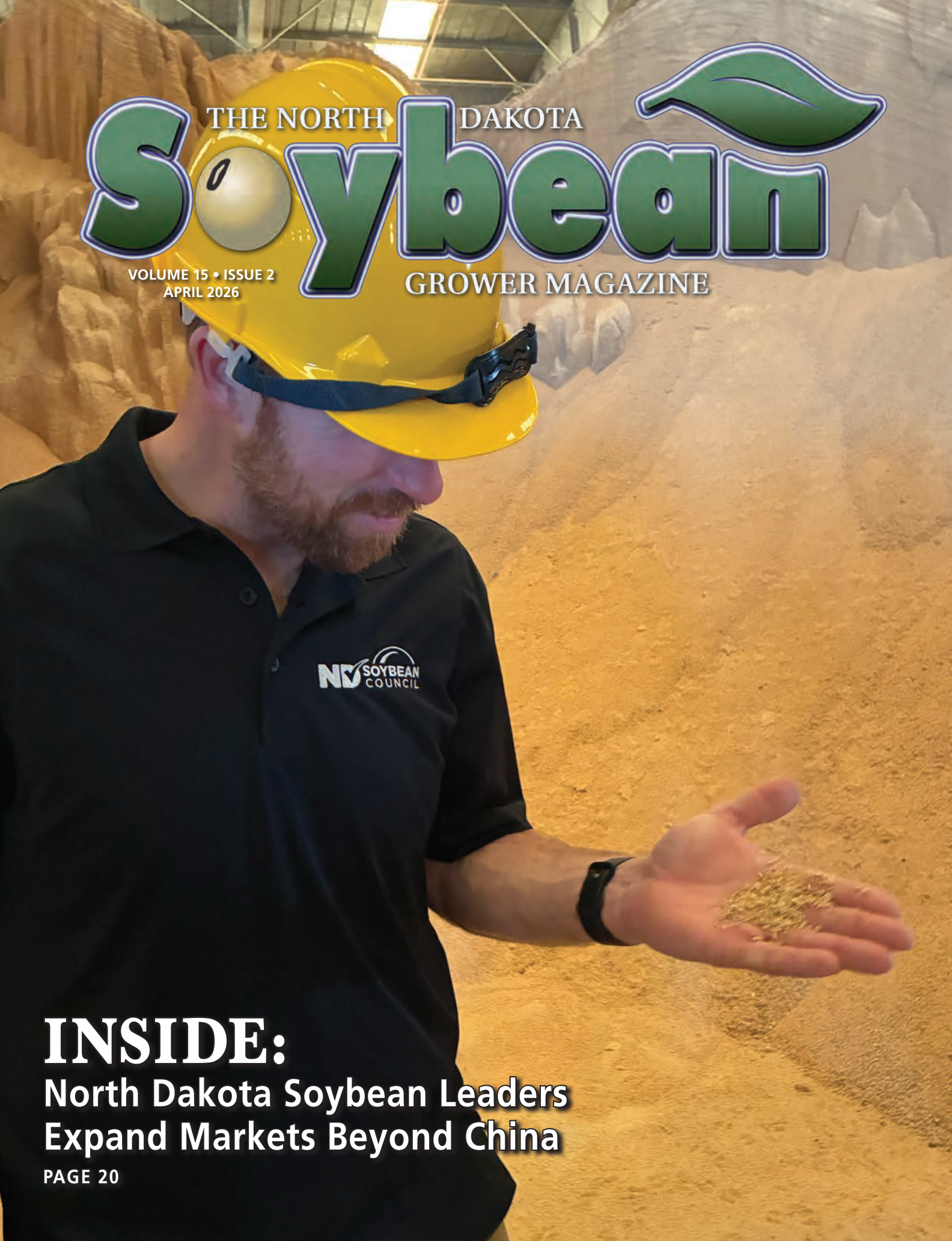

THE NORTH DAKOTA Soybean GROWER MAGAZINE

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APRIL 2026

INSIDE:

North Dakota Soybean Leaders Expand Markets Beyond China

PAGE 20

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THE NORTH DAKOTA Soybean GROWER MAGAZINE

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On the cover

Grand Forks farmer and North Dakota Soybean Council vice chairman Evan Montgomery is one of several of the state's farmer-leaders who recently got a first-hand look at some key overseas markets. The group traveled to Thailand and Vietnam to connect with customers, learn about their needs and promote the quality and availability of North Dakota soybeans.

—Photo by staff

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Legislative Interim Committee Process

In February, the Greater North Dakota Chamber sponsored a policy outlook session featuring Joe Morrissette, director of the Office of Management and Budget; he presented on state revenues and commented on the possible 2027-2029 state budget. His presentation was factual, insightful and helpful. He was careful to express how he didn't want to paint a gloomy financial forecast for the state of North Dakota. The state will likely have less state revenues available during the next budget cycle.

This expected reduction will affect state agencies and other entities that receive state support. This budget scenario will probably influence agriculture and rural areas in many ways, whether through agricultural programs, road and bridge improvements, or state water projects. My conclusions are not solely based upon one presentation, but they're informed by input from many legislators who are predicting "tightening belts" and trimming state spending.

The state is projected to end the current biennium with a balance of about $400 million, approximately $1 billion less than the two previous bienniums. The state is spending more than the ongoing revenues support. There has been a 33% ongoing revenue increase over the last 8 years, or an average growth of 4% per year. Meanwhile, spending has increased 42%, or 6% per year. Ongoing growth has not kept pace with the current spending. There is a $784 million gap in the 2025-2027 biennium, the widest imbalance for the general fund in the state's history. Because of large balances at the beginning of the bienniums, the state has never had a projected deficit when spending exceeded growth. Over 80% of the state's spending goes to areas which are incredibly difficult to cut, such as education and the Department of Health and Human Services.

There is valid concern about decreased oil production. Morrissette reported a strong correlation between oil-extraction tax growth and sales-tax growth. The Strategic Investments Improvement Fund (SIIF) will collect significantly less than in the 2023-2025 biennium. The legislature significantly relies on SIIF money for projects, including road and bridge improvements. Smaller SIIF collections will have a negative effect and possibly result in reduced spending for the next biennium.

Morrissette noted that the state has been increasing expenditures at an unsustainable rate. He indicated that Governor Armstrong anticipates providing guidance regarding state agency budgets in April and that agencies will be asked to make cuts and to trim spending. There are ongoing discussions with agencies about anticipated shortfalls. The next budget must be balanced in December, prior to the next legislative session.

Morrissette did have some encouraging information. Despite expected reductions for the oil-extraction taxes, he expects continued growth, between 3% and 4%, for the sales-tax revenue. Overall, he is expecting growth for the general tax revenues.

Regardless of the state's financial situation, the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association will continue to actively engage with legislators and to advocate for prudent choices in the next session, recognizing agriculture's important and tremendous contributions to the state's economy and the rural life which it fosters and sustains.

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Soybean Industry Leader Passes

One of the farmers responsible for creating the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association (NDSGA) more than 40 years ago has died. David Holter, 89, of Hatton passed away on Nov. 25.

