THE NORTH DAKOTA Soybean GROWER MAGAZINE

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THE NORTH DAKOTA Soybean GROWER MAGAZINE

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On the cover

Shiploading facilities like the Temco terminal in Kalama, Washington, are busy loading cargo vessels with agricultural commodities. China is an active buyer of soybeans, wheat and corn as they move closer to fulfilling their commitments in the Phase 1 trade agreement. Active export sales are translating into market opportunities for farmers.

—Photo by Daniel Lemke

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Grain-Handling Bill to be Addressed in the Session

One of the larger agricultural concerns during the last session of the North Dakota legislature was how to get a better handle on insolvencies with the grain-handling business. After much testimony and gnashing of teeth, the decision was made to transfer the regulation and oversight from the Public Service Commission to the Agriculture Department. As often reported in this space and via our blog, the new regulators have devoted substantial time and resources to adopt practices in order to better manage potential problems. No system can be foolproof because, you know full well, it can be difficult to get in front of someone who wants to cheat by coming up with ingenious methods.

As a side note, as a legislator and lobbyist, I often heard complaints about the number and necessity of so many laws. There is your answer: with people constantly looking for ways to circumvent the law, regulators and legislators are often forced to play catchup.

At the last meeting of the interim Agriculture and Transportation Committee in October, it was confirmed that a bill draft is being brought to the session. Without going into excruciating detail, I will pick a few details that would change the industry: North Dakota is the only state that allows scale-ticket conversion to lag once grain is delivered. The practice currently allows for up to 45 days, and this situation causes great uncertainty, especially when insolvency occurs. This bill reduces the conversion time to 30 days and puts the onus on the producer who fails to convert the scale ticket, removing the producer from any access to the credit-sale indemnity fund and the trust fund. Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring hopes that this change will incentivize producers to make up their mind. He also states that attorneys use the confusing language that exists in the code and that, hopefully, this process of making the language simpler will reduce some litigation. It is also good to know that the North Dakota Grain Dealers worked with the Agriculture Department on every portion of this bill.

Most licenses for grain handlers have been condensed so that it is easier for the Agriculture Department to track the license; the requirements for new handlers are being increased so that the Agriculture Department can better vet the new handlers. Licensing steps have been based on the volume of grain handled, but licensing will now move to the commodity's value. Bonding levels are also being changed.

Senator Terry Wanzek is a farmer and a grain handler, and he asked a number of questions, stating that there is frustration on both sides, and seemed to think that this bill draft is on the right track. Chairman Dennis Johnson, also a farmer, talked about how the education that he received during this process of revamping regulations has helped him pay better attention to the notices he gets from grain-handling facilities. Johnson said that he often ignored the first and second notices about deciding what to do with his delivered grain. He now comes to a decision in a timelier manner.

Commissioner Goehring is also a farmer. He testified that he has personally been burned by dishonesty, recovering about 6 cents on the dollar. It hurts, he said, going on to explain that he knows of lives that have been ruined, even cases of suicide because of trying to appease a few producers who could not make up their minds. Goehring explained how that situation can put the entire industry at risk, and he is hopeful that some of the insolvencies of the past few years have heightened awareness among producers.

Veteran lawmaker and educator Phil Murphy is the NDSGA liaison between legislators and farmers.

Senator Jim Dotzenrod, also a farmer, asked about the buyer who might not be operating in an honest manner and who bore the responsibility for monitoring that buyer. In his response, the commissioner said that, in his mind, the producer would not be held responsible in that case and that some grace, mercy and common sense would be applied should the buyer not carry through with a contract.

Also receiving some attention during the last session was a new bond fund that would essentially self-insure farmers against large losses, but it was stated that the fund was not a part of this bill. If someone wanted to resurrect that concept, it would have to be a separate action.

Legislative Arrangements and Procedures has met, and the committee is working on using spaces all over the capitol, even high up in the tower, in order to make enough large committee rooms available for the regular session to allow for social distancing and the equipment needed for virtual attendance. There has also been talk about a substantial, but unknown, percentage of lawmakers who do not want to be physically present, so new voting boards and other allowances are being made so that everyone can stay safe.

In Memoriam

Dusty Lodoen of Westhope died tragically on Wednesday, September 30, while doing what he loved, farming the land. Dusty served on the North Dakota Soybean Council's board as a director from 2012-2015. We wish to extend our deepest condolences to his wife, children and the entire Lodoen family.

Reason for Optimism

I had honestly forgotten how much fun and rewarding harvest can be. The past several fall harvest seasons were full of challenges, including bad weather that led to difficult harvest conditions, for North Dakota farmers. Early snowfalls; muddy, saturated soils and overall tricky circumstances made the harvest process long, complicated and not very satisfying the past two years. For a lot of North Dakota farmers, the 2019 harvest lasted well into 2020.

Not only was the process of gathering the crop difficult, but the economics were also challenging. Depressed commodity prices have led to difficult economic conditions. With that backdrop, it's easy see why it was hard to get enthused about slogging through a months-long harvest process to gather an undervalued crop.

With those memories fresh in my mind, it was a treat to have the 2020 fall season proceed largely free of major disruptions brought on by weather. There were the typical challenges, including mechanical issues and day-to-day decisions that needed to be made, but overall, the 2020 harvest season was a welcome change for a lot of other farmers and me.

There's nothing quite like gliding through a field of soybeans that you've worked all year to grow. It's the result of planning, planting and managing. When we finally get to gather the fruits of our labors, and that process goes smoothly, there aren't many better feelings for a farmer.

Beyond the harvest itself, there's also reason to be optimistic about what's happening in agriculture. Prices the past few months have improved, largely because demand has increased. Export sales of soybeans, corn and wheat have been strong in recent months; these sales have gone to China and many other countries around the world. That news is good because exports are important to North Dakota farmers.

I know everything did not go smoothly for farmers in North Dakota this fall, and challenges still exist on many fronts, including international trade and farm economics. However, it is encouraging to go through a much more streamlined harvest process knowing that there is global demand for the quality products that North Dakota farmers are more than happy to deliver.

I'm looking forward to more reasons for optimism in 2021.

Joe Ericson
President, North Dakota Soybean Growers Association

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A Balancing Act

Rep. Dennis Johnson's political career was almost over before it ever really began.

Johnson, a farmer from Devils Lake, North Dakota hadn't seriously considered entering the world of politics. No one in his family was politically active, and the closest he had come was being involved with 4-H and the Jaycees. Still, by 1990, Johnson was a candidate for state representative.

"A good friend was looking for a candidate to run in our district," Johnson says. "We got together and talked about that, and I asked her what the involvement was like in the legislature. By the next weekend, she'd convinced me to be a candidate."

He campaigned, but lost.

"I thought that would be the end of my career," Johnson explains. "I didn't get elected the first time around, but I had the experience of campaigning. After getting involved and meeting people at the state level, I decided to try it again, and this time, I got elected."

Johnson has served in the legislature since 1993 and is currently the chair of the standing Agriculture Committee. During the recently completed interim period, he chaired the Interim Agriculture and Transportation Committee.

Agriculture Ties

While Johnson has served in the legislature for 27 years, his farming roots run deeper.

"I started driving tractor for Dad in 1957 or 1958," Johnson recalls with a laugh. "I was a pretty small guy, working summer fallow and staying 100 feet away from the power poles, so I wouldn't hit them with a 10-foot steel wheel cultivator."

Johnson started farming on his own in 1974 after returning from his service in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War. Over the course of more than 45 years farming, Johnson says that he's been through ups and downs with crops, prices, expenses and interest rates.

"I am well educated in how that all works," Johnson states.

Johnson currently raises corn, soybeans and wheat, with an occasional malting barley crop. He previously had a cow-calf operation, raised sheep and grew a wide variety of grains. For more than 20 years, he also had a custom-harvesting operation that took him through the nation's breadbasket for months at a time.

"We started on wheat in southern Oklahoma in May, worked our way back and would get done in North Dakota by the end of August. Then, we'd head to South Dakota for fall harvest, work our way north and get done in North Dakota by the end of November," Johnson explains. "We did that while I was in the legislature, too, so I was on the road quite a bit."

Johnson says that he, eventually, phased out the livestock; rented the pastures; and, in 2006, quit custom harvesting.

Dennis Johnson of Devils Lake has balanced the demands of farming and legislative service for nearly three decades.

Looking Ahead

When the gavel falls on January 5, 2021, to open the 67th General Assembly, Johnson expects that the issues his Agriculture Committee

Rep. Johnson's crop rotation has changed over the years and now includes soybeans, corn, wheat and sometimes malting barley.

will address will include dealing with statute changes involving the shift in oversight for grain dealers from the Public Utilities Commission to the North Dakota Department of Agriculture. He states that the bill's details were largely hammered out during the interim session, but the measure will have hearings in both the House and Senate.

Budget issues will also be pervasive, Johnson explains, especially in light of the drop in oil prices and North Dakota oil production.

"Oil has become a source of revenue for projects we fund, whether it's education, water or highways. We don't have the supply we've had in the past, but we'll make it work," Johnson says. "We have to go out of there with a balanced budget, and sometimes, it hurts a little bit to balance that budget. If you're allowed to just deficit spend, you can really get yourself in trouble."

Johnson states that one of the changes he's seen during his legislative tenure is how inflation has reduced how far a dollar will go and just how much money it takes to fund a state.

Juggling Act

Johnson says that he has worked hard to represent the people and communities in his district. It's a responsibility he takes as seriously now as he did when first elected.

"It has been an honor to represent the people from this part of the state, and try and serve their needs, represent them and try to do a good job of it," Johnson states. "You realize not everybody thinks the same way you do. You're one party or the other when you decide to run, so you realize you're not representing everybody's thoughts, but I've tried to put politics aside and represent the people who are in our community."

It's not easy to please everyone, and sometimes, Johnson explains, the people closest to him have also carried the burden of his elected role.

"You pay a price to be a legislator in North Dakota, but we've made that decision, and it's been rewarding in its own way, too, by being able to help people," Johnson says. "It's tough with the family; you try to be there with your kids growing up with ballgames and the activities they're in. Your wife has to carry the load back home when you're gone and keep the family going, so you have a price you pay, but you try to make it work."

Johnson states that, as a people's legislature, most legislators have to maintain jobs while serving as policymakers. Keeping a balance can be especially challenging when farm and legislative demands intersect.

"Sometimes, it makes it hard when you have to pull your work clothes off and get your suit on to run to a meeting. Then, when things are going on back on the farm, you feel guilty for leaving," Johnson explains. "But you have to do it, then get back home again to try to make up for the time you're gone."

Balancing responsibilities is challenging, but Johnson remains grateful to have been placed in that position.

"I'm just glad to have the opportunity to serve the people here in this district and in the state," Johnson says.

—Story and photos by Daniel Lemke

The demands of serving in the legislature puts a lot of demands on the family, Rep. Johnson says, but helping others is a reward.

Help Shape Our Future

For many North Dakota soybean producers, the only time the soybean checkoff is truly considered is when producers sell their soybeans. Did you know that there is much more to be learned about our soybean industry here in North Dakota, beyond opening the end-gate of the truck and selling our soybeans at the local elevator? North Dakota farmers have the opportunity to help shape the future of the state's soybean industry by becoming involved with the North Dakota Soybean Council (NDSC).

NDSC directors influence where checkoff funds are invested in order to benefit all North Dakota soybean farmers through public research, worldwide market development and promotion, producer education and more. Fresh insight and ideas are always welcome on the NDSC, so we hope producers will consider running for the NDSC or nominating a farmer you think would provide leadership for the industry's future.

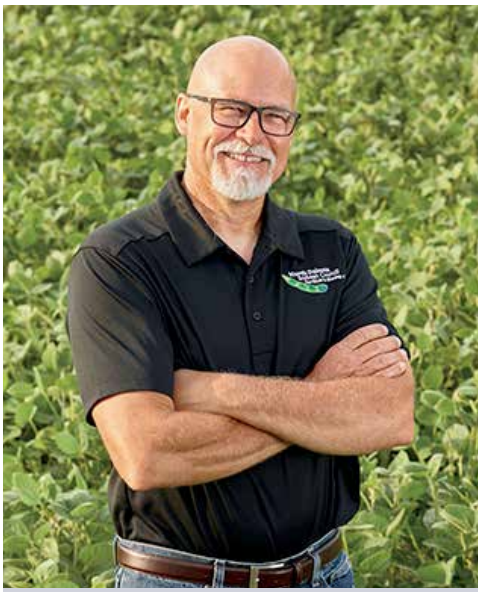
North Dakota is divided into 12 districts. In 2021, the NDSC is seeking four representatives to serve on its Board of Directors: a representative from District 3, LaMoure and Dickey Counties; District 4, Cass County; District 6, Stutsman County; and District 11, Divide, Williams, Burke, Mountrail, Renville, Ward Bottineau, McHenry, Rolette, Pierce, Towner, Benson, and Ramsey Counties.

The process is simple. Watch your mailboxes for green nomination forms that will be mailed by January 1, 2021. Men or women who are soybean producers in the listed counties are eligible. If you are a soybean producer in these counties or if you know someone who would be interested, we encourage you to consider nominating him/her for the NDSC election. It's also okay to nominate yourself.

