



WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION NEWS

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Shine on: *Farmers Union partners on solar*



Photo by Danielle Endvick

Wisconsin Farmers Union is a proud partner in Solar Powering Farms (SPF), a collaborative venture to make on-farm solar more attainable. This installation at the Ofte family farm in Coon Valley was commissioned May 15th.

Danielle Endvick
Communications Director

Ask any farmer who has considered solar energy on his or her farm what the biggest hesitation is, and you'll likely get the same answer: cost.

But a new pilot program being launched by Wisconsin Farmers Union and key partners is aiming to turn the dream of on-farm solar energy into reality. Solar Powering Farms (SPF) is a financing program that seeks to make solar energy more attainable for Farmers Union members. The project has been made possible through a partnership with North Wind Renewable Energy and Legacy Solar Co-op.

"Certainly a lot of farmers have that inclination that they want to do something with solar, but for a lot of people the up-

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Keown-Bomar hired as WFU Executive Director

Wisconsin Farmers Union is pleased to welcome Julie Keown-Bomar as executive director.



Keown-Bomar brings to the role a strong background in organizational development and civic engagement as well as practical experience working with farmers and farm organizations. She has served in UW-Extension roles since 2005, including as a family living educator, Northwest Wisconsin regional director and, most recently, as co-director for Wisconsin's State 4-H program.

Julie grew up in the Rocky Mountains of Wyoming. She has Bachelor and Master of Arts degrees in International Studies from the University of Wyoming and a Doctorate in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. Much of her work has been with refugees and immigrants, running international training projects and creating culturally relevant programming.

Keown-Bomar and her husband, Charles, live in Menomonie, where he serves as dean of the College of Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Management at UW-Stout. They have two daughters.

"Julie has a breadth of experience in administration and program development," said retiring Executive Director Tom Quinn. "She has a strong commitment to our WFU values and is looking forward to a position that allows her to advocate them."

Keown-Bomar will start with WFU in mid-June. She can be reached at jbomar@wisconsinfarmersunion.com.

Scholarships available for Fall Fly-In

Scholarships will be available for several first-time attendees to go to the National Farmers Union Fall Fly-In this September in Washington, D.C.

Hundreds of farmers from across the U.S. attend the fly-in, which offers the opportunity to meet with members of Congress and officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. During the fly-in, members highlight key NFU priorities and the issues they are facing on their farms, which are especially important this year given the current farm crisis.

Applications are due by July 26 and can be found under events at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com or by calling 715-723-5561.



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Family farmers call for a new approach to trade, NAFTA

On May 30, Congressman Mark Pocan, members of Wisconsin Farmers Union, and representatives of several other organizations offered the following remarks about trade and its impact on Wisconsin farmers.

Wisconsin Farmers Union President Darin Von Ruden stressed several points regarding trade:

1) The export market is the least lucrative and most volatile destination for agricultural products. Exports should be a release valve for surplus production, not our central strategy for maintaining U.S. farm incomes.

2) Our current approach to trade creates an uneven playing field and puts U.S. farmers in an unfair competition with farmers in other countries.

3) We need to follow a steady course of reorienting both our trade and our domestic agricultural policy to bring long-term prosperity to rural communities.

“Our current approach to trade is not serving farmers well,” Von Ruden said. “With over 20 percent of U.S. agricultural output headed for international markets, farmers have become vulnerable to factors over which they have no control, such as exchange rates or trade wars with other countries.”

Nels Nelson, who runs a 350-cow dairy farm with his family near Wisconsin Dells, agreed. “It would be destructive to pull out of NAFTA now or get into a trade war with China because we’ve gotten ourselves in the position of needing those export markets. But we’d do better to reduce our dependence on exports and try to negotiate fair trade deals that actually support farmers and communities. As farmers, we hear over and over again that exports are the answer. It hasn’t worked and it’s not going to work. We suffer from volatility in the prices we get, making it impossible to plan as a business.”

“We’re losing more than a dairy farm a day in Wisconsin because we can’t get a decent price for our milk,” Nelson added. “Every farm that goes out

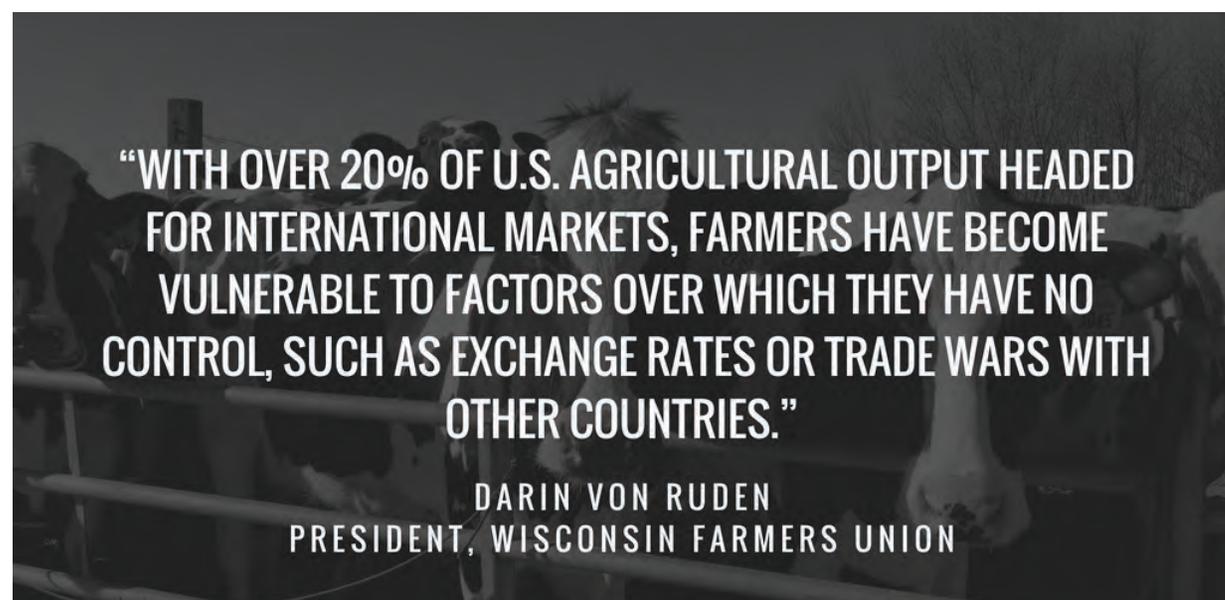
of business deals a blow to all the other businesses around – the seed and implement dealers, the supply salesmen. We need our elected officials and industry leaders to come up with a real solution and not just repeat the ‘more exports’ mantra.”

While exports account for a significant portion of farm income, looking at exports alone only paints half of the picture, stressed David Newby, president of the Wisconsin Fair Trade Coalition. “True, higher exports mean more sales for agribusiness corporations,” Newby said, “but at the same time, increased imports equal the loss of domestic markets for farmers. According to the most recent data available, Wisconsin’s state-specific agricultural trade deficit with Canada and Mexico was \$12.6 million in 2016.”

Tony Schultz, who direct markets vegetables, beef, and maple syrup on his Athens farm, echoed that sentiment. “Trade is a two-way street. As a vegetable producer, I am keenly aware that imports of fresh produce have increased steadily since the passage of NAFTA, such that in 2015 we had an \$11.4 billion trade deficit in fresh and processed fruits and vegetables. My customers can go to the grocery store and buy tomatoes or lettuce or cucumbers from Mexico for a fraction of what it costs me to produce the same crop in the United States. I’m all for competition, if the competition is fair. But the minimum wage in Mexico is \$3.86 per day. How can I compete with that wage as an employer?”

Jim Goodman of Wonewoc, dairy farmer and president of National Family Farm Coalition, said “So-called ‘free trade’ and the export market will not solve the underlying problems facing family farms today. Trade agreements like NAFTA have only sped up agricultural concentration, driving family farmers out of business. These agreements must instead be ‘fair trade,’ ensuring equitable treatment to farmers on both sides of the border and a fair price based on their cost of production.”

See p.5 ► TRADE



“WITH OVER 20% OF U.S. AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT HEADED FOR INTERNATIONAL MARKETS, FARMERS HAVE BECOME VULNERABLE TO FACTORS OVER WHICH THEY HAVE NO CONTROL, SUCH AS EXCHANGE RATES OR TRADE WARS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES.”

DARIN VON RUDEN
PRESIDENT, WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION

Crisis by design: Why our current farm crisis looks so familiar



Tom Quinn
Executive Director

For farmers, the up and down cycle of farm prices can seem almost inevitable — a natural cycle that can't be controlled, and survived only by relying on their own

hard work, luck and wits. To economists, the price cycle reflects the natural working of the market, with production efficiencies leading to bursts of unmanaged surplus, leading inevitably to sharply lower prices, and then, after a period of crisis, to a period of relative stability. This new stability, of course, always arrives with far less farmers on the land and wealth and markets controlled by fewer and fewer hands.

