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# Against the Grain

## Staying above the fray

Welcome to another edition of your magazine, *Prairie Grains*. I hope that you find the content to be interesting, engaging and, ultimately, useful to your farm operation.

I'm sure that many of you are in the final phases of developing cropping plans for the coming year. When I look back at the number of years which I've been farming, it is amazing to me the degree of excitement and satisfaction I feel when planning each new crop year. I believe that we are fortunate to work in an industry in which no two years are alike, and we are empowered individually to make decisions as to how we wish to proceed. I wish all of you success in your



deliberations.

An upcoming event on the national level to keep on your radar is the meeting of the National Association of Wheat

Growers. This particular meeting will be a combined winter conference and annual meeting of NAWG; either in-person attendance, or virtual experience will be offered. Our state association is a member of NAWG, and certain staff members

and board members will be attending. MAWG has board members who have been elected to various national committees, so their input will be used to assist in the development of certain national policies.

When I consider all of the acrimony and turmoil on display recently in the United States, I'm so thankful that our organization is nonpartisan in nature and scope. We aim to improve the lives and outlook for all Minnesota wheat growers, regardless of any personal political affiliation. No persons, either board members or staff, will be allowed to politicize our mission. We advocate for policies, not political stripes.

Thank you for your continued support, and we will attempt to serve to the best of our abilities.

Gary Anderson  
President, MAWG

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary Anderson".







# Breaking down the budget

## Virtual 2021 legislative session picking up steam

By Drew Lyon, Ag Management Solutions

There's a time-tested adage among political experts in St. Paul: No two legislative sessions are the same. Each year has its own distinct mood and flavor. True to form, the 2021 legislative session has been unlike any that came before it, with the Capitol essentially off-limits to advocacy groups for security and health reasons.

"Every session has its own theme, and this one is certainly hard with all the remoteness," said Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers lobbyist Bruce Kleven. "It's a hard way to run a railroad right now."

The virtual session began Jan. 5. It's been slow going so far; most of the first weeks were spent with committee overview work and examining the governor's biennial budget. MAWG, along with other farm groups, have been examining the governor's proposed Clean Cars Rule.

"So far, there's not a lot of policy going on right now," Kleven said in mid-February from his St. Paul office. "Legislators are spending time getting familiar with the governor's budget, and they'll proceed from there."

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture's proposed \$112.3 million general fund budget in the 2022-23 biennium is an approximately 3% increase from the 2020-21 biennial

budget. The proposal would promote and regulate Minnesota farm and food products, allowing prompt response to diseases and pests that threaten state resources.

The governor's budget would largely build on the one approved for the 2020-21 biennium. Noteworthy proposals for new spending related to agriculture include:

- \$4 million in grants to fuel stations for E-15 blending pump infrastructure.
- \$2 million for low-interest loans for water-quality and pollution-reduction projects.
- \$450,000 for the state's Noxious and Invasive Weed Program.
- \$100,000 to fund rural mental health, including the department's 24-hour confidential support hotline.
- \$100,000 to hire a trade representative in Taiwan, one of the largest importers of U.S. agricultural products (wheat accounts for 8% of Minnesota's ag exports to Taiwan).
- \$500,000 for the new Climate Smart Program (carbon trading program).
- An increase in agriculture pesticide fees by .35% to .9%.

The additional pesticide fees would generate an estimated \$2.25 million across the state.

"That will be something we'll be

**MAWG is seeking a director for its Region 2 position. For more information on applying, contact Coreen Berdahl, at 218-253-4311 ext. 7.**

looking at, because it's a sizable amount when you add it up," Kleven said.

One notable funding endeavor missing from the governor's proposal is the annual resources for the Northern Crop Institute at North Dakota State University. MAWG will continue advocating funding for NCI in the final biennial budget.

"We're certainly going to be monitoring this and looking to restore (funding)," MAWG Executive Director Charlie Vogel said.

The session must end by May 17. Though it's started slow, Kleven expects the action to increase as the clock ticks.

"It's been slow, but we'll get there," he said. "That's the nature of the work." 🌾

# TAMING THE BULLS



BY BETSY JENSEN



# & BEARS

## Irrational markets

Did you see the headlines about GameStop, Reddit and Robinhood? To summarize, an internet chat board on the website Reddit decided GameStop, a video game retailer, was undervalued. The theory spread like wildfire and using a popular trading app called Robinhood, the stock skyrocketed beyond all reason. It is difficult to find a fundamental reason why GameStop rallied from \$2.57 to \$483. Read those numbers again. There is not a decimal point error. It rallied from under \$3 to \$483. Those are the 52-week highs and lows.

There was outrage, finger pointing and lots of

questions. How could the markets act irrationally? Who is to blame? What new laws do we need to create so this never happens again? How could a group of mostly 20-something- year-old traders cause such chaos? As someone who sells commodities, I sat down with my bowl of popcorn to enjoy the GameStop show. Irrational markets?

Been there, done that.

Irrational markets are common in commodity trading. That's why we have spike tops. Look at any commodity chart. It is several months, or even years, of gentle waves interrupted by spike tops. We typically have rounded bottoms



and spike tops. For brief periods, the markets become irrational. There's panic and a belief we are going to run out of the commodity. And it happens in all commodities. Look at lumber during 2020. Soybeans traded over \$17 in 2011. These are not new plateaus for prices or long-term changes. These are blips on a chart when a market behaved irrationally.

You may remember the headlines about negative oil prices in 2020. The stars aligned in a unique situation with oil delivery and a lack of storage, which briefly caused nearby oil prices in specific locations to be negative. There were headlines, but the market did correct itself and oil prices became positive again.

I love irrational markets. They give us sales opportunities we never expected. Eventually the market becomes rational once again, and the party is

over. The GameStop price rally may be remembered right along with Beanie Babies in 1999, dot-com stocks in 2000, Hunt brothers silver in 1980 and even Dutch tulips in 1636. There was a stock market in Amsterdam in the 1600s, and tulips led to financial ruin for many traders. Irrational markets are nothing new.

Irrational markets are not wrong or unjustified. There are fundamental reasons why prices rally. I call markets irrational because the market always overshoots itself. It's like a pendulum that swings too far but ultimately ends up back where it belongs.

We have great sales opportunities for 2021, and these high prices are going to encourage production. Those irrational spike tops get farmers busy producing more bushels, and on the other side of the equation, kill demand for those bushels. Crop farmers are thrilled with

high corn and soybean prices. End users such as livestock farmers or ethanol plants do not share in our enthusiasm for higher crop prices.

We can call weather markets irrational. The market frequently trades the worst-case scenario. We can see that with winter wheat freezes. The winter wheat crop has nine lives, and sometimes there really is damage done. Most of the time the cold weather just makes the market nervous and wheat rallies to include a premium just in case this is the time the cold weather causes damage.

There will be headlines and investigations about GameStop stock behaving irrationally. I am more concerned with watching our commodity prices and ignoring the headlines. If I can make money at these prices, I should be rational and make sales. It is not fun, but it will keep you in business. 🌾

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# JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE (AG) EARTH

Northern Crops Institute continues  
to thrive after four decades

By Shane Frederick  
*Ag Management Solutions*





This is not a joke.

A group of people walk into an Irish bar in downtown Fargo, North Dakota. There's a person from Morocco, another from Tunisia and Egypt, Israel, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Singapore and China.

"You're expecting a punchline, but there's not," said Mark Jirik, director of the Northern Crops Institute. "It's pretty unique – to see all those cultures coming together and learning the value of things we produce here – and getting along. It's kind of fun."

That was one group, of many, that have met at Northern Crops Institute (NCI) – pre-COVID-19, of course – during much of its four decades of existence. Over the years, representatives from all over the world have traveled to the heart of the Red River Valley to visit NCI and take its courses and use its facilities. They're government officials, private industry executives, agricultural workers, ingredient buyers, commodity traders, technical experts, scientists and professors.

"We are an educational facility," said Brian Sorenson, an NCI program manager.

Indeed, NCI is educating people in the

areas that touch so much of the value chain that begins in the fields of North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and Montana.

"Quality doesn't stop at the border," Jirik said. "Crops don't stop at the border."

NCI teaches grain trading and gives market updates. It works with private companies, doing proprietary processing to test new varieties and

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**“ Quality doesn't stop at the border. Crops don't stop at the border. ”**

—Mark Jirik , Northern Crops Institute director

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develop products and recipes. It provides technical services to solve problems in food processing and test for nutritional values.

And it's all in the name of promoting the crops grown in the northern states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and Montana and helping develop and grow markets.

