONSINFARMERSUNION.COM/CONVENTION](https://wisconsinfarmersunion.com/convention)



## DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sept/Oct - Chapter Annual Meetings & Policy Discussions
- Oct 1 - Policy & Bylaw Resolutions Due
- October 14 - Bylaws Committee meets (virtual)
- Oct 15 - Deadline for WFU board and NFU delegate candidates to submit bios for Nov/Dec WFU News
- Oct 15 - Award Nominations
- Oct 16 - The Resolutions Review Committee will review resolutions submitted by the Oct. 1 deadline.
- Oct 31 - Final Chapter Reports due
- November 3 - Convention Committee meets (virtual)
- Nov 8 - County presidents meet to review proposed policy
- Nov 10 - Chula Vista room block ends
- Nov 16 - Early bird registration ends
- Nov 22 - Deadline for WFU board and NFU delegate candidates to submit bios for delegate email
- Nov 30 - Last day to register as a voting delegate to represent your chapter or vote your own vote
- Dec 5 - Deadline for non-delegate attendee registrations
- Dec 12 - WFU Groundswell Pre-Convention
- Dec 13-14 - WFU Convention!



Sign up for autopay of your  
WFU membership dues!

All you need to do is:

1

Log into your WFU Membership Account

2

Visit the resources tab for instructions to turn on autopay

3

Add in a payment method to enroll in auto pay. This is a safe and secure third-party processor.

To make your decision to switch to autopay even easier, we're sweetening the deal with a drawing to win \$75 or \$100 gift certificates each month during the campaign from July through December. Members who already use autopay and any members switching by December 21st will have a chance to win farmer favorite gift certificates! Help save the trees AND have a chance to win!

For questions or more information,  
contact Karen at 715-450-5362 or  
[kgoulet@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:kgoulet@wisconsinfarmersunion.com)







# Lessons Learned from a Kernza Field Day

By Becky Brathal  
Northwest WI Conservation Coordinator

*Photo: Leaders from the South Kinnickinnic Farmer-Led Watershed Council are outstanding in their field. This time, they were out standing in Peterson's field examining the Kernza crop before harvest.*

The South Kinni Farmer-Led Watershed Council hosted a pre-harvest field day in early July for farmers in the area to see council lead farmer, Brad Peterson's, Kernza field. While Kernza is one piece of many potential solutions to improve water quality and climate resilience in agriculture and diversify farmer revenue opportunities, there are many lessons to be learned to make this a viable crop for farmers. This field day helped answer a couple of those questions.

## What is Kernza?

Kernza is sometimes referred to as perennial grain. It is a grass that can be planted once and harvested 3 times for grain and even more times for feedstock. This is attractive as it reduces the passes over the field year over year, saving farmer time and labor, while also providing soil health protection with an immense root system that ends up reaching down 12 to 13 feet.

Kernza yields are currently much lower than traditional wheat yields, but growing quickly. Since research on the plant started, the seed size has doubled. This new crop is usually grown in relatively small fields of one to three acres for speciality production around urban hubs like Madison with the largest field known right now being 60 acres in Minnesota.

"There are over 50 products made with Kernza on the market right now," said Steffen Mirskey, UW Extension Speciality Crop Specialist. Kernza products available include beers, breads, and other baked goods.

## Early Lessons Growing Kernza

Kernza is a relatively low-nitrogen grass with a recommended N rate of 70 to 90 pounds per acre annually based on recommendations from the University of Minnesota. This research coming out of a university close to our latitude gives extra confidence to farmers. One immediate lesson Peterson learned is that if you apply more than this, you'll end up with a very tall crop. It can be used with 2-4D and Curtail to assist with weed control.



*The yield potential of Kernza is rapidly increasing according to The Land Institute which has been working on a breeding program for the crop since 2003.*



Peterson planted 50 acres of Kernza under contract. After planting last fall, they didn't see rain for 2 months, so they did a supplemental planting this spring to improve the stand. One 20 acre stand had such poor growth this spring that they chose to terminate and instead plant more traditional crops. They kept 30 acres in Kernza, however, to learn some lessons with the crop.

He had some nerves earlier this summer when he checked the crop only to find a lot of volunteer wheat had emerged even though it had been over two years since wheat had been planted in the field. However, checking in with his contractors, and monitoring the field through the summer, what appeared to be a big concern at first is now significantly less. The wheat remains at a different height and has been outcompeted by the Kernza plants which have come into their own since early summer.