Holter served in the United States Army until his honorable discharge in 1957. He returned home and attended college in Wahpeton at the North Dakota State School of Science as well as at North Dakota State University (NDSU) in Fargo. He then joined his father in the family farming operation, which he later took over and continued for more than 50 years.

Holter was deeply involved with agricultural organizations and research. He worked with the North Dakota Farm Bureau and NDSU Extension regarding research and testing programs. Holter was one of the original farmers who helped found the NDSGA. Holter served as secretary when the NDSGA was established in 1983. He also served as the chair of the Northern Crops Council in 1987.

The NDSGA offers its sincere condolences to the Holter family.

Founding North Dakota Soybean Growers Association board member David Holter passed away in November. Holter is seen speaking at the NDSGA's 40th Anniversary celebration in 2023.

Have We Weathered the Storm?

Has the ship found smooth sailing? Are things beginning to turn around? I get these or similar questions when discussing the current situation facing soybean farmers in North Dakota. It was a year of "choppy seas" in 2025, but 2026 may, hopefully, have fewer rogue waves heading our direction.

2025 will likely go down as one of the worst years in recent memory for North Dakota soybean producers. Some areas of the state had decent to excellent yields, but many of us were hit with extreme weather events, from windstorms to hail, or the early September frost that clipped top yields. Combine those events with the trade issues that resulted in a roller coaster of basis and cash grain prices, and most producers were eager to leave 2025 behind.

While we still face many of the same fundamental issues in 2026 that we did during 2025, it is noteworthy to point out that we may have turned a corner and are heading in the right direction. The trade truce announced by the White House and the fact that China does, indeed, appear to be making purchases equal to the amounts stated, have given renewed hope for soybean export demand. While this situation doesn't reduce the global soybean oversupply issue, it is at least a starting point and helps ensure that we can make more sound planting and financial decisions. China still plays an important role in U.S. soybean demand and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

I've often been asked why we don't just look for other customers and forget about China; China's soybean crush industry has the capacity to crush around 120 million metric tons per year, which equates to an entire unit train of soybeans roughly every 45 minutes, or about 9,000 bushels per minute. All of our other customers combined cannot match that sort of demand. Most people in the soybean export industry agree that things aren't going back to how they were, and we do have very legitimate trade and geopolitical challenges with China; however, it is still worth pursuing a positive trade relationship that benefits us all.

We received some good news for biofuels because the 45Z tax guidance has finally been released. The biofuel industry now has the blueprints with which it can work to expand and to build out this important industry. I believe that biomass-based fuels, such as biodiesel, renewable diesel and sustainable aviation fuel, have the potential to do for soybeans what ethanol did for the corn market in the past two decades, creating long term domestic demand.

We've also had some positive developments with pesticide labels from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and positive news from the White House regarding glyphosate. The EPA announced approval for three over the top (OTT) products. While OTT dicamba applications can be controversial in North Dakota due to the variety of crops which can be sensitive to dicamba drift, this win was still important because it allows producers to have another tool in the toolbox. It is on all of us to use this tool responsibly so that the product does not get taken away again.

President Trump signed an executive order to boost the domestic production of glyphosate and important pesticide ingredients. Glyphosate is a very important tool for many of our farming operations, and this order ensures that we have access to that product.

While many individuals in the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) movement decried the move, it is important to point out that both the president and Secretary Robert F Kennedy, Jr publicly supported this action, bringing a great deal of certainty and relief to the industry because people were fearful that the MAHA movement could take away many of our crop protection products.

Most of us have been working through farm financials, meeting with lenders and trying to work "unworkable" math going into 2026. We still have many challenges ahead, including high input costs, inflation, high interest rates, market access issues and more. However, I am hopeful that, perhaps, we have found slightly calmer waters and that we have the wind with us instead of against us as we did for most of 2025. It feels like we are finally heading in the right direction. While it certainly won't be all smooth sailing ahead, perhaps, if we're lucky, we'll have fewer hurricanes to sail through in 2026 and beyond.

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PUTTING DOWN New Roots

For the past several years, heavy equipment around the Fargo-Moorhead area has been slowly transforming the landscape. The $3 billion Fargo-Moorhead (FM) Area Diversion Project is scheduled for completion in 2027. The project includes a 30-mile diversion channel, a 20-mile earthen embankment, three gated control structures and numerous other features which are designed to provide protection from catastrophic Red River flooding for homes and businesses throughout the entire Fargo-Moorhead metro area.

The project has often been contentious because it involved disruptions for families, communities and farms upstream of the diversion. The channel south of Fargo affects thousands of acres of farmland that would be covered with water when flooding occurs.

For some farm families, the project is even more invasive than the potential for crop loss.

Jerome Nipstad grew up on his family's farm on the banks of the Wild Rice River near Horace. The homestead had been in the family since 1875. Other than a few years right after he and his wife, Sandy, were married, Jerome Nipstad called the farm site home for more than 70 years. Dealing with flooding on the farm came with the territory.

"We had to fight water because we were right on the Wild Rice River, so any flood, we'd have to station tractors to get out of there," Jerome Nipstad recalls.

"We never had water in anything, but we had to drive through water to get out at times," adds Scott Nipstad, Jerome's son and the fourth generation of the family to farm the land.

MaryJane Nipstad keeps a collage of photos in the farm shop office that traces the family's farm heritage.

Despite being on the banks of the river, there were benefits to the farm's location.

"It could be storming out, but I wouldn't know what was going on because we were well protected by the trees along the river," Jerome Nipstad asserts.

Because of that proximity to the river, the Nipstad farm was one of several that became casualties of the diversion project. After nearly 150 years in one location, the Nipstad farmstead would have to move.

Lengthy Process

Discussion about the diversion and the potential that it would uproot the Nipstad family started about a decade ago. Eventually, the project gained the necessary approvals and moved forward. After numerous meetings and negotiations, the Nipstads knew there wasn't much recourse.

Starting from scratch allowed the Nipstads to lay out the farmyard to maximize efficiency.

Jerome and Sandy Nipstad moved to Kindred while Scott Nipstad and his wife, MaryJane, who lived a quarter mile from the home farm, were also forced to move. They built a new farm site about two miles from the original location. The new site was constructed on land that the Nipstads owned. It was the only part of their farm that wouldn't be affected by water routed through the diversion during a flood.

"This is the only quarter that was out of the easement because they needed to take easement on anything in that holding pond," Scott Nipstad explains. "You can't build on that anymore."

For three years, the Nipstads worked with engineers, contractors and Richland County Soil Conservation to design the new farm site. At times, the entire process was exhausting.

"It just sucks the life out of you because there's just so much to it," MaryJane Nipstad says. "There's so many moving parts, and logistics were probably the most overwhelming part. There are probably things we would do differently now because we've never had to go through this before. This is a huge undertaking to start fresh and build."

The transition has been a lengthy process.

"We've been in our house since last July, so a year and a half, roughly," Scott Nipstad says, "and we got the farm stuff moved over last May and June. The buildings went up two summers ago, and then, we did the electrical work last winter. This fall was our first harvest on this location."

The settlement with the FM Diversion Authority meant that family members would be compensated to replace the same amount of bin space and building square footage as they previously had. They couldn't upsize buildings or bins without spending money from their own pockets.

