



WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION NEWS

September 2017

Volume 74 | No. 7



Above: National Farmers Union President Roger Johnson shared his insights on the 2018 Farm Bill and other issues impacting rural America during the Wisconsin Farmers Union Summer Conference Aug. 17 at WFU Kamp Kenwood.

NFU President Johnson shares Farm Bill insights

Danielle Endvick
Communications Director

CHIPPEWA FALLS — “I think the 2018 Farm Bill is going to be passed on time. If that is true, it will be the first one in literally decades to be passed on time.”

That’s the prediction National Farmers Union Roger Johnson gave as he addressed attendees at Wisconsin Farmers Union’s Summer Conference Aug. 17. More than 100 Farmers Union members gathered at WFU’s historic Kamp Kenwood, along the shores of Lake Wissota, for the event, which also included a county presidents’ meeting, updates from WFU staff, a lakeside lunch and pie contest.

“There’s a lot of trouble in farm country right now,” Johnson said. “Net farm income is drastically down – cut in half over the past four years, and other indicators point to intense, ongoing stress within our rural communities.”

And what’s more, he noted, is that politicians recognize they need to have some progress to show their constituents back home. “There is not even one single major issue that the Congress has passed this year and that the president has signed into law,” Johnson said.

“In terms of major legislation, whether it’s tax reform, health care, any of the big issues – nothing has happened.”

But with many of the Republican members of Congress representing rural areas, the farm bill may be more achievable. As for what the 2018 Farm Bill might look like, Johnson said it may lean less heavily toward nutrition funding, because the improving unemployment rate means fewer folks will qualify for these income-based programs.

“In the 2014 Farm Bill, 80 percent of spending was on nutrition – the most spent on nutrition in the history of farm bills,” Johnson said. “That was largely because we were coming out of the Great Recession, when many people were needing those benefits.”

He predicts a greater percentage of funding in the 2018 Farm Bill may funnel toward farmers, many whom are struggling under depressed prices and disastrous weather events.

“Farm loan borrowing has gone up. Bankruptcies are up. Loan delinquencies are up,” Johnson noted, citing data compiled from credit institutions like the Farm Service

See p.13 ► FARM BILL

WFU offers scholarships for WFAN Conference

Wisconsin Farmers Union will be offering scholarships to help offset costs for first-time attendees to the Women, Food and Agriculture Network Conference Nov. 2-4 in Madison. The WFU Board of Directors has set aside four \$250 scholarships. The Board will give priority to first-time attendees to WFAN and work to distribute scholarships across multiple regions of the state.

Each recipient will be reimbursed up to \$250. For details on what costs will be reimbursable, please see the application. Recipients may be asked to give a report of the experience to the convention, a local chapter meeting, and/or in writing (WFU blog post, newsletter article, etc.).

The application is available online on the events page at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com. Apply by Sept. 14, 2017.

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Permit No. 203
Eau Claire, WI

FARMERS EDUCATIONAL & COOPERATIVE
UNION OF AMERICA - WISCONSIN
117 W. Spring St.
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729
Return Service Requested

WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION NEWS

A publication of
Wisconsin Farmers Union
117 W. Spring St.
Chippewa Falls, WI 54729

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Newsletter Editor, Layout & Design: Danielle Endvick
Printed by: Leader Printing, Eau Claire, WI
Bulk Rate postage paid in Eau Claire, WI

In Farmers Union, the door is open



Darin Von Ruden
President

In early August, newly minted U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue hopped into an RV and launched his five-state Back to Our Roots tour.

Wisconsin was one of the very first stops on the tour — with several highly anticipated meetings planned, including visits to the Wisconsin State Fair, the Franklin-based Hunger Task Force Farm and Wisconsin Farm Bureau President Jim Holte's farm near Elk Mound.

A news release circulating in the weeks before the tour touted it as a chance for Perdue "to hear directly from people in agriculture across the country" and "to gather input on the 2018 Farm Bill and increasing rural prosperity." It noted that along the way, Perdue would meet with farmers, ranchers, foresters, producers, students, governors, Members of Congress, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) employees, and other stakeholders.

At least, according to *Agri-View*, a select few stakeholders with some notable absences.

By all accounts, Secretary Perdue is a southern gentleman, but he and his team may not be familiar with Midwestern Nice. An exclusive group of farmers were invited to meet with the Secretary. Members of the media, even some who claimed to have been invited, were turned away from the closed-door meetings.

The experience led *Agri-View* Managing Editor Julie Belschner to write an editorial, in which she fumed, "In my 30 years of working in journalism, I've never been locked out of a meeting where public officials talked with the voters, where they talked

with the grassroots of democracy. We're not talking about tabloids. We're not talking about political opinionated talk shows. We're talking about mainstream agricultural media who have been reporting on agriculture for 50 years or more. Both of our reporters in attendance grew up on farms and are still involved in agriculture. It didn't matter. They were locked out."

This scenario — where concerned citizens are left on the outside looking in and transparency is hard to come by — is one that unfortunately has become all too common in the political arena today.

It reminds me of why I'm grateful for Farmers Union and our cooperative-minded roots. We recognize that the important work of advocating for family farmers and a better rural America cannot be done alone. We need every voice speaking up and helping to shape the policies that will guide agriculture into the future.

You can be a part of that important mission by joining your local chapter and taking part in Farmers Union lobby days and our annual convention, where members reason together on the issues impacting family farmers. The 2018 WFU Annual Convention will be Feb. 2-4 at Chula Vista Resort in Wisconsin Dells. Consider joining us, and experience how powerful it can be when all stakeholders are given the chance to speak.

As for Secretary Perdue, we look forward to his future visits to our great state and wish him well as he looks for the answers he and USDA will need to carry US agriculture forward into a future riddled with uncertainty. Given the difficulties he will face, he might find a bit of inspiration in the Southern Live Oak. This amazing tree and its evergreen leaves persevere year-round and despite the ups-and-downs that come with the seasons. It's also not only the official tree of his home state of Georgia, but it's also the great emblem of Farmers Union.



87th Annual
Wisconsin Farmers Union
STATE CONVENTION
FEBRUARY 2-4, 2018
Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells

NETWORKING • WORKSHOPS • POLICY
SILENT AUCTION • FARMERS UNION CAMP FUNDRAISER
YOUTH PROGRAM • CHILD CARE AVAILABLE

Registration will be open soon at
www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com!



A cog in the wheel?



Kara O'Connor
Gov. Relations Director

The farmer is the central cog in a system of production where all of the other ancillary cogs (seed and agrochemical companies, animal breeders, equipment dealers, crop insurance salesmen, and bankers on the front end, and food processors and manufacturers on the tail end) make money off of the fact that the central cog keeps turning. They all need the farmers' wheels to keep spinning in order for them to make money.

All of these ancillary cogs are pressing the gas pedal of overproduction. The more corn a farmer plants, the more profit for the seed and agrochemical companies. The more cows a farmer needs to breed, the more profit for the animal genetics companies. The more loans a farmer takes out to expand his operation, the more profit for the banks and equipment manufacturers and dealers. The more surplus farmers produce, the lower the price of agricultural commodities that the food processors and manufacturers have to buy.

All of the most powerful players in the agribusiness industry, except the farmer, benefit from overproduction.

The farmer, of course, is hurt by overproduction. The economics are so bad that many farmers have had to exit the business. But oh no! If those central cogs stop turning, all the ancillary cogs lose their profits, too! One option, of course, would be for Congress to step in and manage overproduction, like Canada had done with dairy, and like the U.S. government has the ability to do for cranberries.

But, because all of the ancillary cogs benefit from overproduction, the agribusiness sector marshalls its full lobbying power in Washington to oppose any sort of supply management. Case in point: powerful dairy processing interests successfully lobbied to get overproduction management taken out of the last Farm Bill at the 11th hour.