Like other small grains, the Kernza will be harvested in late July or early August. Stalks will be taken for straw and then a hay crop from the re-growth this fall. Mirsky noted that studies show a high relative forage quality of 150 through early research. This is a side benefit to Peterson, a dairy farmer.

And without having to plant again next year, Peterson can expect to get the same three harvests next year, with this first year the grain will have its highest yield. The third year of growth tends to see the least amount of



Many of Kernza's main environmental benefits and hardiness come from its robust root mass which will only get bigger over the next two years.



Steffen Mirsky (right front) speaks with baker, Maureen Ash (left front), in Peterson's Kernza field in early July.

harvestable grain, as the Kernza begins to outcompete against itself.

Attendees of the field day noted that the third year harvest could be improved with disturbance to the crop in the fall of the second year to reduce that competition. Peterson is considering knifing in a manure application to see if that helps. Other attendees suggested heavy grazing of the field as an option.

### Processing Kernza

As with any new crop, the supply chain development in conjunction with learning to grow the crop is a challenge. Mirsky noted that there is only one processor of the grain in Wisconsin. There are two more in Minnesota; all are roughly equal distances from Peterson's field in western Wisconsin.

Most of the folks growing Kernza are getting a certification called Perennial Percent through the Land Institute, and/or Regenerative Organic Certification (ROC) to communicate to buyers, processors, and consumers the positive impact of the crop.

One neighboring farmer on the South Kinni Farmer-Led Council, Maureen Ash, is quite familiar with Kernza. She had a local bakery and used up to 40% of her grain mix in her sourdough in the past, saying that the grain "added depth to the flavor of the bread." Having milled the grain herself in previous years, Ash was delighted to see a full field of the crop almost ready to go to harvest.



>>Continued from page 5

Governor Tony Evers provided the keynote address, applauding WFU's leadership and highlighting the shared progress made for rural communities in the recently signed bipartisan state budget. He noted increased funding for meat processing, watershed protection, mental health services, rural roads, and food security, while calling attention to the harms of federal funding freezes and USDA staffing cuts. The governor also praised WFU members for their consistent presence and leadership in producer-led watershed groups and conservation initiatives statewide.

The conference featured additional presentations and panels on urgent issues facing family farmers, including:

- A joint talk on climate and consolidation by WFU staff Erin Thompson and Erin Lenninger
- A local food systems panel moderated by WFU Special Projects Director Layne Cozzolino, featuring Kristy Allen (St. Croix Valley Food Alliance), Tara Turner (WI Food Hub Cooperative), and Aiden Bergh (REAP Food Group)
- Remarks from WI DNR Secretary Karen Hyun, who highlighted the importance of partnerships with farmers to meet Wisconsin's environmental and clean energy goals

The event underscored WFU's commitment to investing in place-based solutions, grassroots democracy, and the next generation of rural leaders. As Endvick reminded the crowd, "Farmers Union is—and will continue to be—a place where rural people gather around shared values: More farms on the land, not fewer. Stronger, fairer food systems. Affordable health care. Thriving main streets. And farmers leading the way on climate and clean energy."

**SUBMIT YOUR BEST RURAL LIFE PHOTOS!**

Send in your photos for a chance to be featured on the 2025 WFU Calendar or an upcoming Newsletter!

**WFU PHOTO CONTEST**

WINNING PHOTO ENTRIES WILL RECEIVE A WFU HAT!

Send your photo entries and a brief description to Tommy at [tenright@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:tenright@wisconsinfarmersunion.com)



# We'll Be There.







# COMMUNITY HEARINGS ON FAIR MAPS

Make Your Voice Heard!



Wisconsin finally has fair voting maps after years of struggle—but those maps are only temporary. Unless the legislature passes real reform, we risk going right back to gerrymandering after the 2030 Census. The Wisconsin Fair Maps Coalition (FMC) is hitting the road to host Community Hearings across the state, and your voice is needed.

These hearings are an opportunity for everyday Wisconsinites to weigh in on a proposal for an Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC)—a transparent, nonpartisan way to draw district lines so voters choose their leaders, not the other way around. Input gathered will help shape legislation to make fair maps permanent.