Because they were starting from scratch, the Nipstads could design the farm yard to operate more efficiently than the old homestead. However, once they came to an agreement with the authority, they had no recourse to go back for additional funds if unexpected problems arose.

"We ran into things since we've settled, but we can't go back and get more or ask for anything different," MaryJane Nipstad explains. "For one thing, our well isn't big enough here, so now, we're going to work with Cass Rural Water, so additional water can be piped into the farmstead where we never had to do that before because we had a big enough well. That will be an added expense forever that we never had before to pay for water."

After being surrounded by trees near the Wild Rice River, the new farm site is wide open to the elements and passing travelers. A shelter belt, which was planted several years ago, will take some time to mature.

"There's no privacy," MaryJane Nipstad contends, "everyone sees everything."

"It will probably be great for our son, Mason, when he takes over the farm in 20 years," Scott Nipstad adds.

There are benefits to having a new, well-designed farm yard with new, more modern facilities. Scott and MaryJane Nipstad recently hosted a large Future Farmers of America (FFA) event in their machine shed.

"We were probably limited space wise to grow on the old farm, so in the long run, it would probably be a good thing, but the whole being uprooted and moving is a big adjustment for anybody," Scott Nipstad states.

The house, machine sheds and bins may be new, but it will take some time for the Nipstad family's new roots to grow as deep as they ran on the banks of the Wild Rice River.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photos by Daniel Lemke

Scott Nipstad gestures toward a wall of photos showing the original farm site near the Wild Rice River.

A Relationship Business

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There's nothing quite like being there. In this case, "there" was Thailand and Vietnam when several fellow North Dakota farmer-leaders, North Dakota soybean staff and I flew to Southeast Asia to do our part to enhance the demand for North Dakota soybeans.

China remains the largest soybean market in Asia. With recent disruptions affecting U.S. access to that market, the North Dakota Soybean Council is continuing its long-standing efforts to expand relationships in growing markets such as Thailand and Vietnam.

The trade mission included tours of feed mills, soymilk processing facilities, aquaculture production operations, and more. We met with soybean buyers, nutritionists, and trade representatives in both countries in order to create connections and to promote what we grow.

It's readily evident that soy plays a huge role in the culture. Store shelves are stocked with rows of soy beverages and soy foods. The abundance of soy foods isn't something that's typical in North Dakota stores, but in Asia, soy items are a very big deal and an important source of nutrition. It was especially exciting to see bags of soybeans at a large processing facility; those sacks were labeled as originating from North Dakota. Soybeans that were grown at home were half a world away, poised to become high-quality food items for hungry families.

An issue of growing importance to Asian food manufacturers, exporters and consumers alike is sustainability. Years ago, the U.S. soybean industry, including the U.S. Soybean Export Council, developed a sustainable soy logo that food manufacturers can use to demonstrate to consumers that the products are made from sustainably raised U.S. soybeans. That logo is becoming increasingly valuable because consumers trust what it represents, helping to set our high-quality soybeans apart from our competitors.

While the sustainable U.S. soy logo is a valuable tool, it can't replace relationship building. Meeting with buyers and manufacturers, showing them how we, as farmers, care for the land and the crops we produce, is a compelling story. One purchaser told us that he used to purchase soybeans from Canada but now buys more U.S. beans because he's met with a number of U.S. delegations that took the time to meet with him and to explain how U.S. soybeans could help his operation. That anecdote drove home the point that we are in a relationship business.

Besides offering high-quality soybeans, we highlighted the infrastructure advantages that make us a reliable and predictable supplier of whole beans and soybean meal. Thanks to a very efficient supply chain, we can get a load of soybean products delivered to Southeast Asia faster and in better condition than nearly anyone in the world.

Thailand and Vietnam are attractive markets because we have a lot of room to grow our market share. Thanks to their soybean usage, we can really move the needle for the volume into those countries. These growing markets aren't going to be a one-for-one replacement for the China demand, but every percentage of market share that we can pick up in the surrounding countries is a noticeable amount of both meal and whole soybeans moving from North Dakota. We need to expand marketing opportunities to places where we can build market share. It creates a more resilient marketing picture if we have multiple strong ties in Southeast Asia.

One important thing that I learned on this trade mission is the role of soy throughout the Asian culture. Soy is very heavily relied on throughout the entire food complex. They're going to need soybeans. We were there to demonstrate how there are multiple reasons why those beans should come from North Dakota.

Read more about this trade mission on pages 20–22.

USDA Appoints Rob Rose of Wimbledon to **United Soybean Board**

Matt Gast Reappointed and Continues as Vice Chair

On February 2, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the appointment of North Dakota soybean producer Rob Rose of Wimbledon to serve on the United Soybean Board (USB). Rose will serve a three-year term that began on February 6.

"This is an exciting opportunity to continue serving soybean farmers at the national level," says Rose. "My time on the North Dakota Soybean Council and working with Clean Fuels Alliance America has shown me how important it is for farmers to have a voice in how checkoff dollars are invested. I'm honored to represent North Dakota growers and help ensure our soybeans continue to add value across fuel, feed and food markets."

Rose farms alongside his wife, Dawn, and their son, Taylor, on a fifth-generation centennial farm in Barnes County. Their operation includes soybeans, corn, wheat, barley and pinto beans. Rose has a degree in agricultural economics from North Dakota State University.

Rose joins Matt Gast, a North Dakota soybean farmer near Valley City. Gast was elected vice chair of the United Soybean Board on December 9, 2025, and was also reappointed to the board in February. Gast has served on the USB's executive committee since 2021. Cindy Pulskamp of Hillsboro also represents North Dakota soybean farmers on the USB.

"Rob brings a deep understanding of both farming and renewable fuel markets to the United Soybean Board," says Jim Thompson, chairman of the North Dakota Soybean Council. "His leadership experience, combined with his long-standing commitment to the soybean checkoff, will serve North Dakota and U.S. soybean farmers very well. We also appreciate Matt Gast's election as vice chair and continued service, and Cindy Pulskamp's ongoing representation on USB."

The United Soybean Board is comprised of farmer leaders from across the country who oversee the national soybean checkoff program, investing in research, education and promotion to increase the value of U.S. soybeans.

The soybean checkoff is supported entirely by soybean growers who contribute one-half of one percent of the market price for each bushel of soybeans sold. The North Dakota Soybean Council supports the United Soybean Board by submitting 50% of the collected North Dakota soybean checkoff dollars to the national program while overseeing the remaining 50% for state-level investments.

About the United Soybean Board

The United Soybean Board's 77 volunteer farmer-leaders work on behalf of all U.S. soybean farmers to achieve maximum value for the Soy Checkoff investments. These volunteers create value by stewarding investments for research, education and promotion with the vision to deliver sustainable soy solutions to every life, every day across the priority areas of Infrastructure & Connectivity, Health & Nutrition, Innovation & Technology, and Exports. As stipulated in the federal Soybean Promotion, Research and Consumer Information Act, the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service has oversight responsibilities for the USB and the Soy Checkoff. For more information about the United Soybean Board, visit unitedsoybean.org.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photo courtesy of United Soybean Board

Rob Rose of Wimbledon has been appointed to the United Soybean Board for a three-year term.