The farmers who remain are offered glimmers of hope: trade expansion will take care of surplus production and raise prices, technology will lead to more efficiencies and cut costs, and the conviction that if we can just ride it out things will get better. This may be false hope, but false hope can seem better than no hope.

This cycle, in broad strokes, is the history of farm and rural policy in America. Our early history of farming was largely based on concentrated land ownership (slave plantations, bonanza wheat farms and huge cattle ranches and haciendas). This all changed with the ending of slavery, the settlement of the West and the passage of the Homestead Act. Millions of Americans were now given the opportunity to own and operate a farm.

In a thoughtful booklet, "A Brief Review of U.S. Farm Policy," published by the League of Rural Voters in the midst of the 1980's farm crisis, Mark Ritchie and Kevin Ristau, with help from current WFU member Jim Hare, argued that the story of family farmers ever since that period has been one of farmers' efforts to hold on to their land and their dreams in the face of an unrelenting cost/price squeeze from the monopolies that control markets, inputs, transportation, and finance.

The worst effects of this long-term squeeze generally came in the form of a crisis, usually manufactured or caused by powerful economic interests and explained as the inevitable result of normal market forces and progress. Farmers, however, understood that the game was rigged.

A story worth remembering

The story of how America's farmers organized to fight back against this rigging is worth remembering.

For example, in the 1890s and early 1900s, a series of rural depressions led farmers to organize the Non-Partisan League and take over state

“ This policy of crisis would become normalized in America, even among many farmers and organizations. The story of how that happened is complicated and not without blame, but it is good to remember that these were openly expressed policies which many seemingly thoughtful people agreed with. Turns out, they were wrong, and instead of providing sustained rural prosperity, they have provided us with one unnecessary crisis after another. ”

- Tom Quinn, Wisconsin Farmers Union Executive Director

legislatures, challenging the government policies that had allowed the railroads, banks and grain monopolies to create the crisis. In North Dakota farmers established a state bank and a state grain elevator — both still in operation today.

By the 1920's, as the rural crisis spilled into the Great Depression, farmers fought to establish new federal farm policies that could provide long-term price and market stability for family farms. When fully developed, the core "parity-based" farm programs they won provided stable prices, management of production, locally controlled conservation and access to fair financing — without relying on subsidies.

From 1935 to the early 1950s, these programs avoided the cycle of crisis. They increased the number of farmers, expanded soil conservation and stabilized consumer prices. The Commodity Credit Corporation which provided market stabilizing loans to farmers, actually made \$13 million.

By the 1950's, however, it became clear these policies conflicted with the goals of other powerful economic interests. Ritchie and Ristau pointed to the emergence of corporate think-tanks such as the Committee for Economic Development (CED), which pushed for free market farm policies. CED whitepaper reports articulated the corporate view quite clearly.

"The Choice Before Us: (a) a leakproof control of farm production or (b) a program, such as we are recommending here, to induce excess resources (primarily people) to move rapidly out of agriculture."

Prominent economist Kenneth Boulding, was even more direct, calling for policies that would create an economic crisis and force farmers to leave. "The only way to get toothpaste out of a tube" he wrote, "is to squeeze... If you can't get people out of agriculture easily, you are going to have to do farmers a severe injustice."

Over the next 50 plus years, this policy of crisis would become normalized in America, even among many farmers and organizations. The story of how that happened is complicated and not without blame, but it is good to remember that these were openly expressed policies which many seemingly thoughtful people agreed with. Turns out,

they were wrong, and instead of providing sustained rural prosperity, they have provided us with one unnecessary crisis after another.

Qualitative effects on farm country

The major farm crisis of the 1980's was the direct result of this shift toward free market, feed the world, subsidy-based farm policies. They created a bubble of rising prices, dramatically increased debt and artificially high land prices. Many thousands of farmers were caught in the tube and squeezed out. The impact back then seemed to be largely quantitative. Farms got bigger, marketing and supply chains became even more consolidated.

Today these same policies are shaping a new farm crisis that is squeezing another group of farmers. But this crisis feels different in some important ways. There are still quantitative impacts (Wisconsin is down to about 8,500 dairy farms, and we will likely lose another 500 this year). But the most meaningful impacts of this crisis seem more qualitative than quantitative.

Once again some neighbors will buy available land for expansion, but increasingly land purchases are being driven by the opportunity for establishing much, much larger farm operations. Some of these may be family operations, but increasingly the largest expansions are driven by outside investment, and ownership is no longer local. We are beginning to see dairy processors actively investing and owning their own large dairies, in direct competition with their patrons. At a recent Barron county meeting farmers reported that an outside investment group had purchased over 6,000 acres of the best farmland in their area and was looking for more.

Our current crisis is again driven by failed policies that create unmanaged surpluses and depressed prices. For now, the bubble is supported by cheap credit policies and debt expansion. But this will again prove unsustainable.

America's farmers, and all citizens really, can learn from the history of democratic engagement that won important reforms during other times of crisis. This will not happen easily or quickly, but it does need to happen if we want a real future for family farms.

CSA farmers demonstrating resiliency



Tommy Enright
Communications
Associate

Amidst rumors that the market for CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) farms in Wisconsin and Western Minnesota was “softening”, I reached out to three different CSA farms to get their perspectives on the state of the CSA movement.

Community Supported Agriculture consists of a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm operation so that the farmland becomes, either legally or spiritually, the community's farm, with the growers and consumers providing mutual support and sharing the risks and benefits of food production. There are variations of the model, but typically members pay upfront at the beginning of the farming season and then receive their shares (a box of produce) once a week for the next 16-22 weeks, depending on the agreed-upon length of the season.

In a 2015 USDA report titled “Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems,” farms selling local food through direct-to-consumer marketing channels were more likely to remain in business over 2007-12 than all farms not using DTC marketing channels, according to Census of Agriculture data. However, Farms with DTC sales tended to experience smaller increases in sales than all other farms, which is probably due to the fact that CSA farms usually have a set membership goal that they try to reach every year, often limiting their number of shares to what they deem manageable for their situation.

It's also important to stress that rumors of a market plateau are anecdotal, as there is no data that tracks the overall number of CSA memberships in Wisconsin. Nonetheless, market trends shift over time and, with the emergence of meal-kit companies like Blue Apron, as well as the popularity of Farm to Table restaurants, it seemed entirely possible that consumers could be looking to other sources for their local food.



Photo credit: Steady Hand Farm

Above: The Community Supported Agriculture movement is re-connecting consumers to the beauty of locally grown, fresh produce.

“It's got to be relational. We have to tell our story. We have to find people who like our farm story, and keep telling it.”

*- Jason & Juli Montgomery Riess
Steady Hand Farm, Amery, WI*

Emerging markets

“There are lots of ways for people to get their ‘support your local farmers’ fix,” according to Jason and Juli Montgomery-Riess of Steady Hand Farm in Amery. “Restaurants touting farm connections. Natural food stores identifying where food is coming from. Maybe people don't have to face the challenges of the weekly box to still feel good about where their food is sourced.”

“We've noticed that we have to put more work into outreach to meet our [membership] goals,” says Tony Whitefeather of Whitefeather Organics in Custer. “I've heard of people choosing where to live based on restaurants in the area. I think we have a generation that may like good and better food, but preparing a meal more than 3-4 times a week may not be happening.”

Gaining vs Retaining

“Some farms struggle to retain members, which perhaps is just as big an issue, if not bigger,” says Mike Racette, who farms with his spouse Patty Wright at Spring Hill Community Farm in Prairie Farm. “If you have your membership filled today, how do you go about

making sure that as many of those folks come back next year?”

“Once we have our members for any given season, the first thought is how do we make this a great vegetable season so they want to come back,” says Jason.

According to Small Farm Central, a small farm management software company that helps small CSA farms better market their farm, retention could be better. One popular opinion is that CSA farms need to customize and individualize orders. “I don't know if that's true,” says Mike. “That's not our approach. We are much more interested in figuring out why people stay rather than why they leave, and we pursue that. We really try to engage in active listening.”

Building relationships

All three farms indicated that it's their connection to their customers — the community aspect — that enables them to be successful. “We have folks come out to the farm all summer long,” says Mike. “Every member comes out to the farm at least once during the year, so there's a connection to the farm and other members. This was an idea that come from the members. Members wanted to

help harvest, pack, and deliver. Due to this connection, we can ask members to recruit other members. That way, people come in connected already. We are constantly looking at ways to enhance the community aspect.”

Jason and Juli agree. “It's got to be relational. We have to tell our story. We have to find people who like our farm story, and keep telling it. We have to deliver good produce, too.”