## Upcoming Community Hearings

- Virtual Hearing – September 9, 6:00–8:00 pm (Register at [bit.ly/FMCVirtualHearing](https://bit.ly/FMCVirtualHearing))
- Egg Harbor – September 10, 6:30–8:30 pm, Kress Pavilion, 7845 Church St
- Menomonie – September 11, 6:00–8:00 pm, Dunn County Judicial Center, 815 Stokke Pkwy
- Madison – September 25 (details TBD)
- Racine – Date TBD
- Kenosha – Date TBD

📌 Find updates and register at [bit.ly/MapsCommunityHearings](https://bit.ly/MapsCommunityHearings)

Learn more at  
[fairmapswi.com!](https://fairmapswi.com)

When maps are rigged, communities lose their voices on the issues that matter most—clean water, strong public schools, affordable healthcare, climate action, and true accountability from our elected officials. By joining these hearings, you'll help ensure Wisconsin builds a future where every vote counts.

## Get Involved!

- Attend a hearing in your community or register for the virtual hearing if you can't make it in person.
- Spread the word: Share flyers, social media graphics, or invite your neighbors.
- Stay informed: Learn more about the Independent Redistricting Commission proposal at [bit.ly/FMCDraftProposal](https://bit.ly/FMCDraftProposal).



# Capitol-izing on Compromise: The 2025 State Budget

*By Michelle Ramirez-White,  
Government Relations Director*

The Wisconsin state Capitol is in the lull of August recess after successfully completing a tumultuous State Budget cycle. This budget process saw disagreements, halts in negotiation, and culminated in a bipartisan compromise between the conservative leadership of the WI Legislature and Democratic Governor Tony Evers. Let's take a deeper look at what happened during this year's budget cycle.

## **APRIL**

The Joint Finance Committee (JFC) roadshow wrapped in April after the committee hosted four public hearings across Wisconsin in Wausau, Hayward, Kaukauna, and West Allis. These public hearings were key opportunities to get the attention of members of the JFC on issues important to Wisconsin communities.

## **JUNE**

During the week of June 16th, the budget process came to a halt, with a standstill between Democratic Governor Tony Evers and Republican leadership in the Legislature, led by Speaker Vos (R-Rochester) and Senator Devin LeMahieu (R-Oostburg), largely over the future of our childcare industry. Evers drew a line in the sand, stating he would not sign a State Budget into law if it did not include public funding to support our childcare industry. Senate and Assembly Republicans walked away from the negotiating table, with the Assembly leadership returning first on June 24th, followed by Senate leadership days later.

## **JULY**

In order to pass the Budget out of the Legislature and send it to Evers to sign, Republicans needed 50 votes in the Assembly and 17 votes in the Senate. State level redistricting created tighter margins for the Republican majority, especially in the State Senate.

Five Republicans voted against the budget: Senator Chris Kapenga (R-Delafield) who objected to spending associated with the State Budget, Senator Steve Nass (R-Whitewater) who was in favor of larger cuts to all state agencies, Senator Rob Hutton (R-Brookfield) who objected to the 12% increase in overall spending, Senator Mary Falkowski (R-Tomahawk) who is the first Senate President in our state's history to vote against the State Budget – objecting to the increase in the hospital assessment match, and Representative Scott Allen (R-Waukesha) also citing issue with the 12% spending increase.

These 'no' votes meant Senate Republicans needed Democratic votes in order to pass the budget, opening the door for Democratic Governor Tony Evers and Minority Leader Senator Dianne Hesselbein (D-Middleton), to negotiate a compromise that would bring at least 4 Dem-votes in the Senate. These conversations lasted all day and night and led to a voter-rama in the legislature.

Ultimately, the Majority leadership in the WI Legislature and Governor Evers reached a deal, and passed the budget by a vote of 59 to 39 in the Assembly; 19 to 14 in the Senate. Evers signed the budget, now 2025 Wisconsin Act 15, at 1:32 a.m. in his office on Thursday July 3rd, less than an hour after the Assembly passed it. Just before signing it he thanked legislative leaders for working with him and said the budget reflects the fair legislative maps that he signed into law in 2024 and were in place during the November elections.