Matt Gast was elected Vice Chair at the United Soybean Board's December meeting. The North Dakota soybean farmer from Barnes County brings years of leadership experience to the 2026 executive team.

NORTHERN CORN AND SOYBEAN EXPO Builds on Success

Farmers, agriculture leaders, and industry representatives filled the Butler Machinery Arena on February 3 for a day of information, education, and connection at the annual Northern Corn and Soybean Expo. Hundreds of visitors from across the region took in educational sessions and talked with vendors about a wide range of agricultural topics.

This year's expo featured early riser sessions dedicated to weather and transportation. North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network Director and State Climatologist Daryl Ritchison kicked off the day's events with a look at the state's spring weather outlook, which is always an area of concern for farmers.

Rachel Lemieux of BNSF Railway addressed rail movement and

The trade show area gave attendees access to a wide variety of vendors.

American Soybean Association CEO Stephen Censky spoke during a panel on the outlook for corn and soybeans.

The Research Pavilion was a popular stop as attendees had access to some of NDSU's top researchers.

Keynote speaker Ken Gilliam addressed how farmers can use strategy to make important farming decisions.

what BNSF has been doing to help get U.S. soybeans to the market.

The North Dakota Corn Growers Association and the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association (NDSGA) held their annual meetings as part of the expo. NDSGA President Justin Sherlock and American Soybean Association (ASA) CEO Stephen Censky gave updates about organizational priorities, highlighting the value and importance of growers becoming members of the NDSGA to magnify the organization's voice in Bismarck and Washington, D.C.

Ben Brown, senior research associate with the Food and Agricultural Policy Research Institute at the University of Missouri, delivered an in-depth view of the agricultural economy. He also provided a look at the market and income potential for corn and soybean production in 2026.

National corn and soybean industry leaders took the stage to share insights about the current landscape for those crops and what lies ahead. The panel included ASA CEO Stephen Censky, former United Soybean Board CEO Lucas Lentsch, National Corn Growers Association Senior Economist Krista Swanson, and Ellen Zimmerman from the U.S. Grains and Bioproducts Council.

Retired Army Colonel Ken Gilliam was the event's keynote speaker, focusing on Practical Strategy, Hard Decisions and Farmer of the Future. Now with the Decisions Group, Gilliam offered key elements of a strategy to help growers build a decision-making framework that could be applied to on-farm choices.

The expo concluded with a panel of North Dakota corn and soybean leaders looking toward the future. Panelists included North Dakota Corn Utilization Council Chair Carson Klosterman, North Dakota Corn Growers Association President Brian Leier, NDSGA President Justin Sherlock and North Dakota Soybean Council Chair Jim Thompson.

NDGSA President Justin Sherlock highlighted the importance of farmers lending their voice to issues through membership.

FAPRI Economist Ben Brown provided an in-depth look at the ag economy.

The expo wrapped up with an Industry and Partners Reception, providing time for farmers and industry partners to network and connect.

Plans are already underway for the 2027 Northern Corn and Soybean Expo, set for Tuesday, February 9, at the Red River Valley Fairgrounds in West Fargo.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photos by staff

Video presentations from the 2026 Northern Corn and Soybean Expo can be viewed by scanning the QR code.

The active trade show floor provided the opportunity for conversation with vendors.

NDSC Director of Agronomy and Research shared information about the soybean council's research support.

Soybeans Maintain Performance Across Diverse Herbicide Management Strategies

Kochia, a prominent weed in North Dakota, is dominant in this soybean field. A combination of metribuzin and sulfentrazone applications were effective at controlling kochia in the project's test plots.

Herbicide-resistant weeds present a growing challenge, and researchers are working to ensure that current weed management practices remain effective and sustainable. A North Dakota weed scientist is finding little-to-no soybean injury after two common herbicides were applied at rates higher than typical field practice yet still within labeled limits.

In a research project conducted at seven locations across the state, Joe Ikley and his team evaluated soybean crop safety after applying metribuzin and sulfentrazone in separate trials. They also conducted weed-control trials with these two herbicides at five locations, focusing on kochia, foxtail species and waterhemp.

"We had no soybean injury across the treatments, nor were yields reduced in either trial," said Ikley, an associate professor and Extension weed specialist at North Dakota State University.

The project is in its second year. With harvest complete, 2025 results are now being finalized. The project will conclude in June 2026. The research is supported by Soy Checkoff funding through the North Dakota Soybean Council.

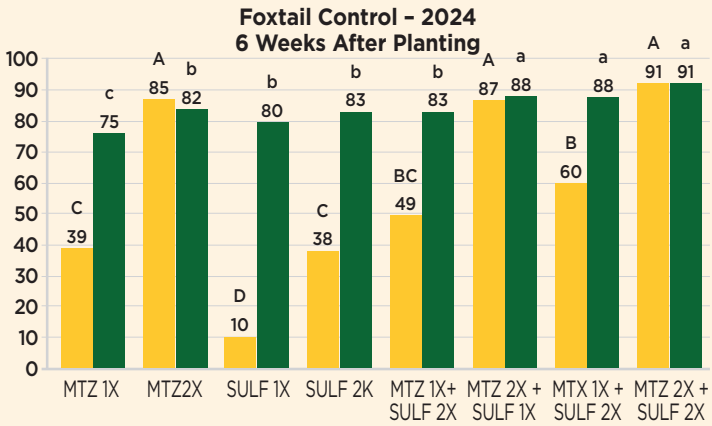
The two herbicides were applied at rates most farmers in North Dakota would use: 1x, or a quarter pound of active ingredient per acre of metribuzin, and an 8-pound active ingredient of sulfentrazone. The team also tested applications at 2x the rate, or one-half pound per acre metribuzin or one-quarter pound sulfentrazone, respectively, to look for plant injury as well as effective weed control. The researchers also tested a tank mix with the two rates of herbicides.

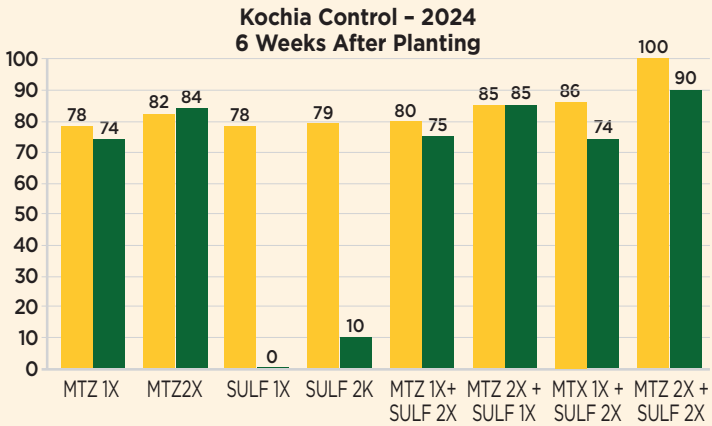
"These rates are still below the

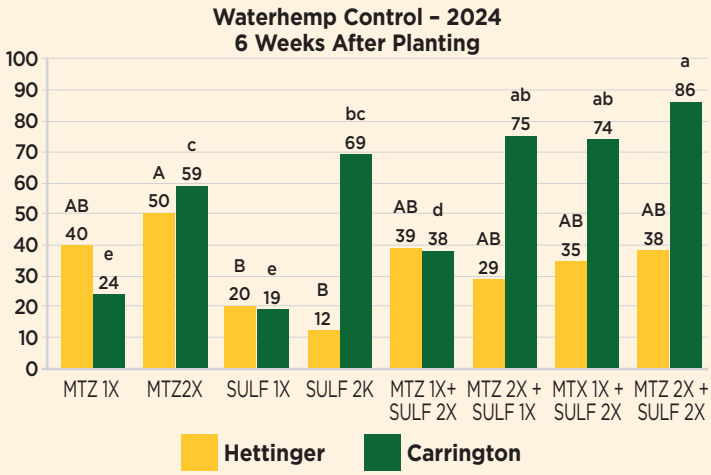
Weed Control By The Numbers

Kochia, foxtail and waterhemp control at 6 weeks after planting in six locations. In the waterhemp graph, capital letters over the bars represent treatment separation based on Fisher's LSD at P=0.05. Treatments with similar letters are not different.