To ensure fairness and impartiality, North Dakota State University Extension conducts the election.

Like a township or other local system of government, the NDSC is a grassroots organization that relies on farmers to provide direction for the soybean industry, including where to invest checkoff dollars.

Serving on the NDSC is a rewarding experience that helps you learn about the many facets of the state's soybean industry. More importantly, it offers farmers, like you, the opportunity to help shape the soybean's future in North Dakota.



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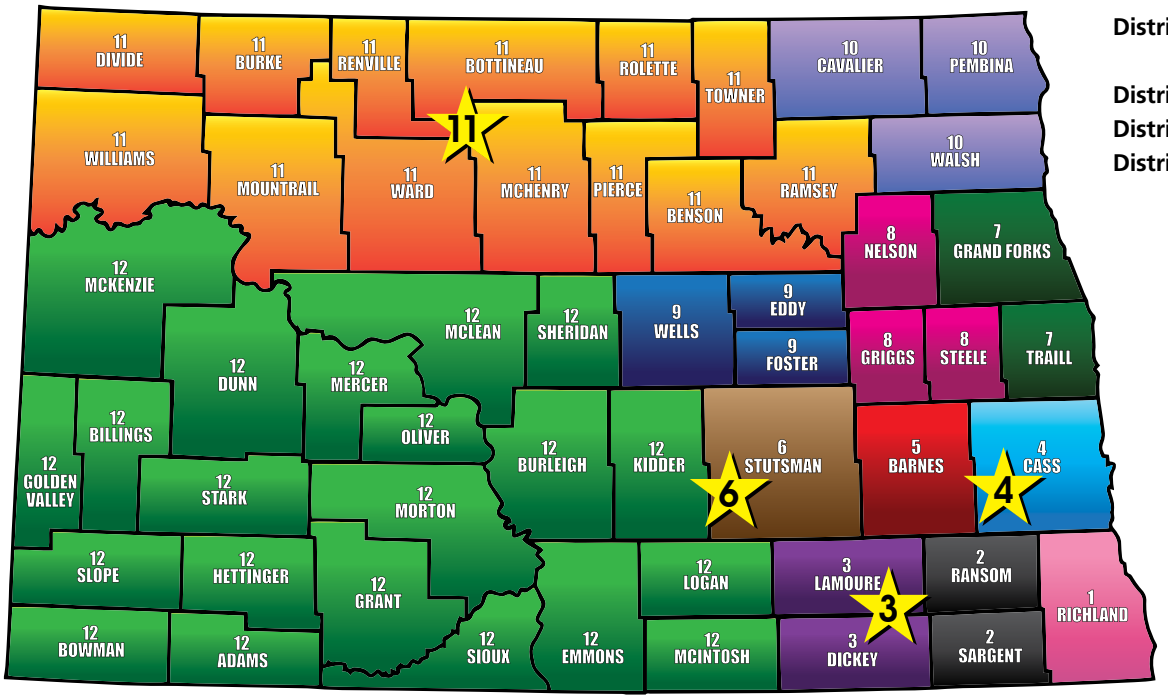


District 3: LaMoure and Dickey Counties
District 4: Cass County
District 6: Stutsman County
District 11: Benson, Bottineau, Burke, Divide, McHenry, Mountrail, Pierce, Ramsey, Renville, Rolette, Towner, Ward and Williams Counties

Farmer-Leaders Gain Invaluable Experience

Troy Uglem of Northwood, North Dakota, served on the North Dakota Soybean Council (NDSC) for six years. During his tenure, he served as both the treasurer and vice chairman. He looks back on his board service as very rewarding and extremely educational, with many invaluable experiences he will always remember. Initially, he was not familiar with the NDSC and its programs.

"Looking back at what I know now about the NDSC and the soybean checkoff, I really had no idea what the NDSC did back then. I understood the basics of the checkoff but did not fully understand all ways the checkoff benefits us as producers," says Uglem. "After being involved as a board member, I understand the benefit of the soybean checkoff and how (the) NDSC continues to make a huge difference in the future of our soybean industry through market development, research, education and promotion."

The NDSC directs the investment of soybean checkoff funds into projects that are intended to improve soybean production or to enhance market opportunities for North Dakota soybeans. The NDSC directors evaluate projects based on merit and effect to ensure that the checkoff dollars get the best return on investment.

"I sat on the NDSC's research committee and was chairman of that committee," states Uglem. "I learned how complex the soybean plant's growth, development and management really is. Production research is one of the most important efforts that the NDSC supports."

The NDSC has divided the state into 12 districts based on soybean production. One farmer-leader is elected from each district to serve on the NDSC. Each year, four districts are up for election, with the directors serving a three-year term. The directors help set the NDSC's direction, and they also gain a wealth of understanding about the soybean industry.

"My favorite experience while on the board was participating in the See for Yourself program to the Pacific Northwest," says Uglem. "Seeing how our checkoff is invested and how our soybeans start the journey to our overseas customers was very educational and interesting."

—Story and photo by staff

Troy Uglem (left) and family scouts for pests with NDSC Director of Research Kendall Nichols.

2021 Council Election

In 2021, the North Dakota Soybean Council (NDSC) will seek four soybean farmers from the following districts to serve on its board of directors:

District 3: LaMoure and Dickey Counties
District 4: Cass County
District 6: Stutsman County
District 11: Divide, Williams, Burke, Mountrail, Renville, Ward Bottineau, McHenry, Rolette, Pierce, Towner, Benson and Ramsey Counties

NDSC county representatives are the entry-level of representing North Dakota farmers. Among their contributions, county representatives provide feedback and insight to the NDSC board of directors about how soybean checkoff funds should be invested to benefit soybean farmers in their county.

County representatives move on to a district election, where a district representative is elected to serve on the NDSC Board of Directors. Representatives from districts comprised of only one county are automatically on the Board of Directors. One district representative is elected from the county representatives in districts with more than one county.

Ballot Process

The election process is conducted mostly by mail, starting with a nomination process, followed by mailed ballots for voting. Soybean farmers who reside in districts that have an election in 2021 will receive instructions, via mail, regarding the NDSC's election process after January 1, 2021. The NDSC election process is managed by North Dakota State University Extension.

Farmer Opportunity

Uglem explains that it's important for new farmers join the board in order to bring fresh ideas and new perspectives.

"I would recommend that any producer who has even a bit of interest or curiosity about the soybean industry should jump in and get involved," states Uglem. "Getting involved as a leader is a great opportunity to not only learn, but also to promote something that is near and dear to all of us: agriculture."

As a working board, directors are expected to participate in meetings and events. Individuals who have served on the board know it takes a time commitment, but the results are worth the effort.

"The best part of being on the NDSC board was the people with whom I had a chance to meet and work," says Uglem. "Other board members with whom I had served with became true friends."

To learn more about the NDSC election process, please visit: ***www.bit.ly/NDSCelections***

Leaving His Mark on North Dakota Soybeans

Many factors have contributed to the growth of soybean acres in North Dakota. Research conducted at North Dakota State University (NDSU) was instrumental with the growth of soybean acres in the state.

Dr. Ted Helms guided NDSU's soybean breeding program for 34 years, testing and developing varieties that fit the North Dakota farmers' needs. Dr. Helms retired from NDSU in June, after releasing 40 soybean varieties during his distinguished career. Dr. Helms' work was enhanced by the efforts of Dr. Berlin Nelson, an NDSU plant pathologist who helped develop cultivars with phytophthora root rot resistance, and Dr. R. Jay Goos, who helped identify genotypes with iron deficiency chlorosis (IDC) tolerance.

Dr. Helms grew up in Illinois and said that a gradual process led him to Fargo and the role he filled for more than three decades. He earned an agronomy degree from the University of Illinois, a master's in plant breeding and agronomy from the University of Nebraska, and a Ph.D. in agronomy and plant breeding from Iowa State University.

He worked primarily with corn breeding prior to earning his Ph.D., but after his graduation in 1986, the soybean-breeder position opened at NDSU.

"I wasn't all that familiar with the crop," Dr. Helms admits. "One of the other requirements was to teach a course in quantitative genetics, which was a specialty area, but it was a subject I was knowledgeable about."

He applied for and received the job.

"I was interested in breeding because I wanted to develop new varieties. I wanted to teach, and I wanted to do research, so the university was a good fit for me," Dr. Helms says. "I had a really good technician who helped me learn more about soybeans, so I learned a lot about the crop while on the job."

A Fledgling Crop

Dr. Helms states that, when he first arrived in Fargo, the state of North Dakota had roughly half a million acres of soybeans. For multiple reasons, he says that there wasn't much interest among private companies to develop soybean varieties for North Dakota farmers.

"Part of the reason was because farmers could save their own seed," Dr. Helms recalls. "For hybrid corn, farmers needed to buy new seed every year, so there was a lot more profit potential for corn research. At that time, there were no genetically modified soybeans, so farmers could save their own seed, and there was less incentive for companies to breed soybeans. There was good reason to have someone like me work on improving varieties."

The University of Minnesota provided a lot of the varieties farmers in the Red River Valley planted, but the varieties didn't always match the growing conditions that North Dakota farmers faced. However, Dr. Helms was able to provide a greater emphasis to develop improved soybean varieties in

Dr. Ted Helms guided NDSU's soybean breeding program for more than 30 years, developing dozens of varieties suited for North Dakota.

Dr. Helms says helping farmers be more productive was a rewarding part of the job.

order to meet the requirements for farmers in northwestern Minnesota and North Dakota.

"It made sense for someone to work on improved varieties, which I did, and developed some good varieties that were improvements and helped farmers to realize more of a profit," Dr. Helms states.

He says that there were some productive seed varieties available, but if soybeans were going to expand in North Dakota, new varieties were needed.

Dr. Helms developed and released 40 soybean varieties during his career; his first variety was available in 1995.

"The first variety I released was called Council. It was a higher-yielding variety, about a 0.6 maturity," Dr. Helms explained. "A couple years later, I released Traill, which was a 0.0 maturity variety. Both were well received by farmers because they gave a boost in yield."

In 1998, Dr. Helms released Jim, a cultivar bred for the northern tier of counties in Minnesota and North Dakota. At that time, fusarium head blight was big problem in wheat.

"Farmers needed more options than growing wheat because the wheat was being stricken by scab," Dr. Helms said. "Jim and Traill gave farmers a different crop they could grow profitably and not have to worry about fusarium head blight."

In 2000, RG200RR was released by NDSU. RG200RR was an early maturity variety with good yield, had phytophthora resistance and was engineered to be resistant to glyphosate. This variety served the needs of farmers in the northern tier of North Dakota counties who needed an early maturity, glyphosate-resistant type.

In 2017, RG17009GT was released by NDSU. RG17009GT was an early maturity variety with glyphosate resistance that increased profits for farmers who needed to reduce seed costs. This variety was well received in the counties in North Dakota's extreme western region.

Enhancing Production

Besides the breeding, Dr. Helms also worked on improving soybean production. Dr. Goos and, later, Dr. Helms worked with iron deficiency chlorosis (IDC), each evaluating several hundred varieties to identify which soybeans would be best on the high-pH soils where IDC was present. Dr. Helms said that Dr. Goos did a lot of research to improve soybean yield on soils where IDC was present.

"That was not so much breeding as evaluating company varieties fairly so that farmers could get unbiased data, comparing all the companies side by side, so they could identify the best soybean varieties for those particular fields that typically have a high pH and a past history of IDC," Dr. Helms stated.

From the time he arrived in North Dakota in 1986 to his retirement in 2020, soybean acres grew exponentially from half a million acres to more than 7 million acres in 2017. While seed varieties bred for North Dakota's growing season are a contributing factor to that growth, Dr. Helms explained that other factors were also in play.

"Back in the 1980s, farmers dealt with some really severe drought. That limited soybean acres produced in North Dakota," Dr. Helms said. "Soybean pods are filling in August, so we needed adequate moisture in July and August. In those years, it was just too dry, and soybeans were not that favorable of a crop to grow. Since 1992, we've primarily had years with adequate moisture, and that has helped increase soybean acres. Most years, prices are favorable as well. The combination of adequate rainfall and price has encouraged farmers to grow more soybeans up here."

Dr. Helms stated that his 34-year career as a breeder, researcher and teacher at NDSU has been a worthwhile experience.

"It was always very rewarding when I was able to help farmers. That was a big motivating factor for me. When I developed varieties that were well received by farmers and they helped farmers make money, that was always very rewarding to me," Dr. Helms said. "I also really enjoyed teaching and advising students. It is really rewarding to see them have successful careers in agriculture and, in that way, benefit the farmers of our area."

Dr. Helms explained that, over the years, soybean research at NDSU was well supported by the North Dakota Soybean Council (NDSC). He also recognized the many volunteers who served the NDSC and the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association.

Dr. Helms retired from NDSU on June 30, 2020. His successor, Dr. Carrie Miranda, joined NDSU in September as an assistant professor and a project leader for the soybean breeding program.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photos by Betsy Armour and staff

Over Dr. Helms' three-decade career at NDSU, he had a hand in developing 40 soybean varieties.