Mike added “I think collectively we need to continually tell that CSA story. How it works, why it works, why it's important for rural communities and farms.”

Throughout the year, Tony holds community and educational events at his farm, covering subjects ranging from mushroom propagation to on-farm wood-fired pizza nights. “It might be as easy as teaching how to sharpen a knife and cutting that onion in less than 40 seconds. Basic food preparation skills are being lost, but the want for great food is there!”

According to FairShare CSA Coalition Executive Director Erika Jones, CSA farmers are invested in the direct connection that people have to their food and the land where its grown. “The resulting relationship between farmer and CSA member,” she says, “is transformative. It moves us to take action in our community and make a difference in the environment, the food system, our health, and our communities.”

In asking CSA farmers about a possible slump in the market, I had expected to hear more of a “struggle to overcome” narrative. Instead, I heard farmers recognizing their challenges but also seemingly knowing the correct path forward. I heard an unbending desire to connect with people and connect people with their food.

As Jason stated, “We can't endlessly morph to adapt to the market — the soil or the humans will pay too high a price. We have to find the people who care about farms in a way that they feel inspired to connect and enter into this relationship. We have to convince some new people that this matters. It matters for the soil, the animals, the land, the economy...”



Above: WFU member and Wisconsin Dells dairy farmer Nels Nelson believes we'd do better to reduce our dependence on exports and to try to negotiate fair trade deals that actually support farmers and communities.

From p.2 ▶ TRADE

Karen Hansen-Kuhn, director of trade and global governance at the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, emphasized the negative impact of free trade on family farmers: "The combination of U.S. agricultural and trade policies has decimated family farms and increased corporate concentration in agriculture. Since NAFTA was implemented, the U.S. lost 247,000 family farms. Simplistic calls to expand exports won't get us to the fair and sustainable food and farm system we need. We need a new trade approach that includes mechanisms to shelter farmers from volatile markets."

Michael Slattery, a crop farmer in Manitowoc County, articulated some of the same concerns. "U.S. farmers cannot afford to see NAFTA terminated, but the agreement should be restructured," Slattery said. "NAFTA and other 'free' trade agreements encourage excess production based on the false premise that we can export our way to agricultural prosperity. The result has been the plunging of crop prices, the dumping of major crops on foreign markets, the squeezing out of 200,000 small and mid-scale U.S. farms, and the undermining of domestic farm markets in our trade partners, particularly Mexico where 2 million

farmers were forced off their land."

Burt Paris, a dairy farmer in Belleville expressed hope that farmers will look for solutions closer to home. "I'm really pleased to hear about more co-operatives implementing plans with their farmers to make sure that the co-op's supply of milk lines up with their demand," Paris said. "I see supply management, both at the cooperative and at the federal level, as a way of taking control of our business and fixing this ourselves rather than relying on government programs or the ups and downs of global markets to save us."

Finally, Rep. Mark Pocan put our current challenges and opportunities in perspective: "The opportunity to renegotiate NAFTA is an important chance to level the playing field for American farmers," he said. "We need to give our farmers the assurance that if they use good conservation practices and pay themselves and their workers fair wages, they will not be undercut by imported products produced elsewhere with underpaid labor and poor environmental standards. We need a new approach to trade that plays to the strengths of American farmers, rather than an approach that places them in a race to the bottom."

From p.1 ▶ SOLAR

front cost is a concern," said Rob Peck, solar design consultant for North Wind Renewable Energy, based in Stevens Point.

The SPF financing program helps lower the initial cost of solar and makes it easier to realize a greater portion of tax credits and depreciation. The project expands financing options for farmers and rural residents by creating a tax sponsorship system that WFU members can participate in.

Through the program, Farmers Union Enterprises (FUE) provides a tax sponsorship covering 40 percent of the cost of the solar project. Farmers hosting the solar installation invest about 20 percent of the project costs upfront and then the remaining 40 percent of the project costs is financed with WFU investment in solar bonds issued by Legacy Solar Cooperative over a six-year period. Over the six years of the project collaboration, FUE claims the tax credit and the farmer host pays off, in regular incremental payments, the remaining cost of the project. After the six-year financing term, the farmer owns the installation outright.

"This allows the upfront cost to be significantly lower," Peck said. "During the life of the project you realize the value of the solar energy in reduced energy bills, you receive from the LLC a little bit of rent from your roof space, and you receive bond payments. It ends up making the cash flow of the project quite attractive."

A final buyout in year 7 helps secure over 25 years of energy savings without having to take on the larger capital expense in year 1.

"Solar panels are warranted for 25 years, and we're seeing them last for 30-35 years plus," Peck added, which means that the farmer is likely to benefit from the project long after the financing period has ended.

Farmers sought for pilot project

The project partners have committed to an initial pilot program and are seeking 7-8 additional

farms to get on line in 2018. The preferred farm for this initial phase will have an annual energy usage of at least 30,000kWh or spending at least \$3,500 a year with your electrical utility.

"Wisconsin Farmers Union and our partners are really pleased to see this program take off," said Wisconsin Farmers Union President Darin Von Ruden. "This program takes away some of the financial risk a farmer might face investing in solar on their own and expands options to make investing in clean energy a real possibility."

Merrill dairy farmers Hans Jr. and Katie Breitenmoser were the first farmers to take advantage of the program, with a system that was completed in November of 2017. A 19.8 kW was installed on the family's new heifer barn.

Rod Ofte of Willow Creek Ranch officially commissioned his solar system on May 15. His system will help meet the energy needs on his Driftless Region grass-fed beef farm.

Ofte said he first starting using solar panels to power electric fences in remote pastures. The decision to invest in a larger solar set-up on his farm was fueled by three motives: energy independence, environmental consciousness, and usability as a marketing tool.

"With the power we will generate and the additional energy we are able to sell back to the power company, we're actually carbon negative farm now," Ofte said proudly. "That environmental piece a big deal for us."

After crunching the numbers with North Wind Renewable Energy, the decision was a no-brainer from a financial standpoint, Ofte added. "When you calculate how much energy we use here on the farm, we just paid forward 9 years of electricity and will get 11 years free after that."

Learn more at the MREA Energy Fair June 15-17 in Custer. North Wind will be at booths X21, 22, and 23; WFU will be at X57. For more details, contact WFU Special Projects Coordinator Sarah Lloyd at 608-844-3758 or slloyd@wisconsinfarmersunion.com.



Left: A solar project on the Breitenmoser Family Farm near Merrill last fall kicked off the Solar Powered Farms (SPF) program.

Momentum building for drastic Farm Bill changes



Bobbi Wilson
Gov. Relations Associate

If you have been following the news on the 2018 Farm Bill, you have probably heard all about the polarized debate over the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

It is certainly an important part of the farm bill discussion. But I would venture to guess you've heard no more than a whisper about an equally important, though perhaps less newsworthy provision: federal crop insurance. Crop insurance is the largest and, at least in 2014, most heavily-lobbied program in the farm bill. Critics argue the current program fails to provide an adequate safety net for family farmers while costing American taxpayers 5 to 10 billion dollars each year. Nevertheless, the 2018 farm bill lacks any substantive changes to the crop insurance program. Like so many provisions — from dairy policy to conservation to organic agriculture — crop insurance deserves more time for revision than the current 'race to the farm bill finish line' will allow.

Crop insurance was designed as a commodity safety net that protects farmers from a whole host of agricultural woes, from extreme weather to pests and disease. However in the last forty years, crop insurance has been flipped on its head and now yields the most benefit to crop insurance companies and mega farms at the expense of family farmers, US taxpayers, and the land.

The Land Stewardship Project reports that for every dollar of insurance benefits paid to farmers, insurance companies receive \$1.44. Put another way, crop insurance companies receive nearly 50 percent more program benefits than actual farmers. Of the benefits received by farmers, the vast majority go to those who need federal assistance the least. The American Enterprise Institute reports that in 2014, 68 percent of crop insurance subsidies went to the top 10 percent of farms in terms of crop sales. These subsidies give the largest farms greater leverage to drive family farms out of business by driving up land values and inhibiting land access for small and medium farms and beginning farmers. This unfair advantage threatens the health of rural communities and the stability of our food supply. Crop insurance has therefore become the antithesis of a farm safety net.

The federal crop insurance program is unique in that it does not contain any subsidy limits. When a farmer buys crop insurance, the government sub-

sidizes 62 percent of the premium. So the dollar amount of the subsidies increases with the size of the farm because it costs more to cover more acreage. Crop insurance proponents argue large farms give crop insurance actuarial soundness, and imposing subsidy limits would force them to exit the program. However, a Government Accountability Office report found that limiting subsidies for the highest grossing farms would not affect the actuarial soundness of the program, and would save millions of dollars in the process. Further, crop insurance coverage is a requirement before lenders will issue operating loans, meaning the largest farms will not be able to forego crop insurance; they will simply receive fewer subsidies to pay for it.

