



# WISCONSIN FARMERS UNION NEWS

UNITED TO GROW FAMILY AGRICULTURE

May/June 2019

## IN THIS ISSUE

Pull Together: Dairy farmers, ag groups call for fair prices

Heartland Forum takes on consolidation in agriculture

Farmers Union announces summer event line-up



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## FROM THE EDITOR

# Farmers Union members get busy livin'

**G**et busy livin' or get busy dyin'.

The famous line is powerfully delivered in the 1994 film *The Shawshank Redemption*. They're also words of encouragement recently sent to me by newly minted Farmers Union member Nik Novak of Eau Claire.

As evidenced within the pages of this newsletter, Farmers Union members have been getting busy livin'.

In late March, a group of 30 WFU members – Nik among them – shook things up on a national scale when we hopped a bus to Storm Lake, Iowa to raise attention to consolidation in agriculture at the Heartland Forum. The event drew a half dozen presidential hopefuls and shined a light on some of the tough topics impacting our family farms and rural communities.

Many in the group caught just a few hours of sleep before waking in the wee hours of the morning catch the bus, but throughout the whirlwind trip, their energy and drive to speak up for family farms didn't wane. That energy WFU brought to Iowa was captured in a number of national media platforms, including *The Huffington Post*, *Civil Eats* and the *Food and Environmental Reporting Network*. Check out the full story on page 6.

Meanwhile, dairy farmers have been turning out by the hundreds for Dairy Together Road Show events across the country. I'm encouraged by the level of collaboration I'm seeing, with members



**Danielle Endvick**  
*Communications Director*

of Farmers Union, Farm Bureau, National Farmers Organization and other groups gathering to ponder the path forward. Those events are showing some promising potential for long-term solutions while also generating some solid energy behind the ur-

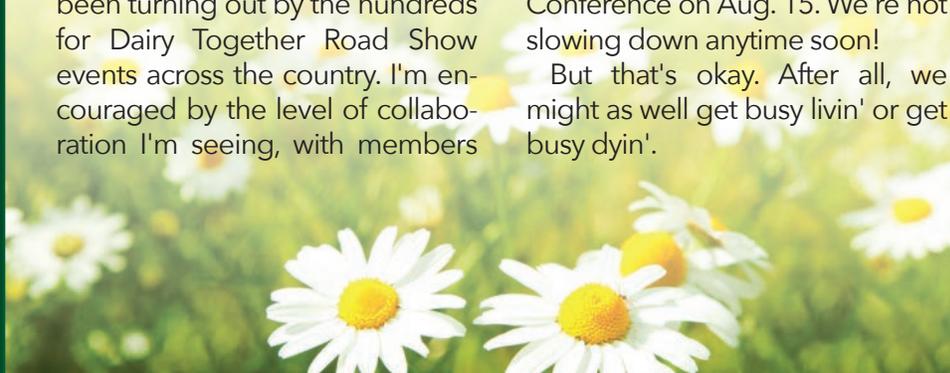
gent need for short-term action on relief for dairy farmers.

WFU recognizes that value-added opportunities are more important now than ever, which is why we've partnered on a handful of events around the state to connect farmers with the resources they need to consider this avenue. Learn more about the upcoming field day at Cosmic Wheel Creamery on page 10.

Even my Uncle Bob, during a quick visit to his Chippewa County farm, noted the whirlwind of Farmers Union activities this spring. "You're not letting any grass grow under your feet," he chuckled. Meaningful words, coming from a man known for his token phrase of "I'll sleep when I'm pushing daisies!"

Looking for ways you can engage with Farmers Union? We've got pasture walks, Women Caring for the Land events, summer youth camps and a number of policy issues looming. Planning is also underway for WFU's Summer Conference on Aug. 15. We're not slowing down anytime soon!

But that's okay. After all, we might as well get busy livin' or get busy dyin'.



# FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Darin Von Ruden

**W**e are deluding ourselves if we think exports alone will forge a viable future for America's dairy farm families. We've had 25 years of steadily increasing trade, and look where it's gotten us: 352 Wisconsin dairy farms lost in 2016, 465 Wisconsin dairy farms lost in 2017, and 691 Wisconsin dairy farms lost in 2018. The 'more exports' mantra is not getting the job done for America's Dairyland. The sooner we start exploring some other options, the sooner we'll start to turn the tide of devastating farm losses in Wisconsin and all across the country.

In addition to being insufficient to help family farmers, the current 'produce all you want, and we'll export the surplus' strategy articulated by USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue and others is phenomenally costly to taxpayers. Government spending on our current dairy insurance programs is expected to balloon to billions of dollars in the coming years.

In contrast, dairy economists Dr. Charles Nicholson from Cornell University and Dr. Mark Stephenson from the University of Wisconsin found in a recent study that if Congress had adopted policies in the 2014 Farm Bill designed to give dairy farmers an incentive to balance production with market demand, it would have significantly decreased government spending on taxpayer-subsidized dairy insurance programs, while doubling farmers' Net Farm Operating Incomes and saving hundreds of dairy farms each year over the past four years. Impact to consumers would have been negligible - less than 12 cents more for a gallon of milk.

The evidence is clear: In addition to increasing demand through exports and dairy consumption, we also need to be looking at the supply side of the equation. Anyone who claims to be helping dairy farmers but is not willing to look at proven supply management



strategies is asking farmers to build a viable future for themselves with one hand tied behind their backs. Given the depth and urgency of the dairy crisis, we should be using every single tool at our disposal to help farmers be profitable - increasing demand, yes, but also getting a handle on supply.

This is basic economics - it takes both supply and demand to set a reasonable price for dairy farmers. We are looking for a serious commitment from Congress to help farmers manage the over-supply of milk that is driving prices down. Farm organizations and elected and appointed officials who are focusing only on increasing exports are missing half of the equation.

## Produce Safety Podcast serves as free resource for growers

**G**rowers seeking to comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule have a new educational resource in the form of the Farmers Union Produce Safety Podcast, an educational series for fruit and vegetable farmers that takes the Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) classroom learning into the field.

Hosted by the late Chris Blanchard of Purple Pitchfork, this podcast shares produce safety requirements and best practices - from harvesting to record-keeping - so that you can take this knowledge and easily apply it your operation. Each episode covers different topics and ranges from 5-20 minutes in length.



"Starting a food safety journey can be intimidating at first, but we hope that this podcast series will make the process easier and let everyone realize that they can implement steps on their farm to

make their food safer for consumers," said Wisconsin Farmers Union Membership & Education Organizer Kirsten Slaughter. "The topics are great for farmers just starting to look at produce safety and for those who want a review before the start of the season."

The Farmers Union Produce Safety Podcast is free and available for download on iTunes. Or listen at [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/podcast](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/podcast).

The podcast was produced by Wisconsin Farmers Union, with support and funding from the National Farmers Union, Local Food Safety Collaborative, and the Food and Drug Administration.



SIGN UP FOR SUMMER FUN!

## Farmers Union Camps focus on cooperatives, leadership



**CHIPPEWA FALLS** – Each summer, youth from across the Midwest attend camps at Wisconsin Farmers Union Kamp Kenwood on scenic Lake Wissota near Chippewa Falls.

According to WFU Education Director Cathy Statz, Farmers Union Camps develop awareness of cooperation, leadership, and sustainability. This year a special focus of the camp programming will be on water quality and conservation of our water resources. Campers will learn more about the impact of human activities on Lake Wissota and local watersheds.

"We are thrilled to be adding to our water stewardship education efforts this year by working through local public and community partnerships," said Statz. A strong focus of the camps will remain on the value of cooperatives.

"For over 80 years Farmers Union Camps have featured leadership development with a cooperative approach," Statz said. Youth learn about the benefits of cooperatives to Wisconsin's family farmers and communities. Campers create their own Camp Co-op

Store, elect a board of directors, buy shares and receive patronage dividends. They also enjoy traditional summer camp activities like swimming, sports, arts and crafts, hiking and campfires.

Second-generation camper Ali Slaughter noted "Through Farmers Union Camp you gain a sense of community and family, knowledge on a wide range of important issues, leadership skills, and countless memories."

Camp sessions are open to ages 8-18 June through August. Acorn Day Camp, for ages 7 and up, is from 9am to 2pm on Aug. 15, coinciding with WFU's Summer Conference. Family camps, open for families with children of all ages, will be July 26-27 or Aug 2-3.

Co-sponsored by a grant from the CHS Foundation, the four- to five-day camps are affordably priced at \$95 to \$105 per camper for WFU members. (Non-members add \$30 for a one-year WFU family membership.)

To register or view dates, visit [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com). Questions? Contact Cathy at 715-214-7887 or at [cstatz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:cstatz@wisconsinfarmersunion.com).

## Day Camps set around state

**W**FU is taking all the fun of Farmers Union Camps on the road this summer with a series of day camps around the state. Youth enrolled in the Farmers Union Youth Program can fulfill one of their program requirements by attending an organized day camp in their area.

Day camps bring the fun and learning of the WFU camp program to your local community. Supported by your county/local Farmers Union organization, day camps are a great way to meet new friends, have fun while working together, and learn more about the importance of family farmers and strong communities.

Are you interested in learning about how your Farmers Union chapter can hold a Day Camp in your area? Contact Kirsten Slaughter at 608-514-2031 or [kslaughter@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:kslaughter@wisconsinfarmersunion.com).