But the agribusiness industry still needs farmers to keep the ship afloat. If agribusiness does not step in to help farmers get a fair price from the marketplace, what do they do instead? Go to Congress to make sure that average farmers get just enough government subsidies - funded by U.S. taxpayers - to stay in the game one more year, keeping the central

cog turning so the ancillary cogs all get their piece of the pie. It's a clever strategy on the part of the agribusiness sector - reap all of the upside benefits of a "free market," but get the U.S. taxpayer to cover the losses when the inevitable downside of the free market manifests itself.

Although some very large players in the industry collect enormous sums in farm subsidies and crop insurance, for average farmers subsidies are just a mechanism for keeping one's head above water and staying one step ahead of ever-rising input prices and stagnant commodity prices. The real beneficiaries of federal farm subsidies are the agribusiness companies, because the subsidies fuel the central cog in their profit machine that would have otherwise run out of gas a long time ago.

How do we take the gas pedal off of overproduction, and rebuild an agricultural industry where all the parts of the machine are making balanced profits, without over-reliance on taxpayer subsidies? We need to have members of Congress in Washington crafting Farm Bills that represent good policy, rather than gifts to special interests.

We also need to overturn Citizens United so that big money isn't calling all the shots in Washington.

What makes this confusing sometimes is that "farm" groups are often the ones out front pushing for the policies that really benefit agribusiness. There are two reasons for this: first, if you are drowning and need a life preserver, are you really going to refuse one that is thrown to you because someone else, who didn't really need a life preserver, got a fancier one than you? No! You are going to grab the darn life preserver that's thrown to you. This is one of the ways that agribusiness companies benefit from farmers being in a continual state of desperation. We will settle for (and lobby for) any crumb of helpful policy that comes out way, even if tacked onto a big cake that goes elsewhere.

There is also a tendency for farmers to see their interests as being synonymous with those of their bankers, supply coops, seed and agrochemical companies, crop consultants, and dairy processors. We buy into a mentality that "we're all in this together." Sometimes that's true, but sometimes it's not. We should be wise about what programs and policies actually benefit farmers, and refuse to be used as a sympathetic face for otherwise-questionable public policy.

FARMERS UNION HAPPENINGS

AUG 29, Graze River Country Pasture Walk: Steinke's Sedge Wood Farms, 6:30pm. 30101 190th Ave, Cornell. Please RSVP to Mary at 715-579-2206.

SEPT 8, Graze River Country Pasture Walk, 12-3pm, Joe and Kristy Lulich Farm, 63375 US Hwy 63, Mason. Please RSVP to Mary at 715-579-2206.

SEPT 8-9, Chippewa Valley Farm-City Day, Bears Grass Dairy, S8495 County Road V, Augusta. More info: <http://www.farmcityday.com>

SEPT 10-13, NFU Fly-In, www.nfu.org

SEPT 14, Deadline to apply to WFU for a scholarship to the Women, Food and Ag Network Conference (Nov. 2-4 in Madison). Apply under events at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com.

SEPT 16, Chataqua Barn Dance - "Food, Land and Water," Saxon Homestead Farm, Cleveland, tickets available at <http://lnrp.org/barndance/> or contact Jenn at jenn@lnrp.org, (920) 627-1799.

SEPT 17, 11th annual Bike the Barns, departs from Lake Farm Park and tours farms around Madison, <https://www.csacoalition.org/bike-the-barns/>

SEPT 23, Graze River Country Pasture Walk, 11am-3pm, Charles Flodquist/John Richmond Farm, 12454 20th St., Colfax. Please RSVP to Mary C. Anderson at 715-579-2206.

SEPT 30, Deadline for all grant requests, local chapter initiative grants and other small grants/sponsorships.

OCT 3-7, World Dairy Expo, Alliant Energy Center, Madison, www.worlddairyexpo.com

OCT 6-8 & OCT 13-15, Fermentation Fest, <http://fermentationfest.com/>

OCT 28, Graze River Country Pasture Walk: Brad and Melissa Larson, 10am-12pm, N10688 County Rd M, Colfax. Please RSVP to Mary at 715-579-2206.

NOV 15, End-of-year deadline for all grant requests, local chapter initiative grants and other small grants/sponsorships.

DEC 1, Deadline for 2018 Resolutions and Articles & Bylaw Changes to be sent to WFU Office.

DEC 7-8, Midwest CSA Conference, Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells, www.midwestcsa.com.

DEC 9, Annual Sauk Co Membership Meeting and Cookie Exchange, noon to 3pm, Driftless Glenn, Distillery & Restaurant, 300 Water St., Baraboo. Bring cookies for a cookie exchange. RSVP to Erin Schneider at e.schneider.hilltopfarm@gmail.com by Dec. 6.

JAN 14-18 National Farmers Union Women's Conference, Catamaran Resort, San Diego, CA.

FEB 2-4, 87th Wisconsin Farmers Union State Convention, Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells.

Farmers Union members, submit chapter or farm events to Danielle Endvick at 715-471-0398 or dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com



Above: Justin Briggs, sporting his Wisconsin Farmers Union cap, caught a nap with his Holstein cow.

Right: St. Croix County Farmers Union members Jerry Croes, left, and David Swanepoel were among volunteers who worked a cheesecurd stand this summer to raise funds for the chapter.



Left: WFU Membership Director Deb Jakubek (back right) visited with attendees to an In Her Boots workshop on Kriss Marion's Blanchardville farm during Soil Sisters.

Chapter Chatter

Share it here!

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

Annual meeting season approaches

Here at Wisconsin Farmers Union, it's one of our favorite times of year — annual meeting season! In the coming months, WFU staff will be out on the road, meeting with membership at annual meetings across the state. Chapter officers, be sure to notify WFU Membership Director Deb Jakubek at 715-590-2130 or djakubek@wisconsinfarmersunion.com when your meeting details are set, so we can help promote and get a staff member scheduled to attend.

Annual meetings must be held by Dec. 1, when bylaw changes and resolutions are due. The Resolutions Review Committee meets in December. Visit the events page at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com for an up-to-date list of meetings.

Dunnum heads to D.C.

Wisconsin Farmers Union would like to extend a hearty congratulations to Vernon County Farmers Union member Alexis Dunnum, who has recently been hired for a full-time position with National Farmers Union in Washington, D.C.

Alexis, who served as NFU's communications intern last summer, has been hired as Executive Assistant. This spring she graduated from UW-Madison with a double major in Life Sciences Communication and Scandinavian Studies with certificates in Environmental Studies and Leadership.

Alexis is the daughter of Craig and Vickie Dunnum. She grew up on a farm in Westby, showing beef steers and pigs at the Vernon County Fair, and was very involved in 4-H and FFA. Best wishes, Alexis!

Fermentation Fest celebrates culture in all its form

Fermentation Fest – A Live Culture Convergence is an annual celebration of live culture in all its forms, from dance to yogurt, poetry to sauerkraut. Presented by the Reedsburg-based Wormfarm Institute, Fermentation Fest brings together farmers, chefs, artists, poets and performers in the beautiful working lands of Sauk County for tastings, demonstrations, cooking classes, art events, performances, food carts and more.

Fermentation Fest classes that you'll find this year range from home cheese making, sourdough bread and beyond, wine tasting, kombucha, miso, kimchi, krauts and pickles, chocolate and beer pairing, how to launch a home-based food business, and making tempeh, vinegars and homebrew, among many other sessions. A special feature this year is a visit from Mexican Mezcal distillers. The event also includes farm field trips and special dinners.