# The 2025 State Budget, Summarized.

**Topline: Evers cut taxes more than he wanted to and Republicans funded the UW System and childcare industry more than they wanted.**

- Spending total: **\$111.1 billion** (a 12.4% increase over current law and a \$4.3 billion surplus over current law. The 2025-27 Budget and subsequent tax breaks will bring the surplus to \$700 million, as a cushion for potential federal changes.)
- **\$1.5 billion** tax cut
- Eliminates sales tax on household utilities
- Exempts some retirement income tax
- Increases Special Education reimbursement rate
- **\$256 million** for the UW System
- **\$330 million** for the childcare industry



*Gov. Tony Evers meets with campers at Kamp Kenwood.*

Despite a funding success for local food through the Food Security grant and Tribal Elder food Box programs, there were also disappointing losses. The Value-Added Agriculture Grant Program, Food Waste Reduction Grant, and Meat Talent Development Grant all received no funding in this budget. The Meat Talent Development Grant, a program which trains new meat processing workers, started under ARPA funding. The grant program will expire in 2026 without additional investment. The Wisconsin Local Food Purchase Assistance Program and the Farm to Fork Grant Program were new budget items this year that were also excluded from the final budget. These five local food programs leave a gap of more than \$7 million in requested funding for regional food system work over a two year period.

Wisconsin Farmers Union is still advocating for long-term structural investments in local food infrastructure through aggregation methods utilized in the LFPA program. Support for local foods benefits consumers and provides stronger markets for small to mid-sized farmers, improving their income streams.

The WI Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easements (PACE) program also failed to be reauthorized under this State Budget. PACE was created in 2009 to help farm owners and local communities keep farmland for agricultural use, by enabling DATCP to solicit applications and award grants towards the purchase of agricultural conservation easements on working lands, paying up to 50% of the fair market value for the easement, allowing the state to leverage an additional \$15 million towards farmland protection (under the 2025-26 provision).

The strength of our state is in its diversity. The strong presence of Wisconsin agriculture serves a counterweight to manufacturing and service sector industries. Farms, unlike factories or call centers, are tied to land and place. When the going gets tough and other businesses pull up stakes and seek greener pastures elsewhere, farms stay put and keep contributing to the state's economic output.

Let's take the positive outcomes from this budget cycle and look into the future to continue pushing for more.

## Get all the details on the 2025 State Budget.

*Read more on the WFU blog*







Mary Pat and Mark Carlson stand in front of their Door County Wildwood Market sign, welcoming visitors.



While standing in the shared-use commercial kitchen that she started, Mary Pat shares about the businesses that have started from this place.



Out in the orchard, Mark checks the cherry trees for successful pollination.



Island View Orchard's Century Farm placard hangs proudly above their check-out counter.

# CREATIVITY AND COURAGE:

## HOW A FIFTH-GENERATION CHERRY ORCHARD ADAPTS TO CHANGING TIMES

By Allison Crook  
Regional Membership Coordinator

At the intersection of Hwy 42 and Wildwood Road, a sign reading “Door County Wildwood Market” beckons you to stop. There sits an old wooden building, long and narrow, painted white, with a welcoming front porch entryway. After driving on the long and windy central road of Door County, passing through the villages of Egg Harbor, Fish Creek, and then Sister Bay, this quaint, storied building, and the orchard alongside it, cannot be passed.

Stepping into the 1940's refurbished “shack” that houses the market, dried flowers hang from the ceiling, an abundance of canned goods line the shelves, and a fridge is stocked full of cheeses, meats, spreads and eggs. It is May, and the market does not open til June, but there are baskets all around the store that will soon be filled with fresh local produce and flowers. Behind the checkout counter, you cannot miss the Century Farm placard, proudly displayed on the wall. There are antique farm implements displayed on the shelves and a table dedicated to old newspaper clippings, photos, and books about the farm and Door County. You can feel the

history in this building, intermingling with the present-day farming operation.

This is Carlson's Island View Orchard, established in 1846, two years before Wisconsin became a state. Here, Mary Pat and Mark Carlson steward the land and operate Door County Wildwood Market, located just a little north of Sister Bay. The orchard has been in Mark's family's care for five generations, with the first cherry tree planted in 1915. On 27 of the original 40 acres, the farm operates as one of the only 18 remaining cherry producers in Door County. Here they grow “the freshest fruits from [their] Door County orchard... processed at the peak of flavor for [their] heritage recipe bakery, jams, pickles, relishes, candies, and fudge.” They say that “although the cherry harvest has changed over the years, [they] do what [they] can to preserve history,” including hand-harvesting all of their cherries to this day.