**AUBURNDALE** – Monday, July 8, Noon-3pm, Auburndale Park

**MONDOVI** – Monday, July 8, 1-3pm, Tourist Park

**STEVENS POINT** – Tuesday, July 9, 9:30am-Noon, Iverson Park

**BARRON** – Tuesday, July 9, 9:30am-Noon, Anderson Park

**AMHERST** – Wednesday, July 10, 9:30am-Noon, Nelson Park

**MEDFORD** – Wednesday, July 10, 10am-2pm, Pam Gebert Home

**CATAWBA** – Thursday, July 11, 10am-Noon, Catawba Park

**HAWKINS** – Thursday, July 11, 1-2:30pm, Hawkins Library

**WASHBURN** – Friday, July 12, 9:30am-Noon, Memorial Campground

**JACKSON/TREMPEALEAU CO.** – Monday, July 15

**AMERY** – Monday, July 15

**EAU CLAIRE** – Tuesday, July 16

**WAUSAU** – Wednesday, July 17, 1-3:30pm, Marathon Park

**LINCOLN CO.** – Wednesday, July 17

**ALBANY** – Monday, July 22, 9am-Noon, Erica Roth Farm

**FORT ATKINSON** – Tuesday, July 23

**DANE COUNTY** – Wednesday, July 24

# WOMEN CARING FOR THE LAND



**JULY 8**  
4-8PM

## PAPE FAMILY PASTURES W5420 LESLIE RD., PESHTIGO

Husband and wife team Aaron and Erin began Pape Family Pastures in 2016. With no farming experience, they were guided by the principles of soil health and Aldo Leopold's essay, The Good Oak. They raise pasture beef, pigs, and chickens.



**JULY 10**  
4-8PM

## PERENNIAL FARMS LLC N3804 COUNTY RD. E, WALDO

Laura Grunwald and her family believe that the distance from the field to your fork should be a short one. The Grunwalds work with Mother Nature to raise organically grown and nutritious produce, free range/orchard grazed eggs, and cider.



**JULY 15**  
9AM-3PM

## EB RANCH N13346 490TH ST., RIDGELAND

Erin Link is both a steward of the land and of a herd of critically endangered and rare San Clemente Island Goats. She rotationally grazes the goats as well as geese, ducks, chickens, and turkeys. Erin also markets goat milk soap and goat meat.



**JULY 16**  
9AM-2PM

## NORTH WIND ORGANIC FARM 86760 VALLEY ROAD, BAYFIELD

North Wind Organic emphasizes solar and wind energy, ecological decision making, self-reliance and organic production of fruits and veggies. Crops are marketed through co-ops, farmers markets, CSA, restaurants, and farm visitors. Child care available.



**AUG 8**  
9AM-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 is her 3rd year of grazing, fencing and building an off-grid home.



**SEPT 19**  
9AM-3PM

## GREEN LEAF FIREMAN'S PARK 1588 FAIR RD., GREEN LEAF

Mary Ann, Kurt Kohlmann and daughter Susan Wilson started grazing 3 years ago. They raise steers and chickens and have converted cropland to pasture land, improving water quality on the land. For this event, meet at Green Leaf Fireman's Park to start our day and have lunch before a tour of local farms' cover crop and no-till practices.

*Women Caring for the Land was created by the Women Food & Agriculture Network to serve women farmland landowners interested in learning more about conservation. The events provide women landowners an opportunity to network with peers and learn from resource professionals. Men are welcome to join for the farm tour portion, however we do request that the learning circle space is for women only.*



**Potluck - please bring a dish to pass! RSVP**  
[wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events](http://wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events) or 715-723-5561





# The Road to Change



**Top:** Farmers Union members at the Farmer Bill of Rights Rally in Storm Lake, IA. **Middle:** Farmers and media from across the nation attended the Heartland Forum. Ashland-Bayfield Farmers Union John Adams of Washburn speaks with Christopher Walljasper of the Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting. (Photos by Danielle Endvick) **Below:** WFU members applaud a call for stronger enforcement of antitrust enforcement. (Photo by Des Moines Register)



## Farmers rally for Farmers Bill of Rights

By Danielle Endvick  
WFU Communications Director

**S**TORM LAKE, Iowa – “When family farms prosper, everyone prospers.” Scribed on the back of their shirts, that was the message that Wisconsin Farmers Union (WFU) members carried to the inaugural Heartland Forum in Iowa on March 30.

The event drew hundreds of rural advocates and a slate of presidential hopefuls to the Midwest, where candidates painted a picture of the potential for vibrant rural communities and viable family farms. Thirty WFU members made the trek, boarding a bus in the early hours of the morning to make the six-hour journey to Storm Lake and add their voices to the chorus of farmers calling for antitrust enforcement and rights for family farms.

Sarah Lloyd, Wisconsin Dells dairy farmer and WFU director of special projects, was among the line-up of speakers who gave a round of inspiring speeches at a Farmer Bill of Rights Rally preceding the forum. Lloyd’s

family milks 350 cows on the farm, which has been in her husband’s family, the Nelsons, for more than a century. She worries it will not endure another year of depressed dairy prices.

“I’m tired of being told as a farmer that I need to tighten my belt a little more and be a better businessperson, when the consolidated market is the problem,” Lloyd said, followed by thunderous applause. “It’s so important that we are here in Iowa talking about antitrust.”

The rally celebrated the Farmers Bill of Rights, recently put forward by Family Farm Action, which calls for the rights to fair and open markets, to feed our community, to fair capital, to protect our natural resources, to local control of our land, to food security, to repair equipment, to transparent labeling, and to rural opportunity.

“We’re fed up with corporations extracting wealth from rural America,” said Family Farm Action board member Wes Shoemaker. “We need action, and we need it now - actually we needed it 15 years ago.” The Missouri farmer has sold hogs at

poorer prices than his grandfather did back in the Great Depression.

"Farmers are being squeezed from both ends," echoed National Farmers Union Vice President Patty Edelburg, a dairy farmer from Scandinavia, Wis. "We need our leaders to stand up and stand strong in the face of corporate interests."

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who attended the pre-event rally, endorsed the Farmers Bill of Rights and vowed that she would enforce antitrust laws. "We need to block foreign ownership of our farmland," Sen. Warren said. "Foreign governments control an area that is the size of, if all put together, the state of Virginia. That is a threat not only to our farmers, but also to our national security." The rally also included recorded video statements from candidates Beto O'Rourke and Cory Booker.

#### Candidates weigh in

Iowa Farmers Union President Aaron Lehman welcomed folks to the Heartland Forum and introduced some of the topics of the day - among them consolidation, conservation, and rural vitality. He noted that "Farmers

aren't just dealing with these problems; farmers are the solution to these problems."

Candidates in attendance were former Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julián Castro, former Rep. John Delaney (Md.), Sen. Amy Klobuchar (Minn.), Sen. Elizabeth Warren (Mass.) and Rep. Tim Ryan (Ohio). The event was moderated by Pulitzer-prize winning reporter Art Cullen of the Storm Lake Times and was co-organized by HuffPost and the Open Markets Institute, with support from Iowa Farmers Union and the Storm Lake Times.

"A generation ago, 37 cents out of every food dollar went into the farmers' pockets; now it's 15 cents," Sen. Warren said, noting that farm income has also been slashed in half in recent years and farmer suicides are on the rise. "We have to treat this crisis seriously. We've got to start fighting against corporations."

Castro highlighted the need for the U.S. to make investments in its people, public schools, community hospitals and com- **See p.8 ▶ Heartland**



Wisconsin Farmers Union members filled the bus to the Heartland Forum in Iowa.

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**“ We're fed up with corporations extracting wealth from rural America. We need action, and we need it now – actually we needed it 15 years ago. ”**

- Wes Shoemyer  
Family Farm Action

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Photo by Leah Douglas | Food & Environment Reporting Network

Thirty Wisconsin Farmers Union members attended the Heartland Forum, including, left to right, (front row) Danielle Endvick, Holcombe; Faye Jones, Spring Valley; Nik Novak, Eau Claire; Rachel Hamele, Fort Atkinson; Justin Briggs, Stratford; Rebecca Druzik, Bruce; (middle row) Tommy Enright, Amherst; Patty Edelburg, Scandinavia; Kriss Marion, Blanchardville; Hayley Burns, Wisconsin Dells; Alicia Razvi, Stevens Point; Sarah Lloyd, Wisconsin Dells; Lauren Langworthy, Wheeler; Bobbi Wilson, Madison; Dale Wiehoff, Glenwood; (back row) Joseph Behlen, Vesper; Darin Von Ruden, Westby; Danny Simpson, Ashland; Mary Dougherty, Bayfield; Joel Kuehnhold, Milladore; Julie Bomar, Menomonie; Caleb Langworthy, Wheeler; Kirsten Slaughter, Madison; Corinne Rafferty, Glenwood; John Adams, Washburn; and Matt Briske, Bruce. Not pictured are Mariann Holm, Elk Mound; Sarah Paquette, Boyceville; Steve Hanson, Menomonie; and Leah Douglas, reporter with the Food and Environment Reporting Network.

## From p.7 ► Heartland

mon-sense immigration reform, while also vowing, "I would appoint people to the EPA who actually believe in environmental protection."

Sen. Klobuchar pointed to the deeply consolidated seed and agrochemical industries and vowed to "look at monopolies and mergers not just going forward, but looking backward." She added, "We are now entering a new gilded age and we need to take on the power of those monopolies."

"I believe in the power of investing in other people," Delaney said, as he called for universal health care, comprehensive immigration reform, and changes to education funding. "I want a resurgence in our communities."

Congressman Tim Ryan

said he sees a "chronic level of stress because of chronic uncertainty" in rural America, heightened by hospitals closing, the growing opioid epidemic and a lack of school funding, among other issues. But he also pointed out opportunities in renewable energy, coalition building and entrepreneurial endeavors. "The government has to be more creative, more imaginative," Ryan said. "There's opportunities in wind and solar ... we've got to drive the investment into distressed communities in rural America."