The Farm/Art Dtour has moved to a biennial schedule — for those who have enjoyed the 50-mile, self-guided driving tour of the beautiful countryside and art installations — that will be in full-force again in 2018. Learn more at www.fermentationfest.com

Farmers Union signs for sale

Show your Farmers Union spirit with a special Farmers Union sign. Available for a limited time, these signs are a fun addition to the farm driveway, the side of a barn or even as a statement piece in the house.

The cost per sign is \$10 or free with a 4-year membership to Farmers Union. To keep the cost as low as possible, shipping is not being offered, but signs will be available at upcoming WFU events or via bulk purchase by chapters by contacting Membership Director Deb Jakubek at 715-590-2130 or djakubek@wisconsinfarmersunion.com.



Local Initiative Grants available for chapter activities

Is your Farmers Union chapter wanting to host some fun activities but lacking the funding to get the ball rolling? Wisconsin Farmers Union's new Chapter Initiative Grant is designed for WFU chapters to:

- Increase local WFU outreach and visibility
- Provide education and information on farm and rural issues, WFU activities and programs
- Expand participation and volunteer activity by WFU members
- Develop partnerships and activities with other organizations

These grants are funded by annual allocations from Farmers Union Enterprises (FUE). Funds are aimed at supporting new projects and initiatives, not regular chapter activities.

The grant application is available on the WFU website at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com. Once you are on the home page, select the "Foundation" tab. A dropdown option should appear titled "Grant Program." The Chapter Initiative Grant will be listed on that page.

Choosing a Chapter Initiatives Grant project

As your chapter starts to think about different grant opportunities, ask yourselves some of the following questions.

- What would you want to do for your community if you had money?
- What are ideas that you have had in the past that

you have always wanted to complete?

- What are key issues members of your community are interested in or concerned about?
- What are other educational organizations or activities that already exist in your community and how can you partner with them?
- Will you format your project as a workshop, a farm tour, or bring in a few speakers? Other specific options could include a workshop on the farm bill with multiple speakers, a grazing pasture walk, or purchasing an educational tool like a milking cow that you can take to a wide variety of events.

Project goals

The grant application asks for the top two goals/objectives for the idea.

Be SMART about your planning process!

- S – Specific: Is the goal explained with enough detail that it can be well understood by those involved in its completion and by any stakeholders?
- M – Measurable: How will those involved in completing the goal know it has been accomplished and how will stakeholders determine its success?
- A – Attainable: Is the goal attainable or feasible given the resources available?
- R – Relevant: Does the goal align with, support, or advance the organization's vision, mission, values, principles, and strategies?
- T – Time bound: Does the goal have a target date for completion?

As you're working on your grant project, think about quantitative ways you can measure its success. (Like the number of people who attend your event, number of speakers, number of farms visited, or, if you have a survey, how many people liked the event.) You may also want to collect some personal accounts, open-ended questionnaires or general observations to include in your project end report.

Project Budget

WFU is asking grant applicants to create a detailed budget of any proposed projects. An example budget is included in the application.

- What type of marketing would you like to do for your grant program? What costs will be associated with marketing such as printing or newspaper ads?
- How much will it cost to book a location?
- If you are bringing in a speaker, what are the costs associated with that?
- What types of materials will you need to meet your project goals?
- Are you also receiving any additional funding from outside sources?

If you have further questions about the grant process or application, please contact the WFU Membership Coordinator Deb Jakubek at 715-590-2130 or djakubek@wisconsinfarmersunion.com, or Membership & Programs Organizer Kirsten Slaughter at 608-514-2031 or kslaughter@wisconsinfarmersunion.com.



Above: Current and former camp staff and Acorn campers sing a tribute to Cathy Statz — written to the tune of "I Will Survive." **Right:** WFU President Darin Von Ruden presents Statz with a plaque recognizing her 20 years of service to Wisconsin Farmers Union and WFU Kamp Kenwood.



Congratulations, Cathy!

During Summer Conference on Aug. 17, Wisconsin Farmers Union took a few moments to thank a very special woman, Cathy Statz, for her 20 years of dedication to the organization and WFU Kamp Kenwood.

"Cathy has been a pillar of the Farmers Union Camp program," said WFU President Darin Von Ruden. "We value her love for Farmers Union, her vast institutional knowledge and her cooperative spirit."

Statz grew up on a dairy farm near Sauk Prairie, where she was active in the WFU youth and summer

camp program, including receiving the Farmers Union Torchbearer Award and serving on the NFU National Youth Advisory Council.

As a college student, she worked summers for the Farmers Union as a summer camp intern and camp director, teaching young people about cooperative business and philosophy.

Statz holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in English (with Secondary Level Education Certification) and a Bachelor of Music degree in Voice Performance from Lawrence University in Appleton. She and her husband Tom Pamperin live in Chippewa Falls.

Organization for Competitive Markets brings family farm supporters together in America's heartland



Nicholas Levendofsky
Government Relations Associate

Organization for Competitive Market members and friends gathered in Kansas City, MO August 11-12 for their 19th Annual Food and Agriculture Conference, focusing primarily on concerns of the recent mega mergers in the seed, chemical and livestock industries, which is having a negative effect on independent producers, as well as consumers.

Founded in 1998, OCM is a national, non-profit public policy research and advocacy organization headquartered in Lincoln, Nebraska. According to its website, www.competitivemarkets.com, OCM is the only national think tank focusing strictly on antitrust and trade policy in agriculture. "Competitive markets in agriculture is our goal, giving rise to our name. We represent America's family farmers fighting the takeover of the food system by large multinational and foreign corporations."

OCM was incredibly fortunate to have Dr. John Ikerd give the keynote address, which kicked off the conference in a very powerful way, earning a well-deserved standing ovation. Ikerd, Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Economics at the University of Missouri, Columbia, spends his retirement writing and speaking on issues related to sustainability, with an emphasis on economics and agriculture.

Ikerd's keynote address, entitled "Feeding the World Intelligently – Without Corporate Agriculture," set the tone for the entire conference, and got the crowd motivated for a battle they know won't be won quickly or easily. His speech is available on OCM's website, and a video has been posted to the OCM Facebook page, but this passage resonates with me more than any other:

"The corporate defenders of the status quo have far more economic and political power than the advocates of change. In fact, the only power great enough to bring about fundamental change in the food system is the collective 'power of people.' Ultimately, the power of the people must be organized and actualized to wrest political and economic power from the agri-food corporations. However, strategies to restore power to the people must be fundamentally different from the strategies of consolidation and hierarchical control that corporations have used to wrest power from the people. Human societies are living organizations — socioecological systems. Strategies

to politically empower people must be consistent with the diverse, dispersed, interdependent nature of healthy living systems. If we are to overcome corporate domination of the global food system, we must speak with voices sufficiently diverse to represent the diversity of the world's people and places. The movement must be led by diverse commitments to a common cause rather than uniform commitments to a common leader. To feed the world sustainably, we must speak with voices sufficiently compelling to marshal the power of the people in support of a common commitment to ensuring enough good food for everyone."