Located on the campus of North

Dakota State University, NCI's charge is to support the region's agriculture industry and value-added processing through programs and services designed to maintain and expand domestic and international markets for the crops grown in the four states.

"I grew up in this part of the world, in northwest Minnesota," said Jirik, who has been NCI's director for three years, "and we were wheat and barley. Today, wheat and barley are still in the region, but corn and soybean acres have grown considerably. At NCI, we've had to change and adapt, as well, because, while wheat and barley are still important, our mission is to support all crops grown in this region."

Whether it's spring wheat's high-quality properties or soybeans high in essential amino acids, northern-grown crops have unique characteristics that are worth telling the world about, Jirik said, even if that means bringing the world to Fargo and NCI to show off those crops.

"Look at how we grow things here," Jirik said. "The climate here gives us different qualities and different

*Continued on Page 11*



Participants of NCI's 2019 Barley to Beer: A Field Perspective Course stand together in a barley field.



NCI transitioned its 2020 Pasta Production & Technology course to a virtual format.





An NCI Staff member tests a fish stick with a texture analyzer, one of many technologies available to participants.

aspects that grain in other parts of the world and other parts of the country don't have. ... The idea (of NCI) was that we needed to highlight that this region is different, and that gives the crops that we grow different attributes."

#### 40 years strong

Northern Crops Institute was initiated in 1979 with discussions about finding ways to promote spring wheat and durum. Two years later, the North Dakota Legislature approved funding to establish NCI, meaning it is celebrating its 40th birthday in 2021.

"It's a neat anniversary," Jirik said. "You think about how much things have changed."

In 1983, the NCI's building was completed at North Dakota State University, and it held its first grain procurement management course for importers. The class drew nine people from Iraq, Oman, Yemen and China.



NCI's Feedmill is an integral part of teaching, research and outreach missions.

Since then, NCI has become a true international meeting and learning center, drawing people – CEOs, product developers, entrepreneurs and leaders of multi-national food companies – from 133 different countries who want to learn how to purchase and process crops and use innovative equipment and who want to test their food and feed or develop new products.

NCI's facilities include an auditorium equipped for translation; analytical, baking, food-processing, pasta-processing and commodity-grading laboratories; a feed production center; and a pilot-scale flour mill; along with use of NDSU's commodity trading room that allows students to practice real-time

*Continued on Page 12*



Participants attend a 2019 Grain Procurement course in the NCI auditorium.

electronic grain trading.

“Lots of things that help agriculture move from the farm to the fork all over the world,” Sorenson said.

Participants leave with tools they can – and do – use.

An impact analysis conducted by the research company Prime46 showed that 51 percent of NCI participants during 2018 and 2019 increased their volume of purchases of U.S. commodities as a result of taking those courses. In addition, 95 percent of participants reported they had greater confidence in the U.S. supply chain, while 99 percent said they had a better understanding of U.S. crop quality because of the courses.

“We get the participants involved,” Sorenson said. “They’re not just standing around and watching us run equipment. We get them involved in quality analysis. They get the chance to get their hands dirty and get a feel for the products.

That’s when learning accelerates, when people get involved in the process.”

They have fun, too. NCI takes visitors to area farms, processing plants and ports, as well as tours of local sights, including lakes and state parks.

#### Growth during COVID

When the coronavirus pandemic began in early 2020 and quickly spread around the world, causing lockdowns and putting a hold on international travel, it looked like it was going to be a big setback for NCI. However, just as it had the ability to adapt to changing agricultural trends over the years, NCI adapted to the changing world.

Turned out there was a silver lining.

Like so many others, NCI turned to the internet during COVID and changed in-person courses into virtual events. NCI’s audience grew, and Jirik and the NCI staff saw opportunities for growth.

A grain procurement course that once

drew 20-30 people to Fargo suddenly had 120 participants online. A food barley course that brought in three people from overseas previously had more than 50 people – half from foreign countries – log in.

“It’s one of the bright spots (of COVID),” Sorenson said. “It really showed us that online courses can complement what we do in person. ... We can reach more people in many parts of the world – companies that maybe can’t afford the cost or the time to send someone to the United States.”

Jirik said ideas for new classes and seminars are popping up all the time. NCI recently scheduled had a webinar on cereal innovation, in which exporters and entrepreneurs talked about what they’re currently working on. Other offerings in 2021 include courses on pasta, barley, beer, vegetable oils, soybean procurement and corn purchasing and processing.





Participants look at pasta samples made with different formulations and ingredients.

“We’ve opened up to audiences and reached people we wouldn’t have reached before,” Jirik said.

Of course, like so many people, Jirki is looking forward to having NCI buzzing with visitors again. But whether they come to Fargo in the flesh or via the world wide web, NCI’s mission remains the same.

“It’s a powerful thing when you can make those connections, between the wheat that you grow and the soybeans that you grow on your farm to you talking to the person running the food program in Ghana, and they want to incorporate soy flour so they can increase nutrition of school children. That’s when you go from a farmer in North Dakota to really feeding the world.”

And that’s no joke.

For more information, or to learn more about the Northern Crops Institute, visit [northern-crops.com](http://northern-crops.com). 🌾

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# MODERN TIMES

## Zoom caught some companies flat-footed Not the North Dakota Grain Growers Association

By Drew Lyon, Ag Management Solutions

The expanse of North Dakota's landscape proved beneficial when COVID-19 effectively shut down most in-person business meetings. Prior to 2020, the North Dakota Grain Growers Association (NDGGA) was already acclimated with Zoom, given the vast distance between the 12 board directors throughout the state. When the pandemic hit, the advocacy group had virtual dialogue down pat.

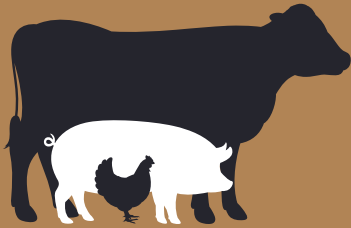
"We're fortunate in this regard: we started Zoom almost four years ago. Because of our diversity, it was easier that way," NDGGA Executive Director Dan Wogsland said. "So, we were ready because we'd already experienced it."

Holding virtual board meetings allows farmer-directors to multitask and continue getting work done on the farm while staying engaged.

"We really like that – sometimes, I'll be spraying during a call," NDGGA President Tom Bernhardt said. "(Zoom) is a really useful tool for our state."







North Dakota's livestock industry contributes \$1 billion in economic activities. It also depends on North Dakota State University to help improve meat quality through advanced research involving nutrition, genetics, handling and husbandry.

Wogsland was reached at his residence in Bismarck, N.D., where he's stationed during North Dakota's legislative session. Lawmakers convene for their legislative session in Bismarck for up to 80 days, and must complete their legislative business by May 1, though Wogsland doesn't expect the session will last that long. It's been quiet at the state Capitol; Wogsland and NDGGA have advocated remotely, and it's been a mixed bag.

"Virtual has been a blessing and a curse," Wogsland said. "We're all social beings who like to get together, and we just haven't been able to do that, and that's tough."

NDGGA is a member of the North Dakota Ag Coalition. During prior sessions, farmer-leaders would gather for a weekly morning breakfast. The event is now held virtually, but attendance has boomed, with as many as 60 participants. Remote testifying has also proven to be a positive for NDGGA, allowing advocates to testify without leaving their farms.

"We can now have someone testifying just as easy as I can," Wogsland said. "From that perspective, it's been great."

One of NDGGA's core policy priorities this year is securing funding for the Ag Products Development Center (APDC) at North Dakota State University. The center, which has been in the works for several years, would combine meat science, cereal science, the Northern Crops Institute and North Dakota's Trade Office into a single state-of-the-art facility.

"It's very much needed," Wogsland said. "We can't obtain and retain top-quality researchers if we don't give them the tools, and this center is a way to give

them the tools."

At press time, the Republican-sponsored bonding bill in the Legislature, totaling \$800 million, included funding for the construction of the APDC.

"That would be a huge accomplishment for North Dakota ag," Bernhardt said.

NDGGA is also asking the Legislature to fund university research and extension efforts. The legislative process can be cumbersome, but it pays off for those who are patient. Following a meeting with North Dakota House Majority Leader Chet Pollert, Wogsland said he's feeling positive about the outlook for the 2021 session.

"We've got a long way to go, and we're moving forward," Wogsland said. "It's going to be a busy time, and it's never over until it's over, so you just roll with the punches."

### **Moving ahead**

Established in 1967, NDGGA is a membership-organization that relies on its members to fund its mission on behalf of the state's approximately 15,000 wheat farmers and 2,000 barley farmers. Nearly 30% of a \$95, one-year membership goes toward lobbying efforts in Bismarck and Washington, D.C.