### Farmer reactions

Mariann Holm, a Farmers Union member from Elk Mound, Wis., didn't flinch at waking at 2:30am to catch the bus to Storm Lake. "I recognize the importance and the weight of this antitrust is-

sue. Something has to happen. It's worth the time to see if we can get this issue on the minds and hearts of people across the country."

Kriss Marion owns Circle M Market Farm, a picturesque farm on the outskirts of Blanchardville, Wis. Last fall, she made a run for State Senate, elevating many of the issues impacting her rural neighbors. She was drawn to the forum out of a curiosity to hear what ideas the candidates might have for helping rural communities like her own. "It's important that these candidates come to rural states. I think there's no substitute for actually talking to people on the ground, spending time with farmers and seeing what it's like out here – getting your mind around the fact that in spite of the numbers, there

has been no economic recovery in rural places. In fact, we've slid backwards, kind of precipitously."

Marion said she hopes to see candidates travel to Wisconsin, a state that forum moderator Art Cullen stressed will be pivotal in the 2020 election and a place where candidates will have to address the elephant in the room – the ongoing dairy crisis that is putting hundreds of family farms out of business each year.

Boyceville farmer Sarah Paquette's concerns over lack of antitrust enforcement run beyond the usual worries over the loss of family farms to those of jeopardized national food security and a loss of vital farming knowledge. "What happens when, with further consol-

See p.9 ► Heartland

## WFU Summer Conference envisions future for family farms

How would American family farm agriculture look today if antitrust laws were actually enforced? What will our food system, watersheds and rural communities look like 20 years from now if we continue down the risky path of monopolization and consolidated market? These are some of the questions we'll tackle at the Wisconsin Farmers Union Summer Conference, which will run from 10am to 2pm Thursday, Aug. 15 at WFU Kamp Kenwood, 19161 79th Ave., Chippewa Falls.

Copies of "The Curse of Bigness: Antitrust in the New Gilded Age" are available for \$15 at the WFU offices (117 W. Spring St., Chippewa Falls or 108 S. Webster St., Suite 201, Madison) for members interested in digging in more before the event.

Join us for a great day of food and networking at beautiful WFU Kamp Kenwood on Lake Wissota near Chippewa Falls! Round up a carload of members from your local chapter and make a day of it! Are you a baker? Bring a pie – or two or three – for the pie contest. Have kids? Consider enrolling them in Acorn Day Camp, which coincides with the event. The cost of \$15/child includes lunch.

RSVP to Summer Conference by calling the WFU office at 715-723-5561 or at [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events).



## SUMMER CONFERENCE

### **American Agriculture: Where Are We Headed?**

*A look at the future of our family farms, food systems, watersheds and rural towns — and why we must address antitrust in agriculture*

**Thursday, August 15, 2019 • 10am to 2pm**

**WFU Kamp Kenwood**

**19161 79th Ave., Chippewa Falls, WI**

**RSVP to the State Office at 715-723-5561 or [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events)**



## From p.8 ► Heartland

ication, the knowledge of farming becomes whittled down to very few people that even know what to do?" Paquette questioned. "Every farmer that goes out of business is expertise that is potentially lost to the next generation."

Holm agreed, noting, "I see the whole farm community is a real delicate web. It's beautiful but it's fragile. Every farm that goes out of business ... it's just such a drain of our intellectual property and that knowledge base and wisdom."

In a previous chapter of his life, Nik Novak was an educator, but in the past decade, he's become the student, learning from family farmers and studying the impact local food can have on a region. In his roles as storekeeper at Just Local Food Cooperative in Eau Claire and a farm hand at Deutsch Family Farm near Osseo, he has learned to focus on a triple-bottom line of profit for the land, profit for the people, profit for communities.

He encourages folks who are concerned about the direction mainstream agriculture is headed in to become a local food patriot by either buying local or growing their own food, noting, "Local food equals national security."

"While our food system is being taken over by large, monopolized corporations, Wisconsin Farmers Union is hard at work fighting for family farmers, citizens and neighbors," Novak said. "We believe in antitrust enforcement, conserving our land and establishing fair markets."

Rolling back northward on the bus home, the day's discussions seemed to be reaffirmed by the sight of fields upon fields of corn and soybeans. Tucked in amid clumps of trees along the interstate are weathered and dilapidated old barns, abandoned over the years as Midwestern farmers shifted from self-sufficient farmsteads into the monocropping that would earn them the title of the Corn Belt.

"The rally and forum demonstrated the importance of farm country and rural communities to a national audience," said WFU Executive Director Julie Bomar. "I just hope that as the presidential campaigns ramp up all contenders will realize they need rural America, and we need the rest of the country to move forward. I'm also hoping for an awesome display of farm and food activism this next political season. I believe we saw the beginnings of that here in Storm Lake."

## Soil Sisters set to inspire with annual tour

This summer, meet Wisconsin's inspiring community of women farmers championing local food and family farms at Soil Sisters: A Celebration of Wisconsin Farms and Rural Life. Come tour, taste, learn and play Aug. 2-4 in this multi-faceted on-farm weekend involving more than twenty women-owned farms in south central Wisconsin.

Soil Sisters recently received a 2019 Top Rural Development Initiative Award from Wisconsin Rural Partner, an award recognizing communities that have made a positive impact on their rural area through collaboration and sheer grit. Additionally, Soil Sisters was featured on a special two-part episode of *FarmHer* on RFD-TV. Filmed at the 2018 event, the shows featured interviews with Wisconsin Farmers Union South Central Chapter members involved with the weekend team, including Dela Ends, Lauren Rudersdorf, Lori Stern, Kriss Marion, and Lisa Kivistik.

Soil Sisters is a venture of the Wisconsin Farmers Union Foundation, in partnership with the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) and Renewing the Countryside.

Learn more and get tickets at [www.soilsisterswi.org](http://www.soilsisterswi.org).

### A Celebration of Wisconsin Family Farms & Rural Life

# SOIL SISTERS

3 Days • 5 Unique Components • 20+ Farms  
Create Your Own Farm and Culinary Adventure

#### Bus Tour of Farms

Friday, August 2 & Sunday, August 4  
Enjoy a guided bus tour showcasing a diversity of women-owned farms. Ticketed event.

#### Green Acres Workshops

Friday, August 2 to Sunday, August 4  
Learn how to launch your own farm, make cheese, spin fiber, preserve the harvest and much more!  
Ticketed events on various farms.

#### Taste of Place

Friday, August 2  
A local food & drink celebration.

#### Farm-to-Table Dinner

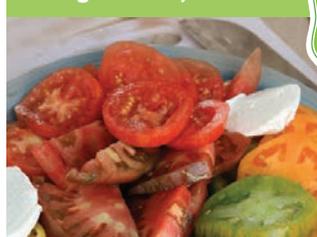
Saturday, August 3  
Farm-to-table dinner at Dorothy's Range featuring heritage meats. Ticketed event.

#### Dine Fine at Restaurants

Friday, August 2 to Sunday, August 4  
Sample "locavore" specials throughout the weekend.



August 2 - 4, 2019



[www.soilsisterswi.org](http://www.soilsisterswi.org)





# Chapter Chatter

Submit chatter to Danielle at 715-471-0398  
or [dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com)

## New Farmers Union chapter in progress for Southwest Wisconsin

Farmers and rural neighbors in Southwest Wisconsin are starting the process to build a Farmers Union chapter in that region. WFU members in Crawford, Richland, Grant and Iowa counties recently met to consider the idea.



Save the date of June 26 for a chapter organizing meeting. This event will be a potluck but look for more details in the upcoming months.

For more information, contact WFU Membership & Education Organizer Kirsten Slaughter at 608-514-2031.

## Lake to Bay event celebrates spring time

**SEYMOUR** – This year the Lake to Bay Farmers Union of northeast Wisconsin will be celebrating spring with Full Circle Community Farm at their Mother's Earth Day On-Farm event on Saturday, May 11. There will be all kinds of activities throughout the day promoting earth-friendly farming practices, such as tours of the vegetable gardens and hoop houses, demonstrations of humanely-raised pastured livestock, and talks on water quality by Lake to Bay member and water quality specialist Aaron Pape. Attendees will enjoy a local, organic brunch catered by Tenet and a chance to speak with and buy from their local farmers.

The event will be held rain or shine from 11am to 3pm at W2407 Hofa Park Road, Seymour. All are welcome. Additionally, the Lake to Bay Chapter will be selling organic compost, available for purchase/pick up at Full Circle Farm at any time during the event or by appointment.

Immediately following the event will be an official meeting for Lake to Bay Farmers Union, where upcoming events will be discussed. The chapter will finish off the day with a lively potluck gathering, music, and an evening bonfire.

## Micro-creamery field day set for May 23

"Begin a Farmstead Micro-Creamery" is the topic of the first MOSES Organic Field Day of the season. The field day runs from 10:30am to 2pm Thursday, May 23 at Turnip Rock Farm in Clear Lake.

Josh Bryceson and Rama Hoffpauir started Cosmic Wheel Creamery in 2015. They'll share how they added the micro-creamery to their full-plate CSA, the legal hurdles they needed to jump, and how they make their artisanal cheese. The free event includes lunch by Farm Table Restaurant in Amery, sponsored by Wisconsin Farmers Union. Register at [mosesorganic.org/farmstead-micro-creamery](http://mosesorganic.org/farmstead-micro-creamery) or call 888-90-MOSES.