Mary Pat and Mark bought the orchard from Mark's dad in 1984. In the 40 years since they have owned the farm, they have continually pivoted, with creativity and courage, to keep



this farm in the family generation after generation. Facing volatile and uncompetitive markets, worker shortages, family deaths, zoning setbacks, and development pressures, they have held on to this property. One of the major changes that the farm has implemented to address these challenges is to create value-added products to enhance the worth of their goods. This endeavor also led them down a path of much greater community food systems work.

Mary Pat ended up starting the first shared-use commercial kitchen in the state and has since become an expert consultant for others looking to complete similar endeavors. She uses the space to process the farm's fruits for their shelf-stable canned goods and bakery items. This community-based economic development project was completed in

partnership with Northeast Wisconsin Technical College. Mary Pat has also remained very engaged with the other patrons and processors of the shared-use commercial kitchen. To date, she has helped start over 248 food-focused businesses through the kitchen, walking food entrepreneurs through the ins and outs of licensing, food safety requirements, and more. Whenever possible, she also finds ways to connect them with local farmers to source their products. With her expertise, Mary Pat is a resource to many other groups looking to start commercial kitchens around the state. She helps others create systems, design facilities, and learn how to navigate food safety regulations and requirements.

The farming and food system work that Mary Pat and Mark have done in their community has truly

benefited so many. As they reflect on the work they have done, they are uncertain about what the future will bring. They say that they “truly believe in family farm agriculture” and are trying to find a way to transition the farm to their daughter Ana. They want to keep the land as community-supported agriculture and hope that the youngest generation's dreams for the farm are supported by the county. For now, though, the “shack” on the side of the road is in full summer swing, luring visitors from far and wide to get a taste of Door County and its history.

The WFU membership team visited the Carlson family during their membership tour in May. Stay tuned for additional member features highlighting farms along the tour!







# One *fin-tastic* farm

WFU couple builds community  
through trout farming

By Hannah Alden  
Membership Coordinator

Tucked away in the rolling hills of Menomonie is a 22-acre property that houses 60,000 fish each year. Working behind the scenes to process and market their products, while also interacting front and center with customers at regional farmers markets and at their on-site restaurant, are Jeremiah and Jordan Fredrickson, the owners of Eat My Fish.

The Fredricksons purchased the trout farm eight years ago after Jeremiah found himself looking for a career change following 16 years of teaching.

"I was never going to be a teacher – both of my parents were teachers," Jeremiah, who grew up in Amery, said. "I was never going to be a farmer – my grandpa was a dairy farmer. Nothing wrong with those professions, but I just thought I had something else in mind. So, I'm zero for two so far on career choices."

Back in 2017, Jeremiah saw an article in a local newspaper about the farm's owner looking for a buyer and showed it to Jordan, who assumed he just meant they should take a family outing to the farm sometime. Intrigued by the prospect of taking over the business, Jeremiah reached out to a friend who had recently graduated with a fisheries degree. The three of them went soon after to visit the farm, and a couple of months later the business' keys were turned over to the Fredricksons.

The couple's backgrounds helped as they navigated the transition to becoming fish farmers. With the help of Jordan's biology degree and Jeremiah's knowledge from his agriculture educator background, the Fredricksons have settled into their new careers, expanding not only the farm's product output but also its networks. Jeremiah and Jordan have roughly doubled the number of trout the farm produces since taking over the operation. Additionally, they vend at more farmers markets and encourage groups from all over the area to come by for tours and education.



The farm's trout go through multiple tanks during their lifespan, moving up into additional tanks as they grow bigger. It takes two years for a trout to grow to a marketable size.





There are multiple fishing ponds on the farm, which allow visitors the option to catch and keep what they want, paying by the pound.

Other factors helped make the business transition a success, too. The Fredricksons' farm manager, Dave, stayed on board after the ownership change and continues to help support the farm. Jordan participated in New Farmer U, which assisted them in thinking about the farm from a business perspective.

"When we came in to buy the farm, there was no, 'Hey, you should take these courses and that will help you out,'" Jordan said. "It was more like, 'Here's the keys, good luck.'"

During the first years of farm ownership, the Fredricksons had a hard time compiling data about the business, especially once disruptions during COVID-19 happened. More recently, as they felt things were becoming steadier and more predictable, there was another unexpected interruption this year – the cancellation of the Local Food Purchase Assistance (LFPA) program. Like the last two years, the Fredricksons had planned on selling products through LFPA again. When the program was cancelled at the federal level, the Fredricksons decided to add another farmers market to their 2025 line-up to hopefully help recoup some of that planned income.