La Niña Winter Expected

North Dakotans can expect the upcoming winter to be influenced by a La Niña weather pattern. What that pattern actually means for temperature and precipitation in the months ahead remains to be seen.

A La Niña is the cooling of water in the Pacific Ocean near the equator. An El Niño is a warming of the equatorial Pacific. North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network (NDAWN) Director and meteorologist Daryl Ritchison says that the effects of an El Niño pattern are fairly consistent, resulting in a generally warmer-than-average winter. He says that La Niña patterns are less predictable, although many forecasters anticipate colder, drier winters during a La Niña pattern.

"Weather is too complicated for just one thing to equal something else," Ritchison contends. "If you hear La Niña equals cold, El Niño equals warm, it's not true because there's something else going on that will contribute to that."

Ritchison explains that it is an oversimplification to automatically associate La Niña with a cold winter. He expects nearly every forecast to call for a colder-than-average winter for North Dakota, but other factors will determine what actually happens.

"How cold a winter in North Dakota is really deals with how much snow cover we get. If we have the same air mass, it will make a difference if we have one inch of snow or 10 inches on the ground," Ritchison says. "So how cold we get will depend on if we get a big snowstorm or two."

Location, location, location

Ritchison states that the forecast is for a moderate La Niña pattern to develop. Where the coldest water is in the Pacific Ocean makes a difference in where the weather effects will be felt. A shift of 300 to 400 miles could mean a big difference in where the brunt of a cold winter is felt. Instead of North Dakota, the bullseye could be focused on the Great Lakes.

While the specifics aren't shaping up yet, Ritchison says that the odds are that North Dakota will see average to below-average temperatures and close to average precipitation.

There is good news with a La Niña pattern. Ritchison explains that the La Niña is a big reason why autumn was largely warm and dry for much of North Dakota. Ritchison also says that La Niña winters are often followed by drier springs.

"Farmers have had two or three really difficult springs in a row. With a La Niña, conditions might not be as tough for planting next spring," Ritchison states. "But one big storm next April can change things dramatically."

Useful Tools

NDAWN offers a variety of weather information from the network's 160 stations which are located across North Dakota and Minnesota. While NDAWN delivers crop guidance tools that farmers use in the summer, many people are unfamiliar with the information that can be gleaned during the winter months.

Ritchison says that many NDAWN sites are equipped with soil temperature sensors, so users can determine the frost depth as well as the soil moisture content before the ground freezes. He explains that information can help farmers have a better understanding about where they're starting in the spring.

"There are things happening in the winter you can watch that will give you clues to what's happening in the spring using NDAWN as well," Ritchison says.

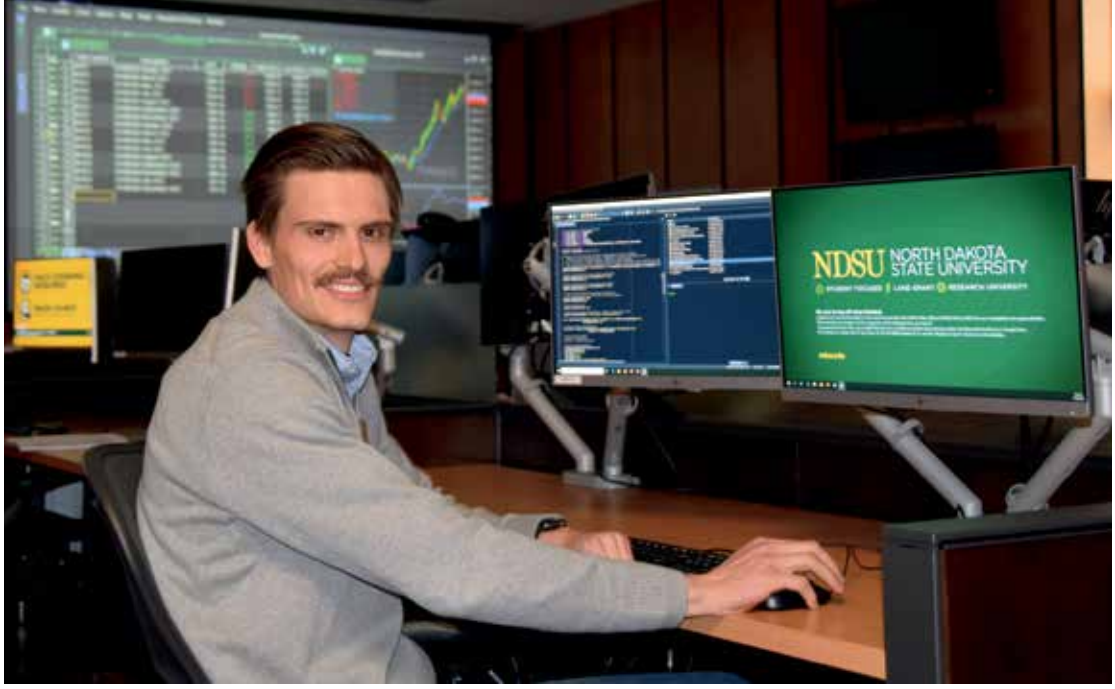
The NDAWN capacity is about to expand. A $6.4 million grant from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will give NDAWN the resources to install gauges in the Upper Missouri River basin in order to measure the snow's liquid equivalency. That information can be extremely useful for farmers and flood forecasters in central and western North Dakota.

"Obviously, you have to shovel the snow, but what's really of importance is the water content," Ritchison states. "We will be able to put up dozens of stations to measure liquid in snow because that will affect river flow, spring flooding concerns and soil moisture. We'll get a good idea of how the season is starting."

Ritchison expects to have several of the new sensors installed before winter. More sensors will be going in next year, too.

To access the NDAWN information, visit www.ndawn.ndsu.nodak.edu. NDAWN Inversion App is available to download in both the Apple App Store as well as in Google Play. This app is free thanks to financial support of the North Dakota Soybean Council.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photo by Betsy Armour



Tools for the **COMMODITY TRADE**

Providing trained and prepared workers who are ready to enter the commercial world is a primary goal for every educational institution. The better equipped students are, the more valuable they are to employers, and the better it reflects on the individuals who did the training.

The Commodity Trading Lab (CTL) in Barry Hall at North Dakota State University (NDSU) is a unique, state-of-the-art resource that is invaluable for training commodity traders and others who are entering the world of agribusiness. The North Dakota Soybean Council helped fund the lab because of the lab's importance in preparing students to work in agriculture.

One student who has benefitted from the CTL is Noah Carlson; he grew up in New London, Minnesota. Carlson is completing his master's degree in agribusiness and applied economics.

"I chose to come to NDSU based off my understanding of the industry's and community's respect for the university," Carlson says. "By choosing to come to NDSU without fully understanding the great possibilities and opportunities that lie for me here, I consider myself extremely grateful and, in hindsight, lucky I made that decision."

Carlson comes from an agricultural background and was involved in Future Farmers of America (FFA) throughout high school. He knew he wanted to be in a similarly related field, so he took classes that sparked his interest in economics, risk management and finance. Those classes exposed him to the unique resource that the CTL provides.

"The Commodity Trading Lab has fostered an incredible environment to learn, challenge knowledge and build inter-student collaboration," Carlson says. "The technology and assets available to students is immense, and it puts NDSU's capabilities for ag economics, quantitative risk management and finance at the forefront of the university pool."

Carlson is scheduled to graduate in December. He's already accepted a role with an agribusiness firm in Wayzata, Minnesota. He describes how the CTL helped prepare him for a bright future.

"The students that come through that classroom are much more prepared and familiar with the industry and the tools that are available as they enter the workforce compared to students that haven't," Carlson explains.

Carlson says that he's learned a lot about economic theory and practice, economic and agricultural markets, risk modeling, investments and much more through his educational program.

Having a top-notch facility such as the Commodity Trading Lab is a valuable asset, but it's the expertise and ability to educate which makes the CTL most useful. Experts such as Distinguished Professor Dr. William Wilson give the educational experience greater relevance.

Checkoff Investment

"Having exceptional professors and researchers teaching, mentoring and working side by side with students is profound. No amount of technology or academic access can compare to having great faculty that inspires, challenges and motivates students to go outside of their comfort zone and (to) think creatively and inspirationally," Carlson states. "The confidence, intrigue and opportunity that comes to fruition with a great mentor is exceptional."

As a result of the Commodity Trading Lab, there are numerous former NDSU students in the workplace who have this training.

"Students pursuing careers as global commodities traders, or in risk management, have clearly benefited from NDSU's Commodity Trading Room," says NDSC Executive Director Stephanie Sinner. "NDSC is proud to have contributed checkoff dollars to this one-of-its-kind facility, which have prepared students like Noah Carlson to become more successful as they enter the competitive job market."

In addition to facilities such as the CTL, Carlson's education was bolstered by a scholarship from the North Dakota Soybean Council.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photos by staff

The North Dakota Soybean Council financially supported NDSU's Commodity Trading Room, which serves as an excellent teaching and training platform for the next generation of industry leaders, like Noah Carlson.

If Only

Guest Column by Dawn Chisholm

It started like every other winter morning in the Midwest with the family routine of getting up and readying for the day: school and daycare for the kids, work for Mom and Dad. At the time, my husband, Bill Lambert, worked at a local grain elevator 18 miles from our Casselton, North Dakota, home. Before Bill left for work, we all took our turns telling him good-bye. Sara, our oldest and at-the-time 10-year-old, bubbly brown-haired girl, said, "See ya later alligator." Alex William, our middle child and only boy at 8 years of age, stated, "See you tonight, Dad!" Then, little Anna, the baby of the family, not even a year old yet, got a gentle toss in the air for a sure giggle and laugh for her daddy. Then, Momma bear gave a quick kiss on the check and said, "See you around supper. Have a good day. I love you."

Everyone made it to their morning destinations, like every other day. Again, the daily routines continued. One of our routines was to call each other in the afternoon on my way home from my job, just to check in with each other. I initiated the phone call on February 7, 2002, at 3 p.m. I called his cell phone. There was no answer. I called the elevator's land line. The voice on the other end was not Bill's; it was the general manager (GM) of the facility. This occurrence was odd. Once the GM realized it was me on the line, he requested that I pull over immediately. As I pulled over, questions shot from my lips, asking what was going on and if Bill was okay. The GM said, "A terrible incident has happened. Bill is trapped in a grain bin." Quickly, he continued, stating, "We are working on getting him out." In shock, I drove 40 miles to the bin location where Bill had been engulfed for over an hour and a half. During my drive, I remember praying, pleading and bargaining with God to not take Bill. Arriving at the scene, I saw, the Sanford Life Flight helicopter, many Casselton Fire Trucks and bright lights, exposing the bin and an ambulance, along with several emergency workers, who were our friends, volunteering their time and talents to help those in crisis mode. It was crisis mode!

Dawn travels the region to share Bill's story with producers, business professionals and others in the hope that safety will become top of mind.

Emotions ran wild while I was being led past the bin to wait for Bill's rescue. It seemed like hours, but only minutes passed, as I was soon told that the rescue was turning into the recovery of his body.

Once pulled from the bin, Bill, my husband, the father to our three children, was placed on a gurney, which was then loaded inside the awaiting ambulance where I was allowed to see him, hold him, and kiss him one more time. Covering the lower half of his body was a tan fleece blanket with brown edging. (Details remain so vivid in my mind to this day.) This blanket concealed his leg and foot from my view. You see, Bill's foot became entangled in the running, unguarded auger that was inside the bin of corn.

My understanding of what happened that fatal February day is as follows: Bill and his supervisor were filling grain cars with stored corn. The corn stopped coming from the bin. After they confirmed that the corn had crusted to the sides due to wet conditions, Bill decided to enter the bin without a spotter, without a harness and lead, without checking the air quality, and without locking out and/or tagging out the unguarded running auger. With all those unsafe scenarios, he still chooses to enter the bin. Why? I can only imagine.

Just like all of us, we think that we are invincible. We have done these types of things before, probably many, many times. Nothing will happen. It hasn't in the past, and it won't now. RIGHT? WRONG! Within seconds after Bill thrust a grain shovel into the resting corn, the crusted corn that was not flowing toward the auger began to flow. This now-flowing corn came down with such a force that it knocked the feet right out from under my husband. This 240-pound, 6'2" man's foot was jammed into the auger, pulling him down into a seated position. The corn just kept on flowing, covering Bill completely. With every breath he inhaled, the corn would fill the void around his chest. Bill was being crushed and suffocated all the while his foot remained in the running auger. I cannot allow myself to continue these thoughts because I cannot fathom the fear and pain Bill had to be experiencing.