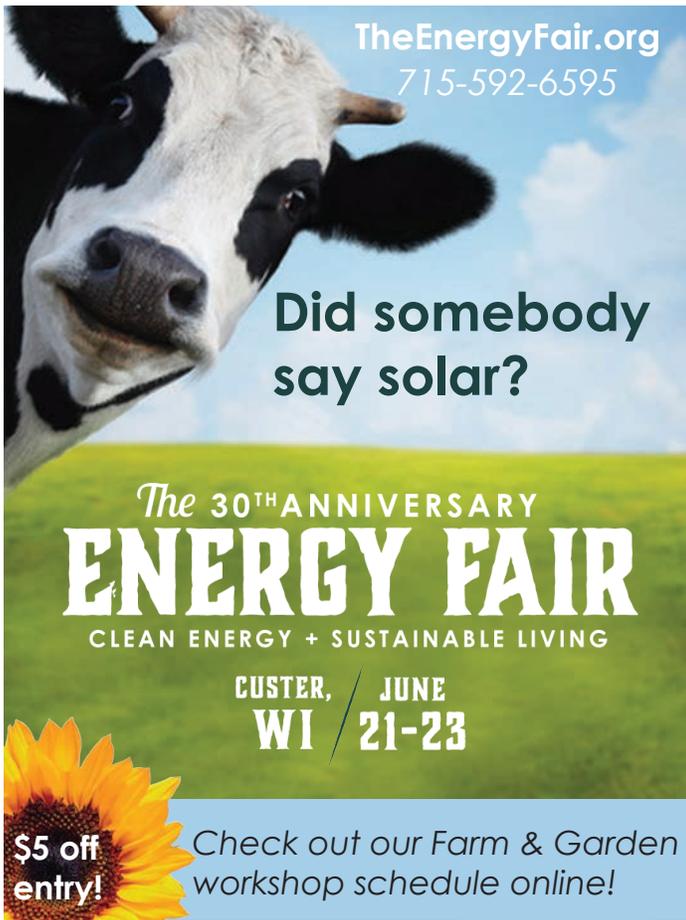


## Strategizing in Stratford

Wisconsin Farmers Union Membership & Education Organizer Kirsten Slaughter led a strategic planning meeting with Marathon County Farmers Union March 24th at the Briggs Family Farm in Stratford.

## St. Croix County Farmers Union to sell curds

St. Croix County Farmers Union is again planning to sell deep fried cheese curds and fresh-cut potato fries at the Music on the River Series in Amery the third Friday of June, July, August and also at the Amery Fall Festival in September. If you're in the area, swing by and indulge!



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## Energy Fair tours feature WFU farmers

A pair of Farmers Union member farms will be among the featured stops on the Sustainable Farm & Garden Tours at The Energy Fair June 22-23 in Custer. Each day of tours costs \$5/person. Both days' tours depart from the MREA bus stop at 9am and return in time for the afternoon keynote. Enjoy tours of local home gardens and farms, organized in partnership with Central Rivers Farmshed.



### Saturday, June 22nd

On Saturday, one of the stops will be Woolly Thyme Micro Farm, run by WFU members Alicia and Shabbar Razvi and their family. The two-acre farm specializes in CSA, halal poultry, jams and chutneys, and home baked goods.

The second stop of the day will be at Zach Garden, where Jen and John Zach have spent the past two decades creating a treasure trove of edibles on their few acres just outside of Stevens Point. Included in this movement toward a self sufficient life are a large vegetable garden, small fruits, a few trees in the orchard, chickens, a bee hive and mushrooms. Large flower gardens and prairie areas add to the beauty of the land. This tour will include a discussion of eating year round from the garden as well as over wintering crops.

### Sunday, June 23rd

On Sunday, visit Black Rabbit Farm, owned by Wisconsin Farmers Union Communications Associate Tommy Enright and his wife, Samantha. The small family farm on the Tomorrow River features vegetables, berries, and rabbits, as well as pasture-raised pork, chickens, turkeys, and lamb.

A second stop will be at Anderson Garden and Glacier's Edge Orchard, a 2100 square foot garden and 100 tree orchard, where mostly organic methods are used for disease and pest control, along with no-till beds and mulch to control weeds. The young orchard includes cider and eating apple trees, pears, plums, cherries, and 75 grape vines. A root cellar stores produce into the winter.

Tickets are available for purchase online or at The Energy Fair Marketplace (if seats are still available). Purchase your ticket today, seating is limited! Early bird and member pricing do not apply to these tours.

Be sure to stop by the WFU booth at the Energy Fair!

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# Dairy Together



## National movement building behind proposals to rebuild U.S. dairy industry

By Danielle Endvick  
WFU Communications Director

**E**AU CLAIRE - Hundreds of farmers have been gathering for a series of Dairy Together Road Show events across Wisconsin this month. Organized by the National Farmers Organization (NFO) and Wisconsin Farmers Union (WFU), the events are engaging farmers on proposals to rebuild a viable dairy economy. Meetings were held in Eau Claire, Oshkosh and Platteville as well as Vermont, New York, Michigan, and Minnesota. The series continues on to New Mexico and California in the next few weeks.

"The plans we're presenting today move the industry away from consolidation and help level the playing field so independent farmers have a fighting chance," Wisconsin Farmers Union President Darin Von Ruden said to the crowd of 100 farmers gathered at an April 2 Dairy Together Road Show meeting in Eau Claire.

WFU and NFO are presenting several potential pathways forward for a national movement on dairy reform. Though

the family farm organizations' plans differ in some details, they are united in aiming to give the dairy industry more control over production. Addressing directly needed structural changes and reducing volatility are key goals, while the groups note that other oft-covered topics like exports, school lunches, dairy labeling and milk mustaches have been purposefully set to the side.

"Although export markets are important, we are certain that we cannot export our way out of this problem," Von Ruden said. "We've heard over and over from dairy farmers that they don't want to put their fate in the hands of global dairy markets that they cannot control."

### Structural change needed

"We have what policy people call a structure problem," said NFO's Dick Levins, professor emeritus of ag economics at the University of Minnesota. "By that we don't mean barns falling down, we mean the mix of farmers out there is changing so dramatically that pretty soon there won't be room for the family farmer."

Levins noted that between 2000 and

*Photos by Danielle Endvick*  
**Above:** NFO's Dick Bylsma and WFU's Bobbi Wilson make the case for proposals that would stabilize dairy markets and ensure a future for family farms.

2017, the U.S. lost 63,702 dairy farms with herds of 200 cows or less, a decrease of 65.6 percent. Meanwhile, operations with over 1,000 cows increased by 109 percent and those with over 2,000 cows by 268 percent.

"As those family-sized dairies leave, the particular benefits they provide to rural economies, the environment, and food security go with them," Levins said.

Recognizing the staggering rate at which the nation is losing family-sized farms, NFO is proposing The Family Dairy Farm Relief Act, a voluntary program that would base emergency relief payments on different tiers that recognize variations in operating costs for different size farms. Monthly payments would be set according to a farm's level of production, with smaller farms receiving relatively higher payments per hundredweight. The plan is modeled off of the Maine Dairy Relief Program, which was implemented in 2004 and has effectively slowed the loss of dairy farms in the state.

Levins stressed that the program would not impact milk prices and is intended to be a short-term bridge until a

more market-oriented, long term program - one not dependent on government payments - could be implemented. He added that the already existing model is one that could be easily and rapidly enacted by Congress.

#### Dairy Price Stabilization Plan

While The Family Dairy Farm Relief Act could provide short-term relief, WFU Government Relations Associate Bobbi Wilson echoed the point that it would be only a lifeline until long-term solutions can be implemented.

"What we're hearing from farmers is that they'd rather have a fair price from the market than a government handout," Wilson said.

A long-term plan proposed to curb overproduction, improve milk prices and provide long-term stability is the Dairy Price Stabilization Plan, which was originally proposed in the lead-up to the 2014 Farm Bill. Dairy economists Chuck Nicholson from Cornell University and Mark Stephenson from the University of Wisconsin recently unveiled research on the impact this program might have had in current market conditions.

"The bottom line on what we found was generally pretty positive in terms of thinking of what these programs could do," Nicholson said. "We saw reduced variation in prices and also some price enhancement, increased net farm operating incomes, reduction in the rate of farm exits across farms of all sizes, and a reduction in government expenditures on dairy programs."

Through the DPSP, farmers who choose to expand beyond an allowable growth rate (based on market demand) must pay a market access fee. That fee would then be distributed among all the farmers who chose not to expand. Two versions of the plan are currently on the table - one that would operate continuously and another that would be triggered when the milk:feed ratio drops below a certain level.

Under the plan, farms could choose to expand production and pay the market access fee (ranging from

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“*What we're hearing from farmers is they'd rather have a fair price from the market than a government handout.*”

- Bobbi Wilson

Wisconsin Farmers Union  
Gov. Relations Associate

\$0.015/cwt to \$3/cwt) or limit their expansion and receive a market access fee disbursement (ranging from \$1.50/cwt to \$1.88/cwt).

Wilson noted this plan looks to better balance milk supply and demand and cause farms to reconsider expansions, an important effort considering milk production continues to climb despite continued farm loss and a glut of dairy on the market. The USDA recently forecasted 219.7 billion pounds of milk production for 2019, up more than 2 billion pounds over 2018.

#### Structured Dairy Pricing Program

The Road Show also offers up the Structured Dairy Pricing Program as a potential long-term solution to the dairy crisis. Research on the plan has been spearheaded by NFO Director of Dairy Sales Dick Bylsma, who also brings to the table a dairy farming upbringing and a strong background in milk bottling and cheese processing.