"We welcome everybody and represent a lot of acres across the state," Wogsland said. "We go to work for those folks."

Normally, NDGGA leaders would be visiting the nation's capital this year, where they'd visit with lobbyist Jim Callan and meet with North Dakota's congressional delegation. That trip, of course, isn't happening, either, but

*Continued on page 16*

Wogsland said his team is fortunate to have forged strong bonds with North Dakota's congressional leadership.

"We work really well with them. They keep us in the loop on all of the ag issues," Wogsland said. "We're really lucky to have a lot of friends here in Bismarck and D.C. ... This business is all about working with people and getting this done."

Wogsland said Callan has been a key asset since he started working with NDGGA several years ago, helping to give North Dakota farmers a voice in Washington, D.C. on issues related to trade, tariffs economics, conservation, transportation and more. NDGGA is also advocating for the next Farm Bill; the current Farm Bill expires in 2023.

"We feel like we haven't missed a beat, and we're starting to get our name out there as an organization that wants to do great things," said Callan, a former senior USDA official. "NDGGA has a lot of things they want to do, and it's an excellent fit, because I want to do a lot for them."

So far, the legislative business in Washington, D.C., has mostly revolved around the latest round of COVID-19 relief. But the latest round, which is likely to top \$1 trillion, may not include direct payments to producers. The

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most recent COVID relief package, passed late last year, included a provision that compensated farmers \$20 per acre for farmers affected by the pandemic. However, farmers who used prevent planting didn't qualify for the compensation. NDGGA is advocating for an amendment for prevent planting acres to be included in the next package.

"We want those prevent planting acres to be covered, because there was a significant amount of acres prevented from planting in North Dakota in 2020," Wogsland said.

"We've been so lucky to have Jim,"

Wogsland said. "Since Jim came on board, we now have advocacy for North Dakota farmers at the national level."

Amid the uncertainty of the ongoing pandemic, Wogsland said his board, along with the state's farmers, is eager to begin spring planting.

"We've seen prices rebound, and with that, a smile on farmers' faces," Wogsland said. "There is worry about how dry it is here. Sans that, there's a lot of optimism."

A full list of NDGGA policy resolutions – including transportation, risk management, economics, technology and more – is available at [ndgga.com](https://ndgga.com). 🌾



Executive Director Dan Wogsland and NDGGA directors meet with Sen. John Hoeven at the Capitol.



# Teammates

Tom and Tami Bernhardt work together to grow their own

By Drew Lyon, Ag Management Solutions

A farmer-led board doesn't get much stronger than the North Dakota Grain Growers Association, according to Executive Director Dan Wogsland.

"I've got the best board on earth," he said. "They treat me well, and their hearts are in the right place. They work hard for North Dakota farmers."

The feeling is mutual, according to the board's newest president, North Dakota farmer Tom Bernhardt.

"Dan is a wealth of knowledge," Bernhardt said. "He's sharp guy and has been doing it such a long time. We're lucky to have him."

Bernhardt farms about 65 miles southeast of Bismarck, where he's been keeping tabs on the latest policy development coming out of the state capital. Though he hasn't been to Bismarck during the current session, Bernhardt has assisted Wogsland with written testimonies to legislative committees.

"I'm getting more out of it than I put in," said Bernhardt, a longtime NDGGA



Family affair: North Dakota farmers Tom and Tami Bernhardt with their brood.

member who became president in summer 2000. "We have a good board, they're all engaged and the younger guys are sharp."

Farming is a family endeavor for the Bernhardts. Tom works alongside his wife, Tami, and their son, Austin on the fifth-generation, no-till operation.

"We've been strictly no-till since the mid-90s," he said. "My feeling is that Mother Nature can bite you harder than the markets."

Together, the Bernhardts raise spring wheat, alfalfa, sunflower, corn, soybeans, barley and cattle.

Tom is quick to point out that Tami, a past winner of Farm and Country Guide's Country Woman of the Year, is every bit his farming equal.

"She is 100 percent involved," said

eternal optimists," he said, adding his input costs were reasonable this winter. "When you look at the commodity prices, we can lock-in some profit. ... but we're going to need rain."

He's also bullish on his spring wheat crop.

"I like the chemistry, crop protection and the different chemistry with spring wheat," Bernhardt said. "There are a lot of things that make wheat attractive, and it's nice to be combining when it's 90 degrees outside."

After connecting virtually for months, Bernhardt is looking forward to visiting in-person with his colleagues in the near future, possibly as early as this spring.

"I really like Zoom," he said, "but we're all ready to meet again and do what we can to help farmers in our state." 🌾

Tom Bernhardt, who raised five children with his wife. "She runs the machinery, plants the crop, can adjust the planter. We're a team."

With a rally in commodity prices and trade tensions eased, Bernhardt is feeling confident heading into the growing season, though he's growing a bit concerned about the dry winter.

"Farmers, ranchers—we're



Pete Hvidsten, Minnesota Wheat's newest board member, farms near Stephen, Minnesota with his wife, Kristen, and their three children.

# Growing with the flow

New board member eager to tackle challenges

By Drew Lyon  
*Ag Management Solutions*

When Pete Hvidsten first joined Minnesota Wheat Council's Research Committee in 2010, he felt a bit in over his head taking in the conversations between Council directors and his fellow farmers.

"It was overwhelming," he said, "but I took enjoyment by understanding the research side of wheat and how commodities work."

Hvidsten, who holds an agronomy background from North Dakota State University, found his footing and remained active on the committee for about five years. In 2012, he was appointed to the Sugarbeet Research and Education Board, and served as treasurer from 2014-2017.

"That was a good growing experience," he said. "I was able to learn how the industry works in terms of education."



Last year, outgoing Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council Director Tim Sedlacek suggested to Hvidsten that he run for Sedlacek's open board seat. Hvidsten embraced with gusto the opportunity to direct wheat checkoff investments, figuring there was little risk in applying.

"I decided to go for it," he said. "It's just an election and if I lose, well, I wasn't supposed to do it then."

In January, wheat farmers in Minnesota's Area 1 elected Hvidsten to the Council, where he'll serve a three-year term. Hvidsten's term begins July 1.

"We're pleased to welcome Pete to our diverse team of directors," Council Chair Scott Swenson said. "His expertise on the agronomy side will be a huge asset going forward, and we look forward to visiting with him in-person in the near future."





Hvidsten has had experience with gluten-free diets; along with his passion for research, he said he's eager to dispel myths surrounding wheat.

"There's some negative info out there about wheat, so I definitely can educate people about that and fight back against the negativity on social media," he said.

Hvidsten farms east of Stephen, Minn., less than 10 miles from his childhood home. He farms with his dad, who's semi-retired. The Hvidstens grow mostly spring wheat, along with soybeans, edible beans, corn and canola.

Joining the Council won't be the first time Hvidsten had to step out of his comfort zone.

In 2017, his brother decided to leave the farm and move to Arizona. Hvidsten had to learn welding and the mechanical finer points of his farm equipment – not his strong suit, he admitted.

"I had to focus my energy and learning those things on the farm," he said. "Now I feel like I'm at a place where I've adapted enough and mostly farming on my own."

Hvidsten is married to his wife of 16 years, Kristen, and their three daughters, Kate, Maddie and Ella. Off the farm, he enjoys traveling, fishing and golfing. He's feeling positive heading into the 2021 growing season.

"Hopefully there's a light at the end of the tunnel with COVID," he said. "The rally in the markets with pretty much every commodity have been great to see. We had a nice fall, got a lot of field work and there's a lot of optimism going into 2021 for all those reasons. I'm excited to get going when that time comes."

With a decade of ag leadership under his belt, Hvidsten doesn't think he'll feel overwhelmed this time around.

"I'm interested in learning how the Council works, and how I can be an asset," he said.

### Council directors returning

A pair of MWRPC directors earned reelection in February. Rhonda K. Larson, a East Grand Forks farmer who grows wheat, soybeans and sugar beets, will return to her Area 1 directing position.

Larson has been farming alongside her son and two brothers for 30 years, and enjoys the challenge of producing new varieties.



"I am interested in the promotion of wheat varieties, which contain all the valuable traits of high protein, disease resistance and high bushels with excellent milling quality," she said. "I believe research and promotion can help improve the profitability of wheat production."

Members of the Minnesota Wheat Research and Promotion Council are elected to direct and invest Minnesota wheat checkoff

dollars to benefit wheat producers. Checkoff dollars can't be used for lobbying purposes.