With each presentation, I relive this part of

Bill Lambert is pictured with his family at Christmas 2001, just months before being killed in a grain bin accident.

the incident with greater detail and, usually, some tears. Why do this to yourself, some people may ask. The day after Bill's death, I knew that I was going to be doing something to help others. I just did not know what, when or how. For 15 years, God helped me grieve, heal, gain strength, increase confidence and grow in my faith. In 2017, the North Dakota Safety Council (ndsc.org) approached me, asking if I would be willing to tell our story at one of the breakout sessions during the Annual Safety Conference in 2018. Since then, I have spoken or presented to over 30 companies or organizations, including American Crystal Sugar, Integrity/Marvin Windows, Trail King, Gavilon Group, North Dakota Annual Fire School Convention, various fire departments, the North Dakota Grain Dealers Association, Future Farmers of America (FFA) conventions, churches, women's groups, and local elevators.

"If Only" derived from "If Only" I'll wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) provided to me. "If Only" I'll consider how my actions will affect my family (What would my family do without me?), my friends, co-workers and communities. "If Only" I will do it this one time. "If Only" I will text and drive, or drink and drive. "If Only" you fill in the blank!

I have to say that I would not be the person I am today without being embraced and loved by our small community of Casselton, North Dakota; our parish family at Westminster Presbyterian Church; our family and friends; and, of course, our God who helped me breathe. At times, I could not breathe on my own, and at times, I felt immense sorrow and desperation; HE carried me.

Bill was 40 years old when he died, leaving behind our marriage of 17 years, three young children, his sisters and many more people who loved him. Bill was soft spoken, hardworking, strong, humorous, kind and loving; above all, he loved his family like nothing else. I have the blessing to see him in each of our children: Sara with her kind heart; Alex with his humorous one-liners; and, lastly, the baby of the family, Anna, who was 11 months old at the time of his death. She inherited his bright blue eyes. During my presentations, I introduce the audience members to our children and tell them about the life events that the kids and Bill missed due to his "If Only" decision, such as teaching the kids how to hunt or fish; attending Daddy and Daughter Dances, or Boy Scout events; and a big one: walking our daughters down the aisle at their weddings.

Because of Bill's death and his void in our daily lives, our children had no choice but to become resilient, to understand what empathy is, to trust that there is a heaven where Daddy is waiting for us, to learn to forgive quickly and to love sincerely because we never know what tomorrow will bring.

I believe that there are several reasons why so many accidents continue in the agricultural world. Here are just a few:

- Farmers work by themselves on many daily tasks.
- They have routinely completed these tasks in the past, and nothing has happened thus far.
- Farms have larger storage facilities and equipment.
- Past wet conditions and Midwest freezing/warm temperatures: causing bridging, crusting, etc.
- Farmers are often in a hurry, are under stress or have their minds preoccupied on other things.
- There may be a lack of experience and training for the younger generations.

Some comments that I have received from audience members after they listened to my presentation include:

"I have never thought what my 5-year-old daughter would do if something happened to me."

"Thank you for sharing your story. It has helped me process some of my grief of losing my daughter in a car accident three years ago."

"I was buried in a bin of sand for two hours. It was terrifying. I was one of the lucky ones. I got out."

"I just lost my home and everything I owned in a fire two weeks ago. You have given me hope. Thank you."

If only one life can be saved by me getting up and telling our story, then I feel successful. Whether I'm asked to speak to a few people or if there will be hundreds in the audience, I will go. I knew passionately the day after Bill's death that I was being called to do something to help others. Here I am. Send me, Lord.

Editor's note: *Chisholm now lives in Hawley, Minnesota, and started "If Only" to connect with people on workplace and personal safety.*

China Makes Progress WITH AG PURCHASES

Hardly anything about 2020 has seemed normal, but China increasing its ag-product purchases from U.S. farmers is certainly one step in that direction. Whether those purchases will meet China's obligations that were outlined in the Phase 1 trade agreement between the United States and China remains uncertain.

One component of the Phase 1 trade agreement, which went into effect in February 2020, was China's commitment to buy $80 billion of agriculture goods in the next two years. In 2017, China purchased an estimated $24 billion of U.S. commodities. Using 2017 purchases as the baseline, China pledged to meet the 2017 levels and to purchase an additional $12.5 billion in 2020 as well as an additional $19.5 billion in 2021.

North Dakota State University Extension Crop Economist and Marketing Specialist Frayne Olson said that the Phase I agreement contained six chapters that outlined how the U.S. and China would conduct business. Only one chapter addressed agriculture, and more than 200 U.S. agriculture products count toward China's Phase 1 purchases.

A report from the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) states that by October, China had purchased approximately 71 percent of its targeted 2020 purchases. The USTR and USDA estimate China had purchased $23.6 billion in ag products from the time the Phase 1 agreement went into effect on February 14, until October 8.

"China has been buying pretty aggressively," Olson says. "The market is expecting them to continue being aggressive buyers until February when Brazil's crop comes on line."

Olson states that, to date, soybean purchases are ahead of pre-trade-war levels. He says that China's soybean-buying habits have been very similar to what was seen before the trade war began, but other commodities are seeing an uptick. For years, China bought very little U.S. corn. Now, China is aggressively buying U.S. corn and wheat, and China is actively buying U.S. pork and poultry products.

"All these things count toward the Phase 1 agreement. Just because China says they're going to buy more ag products doesn't mean it has to be soybeans," Olson explains.

The stepped-up purchases mean good news for U.S. farmers and are reason for optimism, but these actions are not a guarantee that China will live up to the terms of the Phase 1 deal.

"They're buying products that they haven't bought from us in a long time. Some of the products they have bought in the past, they are still buying, but I'm not sure they're going to reach the targets in the Phase 1 agreement," Olson says. "It is a substantial improvement, not only from the past couple years but even back before trade war. If we look at volumes, they are buying more than they have in the past. Whether its enough to meet the Phase 1 targets is still hotly debated."

While farmers are mostly concerned with what's happening in the ag portion of the agreement, Olson states that purchases for the other sectors are well behind schedule. Areas such as energy products, manufactured goods and the services sector are well behind, largely because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Available Capacity

Increased commodity purchases are good news for farmers, but an uptick in grain shipments could put a strain on the nation's infrastructure, leading some people in the agriculture industry to wonder if port facilities have the capacity to keep up with demand.

Olson states that the most U.S. corn, which China purchased in a year, was about 5.2 million metric tons, roughly 204 million bushels. China has already purchased over 361 million bushels in 2020. By early October, China had already purchased over 955 million bushels of soybeans and was likely not finished buying corn, soybeans or wheat.

"The assumption of farmers is these shipments have to go through the Pacific Northwest (PNW)," Olson says. "We can deliver through the Gulf of Mexico. It takes a little longer and is a little more expensive, but it's not as big of a difference as people think. There's still a big advantage from PNW, and it still makes sense to ship from there, but it's not mandatory."

Olson explains that he looked back at the historical total volume shipped through the PNW and Gulf ports, determining that there was enough capacity to handle a crush of shipments.

"I don't think there's a capacity constraint," Olson says. "Ports are going to be busy, but they have the throughput."

Market Opportunity

Increased demand and tight shipment timelines could present farmers with an opportunity to market grain, particularly at basis levels. Local basis levels could fluctuate as the market tries to regulate the grain flow.

"Because of larger grain volumes, there will be a premium in the market to make sure the flow of grain is figured out," Olson states.

Olson says that having some unsold grain in reserve to take advantage of possible emergency buys is a good strategy, but he wouldn't make that option the focus of a marketing plan. He explains how, in that scenario, farmers are gambling that the local elevator, the railroads and the export terminals will mess up someplace. They're going to have to come in and make emergency buys, and "from what I have seen, that doesn't happen very often."

With a large volume of grain movement, Olson expects that there will be a premium for scheduling into the future. Olson describes how farmers may see some opportunities by watching the carry in the markets as well as the carry in the basis.

"We may see more negative basis levels for today, more favorable levels for later delivery in December or January because that when elevators may need grain. They don't need it right now and don't have capacity to store it." Olson says. "They may have trains booked for January or February, but may not have the grain on hand to fill them. In my opinion, that's a much better game to play than sitting back hoping someone has a screw up. There are different strategies that you can use to try and get a little more money out of the marketplace."

—Story and photos by Daniel Lemke

Table 1. Value of U.S. Exports to China, by Commodity, for Agricultural Products Listed in the Phase 1 Agreement.

2017			2020	
Product	Jan-Sep Total ($1,000)	Annual Total ($1,000)	Product	Jan-Sep Total ($1,000)
Soybeans	5,586,299	12,224,802	Soybeans	4,328,259
Cotton	738,417	972,554	Meat of swine	1,300,358
Raw hides: bovine	646,468	876,715	Cotton	1,172,568
Grain sorghum	611,241	839,459	Grain sorghum	708,742
Whole frozen fish	666,385	821,879	Poultry meat	507,196
Animal fodder	300,717	388,818	Corn	489,887
Total for all 217 products	**12,052,340**	**20,836,644**	**Total for all 217 products**	**12,625,222**

Data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Service's Global Agriculture Trade System

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Ports like the Temco facility in Kalama, Washington have seen an uptick in export demand.

A Needed Trade Platform

U.S. farm groups, including the American Soybean Association (ASA), are urging President Trump and Congress to remain in the World Trade Organization (WTO), calling membership "essential" for U.S. ag exports.

In a letter to U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, the groups called for continued WTO membership and constructive engagement with the needed reform. The Trump administration has been sharply critical of the WTO and has questioned the value of the United States' participation in the global organization.

Valley City, North Dakota, farmer and ASA Director Monte Peterson says that the WTO provides value, but some reforms are needed.

"We've come to appreciate the doors WTO can help agriculture open overseas," Peterson explains. "ASA certainly recognizes that reform is needed within WTO, but perhaps the way to the best reform is to engage with it, not to be apart from it, to be part of it to make it a better organization and provide a better benefit to the U.S."

According to the ASA, in the WTO's first two decades, the overall trade of goods has nearly quadrupled while WTO members' import tariffs have declined by an average of 15 percent. Over half of world trade is now tariff free.

The WTO affords U.S. agriculture producers and exporters most-favored nation treatment in 163 countries, representing over 80 percent of the global economy. The WTO has rules to guard against the arbitrary use of technical regulations or standards to block imports, such as actions associated with sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures that lack a clear basis in science and are protectionist in intent.

Doyle Lentz, who farms near Rolla, North Dakota, was an official WTO delegate, participating in global negotiation rounds in Seattle, Geneva and Doha. Lentz served as the international market development chair for the U.S. Grains Council.

"The WTO is a monitoring group for (the) whole world," Lentz says. "By and large, the U.S. was a beneficiary. There have been so many other tariffs and hidden trade issues over the years that the WTO was able to digest and make it more fair. The U.S was a huge recipient because we were fairly open."

Former WTO delegate Doyle Lentz of Rolla says the U.S. has benefitted from participation in the global trade organization.

Lentz states that the current tariffs which the U.S. has placed on products from China was exactly the sort of practice that the WTO was fighting against.

With more than 20 percent of overall agricultural production in the United States destined for foreign markets, U.S. agriculture is heavily dependent on exports. Numerous U.S. agriculture groups, including the ASA, contend that, while the WTO has been beneficial for U.S. agriculture, its rules have not kept pace with changes in the global economy, and improvement is needed to hold members accountable and to improve the organization's governance.

"As we move forward with a smaller world, if you will, I don't know how we're going to function without an organization like the WTO to make the discrepancies go away," Lentz says. "I don't know another way to do that other than taking the word of the other country or with bilateral agreements which are impossible with that many countries."

Lentz contends that it's in the best interest of the country which needs to do the exporting to be part of the WTO because the organization provides access to more customers. In addition to commodities, other areas, such as exchange rates and money discrepancies, are key issues.

"This is complicated stuff,"

Valley City farmer and ASA director Monte Peterson says the organization supports the WTO, but reforms are needed.

Lentz explains, "but the old saying is true; if you're not at the table, you're on the table. You have to be there; you have to participate; and I've always been of the philosophy that, if you're going to be there and you're going to participate, you should lead, too."

Peterson says that it is important for member nations to work together in order to build a unified platform on which to base trade.

"The organization remains solid enough, and it has provided value in the past. I believe it can in the future, but it needs U.S. participation for it to be a benefit to U.S. agriculture," Peterson states. "Because we're so dependent on exports and trading with other nations, having a vehicle like the WTO to help with some of those transactions makes good sense.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photos courtesy of Betsy Armour and ASA

WTO in session. *Photo courtesy of WTO*

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Familiar Face

Returns to Lead ASA

After serving as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) deputy secretary for three years, Steve Censky is returning to the position he held before joining the USDA. Censky resumed his role as the American Soybean Association's (ASA) chief executive officer, a job he previously held for 21 years.

"It has been a true honor to serve my country on behalf of American agriculture," Censky stated. "These past few years have seen tremendous developments, and I am humbled to have served a role in implementing a Farm Bill, launching the USDA's Agriculture Innovation Agenda, supporting America's farmers against trade retaliation, and now assisting farmers and ranchers and feeding families affected by the coronavirus pandemic."

Censky returned to the ASA in November, following the June departure of Ryan Findlay, who is credited with helping the organization restructure internally and establishing an independent government affairs office in Washington, D.C.

"There is no doubt that I personally, as well as the whole USDA family, will miss Steve's experience, preparedness, and steady leadership," said USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue. "During his tenure as Deputy Secretary, we accomplished a great deal in a short amount of time even in the face of serious challenges in American agriculture. Steve's roots are in agriculture, and he is one of the best and most professional public servants America has."