Ikerd mentioned natural allies to OCM that oppose the industrialization of agriculture, work to ensure domestic food security, and protect farm workers and the public from agricultural pollution and contamination of air, water, and food with agricultural chemicals and biological wastes. He also noted obvious allies

Concentration in Agriculture
Top 4 Companies' Share

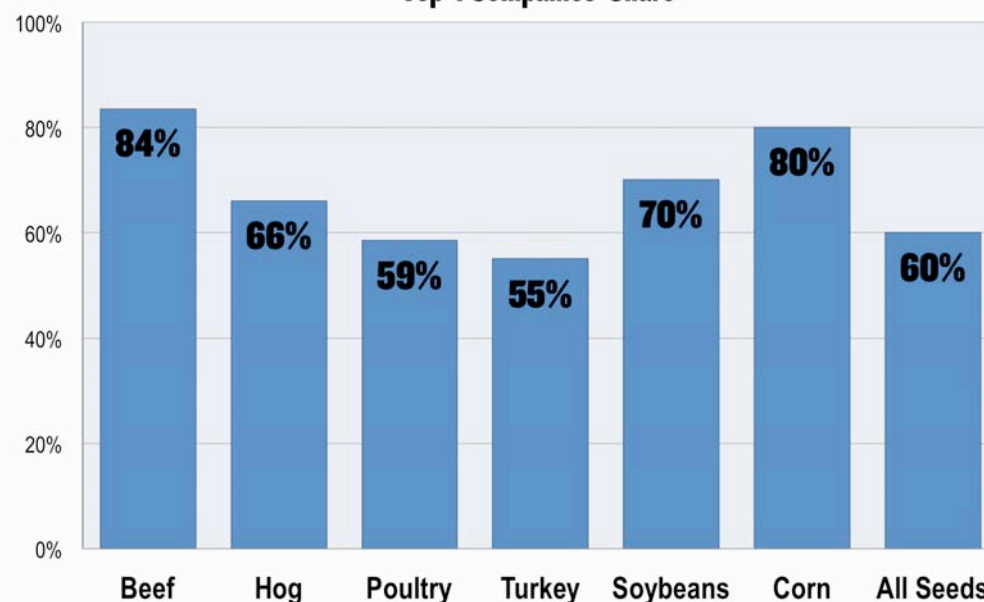


Chart source: FarmAid

The corporate defenders of the status quo have far more economic and political power than the advocates of change. In fact, the only power great enough to bring about fundamental change in the food system is the collective power of people.

— John Ikerd

working for domestic and global food sovereignty, others advocating an end of "corporate personhood," plus those confronting corporations on global climate change.

I am proud to say Farmers Union was among that list of allies, but Ikerd made it clear that none of these organizations can achieve ultimate success unless we "wrest political power from the large corporations, restore competitive markets,

and restore the economy to its rightful, subordinate role within society and nature." "The economy must again be seen as a means of ensuring liberty and justice for all, including those of future generations, rather than a means of creating wealth, which invariably transfers power from the people to the privileged few," he said.

Ikerd wrapped up his soul-stirring speech with this statement, "Together, we have the power to reclaim our collective power to govern **See p. 7 ► OCM**

— and then to proclaim ‘enough good food’ as a basic human right of all people of all times. Regardless of what collective strategies we might choose, it is simply not very intelligent to continue doing the same things we have been doing for the past 60 years and expecting that somehow this time the result will be different.” He went on to say, “‘Feeding the world intelligently’ means feeding the world without, and in spite of, corporate agriculture.”

Lillian Salerno, former USDA deputy under secretary for Rural Development in the Obama Administration and current chairman of Family Farm Action, a newly-formed political action committee, spoke during the Saturday luncheon about her own struggles with market concentration and how rural America can survive by busting monopolies.

“For decades, rural America has been punished by bad policy that places too much power in the hands of distant financiers and middlemen through the formation of monopolies, which undermines small, local businesses and drains communities of resources,” Salerno said.

In 1994, at the height of the AIDS crisis, Salerno started a manufacturing company to produce the first-ever automatically retracting syringe to eliminate the risk of nurses contracting HIV through accidental needle sticks. The syringe received rave reviews from nurses, hospital executives and public health officials, a major grant from the National Institutes of Health and robust private investment. But when Salerno and her partners tried to sell it to hospitals, they were told time and time again that even though it was a better product — a lifesaving product — they weren’t able to purchase it. The primary supplier of syringes, which controlled 80 percent of the market, structured an arrangement with a vast network of hospitals that essentially closed the industry to new firms for good.

Salerno’s is a common story. For years, rural and small-town America have fought an uphill battle for economic survival. Many in the halls of power viewed the shuttered storefronts and desolate downtowns as the inevitable consequence of globalization and technology, about which little can (or even should) be done. But one major force

behind the steep economic decline is something that, until very recently, has received virtually no attention: the unprecedented level of corporate monopoly power that has been concentrated throughout the American economy.

So, how did we get here? After the Great Depression, the government used anti-monopoly laws to keep markets open and fair for smaller, independent businesses — in other words, to keep “Mom-and-Pop Shops” open and Main Street buzzing. “These were businesses run by people who cared about and understood their communities, that kept wealth circulating locally, that created the vast majority of new jobs and that were often the source of game-changing innovation,” Salerno said.

“Corporate concentration has hit farmers, ranchers and agricultural workers especially hard,” Salerno said. “Many markets are entirely monopolized by a single company that dictates the terms of business to suppliers. Two decades ago, in the seed industry alone, 600 independent companies existed. Today there are six giants, several of which are pursuing high-profile mergers that will result in even more radical concentration. Similar levels of concentration exist for the beef, pork, chicken and dairy industries. The result is that the farmer’s share of each retail dollar of food has been collapsing, while consumers pay either the same or higher prices. Mega-corporations in the middle exploit their dominant market positions to reap all the profits.”

Salerno ended her speech by saying, “It is a myth that the economic challenges that rural and small-town America face are caused by forces largely outside our control, like globalization or improvements in technology. We have the ability to help restore competition and economic vibrancy in rural America and beyond. The government has the authority to ensure markets are once again open and competitive so that communities have a chance to shape their own economic destinies. The question is whether we will recognize the error of our ways and put taking on monopolies high on the economic agenda — for rural and small-town America, and for everyone who wants to ensure our country can once again be the land of opportunity.”

**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 ☐ Crops ☐ Organic

☐ Hogs ☐ Horses ☐ Other _____

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

☐ New Member ☐ Renewing Member

☐ 1 Year (\$30) ☐ 2 Years (\$55)

☐ 4 Years (\$100) ☐ Lifetime (\$2000)

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Why I love CSA



Above: Lauren shares her love for growing things with young visitors to her Evansville farm.

By Lauren Rudersdorf
South Central Chapter member

As a kid growing up on a farm in Southern Wisconsin, I always knew one thing for certain: I never wanted to be a farmer. Farmers worked too hard for too little, were never in control of their schedules or their markets, and lived a lonely life of solitude far from city excitement, friends and family. But sooner or later, we all come to learn that certainty is an illusion. Things are always evolving and what we think we know is never quite as it seems.

What I never understood as a child was that a major shift was taking place around me. The very foundation of conventional agriculture was beginning to fracture in the late '80s and early '90s. Pioneering farmers all over the nation were trying something new. Farmers markets were popping up everywhere. Organic farming methods were gaining widespread acceptance and standards for certification were being set into place. Marketing coop-

eratives that paid farmers fair wages were being formed. And a new style of agriculture that allowed farmers to market directly to their consumers in a way that insulated them from some of the risk of farming while also gaining financial support prior to the growing season was gaining ground. In fact, one of the Wisconsin forerunners in the community supported agriculture (CSA) movement was steadily growing their business not more than five miles from where I grew up. But I had no idea about any of this. When I was young, I had no idea what farming could be.

I don't remember when exactly I first really grasped the gravity of the CSA model and what it meant for farmers. It could have been when I decided to take a break from college to figure out what degree I wanted to pursue and checked out Elizabeth Henderson's book *Sharing the Harvest* from the Janesville Public Library. I remember diving into the pages and thinking that this idea of farmers and nearby consumers creating a partnership with one another

was a beautiful and idyllic model, but that it would never work in reality.

It could have been a year later when I first moved to Madison and the whole city was reading Michael Pollan's *In Defense of Food*, and I ripped through the pages with fervor. Or maybe it was a couple years later during my internship with FairShare CSA Coalition, when I met dozens of farmers from all over the state who didn't look burnt out, exhausted or lonely; who were instead tan and smiling, enthusiastically building something for themselves with the love and support of their community.