The Structured Dairy Pricing Program looks to curb production by establishing a national Federal Milk Marketing Order with a \$4/cwt price adjuster for up to one million pounds of monthly production for every dairy farm in the country. The proposal would help re-

duce the cost of production difference between small and large farms in a way similar to FMMO procedures that account for different class prices.

"We have created a scenario where every dairy farmer has a positive margin," Bylsma said. He also stressed that the Structured Dairy Pricing Program would not increase costs to consumers or impact the price a cheese processor or milk bottling company pays for their milk.

He reiterated the importance of addressing the continued loss and growing consolidation in the American dairy industry, citing an April 25, 2017 *Hoard's Dairyman* article by Jack Britt that projects the U.S. could have as few as 1,300 to 1,900 dairy farms by the year 2066. That scenario is a direct contradiction to consumer preferences which trend toward a desire for family farms on the American landscape, Bylsma noted.

"We recognize that if we let these family farmers go out of business, we won't get them back," Bylsma added. "Our proposal makes rural communities stronger and helps keep this treasure we call the family farm in business."

#### Pull Together

In closing, the groups recognized that any meaningful change in the dairy industry is going to require strong coalition building.

"We know that to get anything changed at the federal level, we're going to need people power," said WFU Special Projects Director Sarah Lloyd. "It's very encouraging that we're packing the rooms for these meetings - now we need to spread the word to our elected decision makers, implement our people power through our co-ops, and get everybody on board - processors, veterinarians, seed sales representatives. These proposals are strong enough to make a difference and move the industry away from consolidation."

*Find handouts, videos and resources about the proposals, event details, and a sign-up to keep informed at [www.dairytogether.com](http://www.dairytogether.com).*



## Water Quality Task Force hearings to be scheduled

In January, House Speaker Robin Vos convened a Water Quality Task Force to explore ways the legislature can address growing water quality concerns across the state. Two hearings were held in Madison to seek input from state agencies and stakeholder groups, including Wisconsin Farmers Union. Now they need to hear from you!

The Water Quality Task Force is planning a series of public hearings throughout the spring and summer, beginning in Lancaster on May 8th. Let's have a strong showing of family farmers to support clean water initiatives, and demonstrate how farmers can be part of the solution to the water quality problem in Wisconsin.



Please consider testifying at a hearing near you! Written testimony can also be submitted at the hearings, or online. Dates and specific locations will be posted on the Wisconsin Farmers Union events page as they are announced.

For more information or to get involved, please contact WFU Government Relations Associate, Bobbi Wilson, [bwilson@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:bwilson@wisconsinfarmersunion.com) or 608 234-3741.

# The future belongs to those who show up



**Brittany Olson**  
Barron County  
Farmers Union

**I**t really has been a year since we packed a room at Barron Electric

when Barron County Farm Bureau and Farmers Union held a farmer-led discussion on the dairy crisis. Wow!

One thing that bothers me as much – if not more – than the apathy of dairy industry leaders and elected officials is the apathy of farmers to speak up and do something. So many are unhappy with the way things are, yet don't bother to show up and learn what could be done. They complain about boards of directors for their milk cooperatives, farm organizations, cooperatives, and the Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin (formerly the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board), yet the same people keep getting reelected to those boards.

They say the future belongs to those who show up, and it's true. It also takes a lot more courage to stand up to your friends and peers than it does to stand up to your enemies, and in this case it rings true. Last week, Karyn Schauf, president of the Barron County Farm Bureau, of which I'm also a member, personally invited about 20 farmers to a meeting covering the material that Wisconsin Farmers Union and National Farmers Organization are presenting at the Dairy Together Roadshow looking at potential solutions to our laundry list of woes. Maybe half of those farmers came. The others either had other things going on that day or simply weren't interested.

Every single dairy herd (the Schauf's Indianhead Holsteins included) represented at the small meeting in Barron had about 100 cows or less. Every single cow represented at that table

had a name, a face, and a personality all her own, and we recognize that. Wisconsin is not America's Dairyland because of cow numbers or pounds of milk produced, but because of Wisconsin's farm families.

I'm tired of being told that consolidation is the status quo when it is abundantly clear our end buyers want their milk to come from family farms. According to food science and technology firm Eurofins, 93 percent of consumers surveyed believe it is important to support family farms and that family farms benefit local communities. I want to explicitly mention smaller family farms because those are the herds we're losing at a disproportionate rate compared to other herd size categories, and once they're gone, it's not likely we'll ever get them back. We're rapidly destroying the style of agriculture consumers are consistently saying they want.

So many of our fellow dairymen claim that they don't know what to do or it's pointless to try and change things, yet they don't show up to meetings like the ones Wisconsin Farmers Union and the National Farmers Organization are putting on across the state and country. At the very least you'd get off the farm for a couple of hours and a free meal. I get it; farming is hard and it's usually exhausting. Fatigue and stress are constant companions. I maybe get 5 hours of sleep at night before dragging myself out of bed to go do chores.

But, if you really care, you'd find the energy to at least open your mind to some possible solutions. After all, if there's nothing that can be done to salvage and heal our once-vibrant and diverse dairy industry, why are any of us still milking cows?

*Olson is a dairy farmer, writer, and photographer from Chetek.*

# Farm Crisis or Co-op Opportunity?

*Editor's Note: We loved and had to share this column written by Mariann Holm originally for the Menomonie Market Food Co-op, of which she serves as a board member. Holm is a Dunn County Farmers Union member.*



**Mariann Holm**  
Dunn County  
Farmers Union

According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service, in the last 15 months, 903 dairy farms have been lost in our Dairy State. While the numbers of farms have diminished, the numbers of dairy cattle remain steady, concentrated on larger farms. Despite the low prices, the USDA has forecasted an increase of two billion more pounds of milk to be produced this year compared to last. On the conventional milk market, the prices farmers are receiving are comparable to those paid in 1989.

Almost every industry, but perhaps especially retail, grocery and agriculture, has been touched by consolidation in a tangible way that has become increasingly obvious to most people.

Profit is no longer the short or even mid-range goal for those with pockets deep enough to withstand the battle of vertical integration. Some analysts report that Amazon lost 2 billion dollars in one quarter in 2018. Amazon is willing to lose the profit battle to win the big prize of market share.

With prices on some farm commodities lingering at or below cost of production, "tightening our belts" alone cannot help to ensure the future for the family farm. Larger scale does not always equate to better returns. Small farms can be competitive. For example, a grass-based dairy owned by an individual family can often have a

healthier bottom line due to less dependence on fuel, veterinary services, and inputs associated with row crops.

As a high school student, I remember studying political cartoons in history class. Teddy Roosevelt was sketched busting the railroads and taking on J. P. Morgan utilizing the 1890 Sherman Anti-Trust Act. Characters such as Cornelius Vanderbilt, Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller came to life through these drawings.

Years later, I became familiar with the 1922 Capper-Volstead Act. We were dairy farmers shipping milk to a co-operative that managed their organic milk supply to help ensure as many farmers stayed on the farm as possible. The Capper Volstead Act was passed to ensure that farmers could work together cooperatively to market their products. It is sometimes referred to as the Magna Carta of Cooperatives.

Unfortunately, for the past 40 years, little enforcement has taken place in the realm of antitrust. Our choices as consumers have shrunk. For farmers, the lack of antitrust enforcement has decreased their access to markets and processors while increasing costs of inputs due to decreased competition. Attorney generals in individual states are reticent to file lawsuits in fear of the enormous capital amassed by the corporations they would be litigating with.

A co-operative (co-op) is a business owned by individual members – not large investors. Co-op member-owners get to have a say in how to run the businesses they represent. Many of us here are members of several cooperative ventures. We can change the narrative that we need to look outside for "the big guys" to save us or provide opportunities. Instead we as owners can create resilience and independence within our cooperatives and our own communities. Our mission can be much broader than sheer profits or

market share.

Today, there is a farm crisis. Some say that this will be the crisis that the family farm will never recover from. There is also opportunity for us as Wisconsin Farmers Union members and Wisconsin citizens. We have the perfect structure within our local co-operatives to support independent businesses in our community owned by the people who live here. We can purchase products that other co-ops, for example in dairy, supply to us. These co-ops and businesses value more than market share and more than profit.

Our cooperatives are a gift to us. They are the vehicle we can drive to sustain our farms, our neighbors and our markets. They can support supply management, farmer voices, rural life and community. We have a rich heritage born out of the crises of the past. As a student, I never learned of the work, the personal sacrifice, the courage, and the passion of the people who formed these cooperatives.

Today, I think of our ancestors and marvel at the ordinary people who rose up and did extraordinary things. We have what we need to courageously support each other.

Let's step into that power.

## Things You Can Do

- #1 Shop your local food co-op.
- #2 Purchase items that are produced and sold by small businesses, farmer owned cooperatives and benefit local communities.
- #3 Educate yourself on the issue of antitrust. This issue does not just impact farmers. It is also impacting our choices in health care, telecommunications, transportation and more.
- #4 Purchase directly from a farmer.
- #5 Think of your dollars spent as investment in your community.
- #6 Share with a neighbor the work of Wisconsin Farmers Union and ask them to join us.



# Get your graze on

WFU partners on summer grazing education events



**W**isconsin Farmers Union is pleased to be partnering with several groups around the state on grazing education events this summer.

"Wisconsin Farmers Union recognizes both the conservation benefits and the potential for grazing events to build community among farmers in the region," said WFU Executive Director Julie Bomar. "We're looking forward to getting out on a number of farms across western Wisconsin and seeing some of the innovative practices happening in the grazing network."