"It is a privilege to return to ASA and represent our nation's soybean growers. ASA is, in many ways, home, and I'm excited about working with both new and familiar faces in St. Louis and D.C., and, building on the great changes accomplished since I was last there," Censky stated.

After leaving for several years to serve in the USDA, Steve Censky is back at the helm of ASA.

Returning to his roots is nothing new for Censky, who had served at USDA during the Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush administrations. Censky served as administrator for the Foreign Agricultural Service before joining ASA the first time.

Censky is a Jackson, Minnesota, native who grew up on a diversified crop and livestock farm. Censky helped establish soybeans as the leader in American agricultural exports while with the ASA. In addition to foreign market expansion during his tenure, the use of soy in biodiesel and biobased products grew into significant markets; soybeans became a program crop under the Farm Bill; and ASA's long-term foreign development arm, the World Initiative for Soy in Human Health (WISHH), helped to increase soy demand in emerging markets.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photo courtesy of USDA

Supporting Growth in Animal Agriculture

Efforts to enhance North Dakota's animal agriculture sector are paying off

North Dakota Livestock Alliance (NDLA) Executive Director Amber Boeshans says that two new 4,800-head hog-finishing units are under construction in Sargent County. The barns are part of a family's farm operation that is expanding.

"It's exciting in a couple ways," Boeshans states. "These new swine operations are creating an opportunity for more family members to be involved, and the pigs will produce valuable manure nutrients for improving the soil health of the family's land and that of their neighbors."

Boeshans states that the project is providing construction jobs for concrete workers, carpenters and electricians. The facility is expected to open in early 2021. Boeshans says that there will likely be an open house for neighbors and community members to see what the facilities are like prior to filling the buildings with hogs.

The state and local zoning and permitting process went smoothly, according to Boeshans. She explains that the farm operators were proactive in sharing their plans, which likely helped the process.

"They were champions for their project. They talked to their neighbors, shook hands with everybody, had face-to-face dialog with anybody who would hear them out," Boeshans says. "That's a huge part of why this permitting process was so successful. They took the extra step and made it a major effort to get out and talk to anyone (who) would sit down with them to share what was going on."

Boeshans states that the family gave presentations at local township meetings, so township officers and others were able to hear directly from the people who were going to build the barns.

"Transparency is still the key. The only way to get rid of the fear of the unknown is to talk to people about it," Boeshans adds. "As a livestock producer, it is important to take the time to listen to questions from your neighbors to ensure everyone has the answers and facts they seek. As animal agriculture continues to embrace new technologies and practices, we need to remind each other to share our stories with our communities. They are not only our neighbors; they are the consumers of the products we produce."

Boeshans says that neighboring pig farmers helped this new operation get started, which was encouraging. The NDLA has a mentorship program to encourage livestock producers to assist new farmers who are getting started by providing knowledge and guidance.

"It's good to have somebody with them to help them all along the way with the things you don't think of ahead of time," Boeshans states.

Boeshans says that animal agriculture in North Dakota and nationally is starting to bounce back from the shock delivered by the COVID-19 outbreak.

"We're starting to recover from the shock to our processing systems and the shift from food service to retail when all the restaurants and food service were shut down. We're starting to see some normalcy return," Boeshans explains.

Harvesting capacities for beef and pork are near 100 percent. Processing numbers may never get back to previous levels because of COVID safety protocols, including standards requiring more space between workers on the processing floor, which will likely reduce the number of animals that can be processed in a day.

Confidence is coming back in the dairy industry, Boeshans says. Dairy prices have rebounded in recent weeks.

Positive movement in the livestock sector does more than help the farmers involved with animal agriculture. Livestock production gives crop farmers options and competition for their grain.

"Animal agriculture will allow North Dakota crop producers to become more independent," Boeshans contends, "instead of having to rely on shipping to the Pacific Northwest. Exports are still extremely important, but to feed those commodities here in North Dakota gives our crop producers a better chance of surviving these rough ups and downs because they'll have an alternate market, not just for their grain but their crop residues as well.

To learn more about the North Dakota Livestock Alliance, visit ndlivestock.org.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photo by Greg Wanbaugh

A Few Things You Probably Didn't Know About Aquaculture

U.S. aquaculture supplies sustainable seafood, provides jobs and enhances ecosystems.

It's Not Just for Fish

Many aquaculture producers in the United States don't raise fish, despite the industry's popular image of fish farming. In fact, oysters were the most commercially valuable domestic, farmed marine species in recent years. In 2017, oyster farmers harvested 36 million pounds which were valued at $186 million. Clams ranked number two in production value in 2012-2017. Other top U.S. marine aquaculture products include mussels, shrimps and salmon.

More than Half of the World's Seafood Comes from Aquaculture

Aquaculture is one of the fastest-growing forms of food production. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, global marine and freshwater aquaculture production rose by 527 percent between 1990 and 2018.

Farmed Seafood is Rich in Omega-3s

The U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend eating at least two 4-ounce servings of seafood a week, in part, because seafood—farmed or wild caught—is the only natural source of two long-chain omega-3 fatty acids that promote heart and brain health. Research suggests that these essential fatty acids, known as EPA and DHA, may also reduce the risk of Alzheimer's and rheumatoid arthritis and may aid in the development of muscle tissues.

For farmed fish, feed is the biggest contributor to a fish's omega-3 content. Many farmers work to match or even exceed the levels found in wild species.

Soy based aquaculture feed.

The North Dakota Soybean Council supports the global aquaculture industry through funding of U.S. Soybean Export Council's (USSEC) work with In-Pond Raceway Systems, an efficient aquaculture production technique utilized around the world. Soy protein can be fed to fish in various forms (soybean meal, soy protein concentrates, and soybean oil), and is an economic alternative to fish meal as a protein source in rations. USSEC has been working in the aquaculture field for 35 years.

Farming Fish is an Efficient Way to Produce Protein

All raised animals have to eat, but fish require a lot less food than most animals. Because they are cold-blooded and live in a buoyant environment, fish don't have to take in calories to stay warm or to fight gravity. It takes a little more than a pound of feed to produce a pound of salmon.

This factor is one of the reasons aquaculture has the potential to meet the protein needs of a growing global population with less demand on limited natural resources such as fresh water and farmable land.

U.S. Aquaculture Supports Coastal Economies

The United States has a small, but vibrant, aquaculture industry supported by world-class research and technology. Nationwide production was valued at $1.5 billion in 2017. As aquaculture grows in the U.S., the industry continues to create jobs, to foster resilient coastal communities and to provide new international trade opportunities.

Aquaculture also has the potential to provide significant economic opportunities for Americans as the domestic and global demand for seafood grows. Today, aquaculture accounts for 21 percent of the value of domestic fishery landings, and the country ranks 17th in global aquaculture production. Responsibly increasing production could result in tens of thousands of jobs in coastal communities.

Sustainable Aquaculture Strengthens Ecosystems

The benefits of sustainable marine aquaculture—like we have in the United States—go beyond food production. Oyster farms, for instance, provide valuable habitat for juvenile fish and invertebrate communities. The farms transform the flat, featureless bottoms in some areas into complex habitats that attract species seeking food and refuge.

Shellfish aquaculture can also improve water quality. Oysters, clams and other shellfish eat by filtering nutrients from the water. They remove excess nitrogen from the ecosystem, helping to prevent an overgrowth of algae that can lead to dead zones.

Aquaculture is Vital to Restoration Efforts

Natural resource managers and scientists rely on hatcheries to rebuild wild populations and to restore coastal habitats. The practice is called restoration—or restorative—aquaculture, and it involves cultivating marine plants and animals to, one day, transplant them into the wild.

—Story courtesy of NOAA Fisheries, photos by U.S. Soybean Export Council

Continuing to Ensure Global Market Access For U.S. Soy

Despite uncertain times, the overall demand for U.S. soy remains strong both domestically and internationally. With nearly 60 percent of U.S. soy products exported, continued growth with the international markets is critical for the U.S. soy complex. Long-term demand growth continues at a strong pace, and U.S. soy is well-positioned to serve the global market.

Developing and maintaining market access is a critical strategy for the U.S. soy industry. The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) is tasked with minimizing potential trade barriers while maximizing the U.S. soy competitive advantage. USSEC CEO Jim Sutter says that, even though demand continues to rise, "the smallest market-access issues can affect exports."

One ongoing market-access issue involves Maximum Residue Limits (MRL). An MRL is the limit of residue on agricultural products that is established by regulators in order to ensure that the pesticide is applied in accordance with the label requirements which outline safe and effective use practices. USSEC Senior Director–Market Access Roz Leeck, however, asserts that MRLs reach beyond their intended purpose by enabling trade as a mechanism that importing countries use to ensure regulatory compliance.

MRLs can also create complicated market-access issues, especially when the science is fundamentally the same and, yet, the smallest nuance can generate significant inconsistencies. Leeck explains, "Around the world, the study, the assessment and risk determination of MRLs can be determined very differently, and testing methods can also differ. These variables create uncertainty in the global trade of soy products."

Crop-protection products used for production and through to storage and handling, as well as in the actual shipping, can all weigh into the ability to meet an importing country's regulatory requirement. As an exporter, the U.S. soybean producer must first meet the domestic MRLs that are established by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for each pesticide's use registration. In order to facilitate the export of U.S. soybeans and to meet the international markets' requirements, pesticide registrant companies must then seek additional applications to either register a product with a corresponding MRL or to set an import tolerance (IT), where applicable. The process by which this is done varies greatly from country to country. In some cases, a full registration may be required, or even desired, if a pesticide can be used by farmers in that export destination. Some countries allow for an IT, a level which enables trade and is typically utilized when the product is not used domestically. Codex Alimentarius is an international standard-setting body and offers another mechanism to establish MRLs which many countries either default to directly or use as a basis to set their own MRL.

The complexities that hinder market access really boil down to some basics. When an importing country has no MRL or IT established, and the residue level allowed is zero, there is a high level of risk for trade. Additionally, because of different scientific approaches or policy decisions, there may be a gap between the importer's and the exporter's residue levels that are expansive enough to create a level of risk. Sampling and testing methods may heighten the potential risk. Although these challenges do not reflect an actual safety concern, they collectively elevate the uncertainty when it comes to the use of crop-protection products and the global movement of grains and oilseeds.

Over three years ago, several U.S. ag export organizations came together to coordinate a more proactive approach to address these complex MRL issues, establishing a working group, the Row Crop MRL Trade Roundtable. The USSEC, together with the U.S. Grains Council, the U.S. Wheat Associates, and USA Rice, discuss common issues and talk with pesticide registrant companies, grain-handling and trade organizations, and trade-focused government representatives. This increased coordination and cooperation is helpful, Leeck says. "We face similar issues in common markets, and by working together across commodities, as well as with value-chain and government partners, we can more effectively reduce these market-access barriers for the U.S. farmer."

—Story courtesy of USSEC, photo by Daniel Lemke

Continued access to markets sustains purchases of North Dakota soybeans by Asian customers.

Members of Congress Join the Corps, Coast Guard and PNWA to Celebrate

Columbia Jetty Rehab

Three members of Congress and lots of heavy equipment joined the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association (PNWA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and U.S. Coast Guard leaders to celebrate the completion of the Mouth of the Columbia River North Jetty and Jetty A rehabilitation projects as well as the start of work on the South Jetty rehabilitation project.

As heavy cranes, trucks and excavators moved and placed massive 40-ton stones on the 6.6-mile South Jetty in the background, U.S. Sen. Ron Wyden (OR), Rep. Suzanne Bonamici (OR-1) and Rep. Jaime Herrera Beutler (WA-3) joined PNWA President David Harlan and Executive Director Kristin Meira, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Portland District Commander Col. Michael Helton and U.S. Coast Guard Sector Columbia River Commander Capt. Jeremy Smith to emphasize the importance of jetties in order to ensure that navigation at the mouth of the Columbia River is safe and efficient.

The jetties support the economy for the region and the entire country. Over 56 million tons of cargo, valued at roughly $21 billion, move through the Lower Columbia River annually, and thousands of Pacific Northwest jobs are dependent on this trade. The Columbia Snake River System is the nation's largest wheat export gateway, second in the nation for corn and soy exports, and tops the West Coast for wood and mineral exports.

"Products on this river system can travel from as far away as the Midwest and Canada, bound for Asia and other points around the world," Harlan said. "The jetties are especially important now as our region recovers from the economic impacts of COVID-19; we need to keep U.S. supply chains strong."

The mouth of the Columbia River's jetty system was constructed between 1885 and 1939. Constructed on massive tidal shoals and totaling 9.7 miles in length, the three rubble-mound jetties minimized navigation channel maintenance and made passage safer for vessels transiting between the Pacific Ocean and the Columbia River.

"These jetties keep the (Columbia River) bar intact," Smith said. "They are crucial to safe and efficient commerce. Our merchant mariners and fishing fleet are out of business without them."