Or perhaps it was a different moment that same summer when my soon-to-be-husband got a job at Tipi Produce, the pioneering farm not more than five miles from my childhood home, and I got to visit their operation. All of a sudden, I saw a different way of life on the farm. All of a sudden, I realized farming could far exceed my naïve assumptions. All of a sudden, I saw myself wanting to head back to my family land and become a farmer myself.

CSA is the backbone of our farm and has been since the very beginning. I don't know if we would have ever been bold enough to start a business fresh out of college with only a couple thousand dollars in

See p.9 ▶ CSA

Midwest CSA Conference headed to Wisconsin Dells

Hundreds of farmers and Community Supported Agriculture advocates will converge on Wisconsin Dells Dec. 7-8 for the Midwest CSA Conference. This event, hosted by Wisconsin Farmers Union at Chula Vista Resort, will provide a forum for discussing the shared values, emerging opportunities and challenges of the growing CSA movement.

Community Supported Agriculture is a direct relationship between farmers and consumers that provides unique opportunities. Consumers commit to support a farm by buying a share or membership in the farm. In exchange the consumer receives regularly (usually weekly) a portion of the produce from the farm. This structure provides upfront money for the farmer and builds mutual support.

This year's event will highlight the issues impacting the CSA movement and work to build a shared vision for the region. Sessions will provide time for facilitated discussion and dialogue, led by panels of farmers. Member voices will also be part of the discussion.

The conference features four tracks focusing on Production; Logistics & Technology; Building Community; and Financial Management & Business Planning.

"The Midwest CSA Conference is planned to really focus on farmers and give them a space to reflect on their past season, come together with other farmers and advocates, and to inspire and build energy for the growing season ahead," said Sarah Lloyd, WFU special projects coordinator.

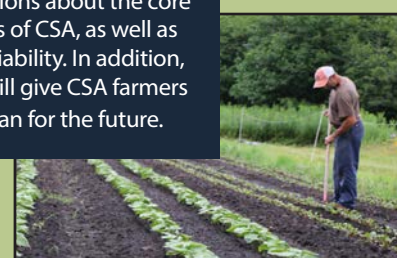
Learn more at www.MidwestCSA.com.

Midwest CSA Conference

December 7 & 8, 2017

Chula Vista Resort • Wisconsin Dells, WI

SAVE THE DATE



Join the Community Supported Agriculture movement in the Midwest for two days of shared learning, practical workshops and lively discussions. We invite farmers, members and advocates to come together for important conversations about the core concepts and practices of CSA, as well as farm and community viability. In addition, hands-on workshops will give CSA farmers time to reflect and plan for the future.

WFU hosts visitors from Montana and Texas to tour Food Hubs



Tommy Enright
Communications Associate

Wisconsin Farmers Union was excited to host out-of-state visitors last month to talk about starting food hubs and local food cooperatives. Jay Buckley and Mike Delton from Montana are in the beginning stages of a Montana Farmers Union food hub feasibility study with support from Farmers Union Enterprises. Michael Fortunado came to Wisconsin to bring back information to a group of local governments in northeast Texas who are looking at the opportunities of food hubs for local farmers there.

WFU Special Projects Coordinator Sarah Lloyd served as the guide to the visitors. She also serves as Director of Development for the Wisconsin Food Hub Cooperative (WFHC) — writing and administering the cooperative's USDA and DATCP grants, as well as serving as Secretary of the Board of Directors of the WFHC on behalf of Farmers Union.

"It was great to be able to host the folks working on food hubs in Montana and Texas and share what we have learned here in Wisconsin," Lloyd said. "For anyone working on getting more local food from field to fork, we know that it has its ups and downs. What seems like a simple concept has many intricacies and complex logistics and economies."

The visit consisted of tours of Fifth Season Cooperative and the Vernon Food Enterprise Center in Viroqua (also home to Kickapoo Coffee, Wisco Pop!, Upstream Cider and others), Central Rivers Farmshed in Stevens Point and the Wisconsin Food Hub Cooperative warehouse in Waupaca.

The Vernon Food Enterprise Center is a great example of a business incubator and accelerator. Sue Noble, who runs the Center and helps manage Fifth Season Cooperative, took the lead when a large manufacturer closed down its facility in Viroqua, leaving an empty 100,000 square foot building. The manufacturer employed 85 people and a main goal of the Enterprise Center is to rebuild that job base in diverse, food-based businesses. They've been at it for seven years now and are reaching their goals and creating vibrancy in the food economy.

At Central Rivers Farmshed, WFU member and NFU Beginning Farmer Institute alum Layne Cozzolino (who serves as Farmshed's director) led a tour of the facility's commercial kitchen and went into



Above: Central Rivers Farmshed and WFU member Layne Cozzolino, left, gives the out-of-state visitors a tour of the facility's commercial kitchen.

detail about the organization's Frozen Assets winter CSA, a frozen produce CSA sourced from local farmers and processed at Farmshed.

At the Waupaca warehouse, Wisconsin Food Hub Cooperative President Tara Turner sat down with the group to go over the nuts and bolts of the operation. WFHC is a farmer-led cooperative owned by the producers and the Wisconsin Farmers Union. The cooperative works to market and sell member produce and then works on the logistics and transport to get farmers' products to market. The WHFC is primarily selling into grocery stores in the region.

"My job is to make sure our farmers are successful," Turner says. "My dad and I run Turners Fresh Market, and we've been the farmers backing up to the loading dock, making our own deliveries to the grocery store. We realized that by cooperating with other farmers we could all benefit. The work that the co-op does allows farmers to do what they like best, grow food! Times have definitely changed."

Hopefully, the tour served as an eye-opening and practical learning experience for our visitors that will further develop the food systems and supply chains around the country.

From p.8 ► CSA

the bank if not for CSA. The shares purchased by those first eight members bought the seeds to grow our crops and the cooler to store our harvests in. We love this business model because it gives us all the things I thought farmers could never have: like predictability, a stable income, insulation from risk, money when we need it (without having to take out operating loans), and most important of all, a community to share our struggles and our successes.

It still isn't easy. There are forces of nature that we can't control, equipment

that breaks, employees that don't work out, poor organization and even poorer communication at times, an enormous workload, a society that continually seeks cheaper and more convenient ways of getting their food, and financial obstacles to acquiring land of our own. Farming is still a rough and tumble way of life that is not without challenges. But with CSA, we feel safe and supported through the highs and lows. We feel connected to people despite our rural existence. We feel like our life can have a semblance of balance.

I love CSA for so many reasons and not only because it makes the lives of farmers better, healthier and more

sustainable. I love CSA because it has taught me patience, fortitude and persistence. Year after year, we keep growing things that challenge us because we know our members want them. Year after year, we learn how to grow more and more crops because we want our CSA members to gain exposure to wider varieties of vegetables.

I love CSA because I love sharing stories from the field and helping people feel connected to their food. I love CSA because I adore being a part of people's routine. I love being a reason why people are spending more time in their kitchens. I love CSA because it helps people achieve a simpler,

healthier way of life. I love CSA because I get to be part of the reason a child grows up to love vegetables. I love CSA because I love food: pure, simple, healthy, delicious food. And I love CSA because it taught me to love being a farmer.

Lauren Rudersdorf, a South Central Farmers Union member, owns and operates Raleigh's Hillside Farm near Evansville, with her husband Kyle. Together, they manage four acres of leased family land, growing vegetables for a small CSA and restaurants. Lauren loves to share stories about farming, life and food on her blog, www.TheLeekAndTheCarrot.com.

Smooth transition

Graduating Dairy Grazing Apprentice prepares to take over Chippewa County farm

Editor's Note: The following article originally ran in The Country Today newspaper and is being reprinted with permission. Learn about the hosts of our upcoming Sept. 23 pasture walk and make plans to join us at one or more Graze River Country walks this fall!