## GLACIERLAND RC&D

- **JEFFERSON** – June 18, 4-8pm, Water Quality & Landscape Management Pasture Walk, Brattset Family Farm, N2437 Brattset Lane.
- **CLEVELAND** – July 10, 1-3:30pm, Positive Environmental Implications of Grazing Pasture Walk for Conservation Organizations, Committee Members and all others interested Saxon Homestead Farm, 15621 S Union Rd.
- **WHITEWATER** – July 18, 6-8pm, Beef Grazing Pasture Walk, Little Red Farms, Cody & Steph Brueggen, 11902N County Road KK.
- **FITCHBURG** – July 30, 8am - 4pm, Advanced Grazing Training with Jim Gerris. Morning Workshop 8am - 12:30pm, DNR Customer Service Center, 3911 Fish Hatchery Road. Afternoon grazing tours from 1-2:15pm featuring grazing cover crops at Highland Spring Farm followed by 2:30-4pm - Grazing to manage wildlife habitat at the WDNR Hook Lake Wildlife Area. This event is sponsored by the WDNR, Glacierland RC&D, Dane County Land and Water Resource Department, The Pasture Project and Wisconsin Farmers Union.

More events will be posted soon at [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com/events). For details, contact Danielle at 715-471-0398 or [dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com).

## GOLDEN SANDS RC&D

In June, Wisconsin Farmers Union is also partnering with Golden Sands RC&D for three pasture walks in Juneau, Green Lake, and Waushara Counties.

This series of pasture walks are a follow up to the "Money Matters on the Farm" workshops that WFU and Golden Sands held in March, bringing in experts to speak about grazing and profitability, business management, EQIP and other cost-sharing opportunities.

"As a co-owner/operator of a grazing farm, it's been very beneficial to attend pasture walks where I can connect with other farmers and also receive information that I would not have learned on my own," says Denise Hilgart, farmer and Sustainable Ag Coordinator at Golden Sands RC&D. "These are opportunities to network with other farmers as well as the educators and experts involved in agriculture. It's important to help other farmers succeed, and in our current farm economy, farmers have a heavy load to carry individually."

Dates and locations include:

- **WAUTOMA** – June 7, 9:30am-11:30am, Ken Williams' farm, N3345 Swamp Rd. Tour Ken's 150 acre Angus beef cattle grazing operation.
- **GREEN LAKE** – June 13, 10am-12pm, Honey Creek Farm, W1532 Bluffton Rd. Grass-fed beef, pastured pork and gourmet garlic production.
- **CAMP DOUGLAS** – June 19, 10am-12pm, Paradise Found Farms, W10581 Bell Rd. A family-run dairy goat farm striving for quality goats and milk production. Come learn about their goat grazing operation. Lunch to follow.

Each pasture walk is free and open to the public. For more info visit [www.goldensandsrcd.org](http://www.goldensandsrcd.org) or call 715-343-6215.

# WELCOME NEW FARMERS UNION MEMBERS!

## New Member

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 Angie & George Clausen, Eau Claire  
 Ann & David Gordon, Chippewa Falls  
 Ashley & Jordan Kasprak Family, Hatley  
 Barb MacNaughton Bernhardt, Chippewa Falls  
 Becca Blanchette, Cadott  
 Becky Semling, Eau Claire  
 Borek Cranberry Marsh, Pittsville  
 Brandon Loehrke, Waupaca  
 Brett Arnold, Beloit  
 Caleb Trainor, West Bend  
 Carol Lierman, Menomonie  
 Char & Dan Fatke, West Bend  
 Cindy Blanc & Peter Minucci, Juda  
 Clarissa Parks, Reedsburg  
 Daniel Litchke, Superior  
 Danielle & Brandon Mittermeyer, Cadott  
 Danielle & Tayfield Reed Family, Menomonie  
 Deb Tuttle, Evansville  
 Diana Hall, Altoona  
 Dick & Barb Barrickman, Chippewa Falls  
 Duane Blaubach, Athens  
 Duwane & Candyce Krautkramer, Marathon  
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 Hayden Holbert, Ripon  
 Heather Herman, Menomonie  
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 WPS Farm Show  
 WPS Farm Show  
 Diana Rico  
 Camp Program  
 Kirsten Jurcek

James & Georgeen Quick, Green Lake  
 Jennifer Olson Family, Eau Claire  
 Jill Zohimsky, Westby  
 Joel Brunner, Durand  
 Kallstrom Flowers LLC, Menomonie  
 Kristina Kramer, Prior Lake  
 Laura Beirne, La Crosse  
 Lindsey Westfall, Stevens Point  
 Little Red Farms, Whitewater  
 Margie Bollinger & Lori Olson, Mondovi  
 Melissa Rueber Family, Eau Claire  
 Michelle Samz Hook & Craig Hook, Eau Claire  
 Nicole & Steven Bujewski, Chicago  
 Nikolas Novak, Eau Claire  
 Paul & Trudi Schaefer, Hager City  
 Randy & Marge Loehrke, Waupaca  
 Rebecca & Dave Clausen, Mondovi  
 Rebecca Salvesen, Hatley  
 Renee & Dan Geving, New Richmond  
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 Robyn & Matthew Krull, Eland  
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## WAUTOMA - June 7th

Ken Williams' Farm, 9:30am - 11:30am  
 N3345 Swamp Road, Wautoma, WI  
 Tour Ken's 150 acre Angus beef cattle grazing operation.

## GREEN LAKE - June 13th

Honey Creek Farm, 10am - 12pm  
 W1532 Bluffton Rd., Green Lake, WI  
 Grass-fed beef, pastured pork and gourmet garlic production.

## CAMP DOUGLAS- June 19th

Paradise Found Farms, 10am - 12pm  
 W1532 Bluffton Rd., Green Lake, WI  
 A family-run dairy goat farm striving for quality goats and milk. Come learn about their goat grazing operation! Lunch to follow.

Presented By:



*Open to the public! For more info visit [www.goldensandsrcd.org](http://www.goldensandsrcd.org) or call 715-343-6215.*

# Don't overlook the importance of ethanol



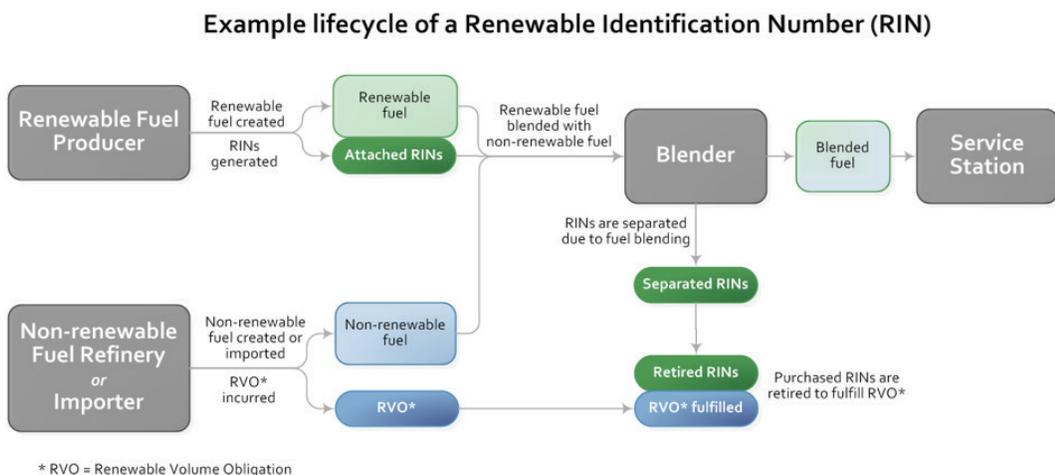
**Craig Myhre**  
WFU Grain Committee &  
District 4 Director

At a recent WFU Grain Committee meeting, the subject of the current trade war and tariffs and how they have affected grain prices and cash grain farming in general were brought up. The importance of the ethanol industry was mentioned and the impact it has had on the corn market.

Without ethanol, the price of corn would be worse yet. About 40 percent of corn production currently goes to ethanol production. But as corn producers continue to improve yields and total production continues to go up, that percentage can shrink. The percentage also shrinks when waivers are granted to refineries that produce gasoline, allowing them to skip the blending of ethanol.

The question came up of why some refineries are being granted waivers by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and how that was affecting the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS), which mandates blending ethanol in the gasoline formulations that we all put in our vehicles. In this article, I will try to provide background on how this works.

Under section 211 of the Clean Air Act, a small refinery can petition the



EPA for an exemption from blending ethanol under the Renewable Fuels Standard, if they can prove an economic hardship. These are supposed to be granted to smaller refineries producing less than 75,000 barrels of fuel a day. As you can see from the chart below, the exemptions have increased a large amount under the current administration. There are some questions if the exemptions are going to small refineries anymore.

So knowing how waivers are granted, this leads us to how ethanol gets blended into gasoline and how that recordkeeping is done.

When ethanol is produced by a plant, a Renewable Identification Number is assigned to a batch of ethanol. That RIN will stay with that

batch of ethanol until is used in the fuel supply – at which point that number will then be retired as that fuel has been consumed. Until that RIN is used, however, it can be bought and sold between refineries and/or importers of fuel that at some point will need to be blended. The RIN is only retired once the fuel has been consumed. I have included above a couple of charts that make it a little easier to follow.

RINs can also be separated back out from the fuel it was originally attached to as you can see in the chart at the top of page 21. As stated before, a RIN is not retired until the fuel is consumed.

So when you read or hear news stories about the administration granting a waiver to a refinery it means it has been allowed to not comply with the RFS and will not have to blend ethanol with its gasoline, thereby backing up more supply of ethanol which leads to less demand for corn and depressed prices.