Despite calls for reform from conservation and groups, conservative think tanks and members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, the 2018 Farm Bill seems poised to advance a "business as usual" approach to crop insurance, locking in a seriously flawed and outrageously costly program for another

five years. Crop insurance is intended to be a safety net that protects farmers from the inherent risks of growing food, not a taxpayer handout to large insurance companies or a leg-up for mega farms that threaten to outcompete family agriculture.

While it may seem counterintuitive, the best hope of getting a better farm bill is delaying its passage for another year. Momentum is building across the county for drastic changes to American agriculture — changes that so far seem unlikely to be addressed in the 2018 Farm Bill. With only two opportunities each decade to create better farm policy, we need to take a little more time to get it right. Crop insurance is just one of the many provisions that needs serious restructuring. If the farm bill passes this year we will only delay the opportunity for much-needed reform across the agricultural spectrum. Please contact your senators and representatives and urge them to vote no on any version of the farm bill that does not provide a fair and adequate safety net for family farmers.

Protects Family Farmers



- ~ Strengthens the farm safety net
- ~ Supports & develops programs that bolster diverse markets
- ~ Provides strong crop insurance & risk management tools

Conserves Natural Resources



- ~ Maintains funding for working lands conservation programs that promote stewardship
- ~ Renews & fully funds climate mitigation research & technical assistance



Our Ideal Farm Bill

Feeds Hungry Americans



- ~ Doesn't cut funding for critical nutrition programs
- ~ Maintains a unified Farm Bill. Food & farm programs should be included in the same comprehensive legislation

Empowers Beginning Farmers



- ~ Expands crop insurance options for operations of all types & sizes
- ~ Eliminates barriers that prevent participation in working lands programs
- ~ Increases direct loan lending limits

Entrepreneurial spirit alive in rural Wisconsin



Kara O'Connor
Gov. Relations Director

If you live in Racine County these days, I'd imagine that the bulldozers and construction cranes are daily reminders of the state's \$4.5 billion investment in FoxConn there.

In rural counties, by contrast, data caps and choppy video streaming are a daily reminder that the state's economic development assistance hasn't made it to your part of the state.

It seems that Governor Walker's prevailing economic development strategy over the past 8 years has been to plow a large amount of money into a few well-connected companies. FoxConn is the most recent example, but it's just the latest in an ongoing approach to economic development that seeks to lure new companies to the state with tax giveaways and other enticements, rather than helping home-grown entrepreneurs build their businesses here.

Since the end of the Great Recession, Wisconsin's rate of sole proprietorship growth has averaged just 1.26 percent, nearly a full point below the national average. Professor Steven Deller from the UW Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics explains why this is a concern:

"Research has shown that net job growth comes from business start-ups, or entrepreneurship. Unfortunately, Wisconsin has one of the lowest new business formation rates in the nation, adjusted for the population size of the state. If new business formation is vital to economic growth and Wisconsin has a very low rate of business start-ups, we can expect modest rates of employment growth."

Let's take stock of this administration's record on fostering small-scale rural economic devel-



Left: Wisconsin has one of the lowest new business formation rates in the nation, a fact that is leaving many Main Streets stagnant.

opment. Gov. Walker eliminated the Agriculture Development and Diversification program, a program that provided small grants to ag-related entrepreneurial enterprises and generated a whopping \$13 of economic activity for every \$1 of state investment. Governor Walker proposed eliminating the Farm to School coordinator, slashed funding twice for the Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin program, and attempted to eliminate restrictions on foreign ownership of farmland so that unlimited acres of Wisconsin farmland could be sold off to foreign investors.

Walker's signature dairy program was Dairy 30x20, which contributed to the flood of milk that has driven milk prices down to their current devastatingly low levels. Throughout his tenure, Governor Walker has dedicated 10 to 20 times less per year on rural broadband than neighboring states like Minnesota. Any wonder why farms and small businesses in rural Wisconsin are struggling?

The legislature has likewise flailed when it comes to rural economic development. This past session, the legislature failed to advance straightforward bills that would have facilitated agritourism events in historic barns, and would have allowed wineries to extend their hours to host weddings and other events. Even worse, the legislature advanced restrictive bills that would have imposed a lowest-in-the-nation \$10,000 gross sales cap on home-baking entrepreneurs, and would have prohibited microbreweries from selling their own beer. Brewers and bakers actually had to leave their businesses to come to Madison and fight against these absurd bills. And most dis-

appointingly, the legislature passed, and the governor signed, a bill that allows cooperatives to water down cooperative principles that have been a bedrock for maintaining wealth in rural communities.

Instead of pursuing the simple solutions that help small businesses thrive, our current leaders have pursued a "blockbuster" economic development strategy that is especially ill-suited to rural communities. Nearly every rural community has a story of the big employer who pulled up stakes and moved elsewhere, leaving a huge chunk of the population unemployed. Luring large employers from out-of-state (or out of the country) all too often results in the same employers leaving when the incentives run out or economic tides turn, just as FoxConn did in São Paulo, Brazil. Instead of enticing new employers to come, what works in rural communities is giving a hand up to the entrepreneurs who are already here.

Spend some time in rural communities, and you'll be impressed by the level of entrepreneurial energy.

According to UW Economic Development Specialist Tessa Conroy, "Entrepreneurship seems an especially promising strategy for development in rural communities which are surprisingly entrepreneurial. Rural counties have both more proprietors and higher business survival rates compared to urban areas."

Rural Wisconsin residents have the ideas and the determination to rebuild their economies with home-grown entrepreneurship. Now we just need a governor and a legislature that will get on board.

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A lasting legacy

Quinn's organizing efforts leave impact on WFU and the Wisconsin countryside



Danielle Endvick
Communications Director

In the early 1970s, after graduating from the University of Minnesota, Tom Quinn expected to be drafted to serve in the Vietnam war — as were many other young men in that era. That plan changed when the war needs began to slow and a random draft lottery system was introduced. Instead, Tom took a job as an organizer for a community development organization which was working to protect an inner-city neighborhood from a massive redevelopment project. That effort led to his first understanding of the need for local food system change, and to the establishment of the first co-op grocery store in the Twin Cities, North Country Cooperative.

"We were taking on these big developers and pushing for affordable housing, but the area desperately needed a grocery store," Quinn recalls. "When no private business stepped forward, we organized a vacant storefront as a co-op store, owned by the neighborhood. Pretty soon people all over Minneapolis and St. Paul were starting food co-ops, partly as a means of building community." He notes that this first co-op store was the seed for a network that has grown to 17 co-op markets across the Twin Cities, with \$400 million in annual sales and support for over 375 local farms.

While procuring products for the co-op, Quinn often traveled

to farms and creameries across the river in western Wisconsin. "At that time there was a big push about connecting to the land, and I had a real desire to get out of the city," he said.

Quinn had grown up in Red Wing, Minn. and spent his summers working on his uncles' farms. This next chapter found him returning to those roots, as he and his soon-to-be wife, Helen, made the move to rural western Wisconsin. Helen started a career on the faculty at UW-Stout, while Tom tried his hand at logging before settling into what he fondly recalls as his favorite job, driving truck for the local Cenex feed mill.

Tom and Helen were in good company, as other city folks were also moving to the country and a new way of life. Their new farming neighbors were welcoming and quick to offer advice.

"We had a good-sized community of people who were trying to fit in and make a life. And it was a time when there were still many small and mid-sized dairy farms, so the rhythm of seasonal work was shared by everyone. I just fell in love with rural Wisconsin," Quinn said.

Through his work at the feed mill, Quinn connected with area farmers and picked up side jobs helping with milking and field work on dairy farms. In time, Tom and Helen had an offer to lease a farm near Glenwood City and managed their own 27-head Jersey herd for about seven years,

as they raised their young family.

Agrarian activism

Inspired in part by the writings of rural author and activist Wendell Berry and by older farmer friends who shared stories about farmer movements of past decades, Tom and Helen were keen to do their part to better their corner of rural Wisconsin.

"We met some of these old-timers who had taken part in farm activism or who remembered hearing the stories from the Great Depression era, and we learned that there was this rich history of agrarian activism that was not that different than the activism we had seen around other issues and social movements."

Quinn had a bit of an awakening as he listened to rancher and then Rocky Mountain Farmers Union President John Stencil

speak at an alternative World Food Conference at Iowa State.

"[Stencil] gave this very thoughtful policy speech that explained the connection between fair trade and free trade, the fallacy of the U.S. trying to feed the world, and the importance to our whole country of fair prices for farmers," Quinn remembers.

Inspired, Quinn called up the Wisconsin Farmers Union office when he returned home, and a few days later Forest Local Farmers Union President Dennis Rosen pulled up in his farm driveway.