By Nate Jackson
The Country Today

COLFAX — Charles Flodquist knew that, at some point, he would retire from dairying. But with all three of his children taking jobs off the farm, Flodquist's goal of turning his grazing operation over to the next generation would need to take a less-direct route than some farm transitions.

Not wanting to sell to the highest bidder only to see what he had turned into a successful dairy-grazing operation develop into something else, Flodquist turned to the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship program for help.

"He is trying to ensure that the business that he's developed continues," said Charles's wife, Karen. "He's developed raw land and made the paddocks and trails and improved the soils. He'd like to see that continue."

Flodquist attended a group session when the River Country Resource Conservation and Development Council was trying to decide whether the group wanted to coordinate the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship program in west-central Wisconsin. There he ran into Joe Tomanl, the executive director of the apprenticeship program, who mentioned a meeting he had at a UW-River Falls job fair where he came away impressed with a UW-River Falls student, John Richmond.

"Joe made some comment about having met some kid at River Falls he wished he could hire," Flodquist said. "I asked for John's number after the meeting."

"That's about as good a recommendation as you can get."

Flodquist gave Richmond a call, and soon the two were discussing their plans. Shortly thereafter, they agreed to the apprenticeship with an eye toward Flodquist selling the farm to Richmond if every-



Submitted photos

Above: John Richmond, right, graduated from the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program in June after three years of working with Charles Flodquist on his Chippewa County dairy farm. Flodquist will be gradually transitioning the farm to Richmond, starting by selling him the cows on Jan. 1.

thing went as planned.

"We talked through our goals and what we wanted to see happen," Richmond said. "I liked what I saw, and he must have liked what he saw."

Richmond graduated in the spring of 2015 with a degree in ag business with a dairy emphasis. Two days after graduation, he got his start on Flodquist's Chippewa County farm.

In June, after two years and 4,000 hours in the program, Richmond completed his apprenticeship.

"These are two people I am very, very proud of," said Mary C. Anderson, River Country RC&D president and DGA education coordinator for Richmond and Flodquist. "One has decided to take the time and the effort and the energy to educate the next generation on how to be profitable by really controlling input costs, costs of production, and one is a young man who dedicated himself to get a four-year college education and then jump into a program that set him up to move into a grass-based dairy."

"John recognizes farming is a lifelong learning opportunity, and Chuck's an excellent teacher."

Flodquist began grazing cattle on his previous farm in Minnesota in 1992. He and Karen moved their operation to the Colfax area 16 years ago after

running short of land in Minnesota. In Chippewa County, Flodquist took what was a dairy/cash-cropping operation and converted it into his dairy grazing farm.

"It's not all flat land, but it's mostly silt loam soils," Flodquist said. "I came from a mostly sand farm before. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven when I came here."

Flodquist's grazing plan was one of the first plans written in Chippewa County after the Natural Resources Conservation Service began funding grazing as a conservation practice, Anderson said.

Flodquist put in lanes between pastures and around hills to ease movement for cattle on the 400-acre farm.

"The buildings are basically in the center of the property," he said. "I can walk cows to every acre on the place, which is a big deal."

Flodquist rotates paddocks every 12 hours, putting cows on a pasture first, followed by dry cows and heifers for another 12 hours. He then allows the pastures to rest for about 30 days before being grazed again.

"We're mimicking what Mother Nature was doing with the buffalo, but instead of predators keeping everybody bunched up, we're using fence,"

Flodquist said. "It's a very efficient system."

While he had spent time on other types of dairies, this was Richmond's first experience with rotational grazing.

"I like this system," Richmond said. "There are things where I ask, 'Chuck, why don't we do this? Why don't we do that?' But I'm only trying to perfect a pretty darn good system."

Flodquist brought 50 cows with him from Minnesota and built his herd from there. He now milks between 155 and 180 cows twice a day in a swing-15 milking parlor. His herd is a mix of Holstein, Ayrshire, Montbéliarde, Fleckvieh and Normande.

Now that Richmond has graduated from the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship program, the plan is for Flodquist to begin transitioning the farm to Richmond, beginning with the cows, which Richmond will buy Jan. 1.

"We'll start with the most liquid thing first," Richmond said.

"I'm slowly backing away," Flodquist said. "I'll be called a consultant for a while."

After buying the cows on Jan. 1, Richmond will follow up by buying the machinery before turning to the buildings and the land after each previously purchased asset is paid off.

"The theory is that you get the cows paid for and the cows will pay for everything else," Flodquist said. "That's what generates the income."

Richmond already started making decisions on the farm, picking out a Guernsey bull in late June.

"I'm hoping to put him with some of the bigger cows and see what happens," Richmond said. "I want a beef cow that milks. I want an animal that, at the end of her useful life in the milking parlor, I want to make some money off her when she goes to market."

The Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship consists of 4,000 hours of training over the course of two years.

"The first year was showing John what needs to be done. The second year, I was kind of starting to back away and just watching John," Flodquist said. "It's a mindset. You have to step in and say, 'Oh, that's my responsibility. I have to figure out what's wrong.'"

Of the 4,000 hours, 3,712 hours are employment and mentoring under an approved master dairy grazier and 288 hours are instruction designed to enhance the on-farm training. The master and apprentice are required to complete the DGA training manual, which lays out the competencies that must be met in order to own and operate a managed-grazing dairy farm.

Anderson met with Richmond and Flodquist monthly to go through the training manual.

"We'd cover all the things they're supposed to learn and discuss," Anderson said. "We talked a lot about what's going on on the farm and make sure that every topic came back to a learning and a teach-

ing opportunity."

Having the support of the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship program is making the farm transition go more smoothly than it may have without, Karen said.

"(Anderson) supported communication by the routine visits," Karen said. "Having someone else involved makes that part of the program succeed. You can have all the really good elements of the program, but if you are not talking and working through stuff, you're not going to make it."

"They're trying to develop a healthy business relationship."

The DGA program was created in 2010 through a partnership between GrassWorks and the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development's Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards and was incorporated in 2013. The program has 125 master farm sites in nine states with more than 200 apprentice candidates.

The Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship starts with a six-month probationary period to make sure the mentor-apprentice relationship is working and the experience is what both had expected.

"At the end of the six-month probationary period, we sat down and said, 'Well, what do you guys think?' John's comment was, 'I'm living the dream,'" Anderson said. "That's a pretty good affirmation that he wants to continue here. Not all master-apprentice relationships end that way."

Had that not been the case, it would have been back to the drawing board for Flodquist. But Anderson wouldn't have considered the experiment a failure.

"If we can provide anyone who wants to get involved in dairy farming a snapshot of what the reality is, and if we can prevent them from taking out hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of loans only to find themselves down the road facing a bankruptcy, facing a crisis because of unrealistic on-farm expectations, that's a success for the program," Anderson said.

"You really do have to like this job to be successful at it," Flodquist said. "Not everyone wants to do this."

As it was, the pair was happy with the relationship and where the opportunity was heading, and they decided to move forward with transition plans.

"This is a unique relationship with a lot at stake," Anderson said. "Big mistakes can have long-reaching ramifications on the livestock, on the landscape. In an environment where the margins are so incredibly tight, expensive mistakes can't be afforded."

"They've spent a lot of time trying to come up with a plan that works for both parties. We started talking about a transition action plan last October. They've been very cautious, which is critical to the overall success of what they're trying to do."

Learn more about the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship program, visit <http://www.dga-national.org>.



GRAZE RIVER COUNTRY

PASTURE WALKS

Please RSVP to Mary C. Anderson at 715-579-2206.