To be considered for a Council position, a person must have shared in the profits and risk of loss from producing wheat during the current or preceding marketing year. Directors are elected to serve three-year terms, and the board meets approximately six times throughout the year.



Area 2 farmers reelected Scott Swenson, an Elbow Lake, Minnesota, farmer. Swenson grows wheat, soybeans, corn and cover crops. He's also a member of several commodity groups, including the Minnesota Association of Wheat Growers. Both Larson and Swenson's terms begin July 1.

"I would like to be part of an organization that is striving to keep wheat viable in Minnesota," Swenson said.

"I will be an advocate for research that makes wheat more profitable, as well as promoting wheat both domestically and in international markets." 🌾





# Simply the ‘Best’

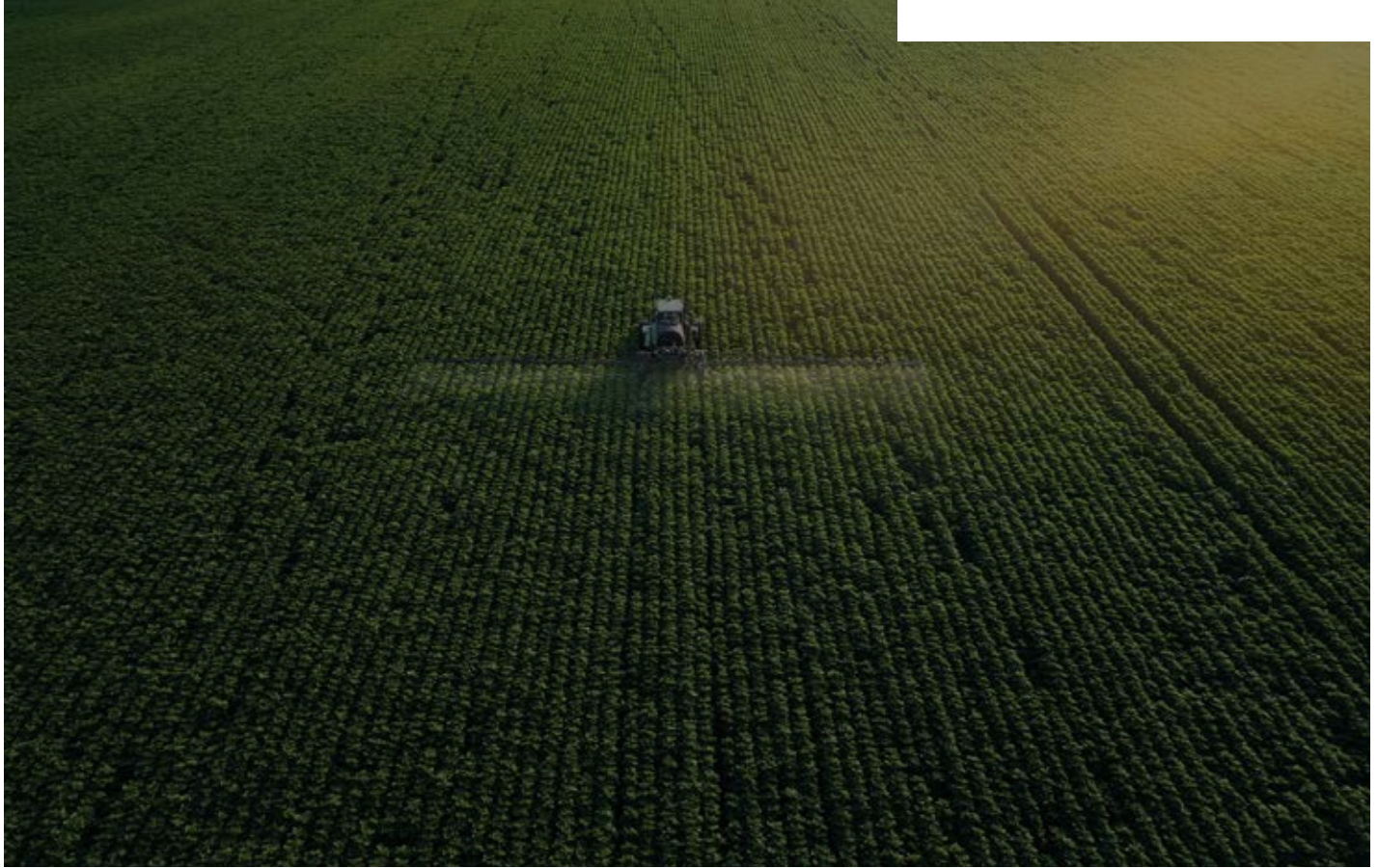
## Best of the Best moves online for 2021

By Kaelyn Platz  
*Ag Management Solutions*

Wheat, corn and soybeans, oh my! With many overlapping commonalities between these three commodities, North Dakota State University and the University of Minnesota Extension, along with a half-dozen commodity groups from the two states, partnered to present producers with current research information during the 2021 Best of the Best virtual event. In this workshop, growers had the opportunity to learn from leading researchers and extension specialists about numerous topics relevant to their farming operation heading into the 2021 planting season.

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### **Xtend and Enlist Soybean Systems**

First on the docket to speak was Joseph Ikley, extension weed specialist at North Dakota State University. Ikley emphasized the importance of following dicamba's new label updates.

Focusing on Xtend and Enlist soybean systems, Ikley highlighted research data showing different levels of antagonism when tank mixing dicamba and Group 1 herbicides (Assure II, Fusilade, Select Max or generic equivalents) on the control of grass weeds and volunteer corn. Additionally, he provided high-level options for tank mixes for postemergent control of waterhemp for the two systems. He also mentioned antagonism between glyphosate and 2,4-D or dicamba reducing barnyard grass control in southern states. It is not currently a problem in the region, but growers should be aware.

"Liberty plus Enlist One is a pretty good tank mix all by itself," he said. "Pretty synergistic on these broadleaf weeds."

To conclude his presentation, Ikley discussed mixing compatibility issues. He showed some examples of jar tests he did between Enlist One and glyphosate and keyed in one of the tests.

"Once we have a potassium salt [of glyphosate], we will get these products falling out of solution," he said.

Using an AMS adjuvant and allowing plenty of mixing time between the additions of AMS, glyphosate, and Enlist One can help keep the products in solution.

### **Managing Fertilizer for Soybean**

Soil fertility plays a large role in affecting production yields. UMN research, sponsored by the Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council (AFREC) and the Minnesota Soybean Research & Promotion Council checkoff, shows that timing and rate of potassium is imperative. Applying high rates of potash fertilizer can sometimes cause chloride injury to soybean.

"What I have been stressing to farmers is with the data we have been seeing, these higher application rates we can see some issues and we have to be very careful in terms of how much we apply ahead of the soybean crop," said Daniel Kaiser, a UMN extension soil fertility specialist.

Aside from potassium, Kaiser discussed crop removal and soil test maintenance approaches to fertility management. The question he posed was: "Can you build your soil?"

If the answer was yes, then he recommended to apply low rates of phosphorus and potassium over time. If the answer was no, research shows that sufficiently fertilizing low testing soils would have the same yield.

Kaiser additionally made recommendations for timing phosphorus applications within the rotation, according to research results.

"Managing phosphorus and soil testing is a major thing to consider," he said. "Getting a handle of where you're at is very important."

*Continued on Page 22*

### Spider Mite and Grasshopper Injury

Pest management is vital for all crops.

Janet Knodel, extension entomologist from NDSU, went into detail discussing two prevalent pests found in the Midwest - the grasshopper and spider mites.

She discussed the life cycles, egg laying sites and how and when to scout your fields for both pests. Warm, dry weather in late spring followed by a warm summer with adequate rainfall and a long fall resulted in the high grasshopper populations seen in 2020. Actively scouting fields and fields margins is important for managing grasshopper populations before they become a problem.

“Grasshoppers have chewing mouthparts, so they do a good job causing defoliation and stripping those leaves,”

Knodel said.

Knodel added that the damage caused by spider mites can be just as bad.

“Spider mites injure plants with piercing-sucking mouthparts and feed on plant sap,” she said. “You will first see the damage as stippling or little white spots on the leaf, and then yellowing or bronzing and then leaf drop under severe infestations.”

Leaf damage decreases photosynthesis and increases water loss, leading to reduced yield.



### Soybean Sudden Death Syndrome: Changing Lessons Learned in the Northern States

Sudden Death Syndrome (SDS) is a harmful disease caused by soilborne fungus called *Fusarium virguliforme*. Yield losses can be greater than 50%, but usually are less over an entire field.

Losses depend on when plants are infected, extent of problem in the field, weather and soybean variety.