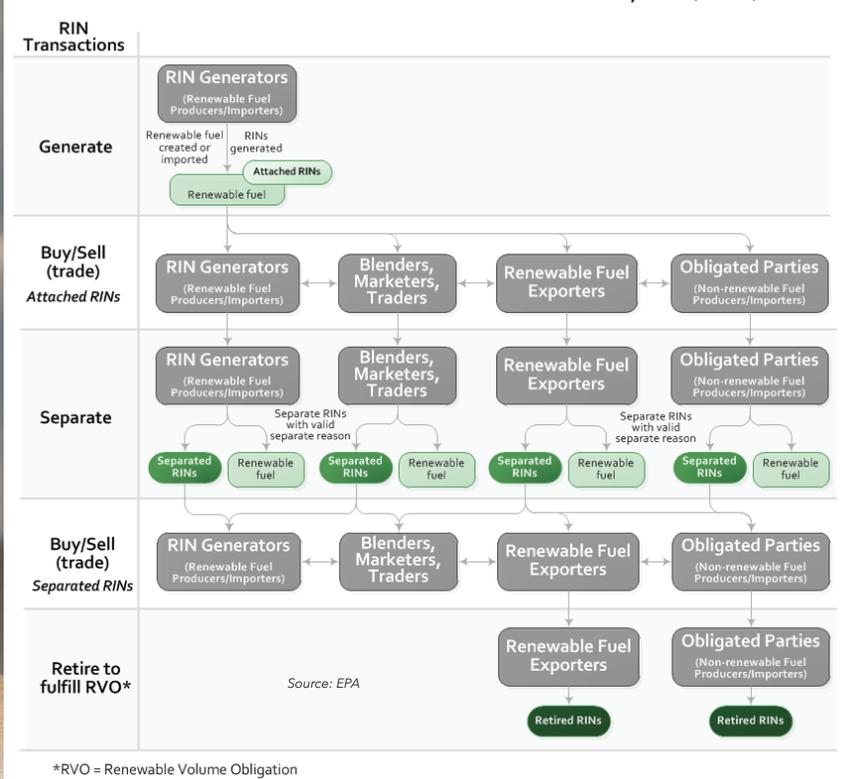
### Double trouble

There is the talk of what the EPA is allowing as a small refinery as the rumors float that they are allowing such oil giants as Exxon to apply for waivers. An analysis by the Renew-

Summary of Small Refinery Exemption Decisions Each Compliance Year					
Compliance Year	Petitions Received	Grants Issued	Denials Issued	Ineligible or Withdrawn Petitions	Pending Petitions
2013	16	8	7	1	0
2014	13	8	5	0	0
2015	14	7	6	1	0
2016	20	19	0	0	1
2017	37	35	0	1	1
2018	39	0	0	0	39

Source: <https://www.epa.gov/fuels-registration-reporting-and-compliance-help/rfs-small-refinery-exemptions>

RIN Transactions in the EPA Moderated Transaction System (EMTS)



**1.6 Billion Gallons**  
of lost demand for ethanol due to  
2016-2017 exemption waivers issued  
by Environmental Protection Agency

- Renewable Fuels Association

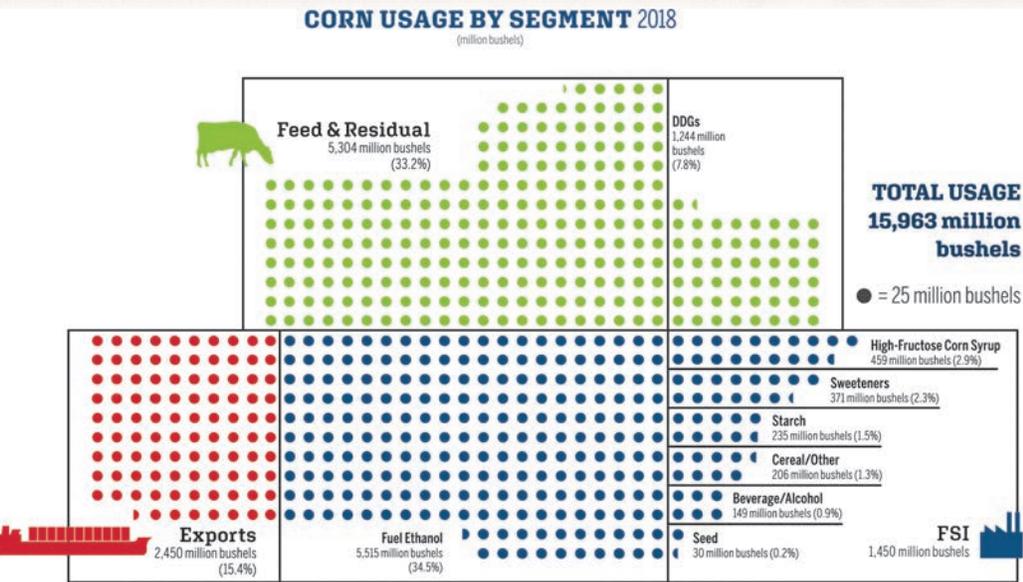


Renewable Fuels Association estimated as high as 1.6 billion gallons of lost demand for ethanol since the Trump administration took over. With tariffs and trade deals in shambles this does not help a depressed farm economy.

As corn prices dropped, farmers were making the switch to more soybeans and wheat as China had a big demand for protein. But as the administration put tariffs and trade wars on and as dairy and livestock feeding began to suffer, the inventory of beans and wheat have also grown.

One point I have to make here that I don't understand about the tariffs implemented by the Trump administration is the fact that farmers had found these export markets and molded them after the 1980's crisis. The President puts the tariffs on, ruining our markets, and then proceeds to throw a few dollars at us to make us feel better. The tariff relief package didn't even put a dent in the damage that has been done.

The President then proceeded



Source: USDA, ERS Feed Outlook, Feb. 2019; ProExporter Network, Crop Year Ending Aug. 31, 2019

to throw out a budget that cuts ag spending on what he calls needless subsidies.

Isn't there just a little bit of irony there?

So as you can see and most farmers already know, we are dependent on each other. One produces grain that gets made into

fuel and the dried distillers grain comes back as feed or gets fed to hogs or livestock. We are all part of the circle. I know dairy has been hit particularly hard but cash grain and the livestock sector are right there with them, struggling to hang on to the life of farming that we all enjoy.



## Farmer dinner tickets available

Wisconsin Farmers Union has 50 free tickets available for the Chippewa Falls Farmers Appreciation Chicken Dinner, which will be Wednesday, June 19 from 5 to 8:30pm at the Northern Wisconsin State Fairground in Chippewa Falls.

Since 1970, the Chamber has celebrated local farmers with a Farmer Appreciation Dinner. Call 715-723-5561 to have us reserve a ticket for you and plan on picking them up at the WFU state office any time before the dinner. (Office hours are 8am to 4pm.)

## Syrup sought for Farmers Union Camps

Syrup makers! The camp staff and campers go through gallons of syrup each summer at Farmers Union Camps at WFU Kamp Kenwood. If you have maple syrup you'd be willing to sell at a reduced rate or donate to the camp, please contact the WFU State Office at 715-723-5561.

## Fall Fly-In scholarships available

Wisconsin Farmers Union is offering scholarships for first-time attendees to the National Farmers Union (NFU) Fall Fly-in Sept. 8-11 in Washington, D.C.

During their time in Washington, members will hear from U.S. Department of Agriculture officials about current events and work the department is doing on behalf of farmers. They will receive briefings from other administration officials and the leadership and staff of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives Committees on Agriculture.

Farmers Union members will also meet with members of Congress to highlight key priorities for the organization, struggles they are facing, and goals for future legislation.

To apply, visit [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com) or call the WFU State Office at 715-723-5561 for more information. Applications are due by July 25.

**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)

Student (\$15)    Organization (\$50)

### Join us today!

#### ***Mail this card to:***

Wisconsin Farmers Union  
117 W. Spring St. • Chippewa Falls, WI • 54729

#### ***Or sign up online:***

[www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com)

***For more information, call 800-272-5531***



## FARMERS UNION HAPPENINGS

Register for WFU events:  
[www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com)

### Little Pink House Film Viewing

May 19, 12-3pm  
Pleasant View Nursing Home  
N3150 WI-81, Monroe

### Little Pink House Film Viewing

May 23, 6pm  
WFU Kamp Kenwood  
19161 79th Ave.  
Chippewa Falls  
Come early, from 4-6pm for  
an open house to learn more  
about Farmers Union Camp!

### The 30th Anniversary Energy Fair

June 21-23  
Custer, WI  
Info: 715-592-6595

### Chippewa Falls Chamber Farmers Appreciation Chicken Dinner

June 19, 5-8:30pm  
Northern Wisconsin State Fairground  
Free tickets available for WFU  
members: 715-723-5561

### Begin a Farmstead Micro-Creamery MOSES Field Day

May 23, details on page 14 or  
<https://mosesorganic.org/>

### Wisconsin Farm Technology Days

July 23-25  
Walter Grain Farms, Johnson Creek  
[www.wifarmtechnologydays.com](http://www.wifarmtechnologydays.com)  
Come see us at the WFU booth!

### WFU Summer Conference

Aug. 15, Kamp Kenwood, 19161  
79th Ave.,  
Chippewa Falls

### National Farmers Union Fly-In

Sept. 8-11  
Washington, D.C.  
Scholarships available - due July 25  
[www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com)

## WFU FOUNDATION

# Quarterly grant recipients announced

The Wisconsin Farmers Union Foundation has announced this quarter's grant recipients. Grant requests must meet the mission of the WFU Foundation, which "supports projects and programs for all ages that foster family farming, rural life and public education on the important role of cooperatives and agriculture in society."

The WFU Foundation maintains a modest Small Grant Program to provide support to a variety of farm and rural organizations and projects. Grant are generally under \$2,000 and typically \$200 to \$500.