The jetties are regularly pounded by Pacific Ocean waves which are 10-20 feet high, with winter storms bringing extreme waves in excess of 30 feet. Storm activity and the loss of the shoaling sand upon which the jetties are built have taken a toll on the jetties' structural integrity.

If a critical section of the jetties were breached during a large storm, sand could be deposited in the federal navigation channel, potentially shutting down commercial shipping. Restoring the channel's entrance would require expensive emergency jetty repairs and channel dredging.

Under the Corps' Mouth of the Columbia River Jetty System Major Rehabilitation Project, rehabilitation of the 0.9-mile Jetty A was completed in 2017, and the 2.5-mile North Jetty was finished in 2020.

"It takes a great Team of Teams to make a project like this happen. Everyone involved has showed tremendous commitment to delivering this important jetty rehabilitation to the people we serve. The Portland District is proud to be part of it," Helton said.

The members of Congress who attended the ceremony discussed their legislative efforts to keep the jetties funded and maintained, and the jetties' importance to the region:

"I want to give a special shout-out to PNWA," said Wyden. "You have made this (the jetties) the Number One request of our Congressional delegation for years ... you all have zeroed in on them and have mobilized Democrats and Republicans to make it happen."

"Without those jetties," Wyden continued, "we cannot have big league quality of life and job creation. It just simply does not happen. In our part of the world, one out of four jobs revolve around international trade."

"Improving the jetties on the mouth of the Columbia River is vital in protecting and securing our region's most important waterway. I'm pleased to have worked over the years to secure critical funding in Congress to shore up our jetties, so they can continue to protect against storms, and prevent erosion and buildup of sediment that impacts the livelihoods of our ports and coastal communities," said Herrera Beutler.

"The jetties at the mouth of the Columbia River are a marvel of engineering that sustains the shipping, navigation and fishing industries throughout the region. I have consistently called for full funding for the needed rehabilitation of this critical infrastructure. It's exciting to see the work beginning where the mighty Columbia meets the Pacific," Bonamici said.

—Story and photos courtesy of Pacific Northwest Waterways Association

Columbia River bar.

Soybean Market Insights for 2021

Soybean prices bottomed in the late spring of 2020, followed by a triumphant rally into harvest. Strong export demand and extreme weather paved the way for higher prices. Ending stocks for U.S. soybeans are the lowest they have been in the past five years, with some people thinking that supplies could continue to dwindle should export demand continue at its current aggressive pace!

Chinese soybean demand has been voracious as the Chinese replenish depleted reserves. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has U.S. soybean exports pegged at over 2 billion bushels, with most going to China. Some individuals feel that, with the slower start for planting in South America, the early harvested soybeans from Brazil will not be available as early as usual. Therefore, the U.S. may continue to have a strong export demand from China until late February or early March, when the South American harvest will begin in earnest.

Speaking of South America, weather conditions must be monitored throughout the entire growing season. Any hiccup in production will be supportive for soybean prices in the coming months. The global demand for soybeans remains strong, especially as China is rebuilding its hog herd and grain inventories. Global ending stocks for soybeans are the lowest that they have been in five years, coming in at less than 90 million metric tons, with a stocks-to-use ratio under 24 percent. This is significant. If the South American crop is not robust, then the global supply becomes even smaller, keeping soybean prices supported.

Here at home, export demand for soybeans is only part of the equation. The soybeans' crush demand is strong, with another facility being added in the Midwest during the coming year. Of the soybeans that are grown in our country, half are used for the crush, and half are exported. We see that trend continuing well into the future.

Looking to spring, the market is curious to know where the battle of soybean and corn acres in the U. S. will end up. For the 2020-21 crop, 91 million acres of corn were planted, and 83.1 million acres of soybeans were planted. It seems likely that, thanks to higher-priced soybeans, soybean acres will increase for the 2021-22 crop.

Heading into 2021, the soybean market will focus on three things: U.S. and Chinese trade relations after the 2020 presidential election, the weather in South America and Chinese soybean demand. There will likely be a myriad of twists and turns in the coming months. Volatility will be high. Be ready to manage both risk and opportunities. Use this winter to brush up on your marketing skills.

Speaking of which, I look forward to next spring in order to conduct a Soybean Marketing Seminar for Women, sponsored by North Dakota Soybean Council. We will look at current market fundamentals, talk about cash marketing opportunities, and discuss how to implement futures or options with your grain marketing plan. This seminar is a great opportunity to have all your questions answered in a fun, educational setting. In the meantime, always feel free to reach out to me with any questions or comments regarding the markets. It would be my pleasure to assist you.

—Story courtesy of Naomi Blohm of Total Farm Marketing by Stewart-Peterson, photo by staff

Naomi Blohm speaks to women soybean farmers at NDSU's Commodity Trading Room in 2017.

To learn more of the upcoming Soybean Marketing Seminar for Women, be sure to follow us on Facebook @NDSoybeanCouncil or Twitter @NDSoybean. Or send your email address to be added to the North Dakota Soybean Council's email list and be the first to learn about these types of opportunities. Email swolf@ndsoybean.org to be added to receive notifications.

IP: It Starts on the Farm

When people in the identity-preserved (IP) industry talk about traceability, the term they often use is "fork to farm." It's the idea of following food and food ingredients all the way back through the value chain, tracing the path for the manufacturing process; containerized shipping; processing; and, of course, growing the crops.

During a recent webinar aimed at European buyers of U.S. IP field crops, the Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance (SSGA) put a couple of IP soybean farmers front and center in its marketing and educational efforts.

Michigan farmer Tim Boring and North Dakota farmer Joe Morken took part in a panel discussion which was led by Eugene Philhower, SSGA's technical adviser for Europe, during the Sept. 15 U.S. Identity-Preserved Soya and Specialty Grains Virtual Seminar. The event was co-organized by SSGA and the European company Bridge2Food.

"For the first time, we committed ourselves to providing messaging from our farmers and growers," SSGA Executive Director Eric Wenberg said. "It's in their rich, fertile soil throughout the U.S. where the IP process truly begins."

The producer panel, titled "Fork to Farm: U.S. Farmers Discuss How They Grow and Deliver What You Order," gave Boring and Morken an opportunity to explain their roles in the IP process to potential European buyers.

"I think it's important for producers to be able to tell our side of the story, hearing it from the horse's mouth, so to speak, as to what we're doing on the farm, how we're keeping the soybeans or other products being grown pure in identity and traceable, and how we're taking that very seriously ourselves so that we're giving customers the products that they desire in the way that they want," said Morken, a third-generation farmer who grows soybeans, including food-grade beans, as well as sugarbeets and corn near Casselton, North Dakota.

Farmers are indeed the people who take the first steps in the segregation of specialized crops, starting with the seed and putting in the extra work, all the way through harvest, that's required to make IP traceability possible.

"This is high-level management, making sure things are well-segregated, things are cleaned out and we're avoiding contamination at planting and at harvest," stated Boring, who operates his family's sixth-generation farm in Stockbridge, Michigan.

Boring raises a variety of soybeans, corn, wheat, barley, dry beans and other crops by utilizing soil health and regenerative principles. His innovative farm practices have been the subject of national and international publications and invited presentations. He is the president and founder of Michigan Agriculture Advancement, an organization dedicated to improving the economic and environmental opportunities for Michigan farms.

"I'm willing to put in more effort on the acres I have," said Boring, who holds a Ph.D. in crop and soil sciences from Michigan State University. "There's a message that there are farmers who are willing to put in the time and effort, knowing there can be a significant financial return on the back side."

Morken, a board member and past chair of the North Dakota Soybean Council, agreed.

"Everything has to be pure," Morken explained, "so the planters need to be cleaned; all the hoses need to be cleaned out; the combines need to be cleaned. There is extra work to it. That's part of the reason for the premium, to make sure it's an identity-pure product.

That premium is beneficial to all parties along the value chain, and the quality, condition and specific traits of those crops make them worth the extra price.

"The companies we work with are selling the beans overseas, so it's vital that we're doing our part to keep these things pure," Morken said. "That's in their contract; that's in our contract. And they check in with us to see that things are right and are passing that information on to the end users."

Including farmers in presentations for the Bridge2Food event and upcoming SSGA seminars, including traceability events for the Philippines and South Korea, is vital to deliver the IP message, Wenberg said.

Boring agreed, saying that the case is built by allowing potential buyers to hear voices which represent each sector of the value chain.

"As growers, we can add value to the products we sell through higher levels of management, such as specialty soybeans, but we can also add value by connecting buyers with a face and story behind that production," stated Boring. "Trust is one of the most valuable, but difficult-to-build, aspects of a business relationship. When growers participate in these virtual events, it's building trust with buyers: trust in who is growing their soybeans, the way in which they are grown, in how the business relationship is valued. I see these virtual events as cultivating a business opportunity that helps give me access to the high-premium specialty soybean market."

—Story courtesy of the Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance, photos by Greg Wanbaugh

Casselton soybean producer Joe Morken.

'Tis the Season for Soybeans

The holiday season is a special time of year for the entire family. Whether wrapping gifts, decorating the tree, or catching up with family and friends, the magic of the season is all around us. No matter what your holiday traditions involve, one thing always brings people together: food.

Whether it's homemade cookies, chocolate fudge or a beautiful Christmas ham, some things always remind us of this time of year. Did you know that soybeans play a big role in getting your favorite holiday dinner or dessert on your plate?

Made of roughly 80 percent protein-rich meal and 20 percent oil, almost all soybean meal produced worldwide is used for feeding livestock and poultry. Soybean oil is used to make hundreds of foods, including mayonnaise, peanut butter and ranch dressing. These special ingredients may be the secret to pulling off the perfect pumpkin pie, casserole or stuffing.

If you're deep frying your turkey this year, select an oil with a smoking point above 425°F to ensure a safe and tasty meal. With its smoking point of 495°F, refined soybean oil is the perfect choice. Plus, it's a heart-healthy option, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

As you think about food memories, don't forget about adding a little soy: soy flour to baked goods (keeps baked goods fresher), shelled edamame to favorite vegetables, textured vegetable protein to cookies, and soy cream cheese and soy sour cream to appetizers and dips.

To learn more about soy as an ingredient, including additional recipes and health and nutrition tips, visit www.soyconnection.com.

Happy Holidays!

—Story by staff, recipe courtesy of The Soyfoods Council

Honey Lemon Ham Glaze

Ingredients

½ cup soybean oil
1-2 tablespoons freshly cracked coarse black pepper
2 tablespoons Soy sauce
½ cup honey
3 lemons, zested and juiced

Instructions

In a large non-stick pan on medium heat, add the oil and black pepper, simmer for 5 minutes. Add the soy sauce, honey, lemon zest and lemon juice. Simmer for 8 minutes. Remove from heat; let set for 2 minutes. Add lemon juice and zest; stir until blended. Brush laze over ham the last 30 minutes of baking.

Serve remining glaze with ham.

U.S.-Grown, Heart Healthy Soybean Oil

Soybean oil has a neutral flavor, making it ideal for use in a variety of applications, from sautéing and frying to salad dressings and baked goods.

Soybean oil is a pantry staple in homes across the country, but many people may not realize it. Often labeled as vegetable oil, most soybean oil is made with U.S.-grown soybeans.

Versatile

Soybean oil's neutral flavor makes it adaptable to nearly every fat or oil application in the food industry. It blends well with other fats and oils, making it a common ingredient in margarine, shortenings, dressings, baked goods and more.

Chefs and food companies have been blending soybean oil for years to achieve the benefits of pricier flavored oils, without paying a premium.

Benefits

Soybean oil carries the U.S. Food & Drug Administration's (FDA) heart health claim, confirming that it may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease. It's a rich source of omega-3s which affect cardiovascular health and may reduce blood pressure.

To meet the needs of consumers and the food industry, the soybean checkoff supports research to expand the production and use of soy oil for human consumption.

To learn more on soy oil, soybean nutrition, soyfoods, soybean recipes and soybean research, visit Soy Connection at www.soyconnection.com. Find them on social media at www.facebook.com/SoyConnection; www.twitter.com/SoyConnection; and www.instagram.com/soyconnection.

Soy Connection is a collaboration of health, nutrition and food industry experts with U.S. soybean farmers to educate on the benefits of sustainably grown U.S. soy, including heart-healthy soybean oil and soyfoods.

—Story by Soy Connection, photos by Soy Connection and Wanbaugh Studios

78% of shoppers say it is important to support domestic agriculture by purchasing foods made with U.S.-grown ingredients, like soybean oil.

Best of the Best in Wheat and Soybean Research - 2021

Researchers and Extension Specialists from North Dakota State University and the University of Minnesota are working together to deliver the most current research information to help you make better management decisions on your farm.

Due to the pandemic, the Best of the Best in Wheat and Soybean Research and Marketing workshops will be held ONLINE on Monday, January 25 in the afternoon and Tuesday, January 26 in the morning.

Further details will be available soon. Questions? Call 218.253.4311 ext 7 or go online at www.mnwheat.org

Brought to you by the MN Association of Wheat Growers, ND Soybean Council, MN Wheat Research & Promotion Council, ND Grain Growers Association, MN Soybean Research & Promotion Council and the ND Wheat Commission.