"I've been a Farmers Union member ever since — and Dennis has remained one of my best friends and inspirations," Quinn said of Rosen, who would go on to be WFU president and a long-time state board member.

1980s Farm Crisis

Helen and Tom became active in the Forest Local unit of Farmers Union and helped with membership drives, fair booths and educational efforts. Their involvement in Farmers Union also led them to be chosen as one of three Wisconsin couples to take part in the American Farm Project, a new NFU program that brought together young farmers from across the country to learn more about Farmers Union, civic engagement, ethics and leadership. The program also touched on appreciation of the values of rural life and literature, and a highlight for Quinn was meeting Wendell Berry, whose writings had fueled his re-

turn to the land and his activism.

By that point, the early 1980s, farmers were beginning to face a severe economic crisis that had started in the grain sector and spread into dairy, devastating rural communities.

"We were in a national recession that seemed like it might not end. Interest rates were at 17 percent, and small and mid-sized farms were being decimated," Quinn said. "There were a lot of farmers around us who were having serious economic trouble. But no one was talking about it. There wasn't anywhere they could get advice."

Farmers Union was among groups that collaborated on a farm credit hotline and advocate training to address the crisis, under the banner of the Farm Unity Coalition. "It was very sobering to get phone calls at night from farmers who were desperate and needed basic advice and someone to talk to."

That grassroots effort grew into the National Farm Family Coalition, of which Quinn was one of the initial organizers. Through that work, and his role with the Wisconsin Farm Unity, he helped rally farm groups around the 1985 Farm Bill and played a role in the initial planning with Willie Nelson and John Mellencamp's formation of FarmAid.

Quinn also helped organize several direct protests, a National Farm Crisis rally at the state capitol and sit-ins at lending offices, as farmers called for, and even-



Left: Tom Quinn has proudly promoted Farmers Union values and helped build the membership not only in his stomping grounds of Dunn County but all around the state. He's pictured here (second from right), with wife Helen, (second from left) and other WFU members at the 1980 Farm Progress Days. Helen is holding their daughter, Anastacia, who could so frequently be found at WFU events that she was dubbed the "Farmers Union baby."



Left: In his founding role with the Wisconsin Farm Unity Alliance, Quinn helped create a guidebook to inform financially troubled farmers of their rights. The alliance trained advocates to help fellow farmers face tough times in the 1980s Farm Crisis.

tually received, a temporary moratorium on farm foreclosures. Their efforts also led to emergency funding for farm operating loans and the creation of the Wisconsin Farm Assistance Program, which would eventually become part of today's DATCP Wisconsin Farm Center.

Quinn was also active in organizing for a farmer-written alternative to the 1985 Farm Bill. The version proposed by the Reagan administration aimed to lower supports and align agricultural product prices with world markets. Farmers across the county organized in support of an alternative bill that would ensure parity prices reflective of the cost of production. Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa championed this bill. Quinn and other Wisconsin dairy farmers helped organize farmers around the country to develop a dairy program that was attached to the larger alternative farm bill. This program provided for strong supply management program and stable, fair prices. Rep. Dave Obey was a champion for this approach.

When political activist Jesse Jackson, who had spoken out strongly on behalf of family farms, became the second African American man to run for president in 1984 and wanted to reach out to rural voters, Quinn was asked to help organize an on-farm rally in western Wisconsin. Harvey Stower, state legislator from Amery, immediately offered his community as a location. The event drew 3,000 people and had a memorable atmosphere. Quinn recounts the ceremonial drumming from the Lac Courte Oreilles tribe, watching an eagle flying overhead, and feeling "reaffirmed in my faith in rural Wisconsin, and the belief that we are goodhearted people, whatever color or faith." He later traveled to Washington, D.C. with his young daughter to attend the first of Jackson's Rainbow Coalition conventions.

When the lease on his dairy farm was not able to be renewed, Quinn threw himself fully into organizing. In 1988, he helped with the initial planning and fundraising for the Coulee Region Organic Produce Pool, which would grow into Organic Valley, the nation's largest farmer-owned organic cooperative. He was recognized with an Organic Pioneer Award in 2013 for his efforts.

"Wisconsin Farm Unity had taken the position that the government wasn't helping family farms, and that we needed to take our own initiative to form co-ops, which for that

time was a leading edge concept," recalls George Siemon, one of the founding farmers of CROPP and CEO of the cooperative, which has grown into a billion dollar business. "We'd never have gotten going without Tom's leadership and work as a professional organizer, moving forward this group of idealistic farmers. Decades later, you look at where his career has led — it shows his dedication to serving family farms."

Siemon credits Quinn for being a critical player in organizing during that passionate, turbulent period. "In his work on pulling farmers together around the farm bill, especially, he was always the level-headed guy who was working to make things effective, and he had a lot of influence in that process."

Quinn went on to serve as founder and early executive director for the Wisconsin Farmland Conservancy, which creatively used land trusts to help beginning farmers fund their start-ups. He worked with a half dozen farms across the St. Croix River Valley, including one memorable project that protected the famous Maiden Rock bluff overlooking Lake Pepin.

"It took about six years to secure that project, but every time I get my sailboat out on Lake Pepin and look up and see that untouched rock bluff, I'm reminded it was worth the effort," Quinn said

Quinn has been active in numerous community and local government organizations, including the Dunn County Board of Supervisors and the Dunn Economic Development Corporation. From 1993-1996 he was executive director of the National League of Rural Voters.

He also has served on the board of directors for the WFU Foundation, Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship, River Country RC&D, and Gathering Waters, among others. He has been a strong voice in farmer-led watershed efforts and planning of the annual Red Cedar Watershed Conference at UW-Stout.

In 2000, Quinn was chosen as a Bush Foundation Leadership fellow to study ways to connect rural economic development with conservation initiatives. He also spent time working on regional community development projects — including the first shared commercial kitchen in Menomonie — before signing on with Wisconsin Farmers Union in 2011.

Though Quinn initially planned to serve

See p.14 ► QUINN



At a March 1988 meeting, from left, Guy Wolf, George Siemon, and Tom Quinn collaborated on initial planning and fundraising for the Coulee Region Organic Produce Pool, which would grow into the Organic Valley, the nation's largest farmer-owned organic cooperative.



During a 1981 Taylor-St. Croix membership drive, Quinn, center, joins others around a farmhouse table.



Quinn visits with the Honish family on their Tomah farm, circa 1992.

Chapter Chatter

Share it here!

Submit chatter to Danielle at 715-471-0398
or dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com

Gathering set for the launch of Lake Superior Farmers Union

WASHBURN — Farmers and eaters alike are invited to join in a meal and discussion about starting a Lake Superior Farmers Union chapter. A meeting will be held Thursday, June 7 from 5-6:30pm at the Harbor View Event Center, 130 Harbor View Drive in Washburn. Come learn how a local chapter would give the region's farmers and rural residents a voice in Madison and Washington, D.C.

Farmers Union is dedicated to family farms and small towns and works on issues like fair prices for farmers, renewable energy, cooperatives, affordable health care and more. Attendees will hear a brief history of Farmers Union along with Mary Dougherty speaking on Farmer Union's support for resilient rural communities and family farmers.

Learn more at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/membership. Let's start our Lake Superior Farmers Union Chapter with a bang — bring your paid WFU membership to the meeting, and we'll buy you a beer! There will also be a cash bar.

Please RSVP to John Adams, johnadams0909@gmail.com, or to Mary Dougherty, marydougherty57@gmail.com. We'll end by 6:30pm and keep the bar open for a social hour or more.

South Central plans picnic

BRODHEAD — South Central Wisconsin Farmers Union will host a summer potluck picnic on Sunday, July 15 at Riemer Family Farm, W2252 Riemer Rd., Brodhead. Come celebrate all the inspiring things happening in the chapter, local family farm-hood and food community.

Please bring a dish to pass, beverage to share and a lawnchair. We could also use extra tables if you can easily bring one along.

Before the potluck the Riemers will be hosting a Field Day for Upper Midwest CRAFT also on July 15 from 1-4pm. The topic will be grazing planning on rented land. To register for the Field Day tour visit <http://estore.learnrowconnect.org/home/Adult-Workshops/FIELD-DAY->

For more details call Jen Riemer at Riemerfamilyfarm@gmail.com or call/text 608-426-4729.

Taylor-Price field days planned

The Taylor/Price Farmers Union is hosting the following events with generous financial support from a Wisconsin Farmers Union Local Initiative Grant:

- Beef Pasture Walk (location and June date/time to be announced soon.)
- CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) and diversified livestock Field Day, July 19, 5:30-8:30pm, We Grow LLC, Rebecca and Eric Zuleger, Westboro.
- Sheep Pasture Walk and FAMACHA Training Workshop, July 20, 10am-4pm FAMACHA workshop (registration required - space is limited) and 4-6pm pasture walk (open to the public), Autumn Larch Farm, Jane Hansen, Ogema.
- Dairy Pasture Walk, Sept., 20th, 12:30-3pm, Hillside Dairy Farm, Linda and Jerry Caylor, Catawba.