When they're not at farmers markets in Eau Claire, Menomonie, Amery, Hudson, or Barron, you can find Jeremiah processing and smoking fish at the farm, while Jordan is often helping cook or taking orders behind the bar at the farm's restaurant on the weekends. During the warmer months, there is live music on Saturdays and Sundays on the farm, which is open 12-6 p.m. both days. Visitors can opt to fish on site, keeping what they catch and paying by the pound, or enjoy the ready-to-eat offerings of the restaurant. Tours are also offered, including those made by appointment during the week.

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As a Wisconsin Farmers Union member, you know that education and advocacy are at the heart of what we do. Our YouTube channel extends that mission, giving you access to resources, inspiration, and tools to support your farm and your community. Whether you are looking for quick tips, in-depth learning, or powerful stories about the challenges farmers face, this channel has something for you.

### Lunch and Learn Webinars

If you enjoy digging deeper into practical topics, our Lunch and Learn webinar series is an excellent resource. These sessions bring experts and fellow farmers together to share knowledge you can put to use right away. Covering subjects from soil health and grazing to cooperative development and farm business strategies, these videos are a convenient way to learn during the day and stay connected with your peers.

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For those who prefer short, engaging content, check out our animated explainer videos. These clips break down complex issues in clear and accessible ways. They are perfect to share with friends and neighbors who may be curious about an issue but short on time.

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### Why It Matters

The WFU YouTube channel is not just another online video platform. It is a member resource, built to strengthen our organization by keeping us informed and connected. Subscribing ensures you will not miss the latest educational opportunities, powerful stories, or updates on the issues that matter most to rural communities.



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# Global Warming and Farmers' Carbon Emissions

By Michael Slattery, WFU Member

Since the Nixon Administration, the US government has recognized that global warming and climate change are a serious threat to our world.

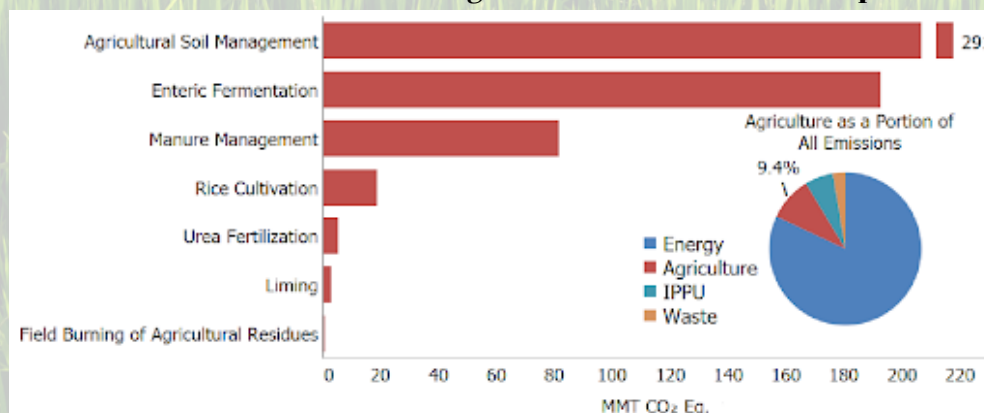
Nevertheless, given that the present Administration is following, along with the US Congress, the guidelines established in the Heritage Foundation's Mandate for Leadership, the so-called "Project 2025," anything relating to climate change and global warming is considered a hoax. The federal government has abdicated its responsibility and leadership to address and remedy this problem. This is a denial of scientific facts and the means to remedy adverse effects of climate change. They have effectively refused to recognize this global existential crisis and terminated any assistance to farmers in determining their specific emissions and ways to mitigate or eliminate such.

Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the US are attributed by industrial source largely to transportation by automobiles and trucks (28%), electric power generation (25%), and industry (23%), but agriculture is responsible for 10%.

In 2022, the US' Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) published its Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks, 1990-2022, a 900+plus page in-depth research analysis. It has identified key contributors of Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in agriculture, i.e. farming. They basically comprise:

- 49% emits from soil management that is largely related to fertilizer, namely synthetic nitrogen.
- Methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) from enteric fermentation, livestock manure, rice cultivation, field burning of ag residue, (33% of agriculture's CH<sub>4</sub> emissions are attributed to enteric emission and 11% to manure management.)
- Nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) from soil management, livestock manure, and field burning of ag residue (N<sub>2</sub>O emissions in soil management comprised 75% of total US emissions of N<sub>2</sub>O, but 49% of aforementioned total sector emissions).
- Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) from liming and urea fertilizer

**Emissions from Agriculture in MMT CO<sub>2</sub> Eq**



Source: Environmental Protection Agency, Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks, 1990-2022, pp. Agriculture 5-1 – 5-5.