“SDS often is severe in well-managed soybean fields with high yield potential,” said Dean Malvick, an extension plant pathologist with the UMN.

Symptoms for SDS usually start appearing in early August and have yellow and brown patches. The disease effects the roots and damages the leaf tissues. It can be confused with brown stem rot, other root rots and other diseases that cause leaf discoloration.

“SDS continues to spread,” Malvick said. “It’s not everywhere, but, again, we don’t know where it is until we see it.”



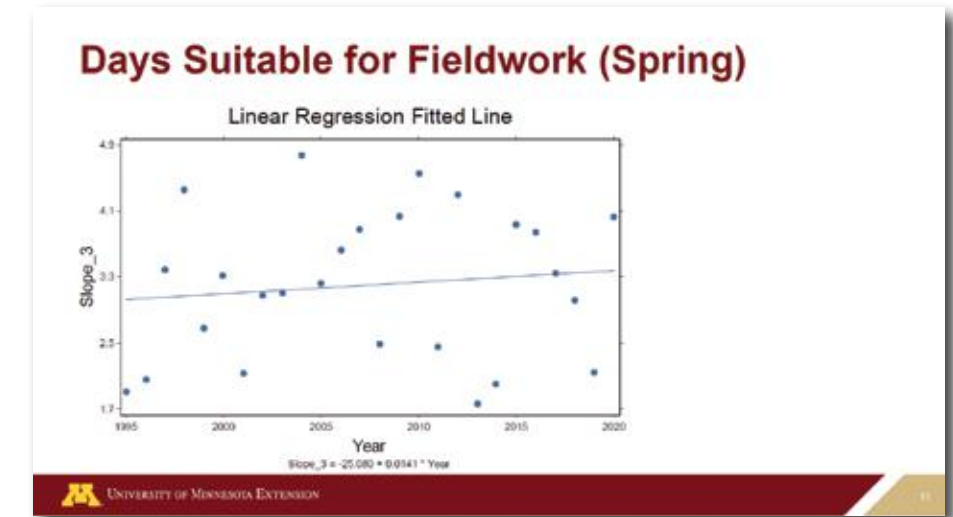
## Climate and Weather

Future climate projections indicate we may begin to see warmer winters, with cooler and wetter starts to growing seasons in April and May – along with higher humidity in the summer— farmers will have myriad weather factors to contend with to complete their fieldwork in future seasons.

Increasing atmospheric CO2 concentrations will benefit C3 crops like wheat, sugarbeet, and soybeans, but warmer summer nights with higher dew points will negatively affect cool season crops like wheat.

“We have air conditioning – we can make ourselves comfortable,” said Jochum Wiersma, UMN extension small grains agronomist. “Plants, unless they’re in a greenhouse or growth chamber, don’t have that option.”

Wiersma dug into past data to summarize the average number of days suitable for fieldwork for the whole season; he concluded that overall, it has not changed over time. However, the number of days in spring is trending up while the number of days for fieldwork



in fall is trending down. Thus, the question is: How can farmers harvest more acres with less time?

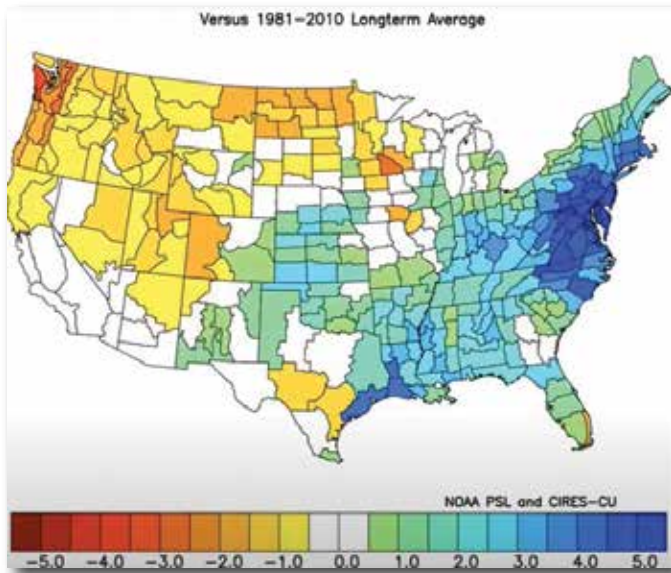
To dive deeper into climate patterns and utilizing last year’s weather data, Daryl Ritchison, director of North Dakota Agricultural Network, offered a prediction for this year’s growing season.

“Remember, (in) 2020 we had an early freeze,” he said. “Additionally, we planted late because, remember, the first part of May was horribly cold.”

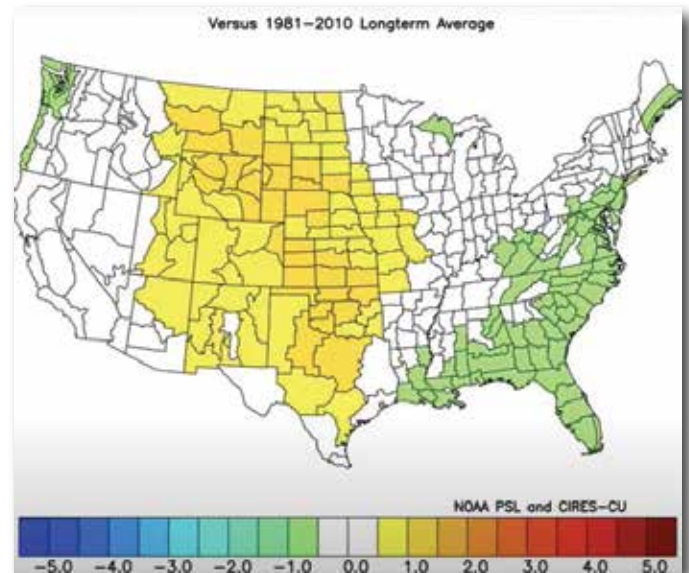
Looking at trends, Ritchison predicts a drier-than-average year, with less rainfall and an overall cooler summer. He also said early indications lean toward more growing degree days and possibly a longer growing season.

“Historically, we have never had two summers as warm as 2020 back-to-back, so why would 2021 be any different?” he said. “This doesn’t mean it is going to be cooler than average. I just don’t think it is going to be as warm.”

*Continued on Page 24*



2021 Summer Temperature Analogs



2021 Summer Precipitation Analogs

## Top Secret Grain Marketing Strategy (Have a Plan)

There are some key crop market factors to consider. Leading the way is the rate at which China is purchasing U.S. ag products.

The feed demand from China has been stronger than expected, and the phase one trade agreement is helping reduce hurdles to trade.

China resumed near-record purchases of U.S. soy in 2020, totaling more than 25 million tons. South American weather and growing conditions, and managed hedge fund trading positions are other factors contributing in increased demand for U.S. commodities.

During his presentation, Frayne Olson, NDSU crop economist/marketing specialist, analyzed the corn, soybean, red spring wheat and wheat markets. He looked at production, demand and exports.

“We are seeing some really aggressive sales, some very aggressive shipments and that has been not only been reflected

in the futures market prices, but also in the basis levels we saw especially at harvest,” Olson said.

## Foreign Matter Reduction in Soybean (2 for 1): Managing Herbicide Resistant Weeds While Protecting Exports

Grain quality standards are focused around easily measurable parameters to make trading more efficient. As a result of these standards, farmers strive to

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“As farmers, we need to produce a crop that someone wants to use in the end.”

—Seth Naeve, UMN extension agronomist

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produce a high-quality crop.

“As farmers, we need to produce a crop that someone wants to use in the end,” UMN Extension Agronomist Seth Naeve said.

With China being the No. 1 buyer of soybeans, they require less than 1%

foreign material. The Midwest continues to meet this standard each year. However, weed seed still finds its way into soybean shipments.