For more information about this series, please contact Jane Hansen at autumnlarch@gmail.com or 715-767-5958.



Wisconsin Cheese Label Survey

Wisconsin Farmers Union is conducting a survey to learn what farmers and consumers think about the "Wisconsin Cheese" label.

The survey seeks farmers' and consumers' input on how much of the milk in "Wisconsin Cheese" should come from Wisconsin dairy farms.

"Wisconsin farmers, cheesemakers and even our consumers take a lot of pride in our dairy heritage and the quality of our dairy products," said Wisconsin Farmers Union President Darin Von Ruden. "As farmers face one of the worst declines in dairy prices they've seen in decades, we want to be sure the 'Wisconsin Cheese' label is being used to its fullest potential."

The Wisconsin Cheese label is managed by the Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin, formerly the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board. Dairy farmers fund Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin via a mandatory assessment on each hundred pounds of milk sold.

The survey is only six questions long and shouldn't take more than two minutes. It can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WisconsinCheeseSurveyLink> — please share with your friends!



FARMERS UNION HAPPENINGS

JUN 7, Farmers Union Meal & Forum, 5-6:30pm, Harbor View Event Center, 130 Harbor View Dr., Washburn. RSVP to johnadams0909@gmail.com

JUN 8, Graze River Country Pasture Walk: Wagner Family Farm, 10am, N5228 Cloverdale Rd, Black River Falls. RSVP to Mary at 715-579-2206.

JUN 12, Chaseburg Local Farmers Union chapter meeting, 8pm (6:30pm social time and farm tour), Korte Acres, E4378 Dodson Hollow Road, Chaseburg. Info: Sarah Korte, call or text at 715-829-3491 or kortecresfood@gmail.com.

JUN 13, Graze River Country Pasture Walk: Holm Family Farm, 6pm, E10025 690th Ave, Elk Mound. RSVP to Mary at 715-579-2206.

JUL 10-12, Farm Technology Days, D&B Sternweis Farm and Weber's Farm Store - Heiman Holsteins, 9885 Cty. Hwy. H, Marshfield. Info: www.wifarmtechnologydays.com

JUL 15, Pierce-Pepin Farmers Union Geology, Water and Us, 1pm-5pm, A to Z Produce and Bakery Farm, N2956 Anker Lane, Stockholm. Info: wfupepin pierce@gmail.com.

JUL 17, Women Caring for the Land: Bouressa Family Farm, 10am-2pm, N3775 Ritchie Rd. New London.

JUL 18, Graze River Country Pasture Walk: Prindle Farms, 7:30pm, W11245 Prindle Rd, Alma Center. RSVP to Mary at 715-579-2206.

JUL 19, CSA and Diversified Livestock Field Day, 5:30pm 8:30pm, We Grow LLC, N7975 Zimmerman Rd, Westboro.

JUL 20, Sheep Pasture Walk and FAMACHA Training Workshop, 10am-6pm, Autumn Larch Farm LLC, Jane Hansen in Ogema, 10am - 4pm FAMACHA workshop (registration required) and 4-6pm pasture walk (open to the public). RSVP to Jane Hansen at autumnlarch@gmail.com or 715-767-5958.

JUL 24, Graze River Country Pasture Walk: Cylon Rolling Acres, 6:30pm, 1956 240th St., Deer Park. RSVP to Mary at 715-579-2206.

JUL 26, Application to apply for National Farmers Union Legislative Fly-In Scholarship, apply at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/upcoming-events

AUG 3-5, Soil Sisters: A Celebration of Wisconsin Farms and Rural Life, www.soilsisterswi.org

AUG 14, Women Caring for the Land: Buser Cattle Company, 8:30am-3pm, 6440 Wiesner Rd. Omro.

AUG 16, Wisconsin Farmers Union annual Summer Conference, Kamp Kenwood and Acorn Day Camp, 19161 79th Ave., Chippewa Falls.

AUG 16, Graze River Country Pasture Walk: Nathan Kling Farm, 1pm-3pm, W15503 Kelly Rd, Taylor. RSVP to Mary at 715-579-2206.

AUG 22, Graze River Country Pasture Walk: Blue Ox Farm, 6:30pm, N11253 St. Rd. 25, Wheeler. RSVP to Mary at 715-579-2206.

AUG 24, Graze River Country Pasture Walk: Richmond Farm, 12:30pm, 12454 20th St, Colfax. RSVP to Mary at 715-579-2206.

SEP 12, Women Caring for the Land. Bossie Cow Farm, 8:30am-3pm, W6174 County Road SS Random Lake.

SEP 15, Graze River Country Pasture Walk: Scott and Marie Belz, 3pm, 230th St, Baldwin. RSVP to Mary at 715-579-2206.

SEP 19, Women Caring for the Land: Long Winter Farm, 8:30pm-3pm, 1446 Lawlor Road East Troy.

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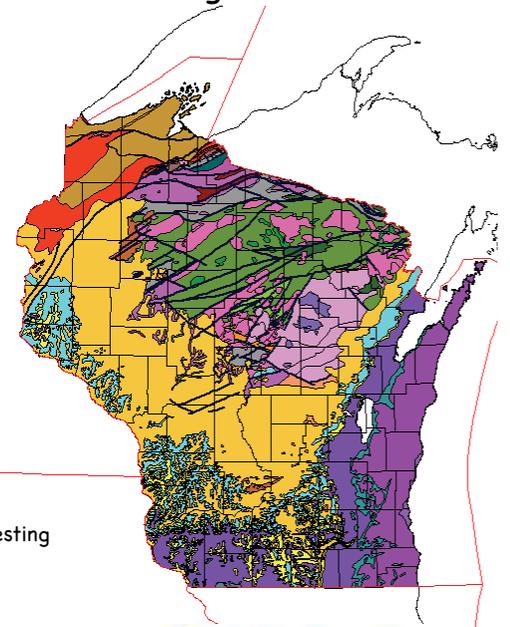
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Retired Geologist, US Geological Survey

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Women Caring for the Land sessions set for this summer

Wisconsin Farmers Union, in partnership with Pheasants Forever, will host Women Caring for the Land workshops around the state this summer. The workshops are geared toward women farmers



or landowners who are interested in learning more about conservation and networking with other farm women in their region. Each session includes a morning learning circle, potluck lunch and afternoon tour of the host farm. Locations include:

• **July 20, 10am to 2pm, Bouressa Family Farm, N3775 Ritchie Rd., New London.** See Rachel Bouressa's grassfed and finished beef farm, where animals are on pasture year-round. Learn how the land is managed holistically and how that leads to healthier animals.

• **Aug. 14, 8:30am-3pm, Buser Cattle Company, 6440 Wiesner Rd. Omro.** Katie Kopina Buser and her husband John Buser own Buser Cattle Company, an operation primarily focused on grazing beef cattle. They utilize own 90 acres and neighboring pastures in conservation with the DNR and are putting practices to work that they learned working on several large cattle operations out west.

• **Aug. 17, 8:30am -3pm, Donna Kehrmeier, 15388 County Rd. EE, Osseo.** Learn about this Trempealeau County cow/calf beef operation and hear how Donna is honoring her husband Jim's memory by continuing on his love for stewarding the land. Conservation efforts on the farm have included farmland preservation, buffer strips, and planting trees and butterfly habitat.

• **Sept 6, 8:30 am -3 pm, Green Briar Farm, W936 Cty. Rd. N, Colby.** Deb Esselman and her husband raise grass-fed British Park White beef and horses on her 80 acre farm. Deb is a former dairy farmer and has been involved in agriculture all her life. She has worked with the Farm Service

Agency for the past 40 years.

• **Sept. 12, 8:30am-3pm, Bossie Cow Farm, W6174 Cty. Rd. SS, Random Lake.** Join Thelma Heidel-Baker as she discusses the unique conservation opportunity

that arises as an organic dairy farmer and insect conservation specialist for the Xerces Society. Also, learn how conservation can be the tie that binds a family together through a farm transition.

• **Sept. 18, 8:30am-3pm, Fenn's Folly, 12041 Severson Rd., Ferryville.** Amy Fenn left her Madison library job in favor of tromping around a 40-acre hilltop trying to turn a depleted hayfield and unmanaged woods into a savanna/silvopasture. This will be her second year of strategically grazing heifers while designing and building infrastructure like fence, water, and an off-grid home.