Additionally, CO<sub>2</sub>, CH<sub>4</sub>, and NO<sub>4</sub> emissions in farming, not part of the aforementioned, originate from ag-related land use (change) and from energy used in mobile and stable fossil fuel combustions ,

In 2022, by quantity, agriculture emitted 593.4 MMT CO<sub>2</sub> eq. Over the past 32 years from 1990, agriculture's GHG emissions have risen erratically 7%, with the proportion of CH<sub>4</sub>, N<sub>2</sub>O, and CO<sub>2</sub> remaining stable.

Nearly 98% of enteric emissions of CH<sub>4</sub> are attributed to cattle with 71% (137 MMT CO<sub>2</sub> eq) generated by beef and 27% (48.9 MMT CO<sub>2</sub> eq) by dairy cattle in 2022. Other ruminating livestock's (sheep, goats, bison) contributions are de minimus.

It is estimated that the EPA-identified GHG emissions are heavily attributable to approximately 600,000 farms, or roughly 0.5 percent of the US population, inclusive of this author. The contribution of such GHG for an individual farmer is enormous compared to the overall population.

The reality of climate change and actual farmers' contribution to it and responsibility to reduce and/or mitigate it call for our role as stewards of the environment. If the federal government relinquishes its leadership, we as farmers must still confront this challenge. Although contribution of 10% of US GHG emissions may be comparatively less than other industries, as stewards of the environment and leaders in determining our own destiny, we will not wait for others to step forward first.

Wisconsin Farmers Union in its 2025-adopted policy has highlighted farmers' need to address climate change and the GHG footprint, as a special order of business and addresses other needed climate-smart practices and actions. Additionally, Wisconsin Farmers Union has established a Climate Committee.

What we farmers lack are reliable data points that identify specific emissions by input, by actual practice, by field, by farm, by livestock and our manure management. Companies like Houston Engineering have confidential and reliable formulas to tabulate such factors. The program COMET-Farm, a federal government-related program, provides no data related to the foregoing. We need that actual data to set a basis so that we can analyze practices and pivot where applicable to reduce their related footprint. COMET has a focus on sequestration, but we need to know the actual/estimated emissions output first.

What we farmers also badly need are data-based options for reducing and mitigating our actual GHG emissions so that we can make actual smart decisions and control our destiny.

The action from Wisconsin Farmers Union's grassroots to set policy that is intentional in addressing climate change can make us a leader in this conversation in rural spaces. Hopefully our organization and the aforementioned committee will continue to assume a lead in meeting farmer needs and opening up farmer-led dialogue on this issue. Agriculture does play a role in climate change, but together we can serve as leaders in shaping solutions and rectifying our impact.



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# 11.10 & 11.11

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The conference will cover relationship-building, production planning and pricing, and the benefits of forming partnerships in farm to institution pipelines.

The planning committee also hosts a quarterly Community of Practice to build the network, inform conference sessions, and offer a learning space.

Join us!

Stay tuned for conference registration information in a WFU news next month. Reach out to [aidan@reapfoodgroup.org](mailto:aidan@reapfoodgroup.org) with questions or to be added to the Community of Practice!

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# Welcome New Members!

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Joseph Teske Family  
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Jeanne Colwell  
Paulina Baker  
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Melissa Weyland & Roy Owensby  
Christina Leavell Family  
Randal Petska Family  
Mark Gill  
Stan Ford  
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David Kramer  
Jessica Grettie Garcia Family  
Alexandra Prediger & Ryan Padrutt  
Janis & Dale Drinsinger  
Heidi Christopher Family

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# PHOTO CONTEST

The winning photo earns a Farmers Union hat! High-resolution vertical photos preferred. Send your photo entries and a brief description to Tommy at [tenright@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:tenright@wisconsinfarmersunion.com)

#### ON THE COVER:

Our cover photo this month was submitted by Romi Pattison Londre of her daughter jumping between round bales at Pattison Home Farm in Buffalo County.