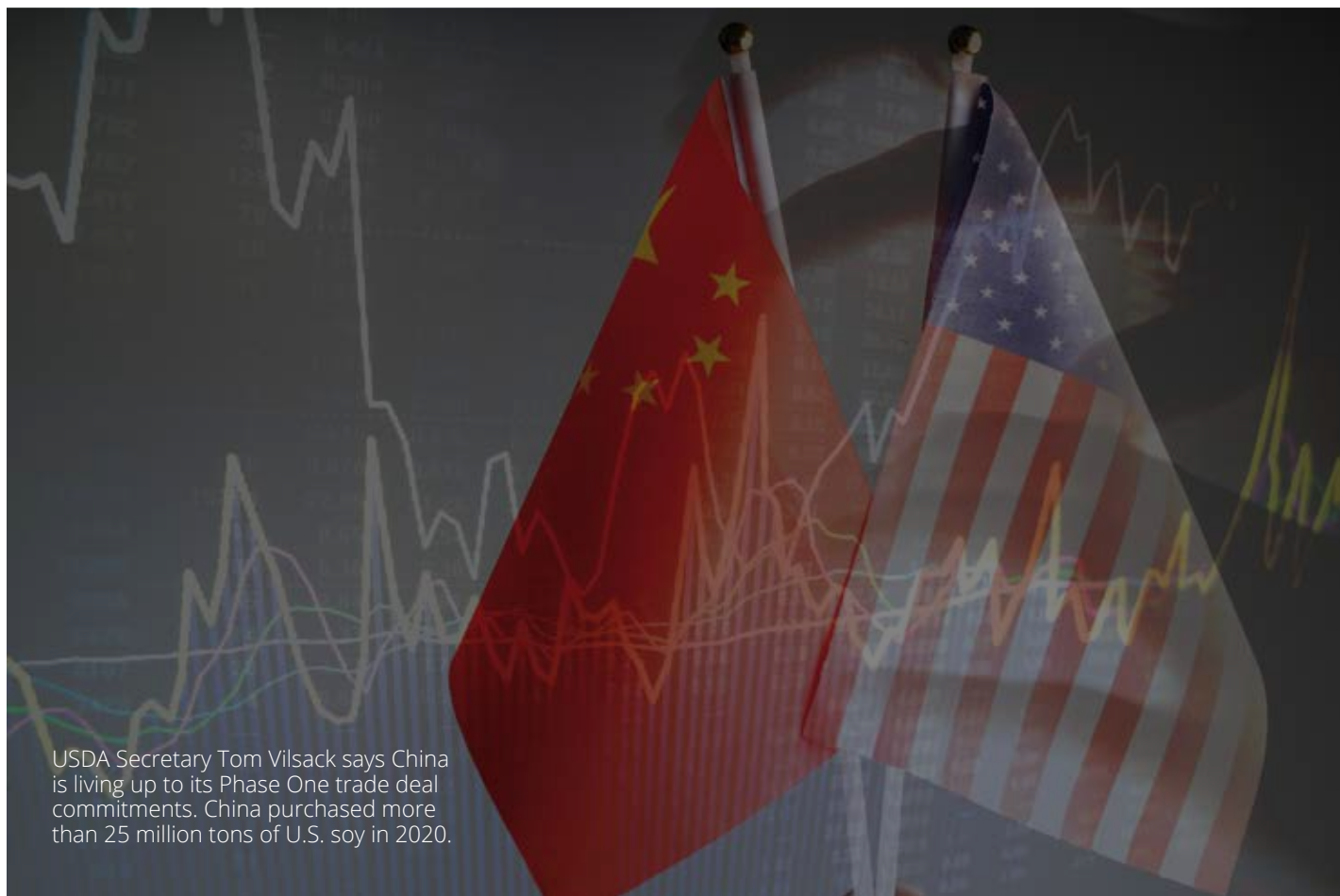
It is important to know what kind of weed seed is being found in samples because the weed seed is going into the combine and then being spread across the field and into other fields, Naeve said.

Naeve encourages farmers to educate themselves on weed management.

“We created a set of six videos...that walk you through planning for managing for weed management in the winter, pre-plant/post planting weed control, and we talk about harvest management and storage,” Naeve said. “I think it is in a pretty easy to digest format.”

To view recordings from the 2021 Best of the Best, <https://bit.ly/39Igyd>. 🌾

*Melissa Carlson, Minnesota Wheat's vice president of research, contributed to this article.*



USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack says China is living up to its Phase One trade deal commitments. China purchased more than 25 million tons of U.S. soy in 2020.



# TAKES ONE TO KNOW ONE

## MAWG members are

part of a vast network of wheat farmers, industry experts, and stakeholders. A membership in MAWG means a wheat family who focuses on legislative issues such as crop insurance, the farm bill, wheat research funds, water quality and other environmental issues.

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**Minnesota Association  
of Wheat Growers**

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# THE NAME OF THE GAME



**By Drew Lyon**  
*Ag Management Solutions*

Former Minnesota Wheat Executive Director Dave Torgerson was driving when he received a call informing him that the University of Minnesota was considering naming an experimental wheat variety after him. He pulled over and demurred, suggesting to University of Minnesota Spring Wheat Breeder Jim Anderson that the variety should be named after the organization, not him.

Nice try, Torgy, Anderson replied. It's yours.

"He said, 'No, name it for the Growers or Council,'"

Anderson recalled. "I said, 'No, we're going to go with Torgy if that's OK.' With the 'MN' prefix, we can name it pretty much anything."

Naming a variety after someone isn't all that rare, Anderson said. The USDA approved the variety, and MN-Torgy was released in 2020. When visiting with a grower last summer, Torgerson was taken aback when someone said to him, "I've got some of your wheat."

"It's an honor," said Torgerson, who retired in 2019, "but really, the best part is Minnesota wheat growers get to see how their investments go into making these varieties."

This growing season, MN-Torgy will be readily available to growers. Its attributes make MN-Torgy an attractive option for

growers, Anderson said, adding that many of the UMN's variety development programs result in publicly released varieties.

"It's high-yielding, has good protein and good straw strength compared to others," he said. "It has good disease resistance – the two main diseases are scab and bacteria leaf streak – and it's moderately resistant to both diseases. It's not the best in class for resistance, but [it's] among the better varieties."

## RECENT UMN RELEASES

Variety	Year of Release	2020 MN Acreage (%)
Linkert	2013	19.6
Bolles	2015	2.1
Shelly	2016	6.2
Lang-MN	2017	1.5
MN-Washburn	2019	4.4
MN-Torgy	2020	0.6



## 'Battle for acres'

Minnesota's wheat checkoff goes partly toward funding breeding activities. The UMN's breeding program is funded through three resources: Minnesota Wheat Council checkoff dollars, the U.S. Wheat and Barley Scab Initiative and via grant dollars from the Minnesota Legislature's Small Grains Initiative.

"All of those combine to fund our technician and operating expenses," Anderson said.

Anderson has been with the University since 1998. He forged a tight bond with Torgerson, but said he's enjoyed working with current Wheat Council Executive Director Charlie Vogel in the two years since Vogel took the helm.

"Charlie's continuing that legacy, and he's doing a great job," Anderson said. "His background is different than Dave's, and he's working well with the growers.

He's proactive in looking out for the industry and farmers, and that's what they hired him for – he's eager to learn what we do and what our needs are."

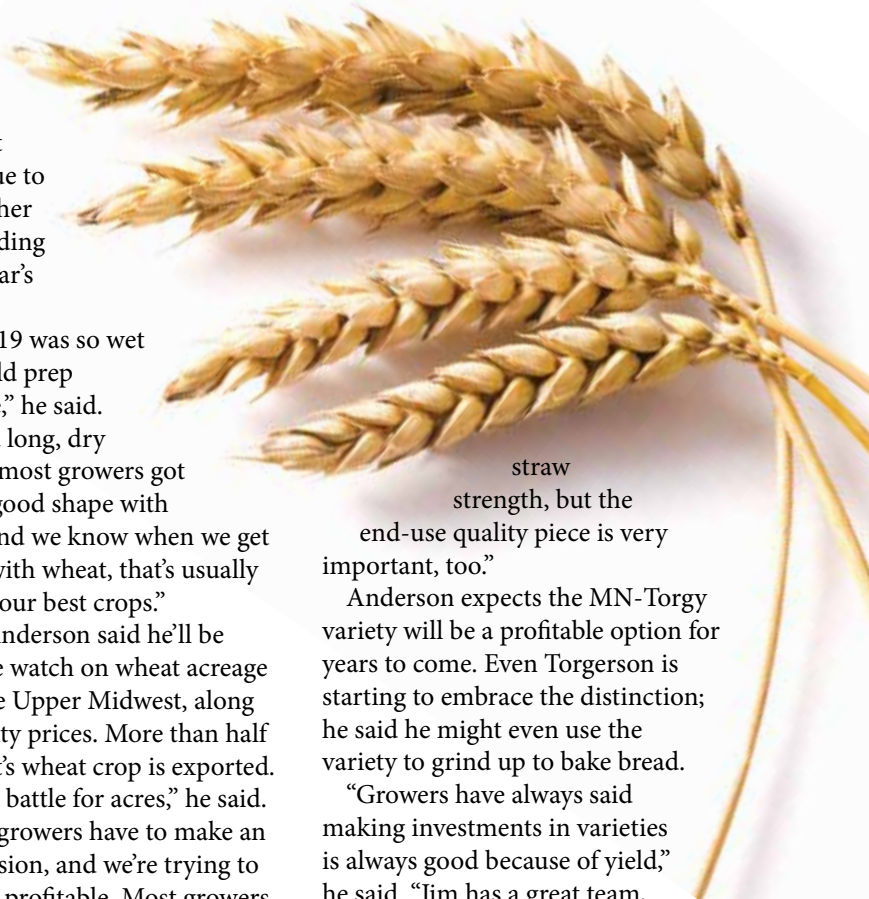
Anderson said the outlook for spring

planting is looking better than last year, mostly due to favorable weather conditions, boding well for this year's crop.