Abbreviations: MTZ = metribuzin, SULF = sulfentrazone, 1X = lowest rate tested for each herbicide (280 g ha-1metribuzin, 140 g ha-1 sulfentrazone) and 2X = highest rate tested for each herbicide (560 g ha-1 metribuzin, 280 g ha-1sulfentrazone).







maximum labeled limits," Ikley emphasized. "We wanted to evaluate performance under realistic conditions that farmers might encounter if they adjusted rates within label guidelines for their particular soil types."

These two active ingredients are in several commercial herbicides, and metribuzin is one of the older herbicides on the market, Ikley stated. With weeds becoming more herbicide resistant, Ikley and his team wanted to make sure that farmers could apply more soil-residual herbicides without a penalty of reduced plant growth or yield.

"We had some soybean injury associated with the higher rates of metribuzin within the first four weeks of soybean growth at the North Central Research Extension Center (REC) at Minot and at a cooperator's field at Glyndon," Ikley commented. "We measured soybean yield at harvest of these research plots and did not see a reduction."

Seeing injured plants after a herbicide application can be unsettling, but Ikley reminds farmers that the soybean is a resilient plant and can recover.

Weed Control in Different Soils

A component of the research is testing the varying herbicide amounts across the state on a range of soil types, which makes a difference when it comes to residual effectiveness. The weed control trials were conducted at a university research site in Fargo, at the RECs in Carrington Hettinger and Minot, as well as at two farmer-cooperator farms.

"The locations we chose each have a different soil characteristic: from heavy, clay soil to sandier soils with both low and high pH," Ikley explained. "Residual effects from the herbicide applications perform differently based on soil types, so knowing how well they control weeds along with possible plant injury are crucial."

Six weeks after soybean planting, the team evaluated the weed presence for each site. The researchers focused on the control of particular weeds at the different plots and compared the weed control percentage for each herbicide at 1x and 2x applications as well as the combination of the two at both rates.

The team evaluated kochia control at Carrington and Hettinger, foxtail at Minot and Hettinger, and waterhemp pressure at Glyndon and Fargo (Figure 1).

Another factor in the trials was outside Ikley's control: weather. In 2024, the rain patterns for all the locations were different than in the spring of 2025. In some trials, weather can be a scientific spoiler, but here, it plays a key role in the outcomes.

"The beautiful part of having many different sites across the state is so we can see how the herbicide residuals perform under wet and dry conditions in the different soils," Ikley said. "We have trials in an array of soil types and across the weed spectrum. The different environments can maximize the amount of data we can capture."

Ikley will continue to process the data coming in for 2025 to compare with 2024 results. He is optimistic that the results will be similar and will show how soybeans are far more resilient than many people might expect. Even with varying herbicide applications, the researchers have seen strong performance and stable yields.

—Story courtesy of the Soybean Research & Information Network (SRIN), soybeanresearchinfo.com, photo and graphs courtesy of NDSU Extension

SSGA is now United States Identity Preserved Alliance

The Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance (SSGA) has changed the organization's name to the United States Identity Preserved Alliance, reflecting the brand's proactive leadership in advancing the U.S. Identity Preserved value chain and strengthening premium U.S. agriculture's global reputation for quality, traceability and food safety.

Since the organization's creation in 2019, the U.S. Identity Preserved Alliance has served as the leading business alliance of identity preserved agriculture in the United States. In 2021, SSGA launched the U.S. Identity Preserved assurance protocol, a voluntary, third-party program that verifies companies' identity preserved systems and ensures high-value crops maintain their integrity from the seed to end-user. The transition to the United States Identity Preserved Alliance provides a clearer message to global buyers and clarifies that the Alliance is a permanent steward of the assurance protocol.

"The new name represents more than a change in branding. It solidifies that our focus is identity preserved agriculture," said Randy Duckworth, U.S. Identity Preserved Alliance executive director. "Identity preservation is a growing priority as non-GMO, trait-specific and sustainably linked crops expand and industry demands more traceability. The United States Identity Preserved Alliance name can future-proof our organization."

The U.S. Identity Preserved Alliance will continue to advance key priorities established under SSGA, including transportation policy, container shipping and market development efforts.

"Our new identity provides a stronger value position for the verified users using the U.S. Identity Preserved label in their packaging and marketing as a unified mark of quality assurance," said Bryan Severs, U.S. Identity Preserved Alliance chair.

About the United States Identity Preserved Alliance

The United States Identity Preserved Alliance, formerly known as SSGA, is the business alliance of identity preserved agriculture in the United States. The U.S. Identity Preserved Alliance is the leading voice for the industry that delivers traceable, high-quality, variety-specific field crops to food markets worldwide. Its members include producers, processors, suppliers and transportation allies whose work ensures integrity throughout the supply chain.

—Story courtesy of the United States Identity Preserved Alliance.

NDSU RESEARCHERS DEVELOPING NEW SYSTEM TO Bolster Agricultural Security

The data that farmers and people in agriculture receive through sensors, drones and intelligent agricultural equipment are invaluable. How is that information secured and protected?

Greg Wettstein, North Dakota State University (NDSU) principal information technology (IT) engineer, and Nick Dusek, assistant director and research facilitator for NDSU's Center for Computationally Assisted Science and Technology, are working to help make these data secure.

The Agricultural Experiment Station was beginning a new project on ag data security, and discussions among Wettstein, Dusek, North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station associate director Frank Casey and NDSU ag tech executive project manager Aaron Reinholz led to the deployment and testing of Quixote as part of a secure IoT (internet of things) data pipeline.

It is part of NDSU's Food, Energy and Water Security (FEWS) research initiative. It addresses key issues facing food production, energy creation and delivery, and water resources by strongly emphasizing technology and research.

"Modern agriculture runs on data; securing it is as essential as seed and soil. From field prep through harvest and handling, one breach can undo a year's work," Casey said. "Through our FEWS initiative, we're backing trusted, end-to-end pipelines like Quixote, so producers can rely on uncompromised information to deliver food, fuel and fiber."

Cybersecurity has risen to the forefront of many areas, and it has done the same with agriculture. This project involves two key components. First, it introduces software tools that enable developers to create precise mathematical models which describe the software's intended behavior as part of the standard development workflow. These models serve as formal specifications that guide and verify the software's correctness.