<p style="text-align: center;">Tues., August 29, 6:30pm Steinkes' Sedge Wood Farms - CORNELL 30101 190th Ave. The beginning stages of starting a beef farm and conversion from row crops to pasture</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Sat., September 23, 11am-3pm Charles Flodquist/John Richmond - COLFAX 12454 20th St. Transitioning the farm & the River Country RC&D Annual Picnic</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Fri., September 8, 12-3pm Joe and Kristy Lulich - MASON 63375 U.S. Hwy. 63 Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program & improving pasture layout</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Sat., October 28, 10am-12pm Brad & Melissa Larson - COLFAX N10688 Cty. Rd. M Fall cover crops & how they fit in with a grazing operation</p>



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Jurcek to represent Wisconsin on National Youth Advisory Council

Jessica Jurcek of Jefferson has been elected to National Farmers Union's National Youth Advisory Council. Jurcek is one of six council members elected by campers during the 81st annual NFU All-States Leadership Camp in Bailey, Colo. in June.

Farmers Union youth members from across the country gathered at the NFU Education Center for the All-States Camp, which encourages youth to explore their leadership potential, discuss issues important to their generation and identify ways to effect positive change in their communities.

Throughout the week, campers ages 17 to 20-years old participated in programs emphasizing leadership, teamwork and cooperation. They also gained hands-on experience in Denver while volunteering at Re:Vision, a food and farming cooperative co-founded by NFU Beginning Farmer Institute alum Eric Kornacki.

"For 81 years, All-States Camp has been the place where our young members from across the country can come to learn more about the organization, the cooperative model, and leadership," said NFU President Roger Johnson.

This year's camp, themed "Stewardship: Care for the Land, Care for the People," featured a number of notable

speakers and presenters. Olympic Gold Medalist Rulon Gardner, a camp regular, spoke about overcoming the odds to become an unlikely wrestling hero, and retired CHS, Inc. Vice President William Nelson explained the value of cooperatives in agriculture.

Other youth elected to NYAC include: Hunter Cardinal, Minnesota; Marissa Holinka, South Dakota; Ben Lehman, Iowa; Shaun Heier, North Dakota; and Kirsten VanDerPol, Minnesota.

"For the next year, these six youths will serve as representatives of their peers, learn about the legislative process and lobbying, and present in front of hundreds of NFU members and press at the NFU convention," Johnson said. "I'm confident they will be strong advocates for both the organization and young people in agriculture."

"WFU would like to thank outgoing council members Killian Harnish and Miriam Valley for their year of service to Farmers Union youth across the country," said WFU Education Director Cathy Statz. "They have been thoughtful and energetic ambassadors for Farmers Union, and I look forward to seeing how they put to work the leadership training they've had in their years within the Farmers Union Youth Program."



Above: Representing Wisconsin Farmers Union at All-States Camp in Bailey in June were, from left to right, Madi Miller, Jefferson; Miriam Valley, Madison; Killian Harnish, La Crosse; Jessica Jurcek, Jefferson; Trevor Joachim, Lodi; and WFU Education Director Cathy Statz, Chippewa Falls.

Women Caring for the Land events build up regional networks



Wisconsin Farmers Union hosted four Women Caring for the Land events this summer, aimed at connecting women farmers and landowners with conservation resource professionals. A bonus of the events is the building up of regional women farmer networks. Thanks to all who attended and to the host farmers: Zoey Brooks, Brooks Farms, Waupaca; Becky Olsen, Autumn Moon Farm, Belleville; Mary Brazeau, Glacial Lake Cranberries, Wisconsin Rapids; and Lauren Langworthy, Blue Ox Farm, Wheeler. Women Caring for the Land was created by the Women, Food & Agriculture Network.



From p.1 ► FARM BILL

Agency. “And if you look at projected budgets and crop prices for this year, many farmers will be in the negative, aside from soybeans.”

Changes needed

Johnson forecasted two major changes to the 2018 Farm Bill: cotton and dairy.

“You may not think that cotton and dairy are linked, but they are politically linked,” he said. “Everyone recognizes the dairy program is not working and the cotton program is not working. Both of those are going to get some significant new money put into them, in my opinion.”

Despite known problems with the Margin Protection Program (MPP), the next farm bill will likely include some variation of the program.

“I know that’s something many farmers don’t want to hear, but until Republican party sentiments on supply management change, it’s what we have to work with,” Johnson said.

Though it has been rumored, Johnson said he doesn’t anticipate a cut in funding to crop insurance, due to its

popularity.

As Washington, D.C. turns its eyes toward farm country and the 2018 Farm Bill, National Farmers Union is pushing several priorities:

- Adequate funding
- Dairy
- Renewables
- Conservation
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- ARC/PLC
- Expanding rural broadband

On Sept. 10-13, hundreds of Farmers Union members will be in Washington, D.C., for the National Farmers Union Fall Fly-In. The Farm Bill is one of several topics members will address with members of Congress.

Meanwhile, Johnson said NFU is also hard at work on the issues of concentration in agriculture, health care, trade, renewable energy and climate change.

On the issue of health care, Johnson explained that “just because it was dead when Congress went into recess, that doesn’t mean it’ll be dead when they come back from recess.” NFU does recognize there are some issues with Obamacare that need to be fixed,

but the organization does not support a total repeal.

He called for creative thinking on how to advance biofuels and renewable energy, noting “Climate change is an issue that has been around for decades. This is an issue that isn’t going to go away.”

NFU is keeping a close eye on North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) deliberations. “From a policy standpoint, Farmers Union agrees on trade more with this administration than we have with any other administration in years,” Johnson said. NFU believes in balancing trade, addressing currency manipulation and sovereignty issues, and eliminating the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS).

“We have a trade deficit with both Canada and Mexico, and we need to fix that,” Johnson said. “Agricultural exports have been going up, but imports sharply increased around 2008 and have ballooned.”

NFU is also speaking up against consolidation in agricultural markets, particularly the seed, chemical and plant trait sectors, where mergers among “The Big Six” input suppliers are

cropping up at a record pace. “Those Big Six are becoming The Big Three and probably The Big Two,” Johnson said. “When there’s no competition left in the marketplace, farmers will be paying more with fewer choices.”

Johnson stressed that the role of farmers back at home is equally important as that of the lobbyists in D.C. “If politicians don’t hear from the farmers back in their districts, they won’t move on these issues,” he said. “It is important to have people in Washington lobbying these issues, just like it’s important to have people in the state capitols lobbying, but that doesn’t mean anything without people back at home calling and writing letters. That makes these folks sit up and pay attention.”

Interested in reaching out to your representatives, but not sure where to start? For help, contact WFU Government Relations Director Kara O’Connor at 608-514-4541 or koconnor@wisconsinfarmersunion.com or WFU Government Relations Association Nick Levendofsky at 608-234-3741 or nickl@wisconsinfarmersunion.com.



WASHINGTON

from National Farmers Union

Corner

SEPTEMBER 2017

During the August congressional recess, elected officials returned to their home districts and states and meet with constituents. To help Farmers Union members advocate on issues important to family farmers, NFU released its 2017 District Work Packet, a helpful resource on legislative issues that Congress may take up this year, including the farm bill, the farm economy, expansion of ethanol use, and health care. Those issues will also be addressed during our Fall Fly-In in September, during which hundreds of members will come to Washington, D.C., to speak with members of Congress. Read more in this month's Washington Corner for a preview of some of the topics our members will be taking up with their representatives and for the latest news from Washington.

2017 FALL FLY-IN

NFU will host between 250-300 members in Washington, D.C., from September 10-13 for the 2017 Fall Legislative Fly-In.