OUR SOY CHECKOFF™

unitedsoybean.org

MAINTAINING OUR REPUTATION TO DELIVER

Whether shipping by river, road or rail, *the soy checkoff is committed to ensuring America's infrastructure is a significant advantage for U.S. soybean farmers. We're looking inside the bean, beyond the bushel and around the world to keep preference for U.S. soy strong. And it's helping make a valuable impact for soybean farmers like you.*

See more ways the soy checkoff is maximizing profit opportunities for soybean farmers at **unitedsoybean.org**

Brought to you by the soy checkoff.

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Dicamba Renewal Clarifies Seed Options

In June, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit issued a decision that vacated the registrations of three dicamba herbicides: XtendiMax from Bayer, Engenia from BASF and FeXapan from Corteva. The ruling left soybean farmers who had already planted dicamba-tolerant varieties in the lurch. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) did allow the use of existing dicamba herbicide stocks for 2020.

Now an October ruling by the EPA has given farmers more clarity by extending the dicamba label for over the top (OTT) use in soybeans on dicamba-tolerant (DT) soybeans through 2025, providing certainty to American agriculture for the upcoming growing season and beyond.

To manage off-site movement of dicamba, EPA's 2020 registration features additional control measures, including requiring an approved pH-buffering agent to be tank mixed with OTT dicamba products prior to all applications to control volatility. The registration requires a downwind buffer of 240 feet and 310 feet in areas where listed species are located. The label prohibits OTT application of dicamba on soybeans after June 30. The label and use directions were also simplified so that growers can more easily determine when and how to properly apply dicamba.

Some farmers made seed-purchase decisions for 2021 without knowing if dicamba-tolerant varieties would be available.

"The last few years, we've seen folks transitioning away from dicamba in pockets," says Carl Peterson, president of Peterson Farms Seed. "Some of that transition is due to the challenges with dicamba application and other systems being easier to work with. The cancellation accelerated the transition, but it hasn't necessarily changed the direction."

Peterson states that many farmers who weren't willing to risk waiting for a possible dicamba label renewal are shifting to the Enlist or Liberty varieties.

Weed Driven

Prevailing weed concerns are a driving factor behind which herbicide and seed tolerance platform farmers choose. In the southeast corner of the state, waterhemp and ragweed tend to be the problematic weeds while kochia is the most troublesome weed across northern and western North Dakota.

Peterson explains that the Enlist platform, which uses 2-4D, is less effective on kochia than the Xtend platform which uses dicamba.

"What we're seeing is growers in areas where kochia is an issue have planned to stick with the Xtend platform, hoping for label approval," Peterson says.

Proseed General Manager Keith Peltier states that most farmers don't make firm seed orders until the combines are parked for the winter, so many growers took a wait-and-see approach. He agrees that the weed-control platform of choice is largely based on weed-management needs.

"Kochia is a western and northern challenge, so farmers there are sticking with the Xtend platform," Peltier says. "In the East where waterhemp is an issue, Enlist and Liberty are what guys are ordering.
If farmers have a really a big weed concern, then the platform plays more than the yield, especially if you have to go over the top. If there's a big weed concern and farmers aren't able to do any pre-emerge herbicide applications, then, yes, the platform is essential even if you get less yield."

Peltier believed that a dicamba label would be approved for soybean use in 2021 and he wasn't alone. Bayer had a Plant with Confidence offer that, if a label for dicamba wasn't adopted by February 2021, Bayer would support farmers who chose the Roundup Ready® Xtend Crop System for their 2021 planting needs by providing farmers with a $7-per-unit price reduction for qualifying Roundup Ready 2 Xtend® soybeans and a $3-per-unit price reduction for qualifying XtendFlex® soybeans.

If farmers plant 50 million acres of Xtend soybeans, the program could have cost Bayer as much as $350 million if a label is not approved.

"That was a big bet," Peltier states.

Carl Peterson is President of Peterson Farms Seed.

Yield Matters

While seed selection for weed management is important, yield matters, too.

"I've never made any money growing weeds," Peterson explains.

Peterson says that, regardless of the trait platform farmers choose, yield is determined by the seed genetics, not the trait.

"It's important to understand that the trait has nothing to do with yield. It's the other genetic components," Peterson explains. "There are very good Xtend lines for most maturities; there are very good Enlist lines for most maturities. We encourage growers to pick the system they want to work with and then pick the variety that fits. I think that's effective."

Peterson Farms Seed operates the largest independent, replicated testing program in the region. Peterson says that the data show no difference across platforms for yield and performance, provided the proper resistance genes are in place if a field has problems such as iron deficiency chlorosis, soybean cyst nematode or phytophthora.

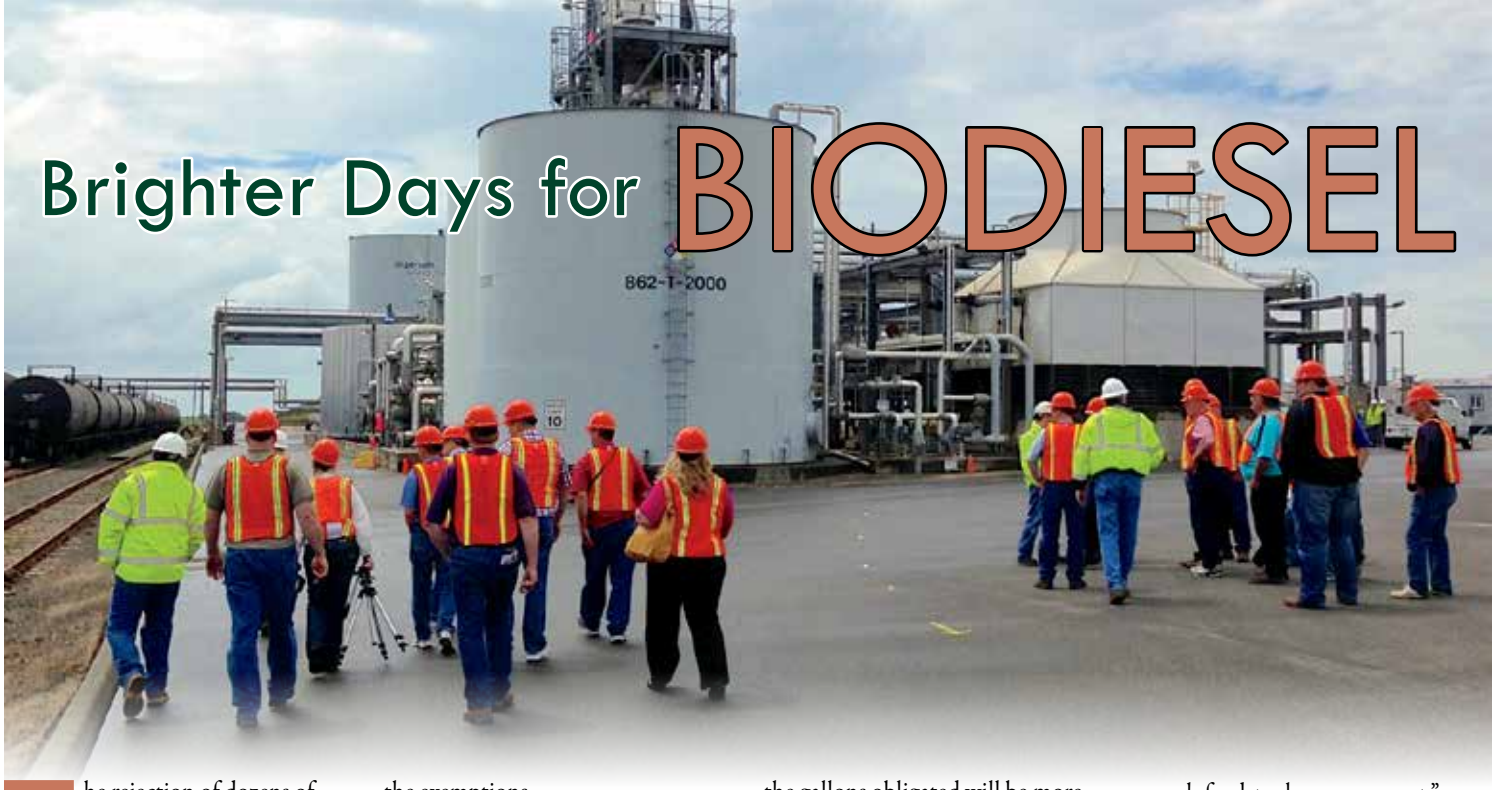
"Farmers do look at how varieties are performing. If, for some reason or other, one platform didn't perform in their area, that can impact which platform guys want," Peltier states.

Stewarding Tools

As herbicide resistance continues to be an issue for agriculture, the

—Continued on page 32

Brighter Days for BIODIESEL



The rejection of dozens of small refinery waivers and a push by some states toward decarbonization are both positive signals for the nation's biodiesel industry which, in turn, should present opportunity and value to soybean farmers.

In September, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) rejected more than 50 small refinery exemptions (SREs) filed by oil refiners in order to avoid their obligation to blend renewable fuels as specified in the Renewable Fuels Standard (RFS). The RFS statute allowed for waivers to small refiners that demonstrated disproportionate hardship as a result of the program. In recent years, the number of exemption requests skyrocketed as refiners sought to avoid blending renewable fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel. The EPA granted many of those requests.

The National Biodiesel Board (NBB) estimated that biodiesel producers have lost 550 million gallons of biodiesel demand over the last three years as a result of these waivers.

The rejection of many of the SREs was the result of biofuel advocates going to court and winning support from the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals, which rebuked the EPA saying that the EPA was illegally granting the exemptions.

"As a biofuels industry, we looked at that as an enormous win," said Kurt Kovarik, vice president of federal affairs for the NBB. "The court said the EPA needed to get back to granting waivers only to those who showed hardship, not as a way to undermine volumes."

Kovarik stated that, when the EPA sets volumes for biomass-based diesel for the coming year, the action sends a market signal.

"What the SREs did was take away the certainty from biodiesel producers, soybean growers and others, ultimately costing them value, costing biodiesel markets and ultimately returning less to the soybean grower in the value of that soybean oil," Kovarik added.

Kovarik said economic studies indicate that biodiesel delivers about 13 percent of the value added to a bushel of soybeans. With the current prices, he explained how that number is about a dollar per bushel or roughly $32.50 per acre.

"My view is that (a) dollar per bushel is the difference between breaking even and having a little bit of profit versus losing money in this market," Kovarik explained.

Kovarik expects that, going forward, the waiver-granting process will comply with the RFS and that the gallons obligated will be more reliable. Annual biodiesel volume obligations for 2020 and 2021 are set at 2.43 billion gallons, but that amount has been eroded by several hundred million gallons. Kovarik says that it will send a strong signal to the biodiesel industry this year and next year if the EPA's volume is held at 2.43 billion gallons and not eroded through waivers.

U.S. biodiesel producers recently won trade cases against Indonesia and Argentina for illegally dumping subsidized biodiesel into the U.S. market. Before the ruling, U.S. producers had been supplying about 65 percent of the nation's biodiesel needs. Now, they're producing upwards of 90 percent of the biodiesel consumed in the United States.

A blender's tax credit was reinstated to incentivize the build out of the biodiesel infrastructure. The incentive was reinstated until 2022.

The combination of clarity on refinery waivers, certainty about a tax credit and a win against illegally dumped imported fuel has biodiesel advocates optimistic about the future.

"We hope to see significant expansion in the next 12 to 36 months," Kovarik says. "The message to North Dakota soybean farmers is we're going to need soybean oil. We're going to need as much feedstock as we can get."

Climate Conversation

Kovarik explains that the policy regarding carbon reduction presents another opportunity for biodiesel. Whether Congress pushes for climate-change policy, Kovarik says that states and other jurisdictions are moving toward decarbonizing.

"Biodiesel is the quickest, easiest way to remove a significant amount of carbon from a transportation sector that relies on diesel fuel. Our product reduces carbon emissions by as much as 85 percent, depending on the feedstock, and you can do it today with no or very little modification to infrastructure and engines," Kovarik contends. "The fact of the matter is, we're going to need more and more feedstock to sustain the industry's growth. That's great news for soybean growers, canola growers and livestock farmers."

California is one of the states driving the decarbonization efforts. The California Air Resources Board (CARB) is the state agency that is primarily in charge of addressing air pollution and climate change.

Floyd Vergara worked for CARB for more than 30 years and now serves as the director of state regulatory affairs for the NBB. He says that CARB has set a goal for a

40-percent reduction in greenhouse gases, from the 1990 levels, by 2030 and an 80-percent reduction by 2050. Vergara states that California has instituted an aggressive suite of policies for vehicle emissions, transportation fuels and vehicle miles traveled in order to achieve those goals. CARB enacted a Low Carbon Fuel Standard (LCFS) in 2010. The LCFS requires a 10-percent reduction, relative to the 2010 baseline, in lifecycle carbon emissions, what's called carbon intensity, by 2022, doubling to a 20-percent reduction by 2030.