Second, the project includes the development of a new security sub-system for the Linux operating system. This sub-system enforces the mathematically defined security behavior when the software is deployed and run in production, ensuring that the software operates in strict accordance with its formal specifications.

Quixote is the enabling technology for a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)-funded project that implements trusted pipelines for agricultural data. The system will ensure that the data collected from field sensors have not been corrupted or modified, from the data's acquisition to their processing and storage in the cloud.

"Quixote was designed from a clean sheet of paper to address these issues," Wettstein stated. "The objective was to provide a means for development teams to obtain 10x+ increases in the security of their applications, without the need to be security experts. Quixote directly supports new software development models that use 'containerized' development practices. Quixote also provides methods to implement AI (artificial intelligence)-based security models without adding agent software to systems that can pose as much of a danger to the system as potential adversaries do."

"Everyone is concerned about data security in agriculture, but very few people are building the software infrastructure needed to address the problem in a holistic way," Dusek explained. "Meanwhile, we are deploying more and more internet-connected devices to the field, in many cases, without any kind of systematic security review. Quixote represents a unique opportunity, not only to secure these devices, but to set a standard for IoT data security in agriculture, and to do it with technology developed in North Dakota and tested at NDSU."

Wettstein described the ag security project as a "prototype implementation of a secure agricultural data pipeline." It is needed because the current system's security technology is 50 years old and was designed for systems and threats that are no longer relevant.

"These security architectures are a poor fit for our modern environment, where computing is being pushed further and further to the edge, and when industries are deploying ever-increasing amounts of software with the primary objectives of functionality, speed of delivery and low development costs," Wettstein asserted. "In addition, these classic security architectures do not directly support the use of artificial intelligence and/or machine learning models for detecting when systems are being attacked or compromised."

Wettstein described how the project features the implementation of a prototype system which guarantees that all of the systems conveying information from the "edge" (which includes field

sensors, drones and intelligent agricultural equipment) are placed into a trusted state.

"This provides a guarantee that the data can be trusted to be the same data that was acquired at the edge and that no adversaries have tried to modify or change the data," Wettstein said.

The initial prototype focuses on securing data generated by field sensors that communicate via LoRaWAN (long range wide area network) wireless technology. These data are transmitted to servers at NDSU, where they are stored and analyzed. Most prototypes have been completed, except for the component that connects the wireless data to the internet.

Development is currently underway on this bridging unit, which will incorporate Quixote security technology, Wettstein remarked.

Why is ag security so important?

"In the modern world of networked computers and industrial control systems, North Dakotans no longer can enjoy the security that was provided in past conflicts by oceans and large land masses," Wettstein stated. "The economic advantages of the deployment of these technologies have also opened the door to our industrial, agricultural and energy systems being directly attacked."

Several Quixote-enabled gateways will be deployed at NDSU for the initial testing phase. The long-term goal will be to deploy them in the field at different experiment station sites across North Dakota.

"Consider, for example, the potential impact of reporting soil temperatures, humidity levels, wind speeds and weed infestations that are consistently different than reality," Wettstein declared. "Our country is generating new software and adopting AI faster than it can secure the systems running this software and these models. Success of the prototype will demonstrate that the Quixote technology can enable development teams to gain 10x+ increases in the security of their software without the need to become security experts."

The development of Quixote will also affect other areas of cybersecurity. There is data collection in smart cities, smart buildings, industrial control, healthcare and hospitality.

"For this project specifically, I can see Quixote being deployed to secure sensor networks at experiment stations and Extension centers across North Dakota. A pilot of this scale would be the first of its kind and could provide a model for other states to adopt for securing agricultural data," Dusek asserted. "Beyond this project, Quixote has the potential to launch a new ecosystem of secure data infrastructure and software development across many industries."

—Story by Tom Berg, NDSU, stock photo

Investing in the Future:
NDSC Congratulates the 2025 Scholarship Winners

The North Dakota Soybean Council (NDSC) recently congratulated its 2025 scholarship recipients, recognizing four outstanding students at North Dakota State University (NDSU) whose studies and research support the future of the soybean industry.

Each year, the NDSC awards scholarships to both undergraduate and graduate students who are pursuing degrees tied to agriculture and soybean advancement.

The NDSC's Undergraduate Scholarship is awarded to sophomores, juniors and seniors pursuing a major in NDSU's College of Agriculture, Food Systems and Natural Resources who demonstrate a connection to soybeans through education, internship or employment.

This year's undergraduate recipients are Gage Goodman of Langdon, North Dakota, and Skylar Seckerson of Jamestown, North Dakota.

Graduate Student Scholarships are awarded to graduate students enrolled in the College of Agriculture, Food Systems and Natural Resources who are pursuing a degree that enhances soybean quality and production while being active in agriculture-related campus or community activities.

This year's graduate recipients are Menglin Han of Shandong, China, and Rachel Yeum of Round Rock, Texas.

Through these scholarships, the NDSC continues to invest checkoff dollars in the next generation of leaders, researchers and advocates who will help strengthen North Dakota's soybean industry for years to come.

—Story and photos by staff

Gage Goodman

Menglin Han

Rachel Yeum

Controlling the Data

Farmers are famously independent, yet most growers are also familiar with the cooperative model used to give member-owners more collective power. Oakes, North Dakota, farmer Kyle Courtney is convinced that ag data hold tremendous potential for farmers and are something upon which farmers should capitalize.

Courtney is one of the founding members of a new cooperative effort to aggregate farm data for the farmers' benefit.

"When you look at agriculture's data, it's fragmented," Courtney explains. "Every farmer has their own data, but there's not one source you can go to aggregate it to actually look for results. This is the first time we've tried to set up a co-op based around data."

The AgriData Cooperative was formed to help farmers maximize their data's value for better decisions and to protect data ownership. The cooperative was also created to help farmers navigate the constantly evolving artificial intelligence (AI) landscape, to help farmers drive policy decisions and to support national security by monitoring threats to food production. Courtney says that the co-op is being built on the principles that it is farmer controlled and farmer led; any dividends that it creates will go back to the farmers.

Yield monitors, drones, planters and numerous other pieces of farm equipment gather data. Courtney states that, until recently, the problem with such a large data set was knowing what to do with all the information, filtering through the data and generating actionable results. Courtney contends that those areas are where AI excels.

Courtney, a self-described "AI nerd," is no stranger to technology. He's on the Grand Farms board of directors and is also part of the National Science Foundation's (NSF) AgTech Engine based in Fargo. His farm is connected through a network of sensors to a central hub, giving him access to a wide range of data.

Precision agriculture and technologies such as global positioning systems (GPS) have transformed agriculture in recent years, but Courtney believes that those advancements will pale in comparison to what AI can do. He wants farmers to be the ones capitalizing on the data they generate. With all the fragmentation of farm data, Courtney kept coming back to the same thought.

"Whoever controls the data is going to be able to control how AI is used because AI needs data to operate, and it doesn't need one farm's data; it needs multiple farms' data," Courtney maintains. "Being on the NSF board, being on the Grand Farm board, I get a front row seat to where technology is going. I've noticed a lot of corporations or private companies are trying to figure out ways to get their hands on our data. We need to make sure that we control the data so that we can dictate how artificial intelligence is applied to agriculture."