"The fall of '19 was so wet that a lot of field prep didn't get done," he said. "Last fall was a long, dry fall, so I think most growers got their fields in good shape with fall fertilizer, and we know when we get an early start with wheat, that's usually when we have our best crops."

As always, Anderson said he'll be keeping a close watch on wheat acreage numbers in the Upper Midwest, along with commodity prices. More than half of the Midwest's wheat crop is exported.

"It's always a battle for acres," he said. "I understand growers have to make an economic decision, and we're trying to make wheat as profitable. Most growers choose varieties based on protein and



straw strength, but the end-use quality piece is very important, too."

Anderson expects the MN-Torgy variety will be a profitable option for years to come. Even Torgerson is starting to embrace the distinction; he said he might even use the variety to grind up to bake bread.

"Growers have always said making investments in varieties is always good because of yield," he said. "Jim has a great team, and he listens to growers." 🌾



## NEW 2019 Varieties

- ND Rolette
- ND Hammond

## Top Varieties

- ND Grano Durum
- ND Riveland Durum
- ND17009GT Soybean
- ND VitPro Hard Red Spring Wheat



[ndcropimprovement.com](http://ndcropimprovement.com)



## Mission 2021: MDA's march toward certifying 1 million acres

To kick off 2021, Gov. Tim Walz's administration is setting its sights high for its landmark water-quality initiative.

Less than two years since crossing the half-million mark, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture is aiming to certify 1 million acres of farmland for its flourishing Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) by January 2023.

"I'm excited to announce this goal of enrolling 1 million acres in the Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program by the end of my current term as Governor," Gov. Walz said. "This is a key effort we can take to ensure our lakes, rivers and drinking water are protected for future generations. We must do this because Minnesota's natural resources are a unique part of our state and culture. Farmers understand this. They are stewards of our land and water and are already helping to protect these resources."

MDA Commissioner Thom Petersen lauded the program for the myriad benefits it provides not just farmers, but Minnesota's environment and agriculture economy.

"We already know that certified farms have a major impact on our environment for the better," said Petersen, who lives on a horse farm in Pine City. "Soil is being saved on the farm, sediment is staying out of our rivers, and nutrients remain where they should."

Farmers enrolled in the MAWQCP reported greater profitability on their operations and higher yields when compared to their peers, according to early data from AgCentric's Farm Business Management Program.

"The certification program is also good for our ag economy,"

Petersen said. "Early research has indicated that the average net income of ag water-quality-certified farms is 26% higher than non-certified farms. This program is a win for agriculture and our natural resources, and I encourage farmers and landowners to see what it takes to get their land certified."

The MAWQCP supports three endorsements available to water-quality-certified producers: Soil Health, Integrated Pest Management, and Wildlife. Farmers can contact their local SWCD to apply for MAWQCP certification and then complete a series of steps with local certifiers using a 100% site-specific risk assessment process. By law, all data is kept private, and only by signing a formal release can a farmer's name be released publicly. After becoming certified, farmers receive a 10-year contract ensuring they will be deemed in compliance with any new water-quality laws, an official MAWQCP sign to display on their farm and other benefits developed by local MAWQCP providers.

More than 1,000 producers are currently certified in the MAWQCP, covering more than 715,000 certified acres and implementing more than 2,050 new conservation practices. In summer 2019, Gov. Walz and Commissioner Petersen marked the MAWQCP exceeding the half-million-acre mark. Now more than two-thirds of the way toward his administration's goal, Walz predicts farmers will continue leading the way in implementing time-tested conservation practices benefiting all Minnesotans.

"We have always been able to count on farmers when we need them the most," Gov. Walz said, "so I am confident we can make this goal, ensure we're making measured improvements to our valuable natural resources, and safeguard farming profits all at the same time." 🌾

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The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program rewards farmers like you for what you do best, taking care of your land and its natural resources.

To get started and learn more, contact your local soil and water conservation district or go to:


[MyLandMyLegacy.com](http://MyLandMyLegacy.com)





# **AN AG-ECON 'GAME-CHANGER': USFRA PLANTS NEW SEEDS**





## **New USFRA research calls on investors to propel ag-tech and accelerate climate-smart practices.**

**By Prairie Grains Magazine Staff**

It's been the topic of conversation during conference panels and chatted about in hotel lobbies at agricultural association meetings for a quarter century. From research science at the great American land-grant universities to movements such as Allan Savory's Holistic Management, farmer and rancher efforts in sustainability, water quality, soil health, grazing management, natural pest control and other "climate smart" agricultural practices have challenged, motivated and revamped the way American farmers and ranchers have practiced their art.

Better known in the agricultural sector as "best management practices" or "stewardship," farmers and ranchers across the country have quietly and humbly absorbed the risks. Otherwise, it's hard to know what quietly and humbly are referring to. But now it is high time for farmers and ranchers to gain recognition for their sizable contributions to the global mission to renew and revitalize the earth's natural resources – past, present and future – and to redistribute the risks and costs of doing so.

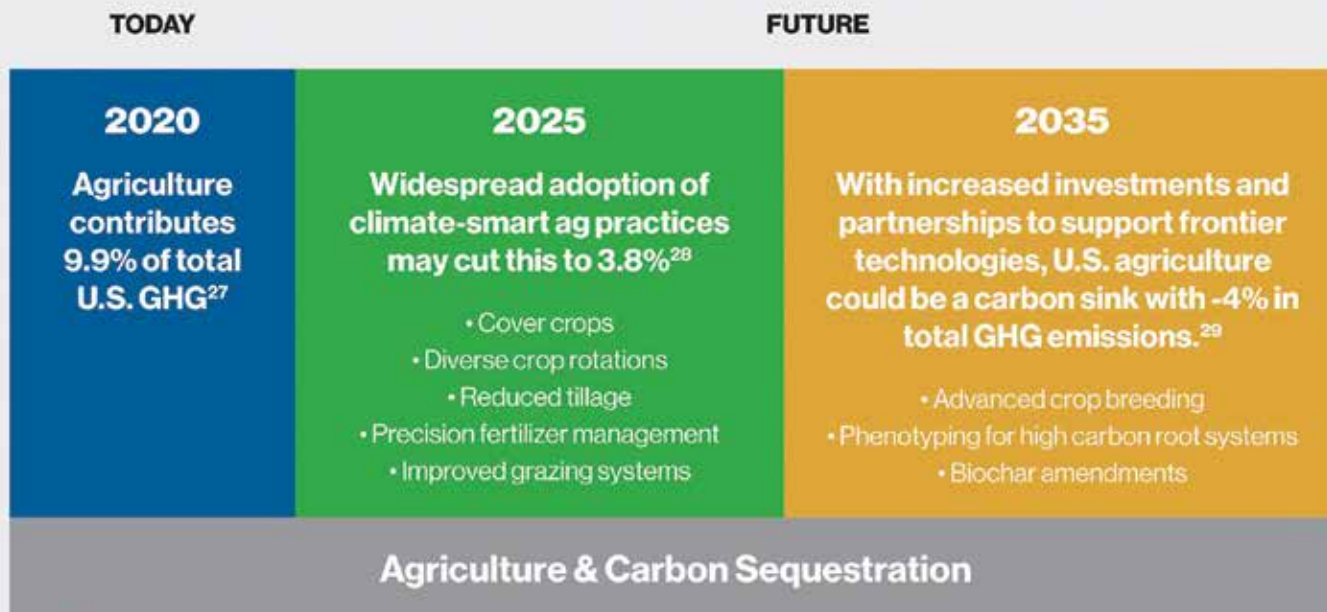
U.S. Farmers and Ranchers in Action (USFRA) CEO Erin Fitzgerald puts it simply: the moment for action is upon us. The future is here; the era of complacency has passed.

"It is time for the finance community to invest in our farmers and ranchers," she said.