Vergara says that the main fuels at the start of the LCFS were petroleum diesel and gasoline, which have higher carbon intensity than the standards, so CARB requires compliance obligation credits that are generated through alternative fuels. Many refiners meet their obligations by blending alternative fuels, including lower carbon stocks such as biodiesel and renewable diesel.

"Biodiesel and renewable diesel from soy and other feedstocks are credit generators because they have among the lowest carbon intensities of any of the liquid fuels, up to 76 percent lower in California than their petroleum counterparts," Vergara states. "As a result, biodiesel and renewable diesel have grown in importance under the LCFS, such that they now collectively generate 45 percent of all the LCFS carbon reduction and credits."

Vergara explains that the LCFS has sent very strong market signals in the form of credit prices. These prices have been sustained and are hovering around $190 to $200 per credit since 2018, with each credit representing one metric ton of carbon reduction.

"Since biodiesel and renewable diesel reduced carbon emissions by 6.7 million metric tons (in) 2019, those credit prices generated about $1.6 billion in value for biomass-based diesel in California alone, equating to about $1.50 per gallon," Vergara says.

California's biodiesel and renewable diesel use grew from 14 million gallons in 2011 to 830 million gallons in 2019, nearly a 6,000 percent increase in 10 years. About 22 percent of every gallon of diesel consumed in California is now biodiesel and renewable diesel. Vergara states that research from the University of California-Davis suggests that the 22 percent renewable content needs to be closer to 60 to 80 percent if California is going to meet its climate targets by 2030.

Kurk Kovarik is vice president of federal affairs for the National Biodiesel Board.

Floyd Vergara is director of state regulatory affairs for NBB.

"There is a really big opportunity for growth. Currently, fuel producers use waste grease and tallow as well as crop-based feedstocks," Vergara explains. "If we're moving from 22 to 60 to 80 percent, obviously all those feedstocks are going to have to grow across the board, including crop-based feedstocks."

What California does from a regulatory standpoint often gets picked up by others. Vergara says that Oregon has a similar program, and Colorado and Washington state are exploring their own standards. Vergara explains that this type of market-based program helps states and other jurisdictions meet their carbon goals because transportation represents about half of all greenhouse-gas emissions in many jurisdictions.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photos courtesy of National Biodiesel Board, South Dakota Soybean Growers and Wanbaugh Studios

NBB research indicates biodiesel contributes 13 percent of the value farmers like Todd Sinner derive from each bushel of soybeans.

Getting to Know Your NDSC County Representative

Andrew Haugen, Hannaford, North Dakota
Griggs County Representative

Tell us about your farm.

I farm with my dad, Dennis, and brother, Mike. We all have our own acres, but I spend a lot of my time helping manage my father's farm operation. We raise soybeans, corn and small grains, along with cover crop seed production.

What do you like best about farming?

Being raised as a farm kid, I knew I always wanted to be a farmer. What I like best about farming is there is something new every day. I enjoy the new seasons, and every day brings a different challenge.

What's most exciting about the soybean season you just completed?

The most exciting part is not combining in snow and actually having $10 cash soybeans at the elevator.

Why did you get involved with the North Dakota Soybean Council as a county representative?

There was a vacant seat for our county, and I thought it would be a good way to get involved. I have enjoyed my involvement so far.

What has changed most about farming since you've been involved?

As a young farmer, I have only been farming a few years myself. The market climate has changed, along with the introduction of dicamba for soybeans.

What do you like to do outside farming?

Besides farming, we also have a seed cleaning and sales business, which also keeps us busy when we aren't in the field. As far as hobbies, I enjoy motorcycling.

What's the one piece of farm equipment or technology you wouldn't want to be without?

Thanks to technology, I'd have to say my smartphone and the monitors we have in all of our equipment is what I find most valuable.

Andrew is one of the North Dakota Soybean Council's county representatives. To learn more about serving on the North Dakota Soybean Council as a county representative or board member, visit www.bit.ly/NDSCelections

—Story and photo by staff

—Continued from page 29

proper use of available weed-management tools remains a concern regardless of the platform that farmers employ.

"Resistance is going to continue to show up," Peterson says. "Dicamba is really effective against kochia, until dicamba and Roundup resistant kochia becomes prevalent and that will happen; it's just a matter of when. It's important for growers to think about their weed-control strategies in a more holistic manner, including crop rotation. We need to fight this with everything we've got because resistance is going to continue, and it's going to be a huge problem."

Bayer's Xtendflex soybeans are now ready for commercial launch in the U.S. and Canada in 2021, following September's trait approval from the European Union. Xtendflex soybeans tolerate over-the-top application of glyphosate, dicamba and glufosinate. Peterson and Peltier say that the variety will offer farmers another option, but currently, there aren't varieties available in the relative maturity that is needed for North Dakota's growing season.

"I'm not sure it will have a big impact this year, but certainly, if there is a renewed over-the-top dicamba label, that's a good package. If you can successfully use dicamba early in the season and then come back on some of those other weeds with a good shot of Liberty later, that could be pretty effective weed control," Peterson states.

Keith Peltier is general manager for Proseed.

"In our opinion, choices in Xtendflex aren't as good as what we have in the Enlist platform or Xtend platform," Peltier explains. "But looking at our plots, it looks like the next release candidates will be a step up, so we should have more Xtendflex opportunities next year."

Both Peterson and Peltier say that their companies offer a full range of varieties and trait packages in order to meet farmers' needs, regardless of the renewed dicamba label.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photos courtesy of Peterson Farms Seed and Betsy Armour

Dr. Gautam Pradhan
Research Agronomist in Williston, North Dakota
Williston Research Extension Center (WREC)

Where did you grow up?

I was born and bred in Thamel, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Tell us about your education.

I had my elementary, middle and high school education from the local schools at Thamel. I earned a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture degree from the University of Agriculture Faisalabad, Faisalabad, Pakistan; a Master of Science in Agriculture from Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn, Bonn, Germany; and a Ph.D. in Agronomy from Kansas State University.

What brought you to North Dakota State University (NDSU), and how long have you worked there?

It is my amazing seventh year working at the NDSU Williston Research Extension Center as a research agronomist.

After my Ph.D., as a postdoctoral researcher, I worked at the Department of Agriculture, Kansas State University for one year and at Texas A&M AgriLife Research and Extension Center, Amarillo, Texas, for more than a year and a half. When I learned about the opportunity at the NDSU Williston Research Extension Center, Williston, North Dakota, I jumped in because it was a scientist position, and I had all the skills, training, knowledge and experience required to excel in this position.

What is the focus of your work at the WREC?

My principal focus at the WREC is to develop technologies that increase farm income of North Dakota producers and ag enterprises via enhanced growth, yield and quality of field crops and/or decrease in the cost of production of the field crops.

My research interests are to develop suitable crop production practices and cropping sequences that fully exploit the genetic potentiality of a variety and enhance input use efficiency, crop productivity, grain quality, and soil health; understand the physiological, morphological, and phenological bases of abiotic (drought and high temperature) and biotic stress tolerance of field crops; explore and apply modern techniques and precision agriculture, such as unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) in small plot experiments; evaluate crop varieties and breeding lines for adaptation and the development of high-yielding varieties suitable to no-till semiarid conditions; and disseminate research outcomes to producers, extension agents, academia, policymakers, and industries.

What is most rewarding about the work you are doing?

Almost every day, I am learning new things. I enjoy the interaction with people, including producers, extension agents, ag entrepreneurs, scientists and policymakers, and making contributions towards the development of new ag technology. I feel most rewarded when technologies that we developed are adopted by the producers.

You are in an area that has not always been a soybean-producing area. What has made it possible to grow soybeans there?

In my opinion, the soybean research that we have been conducting has made it possible to grow soybeans in this part of North Dakota, especially the variety evaluation trials that we have been conducting could be able to identify high-yielding soybean varieties suitable for this region. Thanks to the North Dakota Soybean Council and North Dakota soybean producers for their financial support to conduct soybean research and extension projects.

What do you like to do away from work?

I read local, national and international news. I like watching movies that depict the cultural and social aspects of a given nation, place and time. On many occasions, I would be searching and learning the latest technologies and findings that would help me designing and/or executing new projects.

—Story by Dan Lemke, photo courtesy of NDSU

USDA Invests in Infrastructure to Increase Biofuel Sales

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will make up to $100 million in grants available to increase American ethanol and biodiesel sales. These funds will be available to recipients in 14 states through the Higher Blends Infrastructure Incentive Program (HBIIP).

"Investments made through the Higher Blends Infrastructure Incentive Program are helping rural communities build stronger economies and will give consumers more choices when they fill up at the pump," Secretary Perdue said. "President Trump has expanded ethanol use by unleashing year-round E15, and the result is more demand for American farmers and more affordable fuel for American consumers."

The USDA is funding projects in California, Florida, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Utah and Wisconsin.

Supporting Precision Ag

Ag industry leaders, including American Soybean Association (ASA) Director Jim Kukowski of Minnesota, joined House Agriculture Committee members to discuss an issue threatening to derail precision agriculture, which Kukowski notes as one of the greatest technological advances on the farm in decades.

House Ag Committee Chairman Collin Peterson (D-Minn.) and House Ag Committee Member Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-Pa.) participated in the discussion regarding the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) decision to allow Ligado Networks to operate a terrestrial wireless network and how that network will threaten the reliability of the GPS receivers used with precision agriculture.

Because growers rely upon precision technology so heavily, the prospect of GPS units not working is critical for every soybean farmer.

"Our organization has been advocating for the soybean farmer for 100 years," said Kukowski, a soy grower and the chair of ASA's Conservation and Precision Agriculture Committee. "The arrival of GPS to farms has been the biggest technical advancement the industry has ever seen. The fact that the FCC would threaten our farmers with such a misguided decision is incomprehensible."

The ASA also joined leading ag organizations, which represent farmers across the country, to support the Keep GPS Working Coalition, urging a reversal of the FCC's Ligado decision.

Aquaculture Act

The American Soybean Association (ASA) applauds recent steps toward building a domestic offshore aquaculture industry. The Advancing the Quality and Understanding of American Aquaculture Act (AQUAA Act) has been introduced.

The bill creates a balanced framework for the development of offshore aquaculture in the United States, focusing on the unique issues that arise from offshore aquaculture and creating a joint permit application that consolidates all federal agency requirements so that applicants can fill out a single online form. A similar bill, HR 6191, was previously introduced in the U. S. House.

The bill would set up a research and development program that includes sustainable feeds, such as soy, as a priority. The bill requires the research and development grant program to award competitive, peer-reviewed grants in order to fund research and extension services to create innovative designs and engineering solutions for industry problems, to develop new technologies, to develop cost-effective and sustainable feeds, to improve monitoring techniques and to evaluate the effects of offshore aquaculture on coastal communities' economies.

WTO Rules Against a Majority of U.S. Tariffs on Chinese Goods

A World Trade Organization (WTO) panel ruled that a majority of the 2018 U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods violated a central principle of international trade by circumventing the WTO dispute system. From the perspective of U.S. soybean growers, the WTO ruling is unlikely to affect the current trade climate between the United States and China. Because the U.S. has refused to approve new appointments to the WTO Appellate Body, that court is rendered essentially nonexistent, and the U.S. has no venue to appeal this ruling. It is unlikely that the U.S. will remove any remaining tariffs on Chinese imports, and it is very unlikely that this will affect the Phase I deal with China.

The Dicamba Registration Renewed

The American Soybean Association (ASA) applauds the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) after announcing that EPA it will reregister dicamba for 2021 and future use. Dicamba is one of many tools integral to the success of soy growers who face different crop production challenges throughout a diverse growing region spanning 30-plus states.

Bill Gordon, soybean farmer from Worthington, Minnesota, and president of ASA said, "We rely in great part on EPA support for the continued success of our industry, from measures encouraging biodiesel market expansion to these types of decisions regarding safe and effective use of crop protection tools. We thank EPA for the many steps and time invested in coming to this decision to reregister a product relied upon by many soy growers."

ASA is reviewing the new registration to have a comprehensive understanding of its impact for U.S. soybean production. Dicamba is an important choice for growers to have available to help manage damaging weeds.

Trump Signs Continuing Resolution, CCC Replenished

After an 84-10 Senate vote, President Trump signed a continuing resolution (CR) to fund the government through Dec. 11. The bill includes critical provisions that allow the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to use the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) to make payments to farmers with no interruption to the expected Farm Bill benefits this fall and to access to the second round of Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP2) payments.

The bill replenishes the USDA's CCC account, which is necessary to ensure processing of Farm Bill benefits such as Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC). The bill also prohibits the CCC or USDA from providing payments or otherwise supporting fossil-fuel refiners and importers.

The bill includes a one-year extension for the expiring surface transportation programs, along with an infusion of $13.6 billion for the Highway Trust Fund, $10.4 billion of which will be allocated to the highway account. This extension ensures that state departments of transportation will have funding for ongoing projects before a long-term, 5-year reauthorization is reached.

The CR extends authorization through Dec. 11, 2020. This action allows the USDA's Federal Grain Inspection Service to continue collecting user fees for grain inspection and weighing services, and to continue its work on export markets for grain. Prior to the CR, authorization for grain standards was set to expire on Sept. 30.

—Story by staff

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