Co-op Model

In the AgriData Cooperative model, farmers contribute data from activities such as tilling, planting, spraying and harvesting. The data are consolidated into a data vault. Each data point provided gives the grower one point towards co-op ownership. Farmers can also contribute historical data.

Courtney states that data security is paramount for the co-op. Each farmer still owns his data, and other members cannot access anyone else's individual data.

While numerous companies are collecting some of the data, Courtney contends that those firms don't have the full picture.

"They (farmers) might have their planter monitor going to Climate FieldView™ or John Deere Operations Center or an AFS Connect, but they (companies) don't have the whole picture yet," Courtney explains. "We're going to have an application programming interface where you can directly guide your data over to the co-op at the same time it's going to those other providers."

The system is currently in beta testing while the co-op works to fine tune the technology. Courtney expects data from about 100,000 acres to be included and assessed this spring to see if AI agents can mine valuable insight from the data.

Farmer Value

Courtney describes how participating farmers can get paid for their data in several ways, including potentially licensing the data.

"The value of the co-op is the collection and aggregation of the data," Courtney contends. "We'll probably look at employing data scientists where, if people want to come and access the information, we can give them the answers without giving them the underlying data. If a seed company wants to know how a certain hybrid did in a certain region, we can give them a report with the answers without ever giving them the underlying raw data."

If the data are centralized, AI agents can analyze the data and provide insight to farmers regarding important management decisions. The agent would give the growers assurance that their decision has the highest probability of maximizing their return on investment.

The co-op would also have agents iterating regional or national data, looking for trends that can help farmer-members make better-informed management decisions.

Oakes farmer Kyle Courtney wants farmers to capitalize on the data they are collecting.

"The riskiest move you can take is taking no risk at all," Courtney says, "and by that, I mean AI is coming. No matter what. We can't slow it down. We can't stop it, so we need to figure out how to move with it and how to maintain control over it. If we control the data, our AI will be used in agriculture, and at the same time, we can show farmers how to use it to benefit their bottom line."

Xin Sun, Ph.D., endowed chair and director of the Peltier Institute for Advancement in Agricultural Technology at North Dakota State University, asserts that farmers could potentially profit from their data, depending on the context, scale and how the data are used.

"In general, raw data by itself often has limited value, while value is more commonly created through aggregation, analysis and application," Sun maintains. "In some cases, there is interest from industry in aggregated datasets for purposes such as research or model development. Whether and how that creates revenue opportunities varies widely and is typically shaped by agreements, partnerships and specific use cases rather than technology alone."

Courtney and other AgriData Cooperative leaders are working to raise awareness about the co-op and how farmers can participate. The cooperative isn't solely focused on North Dakota but is targeting anyone related to production agriculture.

"Inevitably, if we don't do this ourselves and set up the cooperative and collect data that's controlled by farmers, a corporation will do it, and then, we lose control, and once again, we become the product," Courtney states. "Even though the AI will be making a lot of decisions on the farm, we will dictate how the AI gets monetized and used."

Courtney believes that ag is probably the largest unmonetized data set in the country. If farmers can monetize and aggregate the information, it could help set up agriculture for the next generation.

"There's so much that we do day in, day out that is outside of our control," Courtney explains. "This is a way that we can put control back into our hands."

More information about the AgriData Cooperative is available at agridatacoop.com

—Story and photo by Daniel Lemke

Peterson Receives ASA Honor

Valley City farmer Monte Peterson was honored by the American Soybean Association (ASA) with its Distinguished Leadership Award during the 2026 ASA Awards Celebration at the Commodity Classic trade show in San Antonio, Texas.

The ASA Distinguished Leadership Award recognizes a soybean grower or association staff leader who has shown a high level of dedication and has successfully led others to meet goals and to achieve successes which benefit soybean farmers.

Peterson has advocated for soybean farmers since 2006 when he joined the North Dakota Soybean Council's board. He also served on the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association and the ASA boards from 2014 until 2023. Peterson chaired the ASA's Trade Policy & International Affairs Committee.

Peterson served on the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) board from 2017 to 2023, including terms as vice chair, chair and past chair. As chair of the USSEC, he led the organization through the COVID-19 pandemic, participating in hundreds of virtual meetings; continuing to strengthen key trade relationships; and reinforcing that U.S. soy is a reliable, high-quality product.

Through the ASA Corteva Young Leader Program, Peterson spent time with new farmer leaders, encouraging them to take on committee work and guiding them through how national policy connects back to their farms.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photo courtesy of ASA

Valley City farmer Monte Peterson (left) is congratulated by American Soybean Association President Scott Metzger at Commodity Classic.

A Drone Dilemma

In December, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced that all new models of foreign-made drones would be added to the FCC-Covered List, effectively banning their sale in the U.S. Concerns about foreign drones, particularly from China, stem from significant national-security risks, espionage and data-security threats. Drones can potentially transmit sensitive data regarding U.S. infrastructure, military sites and citizens back to foreign adversaries. Those threats led to the FCC ban on new models in order to protect against surveillance, supply chain vulnerabilities and potential misuse.

The American Soybean Association (ASA) is concerned about the restrictions on certain foreign-manufactured drones which are used for U.S. agriculture, including the potential effects on farmers. Precision agriculture tools, including drones, are widely used to manage costs, to monitor crops and to help farmers operate efficiently. Foreign-manufactured drones represent a significant majority of the agricultural drone market, and sudden restrictions on their use without available domestically manufactured alternatives risk adding new financial and operational burdens for farmers who are already facing tight margins and market uncertainty.

ASA representatives say that the FCC's decision was the result of section 1709 of the Servicemember Quality of Life Improvement and National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025, which required an appropriate agency to determine the national-security risk of the communication or video-surveillance equipment, or the services produced by Shenzhen Da-Jiang Innovations Sciences and Technologies Company Limited (DJI Technologies) as well as the communication or video-surveillance equipment produced by Autel Robotics.

Chinese-made drones account for 90% of the market share in the U.S. The ASA argues that the legislation's original intent was to assess whether Chinese-manufactured drones were a security risk, not to ban all foreign-made drones. These affected drones are used for pesticide applications that are difficult to complete with other aerial or ground applicators.

"Domestic drone manufacturers are not yet at capacity to replace foreign drones in the market, which will lead to farmers paying more for drones or reducing aerial input use that could diminish their yields," states ASA President Scott Metzger.

A Data View

Dazey farmer Eric Broten has used drones in the past, and he expects that there will be more practical uses for them on his farm in the future. Broten views the ban as a legitimate action because of what could be hidden within the fine print.

"There is a lot of uncertainty in the world about where things are coming from," Broten contends. "Anytime you've got to sign a user agreement, it makes you wonder what's embedded inside of that agreement, what information you're allowing to voluntarily give up that you may not have ever realized you were giving up."

Broten's concerns aren't necessarily limited to foreign-manufactured equipment. Rather, the issue centers on the ownership of the information generated by that equipment.

"Whatever sort of agreement you're signing by clicking a user agreement on a foreign-made drone, you're, more than likely, also clicking the same user agreement on an American-made drone, and that just means that the American company gets to sell your data to whoever wants it instead of a Chinese company," Broten declares.