USFRA's new Transformative Investment Report analyzes the state of soil-health technology and identifies opportunities for investors to capitalize on a vital sector of the global economy — agriculture, of course — that has been, and

*Continued on Page 32*

## U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Need Investment to Reach Full GHG Emissions Net Negative Potential



<https://usfarmersandranchers.org/transformativinvestment>

can be an even more powerful, force in environmental sustainability.

“Sustainability is the issue of our times,” said USFRA 2021 board chair Anne Meis, a Nebraska farmer and cattle producer. “The focus on climate solutions from business, government and consumers is at an all-time high. For too long, farmers have shouldered the economic burden of adapting new conservation practices. Using precision agriculture, water conservation, livestock integration and proven soil health techniques takes money. Big money. Now is the time for agriculture to tap into private investment capital. This is not the same conversation as in the past; the potential for big investment in agriculture as the solution for climate issues is here.”

### Driving the conversation

USFRA, formerly known U.S. Farmers & Ranchers Alliance, represents farmer- and rancher-led organizations, and food and agricultural partners, with a common vision to further our global sustainable food systems. USFRA

believes American agricultural producers uniquely contribute to nourishing the planet, people, and natural resources. The organization’s focus is creating a proactive collaboration between the best minds in food, agriculture, science and technology to co-create solutions that will result in environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

“What I love about being associated with USFRA is how proactive this organization is,” said Rochelle Krusemark, a Minnesota farmer and USFRA ambassador. “They focus on looking toward the future, and showing how farmers can a part of the solutions as we look at the challenges we face.”

During the past year, USFRA has convened leaders in food, farming and ranching, agri-technologies, and finance to identify current capital flows, review the startup ecosystem, and formulate actionable recommendations for identifiable and measurable investment in climate-smart farming and ranching practices.

The culmination of this extensive research is the report, “Transformative

Investment in Climate-Smart Agriculture: Unlocking the potential of our soils to help the U.S. achieve a net-zero economy,” which examines farmer and rancher barriers to practice adoption, the current state of climate-smart soil technology, and financial mechanisms available to farmers and ranchers, as well as the investment case for including agriculture in the broader portfolio of net zero economy investments.

The report identifies a need for accessible and efficient tools for soil sampling and soil carbon measurement, along with underlying data standards, methodologies, and datasets to support decision making. Recommendations in the report include:

- Invest in market-based solutions measuring soil health indicators versus outcomes.
- Invest in a national repository of soil carbon reference data.
- Coalesce around the standardization of reference laboratory methods, spectral measurements, and the exchange of soil data.
- Invest in the accelerated adoption



of practice, indicator, and Farm Management Software (FMS) translation tables.

- Invest in solutions to leverage farmer and rancher know-how and speed collaboration.

“As companies and investors continue to build out the climate-smart investing universe, there are many opportunities to create innovative financial products that simultaneously meet the needs of investors, accelerate the transition to climate-smart agriculture, and improve the livelihoods of farmers,” said David LeZaks, senior fellow at the Croatan Institute and report co-author. “From working capital loans for cover-crop seeds to the promise of green bonds and sustainability-linked loans, we identified multiple opportunities to promote or develop financial mechanisms that enable climate-smart agriculture.”

Krusemark said rural America’s lack of equal access to high-quality broadband

was underscored in the report.

“The thing I think was important that came out of this was the inconsistency of rural broadband is a key factor in limiting the number of farmers that can actually utilize the technology that’s available,” she said. “We suspected that before, but now we have the numbers.”

A growing pool of environmental, social and governance (ESG) capital is also becoming available at the ground-level of agricultural production. Cumulatively, these investors can impact both ecosystem recovery and rural economic viability by investing in agriculture that enables and targets climate-smart practice adoption and soil health outcomes.


“This report is a game-changer toward turning the promise of soil carbon sequestration into a reality,” Fitzgerald emphasized. “To continue building momentum, USFRA’s Transformative Investment (TI) Action Network will bring together farmer and rancher

ecosystems with data/technology providers, investors, and members of the food and agriculture value chain to co-create action plans and funding/investment streams.”

The end game: regenerate America’s agricultural soils as a pathway to revitalizing rural communities and reducing agriculture’s carbon footprint, to meet the growing challenges of the next 30 harvests.

“Farmers are the original conservationists. We know how important it is to protect the soil, but farmers alone can’t be responsible for this monumental task,” Addy Battel a 4-H Member who sits on USFRA’s Honor the Harvest Advisory Council. “The next generation of agricultural leaders is already at work with partners across the sector to bring real change.”

To learn more about USFRA and to read their latest reports, visit [usfarmersandranchers.org](http://usfarmersandranchers.org) 🌾



# 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY GENETICS

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# AROUND THE PRAIRIE

By Drew Lyon  
*Ag Management Solutions*

## **Senate confirms Vilsack's return to USDA**

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) and U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) are pleased with the bipartisan U.S. Senate vote approving the appointment of former Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack to that important post again under the Biden-Harris Administration.

"We welcome Secretary Vilsack's return to USDA in a year that is projected to see record U.S. agricultural exports," said USW President Vince Peterson, who currently serves on the USDA Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee for Trade. "We look forward to working with him again to continue building on the successful export market development partnership between U.S. wheat farmers and USDA."

Prior to his eight years serving in the Obama administration, Vilsack served two terms as the governor of Iowa, in the Iowa State Senate and as the mayor of Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. During his first tenure at USDA, Secretary Vilsack helped pass and implement the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act and led a comprehensive effort to improve the safety of the American food supply. In 2017, he became CEO of the US Dairy Export Council.

"Like many farmers across the country, wheat growers are facing economic challenges, and we are pleased to see the Senate and President work to fill these leadership positions at the USDA with qualified candidates, so we can continue to work on policy that benefits rural America," NAWG CEO Chandler Goule said. "Secretary Vilsack is uniquely qualified to head up the USDA, having served there previously and has an exceptional understanding of agricultural and rural issues. We look forward to working with him and continuing to build our relationship with the USDA."

## **NAWG coins coalition in communicating transportation Issues**

In February, the Agricultural Transportation Working Group, a coalition of 71 national-level food, agricultural and related associations, including NAWG, sent the newly confirmed Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg a letter outlining major transportation policies to enhance the efficient transport of agricultural and food products.

## **Bayer announces Roundup update**

Bayer has announced an update related to the Roundup litigation. The company has reached a formal agreement with plaintiffs' class counsel on a class plan designed to manage and resolve future Roundup cases. Bayer has indicated the class is meant to be one part of a holistic solution intended to provide further closure to the Roundup litigation. As part of the agreement, Bayer would be committed to pay up to \$2 billion, provision for which was made and disclosed last year, to support the claims and programs covered by the class plan. Bayer has indicated that this announcement does not make any changes in the availability of their glyphosate-based products.

## **City of Crookston approves Ag Innovation Campus land purchase**

The Crookston City Council formally approved the purchase of 10 acres of land toward the construction of the Ag Innovation Campus during the council's February meeting.

This announcement clears the way for the location's construction – due to begin this spring – in Crookston along Highway 75. The AIC had requested three multi-faceted variances up to 120 feet. The AIC will incubate



other agriculture industry innovations under a mission of using Minnesota soybeans to create new products and jobs and generate myriad economic benefits for rural communities.

“We’ve been working diligently on this project and have been encouraged with the progression as we continue striving toward revitalizing our region’s economy,” said AIC Board Chair Mike Skaug, who farms in Beltrami.”

Soybean production in northwest Minnesota has grown by more than 300% this century. Although the Ag Innovation Campus would improve the profitability of farmers throughout the state, the 11 northwest Minnesota counties that would see the most gain from the Campus produced more than 50 million bushels of soybeans in 2019.

“(Crookston) is proud to be a partner in this project that is such an asset to our community,” City Administrator Amy Finch said. “Many people have committed their time and efforts to make this a reality, and it is a great investment in Crookston.”

In addition to securing state funds and crucial work permits, the AIC is planning a late 2021 production goal. The



group has purchased equipment, opened an office in downtown Crookston and will be unveiling a website later in 2021.

“We’re super excited to see the progress the Ag Innovation Campus is making,” said Craig Hoiseth, an AIC ex officio board member and executive director of the Crookston Housing and Economic Development Authority. “We really appreciate all the work that’s been put into this, and think it’s going to be great centerpiece for city and region.”

**Report: Family-owned farms account for 96% of U.S. farms**

Family farms comprise 96% of all U.S. farms, account for 87% of land in farms, and 82% of the value of all agricultural products sold, according to the 2017 Census of Agriculture Farm Typology report released today by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). The full report is online at [nass.usda.gov](http://nass.usda.gov). 🌾



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