During their time in Washington, attendees will have the opportunity to hear from U.S. Department of Agriculture officials about current events, new opportunities, and work the department is doing on behalf of farmers. The most important agenda items of the fly-in, however, are the meetings on Capitol Hill. Teams of Farmers Union members will stop by the office of every member of Congress

to highlight the key priorities for the organization, struggles they are facing, and goals for future legislation and the 2018 Farm Bill.



Keep up with all things Fly-In on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram with the hashtag #NFUFlyIn17. For more information about future fly-in activities, please contact your state/regional Farmers Union office.

MONSANTO-BAYER MERGER THREATENS COMPETITION, FARMERS, CONSUMERS

In late July, NFU, the American Antitrust Institute (AAI), and Food & Water Watch (FWW) urged the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to reject the impending merger between agricultural input giants Bayer AG and Monsanto Co. In a joint letter, the three groups outlined their concerns with the proposed merger.

For one, the merger would eliminate competition across a number of important markets. A combined

Monsanto-Bayer would hold between 58 percent to 97 percent of the U.S. markets in cotton, soybeans, and canola. This level of market power squeezes out smaller rivals, eliminating competition and respectively the incentive to create innovative products that family farmers and ranchers need. This in turn raises prices and decreases choices for producers and consumers alike.



NFU also joined a coalition of 24 farming organizations to further emphasize the issues inherent in the Bayer-Monsanto merger. In another letter to the DOJ, the group focused on the anticompetitive impact of the merger on vegetable seed markets. Monsanto and Bayer are the first and fourth largest vegetable seed producers in the world, respectively. Furthermore, as Bayer and Monsanto were the second and fifth largest agrichemical suppliers in 2015, the merger joins companies that dominate not only vegetable seeds but also the pesticides that

vegetable farmers use.

NFU will continue to use all avenues possible to stem the tide of consolidation in agribusiness.

NAFTA RENEGOTIATION BEGINS

On August 16, trade representatives from the United States, Canada, and Mexico began the official renegotiation of the North American Trade Agreement (NAFTA).



In late July, the Trump Administration released its set of objectives for the renegotiation process. They outlined plans to modernize and strengthen the 23-year-old trade pact by decreasing the U.S. trade deficit, preventing currency manipulation, eliminating non-tariff barriers to U.S. agricultural exports, and strengthening enforcement.

For the past 40 years, American trade negotiators have prioritized a "free trade" agenda over fair and balanced trade, leading to a massive trade deficit, corporate consolidation, lost jobs and lowered wages in rural communities across America. NFU is encouraged by the administration's intent to address the fundamental flaws of free trade agreements, particularly the trade deficit and currency manipulation. However, in many ways the

objectives are a missed opportunity for family farmers and ranchers. The omission of both Country-of-Origin-Labeling (COOL) and controls on corporate consolidation are disappointing. NFU will continue to advocate for these important measures to be included in the renegotiated deal.

USDA MUST CONTINUE TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

The effects of climate change are already being felt by family farmers and ranchers. Warming temperatures, erratic precipitation, and extreme weather events interfere with every aspect of growing food, fuel, feed, and fiber, consequently undermining the livelihoods of American family farmers and threatening global food security.

Although agriculture is particularly vulnerable to a changing climate, the industry is also in a unique position to effect change. It has the potential to reduce ongoing emissions and reduce the amount of greenhouse gasses already present in the atmosphere. However, to effectively adapt to and mitigate the adverse impacts of climate volatility, as NFU President Roger Johnson noted in a letter to Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue, producers need the ongoing support and assistance of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).



The USDA already sponsors a number of climate-related programs, including the Natural Resource Conservation Service, regional Climate Hubs, the Climate Change Program Office, the Office of Environmental Markets, and many research endeavors. In his letter, Johnson applauded these initiatives and urged Secretary Perdue to amplify current efforts and to "think creatively about more opportunities to connect with family farmers and ranchers on climate change."

NFU ADVOCATES FOR RURAL HEALTH CARE

While Congress spent the past several months deliberating the future of American health care, NFU was on the front lines, advocating for the right to accessible, affordable, and quality health care for all Americans.

Throughout the process, NFU ensured rural voices were heard. NFU President Roger Johnson testified at a Senate health care hearing, reiterating his concern with the proposed legislation and underscoring the importance of health care to family farmers and ranchers and the communities in which they live. And as the Senate prepared to vote, NFU launched an action alert to encourage individuals to contact their Senators to tell them to vote against the flawed legislation.

NFU will continue to promote a bipartisan solution that improves access to affordable, high quality care for family farmers, ranchers, and rural Americans.

The Washington Corner can also be found at www.nfu.org/corner.

We need to talk



Alan Guebert

It's August and that means much of Congress is, literally, either out of session, out of the country or out to lunch. That doesn't mean, however, some of its more diligent members aren't somehow serving the public.

Take the House Ag Committee. (Please.) A handful of its 46 members will attend three Farm Bill "Conversations in the Field" this month to hear yet-again that U.S. farmers and ranchers feed the world, Americans pay less for their food than any other nation's citizens, and free trade will lead to more farm profit.

They will also hear, as they have for decades, that Congress needs to do something about today's cheap commodity prices, stumbling exports, and all-but-dead rural communities.

Few people attending these "conversations," however, will pick up on the contradictions contained in their earnest remarks. Contradictions like how we both brag and complain about our nation's "cheap food" policies yet rarely acknowledge that you can't have "cheap" food without having "cheap" farm prices.

Or how we continue to view U.S. ag export markets as the yellow brick road to farm riches that it once was but will never again be due to today's cutthroat, corporately integrated competition. (A White House that puts its tweeting thumb in the eye of our best customers doesn't help either but few policymakers in farm country dare to publicly contradict this president.)

And, finally, how we institutionalize ag policies that underwrite farm and ranch consolidation and undermine rural communities only to later complain that "no one's out here to take over" when today's farmers and ranchers either retire or expire.

We on the farming side of food aren't the only ones who are angry when we eventually get what we ask for. The food side of farming, writes Andrea Reusing, a successful North Carolina farm-to-table chef, has its own Jekyll-and-Hyde relationship with food.

"Farm-to table's sincere glow distracts from how... the most pristine ingredients... nearly always... rely on cheap labor," explains the award-winning Reusing in an essay for NPR's food blog, The Salt. "Work

(is) very often performed by people who are themselves poor and hungry."

And her restaurant guests "are sometimes surprised to learn that... our relatively expensive menu yields only slim profits or that we can't afford a group health plan."

So today's lopsided farm policy isn't working very well for either producers or their customers, yet it's the system nearly everyone on either end of the American fork defends and promotes in every farm and food "conversation."

That's a close-minded echo chamber, not an honest, public conversation.

Moreover, the echoes are calling new players to new policy fights.

For example, legislators in many ag-centric states are now debating badly needed clean water policies after decades of turning a blind eye to increasing farm chemical, fertilizer, and livestock waste run-off. The public, rightfully so, wants solutions to this now-public problem.

They aren't alone. Mother Nature wants solutions, too. Recently, the front page of my local farm newspaper featured five stories, three whose headlines read: "Fighting fungicide resistance," "New approach needed to fight herbicide resistance," and "Farm storm damage."

The headlines, as well as the stories, shared how once-miracle, now-failing technologies must be replaced by newer, even more miraculous technologies that, sooner or later, will also fail.

And so it goes on the American farm and ranch.

We believe we can solve today's biggest agricultural problems—new disease resistance; weather extremes triggered by climate change; killer competitive global markets; low-and-going-lower farm income; dying rural communities—with bigger chemistry, bigger ignorance, bigger bullying, and bigger government spending all directed to "help" ever fewer farmers and ranchers and increasingly skeptical eaters.

The driving idea behind this bigger hammer approach seems to be, "Well, it hasn't worked in the past, so let's do more of it and see what happens."

Instead, we should be talking about how to fix what's broken, not how to patch it.

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