• **Sept. 27, 8:30am-3pm, Long Winter Farm, 1446 Lawlor Rd., East Troy.** Rachel Anderson's mission is to farm efficiently and sustainably profitable at low environmental impact. This 1500-acre farm utilizes no-till, strip-till, GNSS-based application, advanced cover crop systems, and water quality monitoring. Additionally, they maintain refuge for wildlife through wetland, prairie, and oak savanna restorations. Rachel and her mother Pamela are starting a new adventure on the farm with a brand-new cut-flower business.

Each event will kick off with coffee and networking. Lunch is a potluck (main dish provided) so bring a dish to pass. Please dress for walking in pastures.

The Women Caring for the Land series was developed by the Women, Food and Agriculture Network. Learn more at www.womencaringfortheland.org. For more information about these events contact Deb Jakubek at 715-590-2130. Please register under the corresponding event at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/upcoming-events.

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



Membership Application

Name: _____

Spouse's Name: _____

of Children under 21: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Household Type:

Farm Rural Small Town Urban

Type of Farm: *Check all that apply.*

Dairy Poultry Vegetables or Fruit

Beef Cropso Organic

Hogs Horses Other _____

Membership: *Fee includes family unless student or organization is checked.*

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Get your graze on: *Summer pasture walks set*

Danielle Endvick
Communications Director

Wisconsin Farmers Union is pleased to be partnering with grazing networks across the state to promote summer events pasture walks this summer and fall.

"Interest in grazing continues to grow as farmers look to be better stewards of the land, increase animal comfort and improve their cost efficiencies," said Wisconsin Farmers Union Executive Director Tom Quinn. "Pasture walks are a great opportunity to meet other farmers in your region, learn from experienced graziers and explore how grazing might fit into your enterprise."

RIVER COUNTRY

BLACK RIVER FALLS — June 8, 10am
Wagner Family Farm, N5228 Cloverdale Rd.
Grazing with milking shorthorns

COLFAX — June 13, 6pm
Holm Family Farm, E10025 690th Ave.
How grazing benefits the watershed.

ALMA CENTER — July 18, 7:30pm
Prindle Farms, W11245 Prindle Rd.
Organic pasture management.

DEER PARK — July 24, 6:30pm
Cylon Rolling Acres, 1956 240th St.
Raising meat goats on pasture

TAYLOR — Aug. 16, 1-3pm
Nathan Kling Farm, W15503 Kelly Rd. Adding acres
and organic production

WHEELER — Aug. 22, 6:30pm
Blue Ox Farm, N11253 St. Rd. 25.
Restorative grazing with sheep and beef

COLFAX — Aug. 24, 12:30pm
John Richmond Farm, 12454 20th St.
Farm transition and dairy

BALDWIN — Sept. 15, 3pm
Scott & Marie Belz, 1063 230th St.
Grazing beef, handling facility &
River Country RC&D Annual Picnic

HOLMEN — Sept. TBD
Todd & Tonia Wright, W7091 Gaarder Rd.
Working with a journeyman graduate

GILMAN — Oct. TBD
Kevin Mahalko Farm, 34717 Highway 64
Grazing dairy for grass milk.

COLFAX — Nov. TBD
Brad & Melissa Larson, N10688 Cty. M.
Fall cover crops & how they fit
in a grazing operation

For more details about River Country RC&D walks and to RSVP contact Mary C. Anderson at 715-579-2206 or Kevin Mahalko at 715-314-0338.



Photo by Danielle Endvick

Farmers Union is proud to be partnering with grazing networks across the state to present a series of pasture walks this summer and fall. This scene is from a 2017 walk at the Peasley Dairy Farm in Black River Falls.

SOUTHWEST BADGER

FALL RIVER — June 14, 9am-12pm
Fountain Prairie Farm, 1901 WI-16
Understanding pasture design and layout. \$40.
Info: Randy Zaugbaum 608-745-3192

FALL RIVER — July 12, 9am-12pm
Fountain Prairie Farm, 1901 WI-16
Implementing your grazing plan. \$40.
Info: Randy Zaugbaum 608-745-3193

BRODHEAD — July 15, 1-4pm
Riemer Family Farm, W2252 Riemer Rd.
Grazing planning for grass-fed beef on rented land.
Potluck afterward. \$20.

<http://estore.learnconnect.org/home/Adult-Workshops/FIELD-DAY-Grazing-Planning.html>

FALL RIVER — Aug. 9, 9am-12pm
Fountain Prairie Farm, 1901 WI-16
Managed grazing workshop. \$40.
Info: Randy Zaugbaum 608-745-3194

BLUE RIVER — Aug. 21, 10:30am-12pm
1435 Old Blue River Rd.
Kickapoo Grazing Initiative
Info: Ryan Studnicka 608-383-3389

For more details about Southwest Badger events, contact Robert Bauer at 608-732-1202.

GLACIERLAND

OAKFIELD — June 19, 1-3pm
Flood Farm, N4312 State Hwy. 151
Dairy grazing profitability,
pasture layout and forage quality

NEW LONDON — Aug. 2, 5-7pm
Rosenow farm, E9451 Kanaman Rd.
Silvopasture project funded through
SARE Farmers Rancher grant

JEFFERSON — Aug. 16, 5-8 pm
Brattset Family Farm, N2437 Brattset Ln.
JEFFERSON — Sept. 25, 10am-2pm,
Brattset Family Farm, N2437 Brattset Ln.

Six additional walks are being planned.
For more details about Glacierland events,
contact Kirsten Jurcek at 262-593-2077.

Save the Date!

**Wisconsin Farmers Union
Summer Conference**

Thursday, August 16

Watch for more details in
the July/August newsletter!

All mud, no Zen



By Alan Guebert

Success in sports, business, and politics requires skilled leaders who know their jobs and know how to fold

disparate talents and personalities into something greater than the logical sum of its parts.

Take Phil Jackson, a North Dakota high school basketball star, who coached two different teams to 11 National Basketball Association championships between 1991 and 2010. Jackson oftentimes credits Zen, a form of Buddhism, for his long success.

OK, but Michael Jordan and Kobe Bryant helped, too.

Or, better yet, take Abraham Lincoln, the little-known rural attorney who, elected president by a country tearing itself apart, won the Civil War and preserved the idea that is the United States mostly through the force of his iron will and the enduring power of his eloquent words.

A thousand years from now people will still say his name in whispered reverence as goose bumps march up their sleeves.

It's hard to find similar leaders today. Only the most ardent fan can name a Jackson-like figure in American sports now. Worse, the world's most famous political leaders also are its most divisive.

Those leaders, the ones whose larger talents lie in digging already-deep political and social moats even deeper, are well remembered, too. In fact, most become historical figures because their public failures—Nixon's Watergate; LBJ's Vietnam—blot out any national or international good they may have achieved.

After last week's 2018 Farm Bill belly flop in the House of Representatives, how do you think its members, Republican and Democratic alike, will be remembered by farmers, ranchers, and historians?

The best guess is that their failure will be forgotten if GOP leaders give a handful of their own members a late-June vote on a going-nowhere immigration bill. After that vote, the wayward members promise to release their hostage, the socially flinty, farmer-generous House Farm Bill, for another vote that should pass.

Between now and then, however, the bill will not improve. No one in either the House leadership or the Ag Committee leadership has acknowledged an offer by Collin Peterson, the Committee's ranking Democrat, to deliver enough votes for passage if the majority GOP simply softens some of its very tough SNAP (food stamp) rules.

The reason GOP leaders have not replied is simple: despite the bill's title, it's only marginally about farms, farming, and food. Its overarching purpose is purely political; it's a Christmas grab bag of what the GOP intends to offer its "base" in the 2018 Congressional campaign—welfare reform, regulatory reform, immigration reform, and housing reform.

That's fine but it's not a Farm Bill.

And, yes, there are some farm program reforms in it, too, but most will boost taxpayer costs, not cut them. How much more? It's hard to say because the bill's program language often is so obtuse it's a mystery to know what it actually means.

For example, here's a May 17 explanation posted by the University of Illinois farmdoc daily policy analysts that attempts to explain one crop insurance change in the House bill:

"To arrive at the effective reference price, Figure 1 tracks MYA prices and the 5-year Olympic moving average of MYA prices. The escalator provision for the reference price equals 85% of that price up to the cap of 115% of the statutory reference price... For most of the remaining crop years, however, the reference price would equal the statutorily-fixed price, especially under CBO projections."

Got that? If so, join the seven other people in the Milky Way galaxy who understand it. If not, fall in line like the other House robots.

The clear-as-mud explanation is, however, an apt metaphor for where we now are in U.S. farm policy: so deep into the weeds that few in any political party or farm organization have the vision and leadership to even dare to think past the next election or this year's crop.

That makes almost any winning Farm Bill this year or next really a long-term loser.