Grant proposals are considering quarterly. Deadlines are: *Feb. 15, May 15, August 15, and November 15.* This quarter's recipients include:

- FairShare CSA Coalition, sponsorships of Bike the Barns event
- Cornucopia Institute, sponsorship at the Guardian level
- Wisconsin FFA Foundation, sponsorship at the bronze level
- Wisconsin 4-H Foundation for a green clover sponsorship
- Chippewa June Dairy Days Dinner – 50 tickets for area farmers
- Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance Conference
- Ralph K. Morris Foundation
- Wisconsin Association of Agricultural Educators Conference
- Brown County Dairy Promotions Dairy Breakfast
- Friend of Wisconsin Agricultural Tourism Association
- School for Beginning Dairy & Livestock Farmers program
- Cable Community Farm – Growing Fruit on a Community Farm
- Farmer's Night Out – UW Extension Dunn, Eau Claire and Chippewa
- Manitowoc County Forage Council Soil Health & Cover Crop Forum
- South Central Wisconsin Hemp Cooperative Education Funding
- Cooperative Conference for Grassroots Cooperative Development
- South Central F.U. Local Initiative Grant for establishing a hemp co-op
- Kenosha/Racine/Walworth/Jefferson Co. F.U. Local Initiative Grant for local farmer open house and 2 twilight on farm tours.
- Wood/Portage/Waupaca Co. F.U. Local Initiative Grant for funding towards Agriculture/FFA Teacher membership in their tri-county area.

Visit [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com) or call the WFU State Office at 715-723-5561 for more information.

## We're on the moo-ve!

Wisconsin Farmers Union is gearing up for one of our favorite times of year – **June Dairy Month!**

Watch for us at local events or, better yet, plan to help with a WFU booth at a breakfast in your area. To coordinate a booth or get promotional materials, contact Cathy Statz at 715-723-5561.



# What's On Your Table?

## Spring's Delight — Asparagus



**Diane Tiry**

*Administrative Assistant*

**H**opefully by the time this article arrives, we'll be hitting prime asparagus season. Wondering how to find the precious wild shoots? The gathering season for asparagus usually starts by early to mid-May.

A good place to look for wild asparagus is in ditches along country roads. Asparagus gatherers should always be mindful of their surroundings and private property signs. Kelly Kearns, an invasive plant coordinator with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, cautions that when scouring roadsides, the line between public and private can be contentious. Landowners usually know if they have an asparagus patch, even if it's in a ditch or along a roadside, so people should be legally and socially conscious and use common sense. Instead, Kearns suggests asparagus gatherers stick to private land they have permission to be on and state, county and municipal parks that allow the harvesting of wild edibles.

### *Tips for Cutting Asparagus*

- Asparagus is often found in open, sunny patches and thrives on cultivated land. Look for new spears growing around last year's growth.
- Cut each spear as close to the soil level as you can. You can generally cut 3-4 spears from each plant at a time.
- The longer the spear grows, the woodier its base of the stem gets. The ideal asparagus spear 8-10 inches long.
- For about a month, asparagus plants continue to grow new spears, which can be collected about every three days.
- Once the diameter of a spear is about the size of a pencil, stop harvesting the asparagus so it can store energy for growth the following year.
- Though it's best eaten fresh, cut asparagus will stay edible for up to a week in the refrigerator.

The recipes below can become part of your grilling and picnicking season.

## GRILLED ASPARAGUS & CARROTS WITH GRAPFRUIT DILL SAUCE

Source: [oceanspray.com](http://oceanspray.com)

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 pound carrots with tops, trimmed and washed
- 1 pound fresh asparagus spears, trimmed and washed
- 1 Tablespoon vegetable oil

### **Sauce:**

- 3 Tb. grapefruit juice
- 2 Tb. vegetable oil
- ½ tsp. salt
- 1/8 tsp. cracked pepper
- 2 Tb. chopped fresh dill
- 2 clementines or oranges, peeled, sectioned



### **Directions:**

1. Preheat grill for direct medium-high heat.
2. Brush carrots and asparagus with 1 Tb. oil. Place carrots on grill. Grill, turning once, 10 minutes.
3. Place asparagus on grill. Grill, turning asparagus once, 5-8 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
4. Place vegetables on serving platter
5. Meanwhile, combine ruby red grapefruit juice drink, 2 tablespoons oil, the salt and pepper in small bowl. Whisk until well mixed.
6. Stir in dill and Clementines. Add sauce and serve.

## BACON & ASPARAGUS PESTO PASTA

Source: [delish.com](http://delish.com)

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 lb. pasta
- 2 bunches asparagus, blanched and quartered
- 2 c. fresh basil leaves
- 1/2 c. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 c. shredded Parmesan
- 1/4 c. almonds
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 6 slices thick-cut bacon
- Freshly ground black pepper



### **Directions:**

1. Cook pasta according to package directions to al dente. Drain, reserving 1 cup pasta water, and return to pot.
2. Meanwhile, make asparagus pesto: In the bowl of a food processor, combine 1 bunch blanched asparagus, basil, and olive oil and pulse until combined. Add Parmesan, almonds, garlic, and salt and blend until combined.
3. In a large skillet over medium heat, cook bacon until crispy. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate, then chop.
4. Add pesto to pasta. Stir until coated, then stir in 1/2 cup pasta water until creamy. (Add more pasta water if desired.)
5. Stir in bacon and remaining asparagus and season.

# Costco and Walmart want you in their 'chain'



**Alan Guebert**  
Farm & Food File

While officials in Washington stare at a federal budget proposal headed nowhere and a federal budget deficit headed to the moon, farm leaders in rural America are closely watching two recent moves into Big Ag by Big Retail.

In mid-2018, Walmart, the Arkansas retailing giant, began bottling milk in a newly-built facility near Ft. Wayne, IN, for its 500 stores in Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana.

In doing so, this newcomer shoved an industry veteran, Dean Foods, its former bottler, out the door and with Dean went 100 or so dairy farmers in surrounding states who sold milk to it. Walmart replaced all with just 30 farmers and cooperatives within 140 miles of its new plant.

At the same time, 650 miles west, Costco, "a membership-only warehouse" club second only to Walmart in global retail sales, began to assemble a feathery empire near Fremont, NE, that will grow, slaughter, and distribute two million whole chickens a week to be sold as "cooked rotisserie chicken" in all Costco stores west of the Mississippi River.

To pull this off, Costco has recruited an estimated 100 to 125 Nebraska and Iowa farmers to, on average, build four specialized poultry barns to grow 200,000 birds every seven or so weeks.

For Costco contract growers, their \$800,000 to \$1 million investment per set-up is a way to both boost cash flow during the latest commodity low-price cycle and bring a

younger generation into their farming operations.

While neither venture looks particularly risky for either the retailers or the producers—all are under contract at what outsiders say presently are profitable prices—they are groundbreaking in other ways.

First, each of the fully integrated enterprises hopes to eliminate all the usual middlemen—anyone who sells inputs to food processors or packagers, as well as distributors and wholesalers—between the originating farmer and the final customer.

Costco, for example, has effectively eliminated suppliers like Tyson Foods and Pilgrim's Pride (and their opaque pricing structures) by building a captive supply chain right down to its own feed plant, slaughtering plant, and transportation system.

Similarly, Walmart has Walmart contracted-truckers hauling Walmart contracted-milk to a Walmart bottling plant that Walmart will then process and haul to Walmart stores on Walmart trucks to sell directly to Walmart customers.

That's an airtight form of vertical integration rarely seen in U.S. agriculture and never seen on that scale. Current livestock integrators do own feed mills, slaughtering plants, and transportation systems. Few, however, retail their products directly to customers.

By closing that loop and managing every link of the production-to-plate supply chain, Costco and Walmart now have direct control of the products' production, quality, price, and profit.

And somewhere along the way, they became farmers because, without their massive market clout

and integrative downstream muscle, thousands of cows wouldn't be milked in Michigan and Indiana and few chickens would ever be found scratching around Fremont, NE.

Will Walmart and Costco effectively and profitably integrate their food supply chains from the farm to the shopping cart?

It's an open question, but both are starting with products that require minimum handling and little processing to become table-ready "food." Also, milk and chicken are traditional retail "loss leaders," low-margin, everyday items stores sell cheaply to entice shoppers into their stores to likely buy higher margin items.

If it does work—and profit-pinched farmers and ranchers, with open eyes and access to ample credit, become contract producers—consumers and farmers alike can expect to see more of it, says John Hansen, president of the Nebraska Farmers Union.

"The reason is simple," he says. "The integrators control quality, production, costs, distribution, and profit. It's the natural extension of the corporate state."

Farmers on the other hand, warns Hansen, need to be more wary of this route than they currently are today.

"I have said that farmers who sign these contracts are volunteering to get run over by a bus because total integration means the total elimination of markets. The integrators become the only market."

And when you have only one market, there is, in fact, no market.

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*The Farm and Food File is published weekly through the U.S. and Canada. Past columns, events and more are posted at [www.farmandfoodfile.com](http://www.farmandfoodfile.com).*





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## Is your photo the next cover of the *WFU News*?

If your photo is chosen for the cover of the next *Wisconsin Farmers Union News*, you could win a Farmers Union hat! Email your photo to WFU Communications Director Danielle Endvick at [dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com](mailto:dendvick@wisconsinfarmersunion.com) for a chance to win!

### On the cover this month:

The strong and sassy photo of then four-year-old Lilah was snapped back in 2015 by her mom, Katie Breitenmoser, on the family's Merrill dairy farm.



**Win a Farmers Union  
trucker hat!**