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From p.8 ► QUINN

as WFU executive director for only a couple years, his tenure has spanned seven very successful years for the organization.

"I had the benefit of coming in at a time when we were beginning to get more financial resources, thanks to the foresight and commitment of leaders before me who had weathered some tough times," Quinn said.

Several chief goals for Quinn as he took on his role were to strengthen the membership base, amplify WFU's voice on rural issues, and re-engage its work on cooperative development enterprises.

"Tom has accomplished these goals and more," said WFU President Darin Von Ruden. "He has certainly left his mark on the organization. We'll miss his thoughtful approach in our efforts."

WFU membership has more than doubled during Quinn's tenure, with a number of chapters starting or rekindling, including Eau Claire, Lake to Bay, Madison Local, South Central and Winnebago-Outagamie.

"Farmers Union is best when it offers a 'big tent,' welcomes a diversity of farmers and people, and then unites them around a set of share values and policies," Quinn explains. "We have worked hard to reach out to newer and smaller farm sectors that are emerging, whether they're direct marketing or grazing or CSA farmers. But we've also stayed connected with conventional farmers, especially with our work on dairy issues," Quinn said. "It's not always easy to fit everybody into our tent, but it's important work for our members, board and staff."

Quinn said he especially has enjoyed seeing a new generation enter into and engage in Farmers Union.

"We've been able to put real resources into leadership development, and created practical opportunities for leadership training and civic engagement," he said.

Quinn said he is especially proud of

efforts to strengthen internal governance procedures, seeing significant increases in youth camper numbers for Farmers Union Camps, and re-energizing cooperative development efforts with the Wisconsin Food Hub Cooperative, solar projects and other endeavors.

"We also have doubled the number of staff and added people who are very skilled, professional and passionate about this work," Quinn said. "Our staff really understands and respects our membership. When we do our work, we know who we're working for."

That energy carries over into the membership and can be seen reflected in events like the Farm & Rural Lobby Day and annual convention, Quinn said, noting, "Our convention is a hotbed of energy, ideas and engagement. That's what I remember from when I started going to Farmers Union conventions — being blown away by the policy debate — and the singing led by our unforgettable Education Director Lilas Trostad, of course. Rural Wisconsin needs Farmers Union to be a stable, strong and thoughtful voice for its future. As members and leaders, we are responsible for being its stewards."

Long-time friend Dennis Rosen says Quinn has truly changed lives during his career. "Tom has been dedicated to the plight of family farmers and sharing their economic importance to rural communities," Rosen said. "In his time as executive director for Wisconsin Farmers Union, he has engaged the membership and strengthened our voice on agricultural issues."

As for Quinn, he looks forward to staying active in Farmers Union, but slowing down a bit to enjoy some time on his sailboat, packing his bag and seeing more of the world, and spending time with his five grandchildren.

"This is the absolutely perfect job to end my career with," Quinn said. "Having the opportunity to do it is more than I could have asked for."



Quinn looks forward to spending more time with his grandchildren and his wife, Helen, pictured with him at the 2015 WFU Annual Convention in Eau Claire.

WHAT'S ON YOUR TABLE?

Just say cheese! *with Diane Tiry*



With our late spring, May began the season for field work, including manure spreading, plowing, planting, haying and of course picking rock. Farm life is a good life, and the smell of that fresh mowed hay or even of our grassy lawns, lilac bushes, and apple blossoms can take one's breath away and make you feel that you have done a good job even after working 16-18 hour days.

I found myself trying to come up with some great tasting lunch ideas to make for our sons who come home to help on these busy days and found some burger ideas, with cheese of course.

Although I have some dairy good milkshake recipes that young kids would find thirst quenching, I am choosing to share with you two burger recipes. One from online and the other from The Dairy Good Cookbook, everyday comfort food from America's dairy farm families.

What I like about these recipes is that I could put them in a 400 degrees F oven or grill them on the charcoal grill near the field or barn where the action is taking place. Just as long as the dust isn't blowing at the open grill when I am flipping the burgers. And that smell will get the crew stopping to pick up their lunch without using a cow bell.

BACON WRAPPED CHEESE STUFFED BURGERS

Source: <https://theketocookbook.com/keto-recipes/bacon-wrapped-cheese-stuffed-hamburgers/>



Prep Time: 40 minutes

Ingredients:

- 10 oz minced beef (15% Fat) Substitute venison burger or other burger meat
- 4 oz Cheddar Cheese
- 9 oz Bacon
- Salt & Pepper to taste
- Burger buns, can be toasted on the grill, if preferred

Nutritional Information per serving: 75 gms fat; 2 gms Net carbs; 61 gms Protein; 864 Cal, 1 gm Fiber

Directions:

- 1) Add your seasoning to your ground beef and work it in with your hands. Divide the beef in half, and form them into two patties.
- 2) Break off a little beef from each patty, that you will use to cover up the cheese center. Take your lump of cheese and push it into the center of your patty. Cover it up with the excess beef, and smooth it over with your hands.
- 3) Next up is wrapping your burger in the bacon. You can adjust how much bacon you use, but we used quite a lot! About 6 slices per patty. Try and cover as much of the patty as you can without covering the same spot too many times.
- 4) Put in the oven for about 25-30 mins, at 400F (200C). Keep an eye on them after about 20 mins, and you can take them out when the bacon has reached your preferred texture, some like it crispier than others! You could also put them on aluminum foil on the grill for about 6-8 minutes per side depending upon how crispy you want the bacon.

And that's it, time to cut into them and watch the cheese explosion! I placed them into larger buns and have the ketchup, mustard, onions available.

You can cut down the calories easily by using a little less bacon, using leaner beef (we used 15% fat beef) and a little less cheese.

The second cheese-stuffed turkey burger uses Monterey Jack cheese with Jalapeno peppers for a slightly spicier taste. They recommend serving it with sweet potato oven fries. Instead of fries, try this dill cucumber dip.

DILL CUCUMBER DIP

Source: <https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/24664/dill-cucumber-dip/>

Prep: 5 minutes

Ready in 5 minutes

"This cool, refreshing dip is great in the summer, and a fine way to use fresh garden cucumbers. Serve with crackers or chips."

Ingredients:

- 1 (8 ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 2 cucumbers - peeled, seeded and chopped
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon dried dill weed
- 1/2 teaspoon hot pepper sauce

Directions:

Place cream cheese in a medium bowl. Beat until smooth. Stir in cucumbers, mayonnaise, fresh lemon juice, dill weed and hot pepper sauce.

Cheese-Stuffed Turkey Burgers

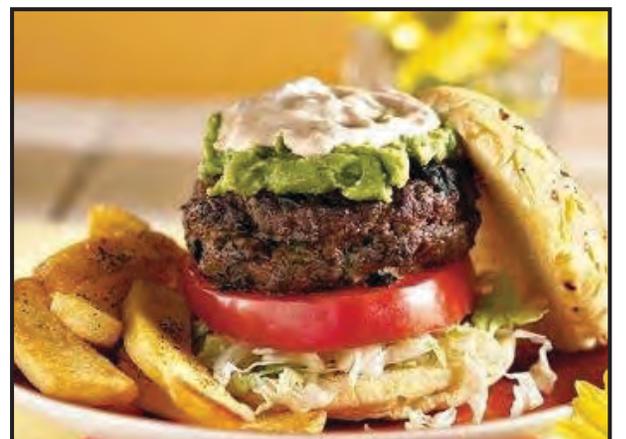
[The Dairy Good Cookbook, page 67]

Ingredients:

- 3/4 cup plain yogurt
- 1/4 cup medium or hot salsa
- 1 1/4 pounds ground turkey
- 3 Tablespoons yellow cornmeal
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1/2 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 4 slices Monterey Jack cheese with jalapeno peppers
- Bibb lettuce leaves
- 4 hamburger buns, toasted
- 4 thin slices red onion

Directions:

- 1) Preheat a grill to medium-high. Stir the yogurt and salsa together in a small bowl. Cover and refrigerate until serving time.
- 2) Combine the turkey, cornmeal, egg, salt and chili powder in a large mixing bowl. Divide the mixture evenly into eight 1/4-inch thick patties.
- 3) Top four of the patties with a slice of the cheese, tearing the cheese in pieces to fit if necessary. Cover with the remaining four patties then press the edges tightly together to seal.
- 4) Grill the patties for 5 to 6 minutes on each side. To assemble the burgers, place a lettuce leaf on each bun bottom. Top with a cooked patty, the salsa mixture, and sliced onion. Close each with the top of a bun.



If you have to bring the burgers out to the field, then make sure to wrap in foil to maintain heat. I use ice cream pails to fill with beverage, sandwich and a sweet for those working in a cab tractor or have them take a break to stretch their legs and eat.

Happy, healthy eating and a safe planting season to all,

Diane Tiry

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