Foreign-made drones which are already in the U.S. are not affected by the ban, and they may continue to operate. However, it is unclear if these drones will be able to receive software updates, which could affect their performance.

In February, DJI, the world's largest drone maker, said it was challenging the FCC decision in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit.

"It carelessly restricts DJI's business in the U.S. and summarily denies U.S. customers access to its latest technology," the company said in a statement.

The ASA is engaging with U.S. Department of Agriculture and administration officials about the effects the ban could have on soybean farmers. The ASA also encourages an interagency approach to conduct a risk analysis that ensures the security of U.S. airspace while preserving farmers' access to critical management tools.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, stock photo

USSEC
U.S. SOYBEAN EXPORT COUNCIL

DRIVING DEMAND FOR U.S. SOY IN 90+ COUNTRIES WITH EXPORTS UP 13% YEAR-OVER-YEAR.

58% OF THE TOTAL CROP.

Marketing Year 2024/25 U.S. Soy Exports

U.S. Soy Complex
(Whole Soybeans, Soybean Meal, Soy Oil)

68.7 MMT

$29.6 billion

Source: USDA, Global Agricultural Trade System (GATS), January 2026

DETERMINED TO BUILD:
North Dakota Soybean Leaders Expand Markets Beyond China

The air in Vietnam hangs heavy with humidity, a world away from a North Dakota January.

Standing on a floating fish platform in the Mekong Delta, Evan Montgomery watched soybean meal pour into feed rations for thousands of fish below him. In that moment, global trade stopped being abstract. It became visible, tangible and personal.

"To literally see our soybean meal being fed to his crop of fish, that's when it really comes full circle," said Montgomery, vice chairman of the North Dakota Soybean Council (NDSC). "You realize the beans we grow at home are part of something much bigger."

That full-circle perspective is exactly why farmer-leaders from the NDSC and the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association (NDSGA) traveled to Thailand and Vietnam in January. Working alongside the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), the delegation focused on expanding market opportunities beyond China and strengthening relationships across southeast Asia.

The purpose was clear: build demand, diversify export markets and protect the long-term profitability of North Dakota's soybean farmers.

Moving Beyond One Market

For decades, China has been the dominant destination for U.S. soybeans. North Dakota farmers, like many growers across the country, have relied heavily on that demand. Shifts in the trade dynamics and purchasing patterns have underscored a hard truth: concentration brings risk.

"You always hear, 'Don't put all your eggs in one basket,'" said Stephanie Cook, NDSGA treasurer and a farmer from Davenport. "We've leaned heavily on China for a long time. Thailand and Vietnam are two more baskets we need to keep building."

North Dakota produces far more soybeans than the domestic market can consume. Exports are not optional; they are essential. Long-term success depends on stable, reliable buyers around the world.

"We're not going to replace China one-for-one," Montgomery explained. "But every market we strengthen, every percentage of market share we gain, adds up. Collectively, it moves the needle."

That incremental growth matters. A few additional shipments of soybean meal here, a stronger crush market there, and the cumulative effect can be meaningful. Diversification is not about abandoning one market. It is about reducing vulnerability and creating balance.

Built for the Pacific Northwest

North Dakota has spent decades aligning its infrastructure to serve export markets efficiently. Grain-handling facilities, shuttle train capacity, and river and rail systems are built to move whole soybeans and soybean meal to ports in the Pacific Northwest. From there, shipments can reach southeast Asia in just over two weeks.

"We've aligned our infrastructure to deliver soybeans and soybean meal through the Pacific Northwest," stated Jim Thompson, the NDSC chairman and a farmer from Page. "We're one of the most efficient providers through that channel. It makes sense to keep that pipeline full and look for markets that value what we produce."

That logistical advantage positions North Dakota well for markets such as Thailand and Vietnam. Freight time matters. Reliability matters. Buyers want predictable supply chains, especially in regions where feed mills and food processors operate on tight production schedules.

Most Pacific Northwest soybean exports already head to Asia. Expanding the market share within that region is a logical next step.

"China represents a substantial portion of overall demand," declared Avery Hansen, the NDSC's international market development specialist. "To make up lost volume, it has to be a group effort, not just one country. We need to be present, build trust and demonstrate why U.S. soy is a smart choice."

The North Dakota delegation made numerous stops, including a visit to a feed mill.

Opportunity in a Growing Region

The U.S. soy industry has been active in southeast Asia since 1981, laying groundwork through education, technical support and relationship building. Today, the region is one of the fastest-growing protein consumption areas in the world.

Urbanization is rising. Incomes are growing. Diets are shifting toward higher animal protein consumption. Those changes drive the demand for soybean meal, which is used in poultry; swine; aquaculture; and, increasingly, ruminant production.

Vietnam is a major global seafood exporter, with a thriving aquaculture sector. Thailand has strong poultry and livestock industries as well as a robust soy food market. Soybeans are crushed for oil and meal, processed into tofu and soy beverages, and incorporated into countless traditional and modern dishes.

"You don't realize how big soy foods are until you see it," Montgomery said. "Tofu, soy yogurt, soy milk lining the shelves at convenience stores. It's not niche. It's everyday nutrition."

Ted Brandt, an Enderlin farmer and NDSC director, sees clear long-term potential.

"With populations growing and diets changing, there's real opportunity in Vietnam and across eastern Asia," Brandt asserted. "There are opportunities in other parts of Asia and even the Middle East, too. It's about being less reliant on one market and strengthening others."

The delegation toured beverage facilities, visited feed mills, and met with crushers and agricultural industry representatives. The representatives walked through factories that produce tofu and soy drinks. The delegates observed feed being formulated for fish, chickens and livestock. Each stop reinforced the same message: Southeast Asia is competitive, but it is open to high-quality, consistent suppliers.

Quality that Shows

Throughout the trade mission, quality remained front and center.

At one feed mill in Thailand, Montgomery saw the difference in soybean meal side by side.

Portland farmer Milo Braaten examines the quality of soybean meal at a feed mill.

Billie Lentz of Perth tried her hand feeding fish at an aquaculture operation.

"We looked at two bunkers of soybean meal," he explained. "One was off color and bridging. The other was dry, clean and flowed well. That was U.S. soybean meal. Seeing it side by side made the point clear."

Flowability affects efficiency. Moisture affects storage. Color can indicate processing quality. Feed mill managers and nutritionists notice these details because those factors affect performance and cost.

The buyers emphasized that U.S. soybean meal stores well, moves smoothly through equipment and delivers predictable nutritional value in feed rations. That consistency begins long before the product reaches a ship.

"Probably their biggest question was about last year's crop quality," stated Mark Knutson, an NDSGA director from Fargo. "We told them what we always tell customers. We wait for the right moisture to harvest, and our cold climate helps us store beans in excellent condition. That shows up in their end product."

Soy foods are not secondary in this region. They are staple items, making quality even more critical.

"When soy ends up in tofu or soy milk, consumers can taste and see the difference," Montgomery said. "Processors want beans they can rely on."

Sustainability Matters More Than Ever

Beyond quality, sustainability is increasingly part of purchasing decisions. Governments are setting environmental benchmarks. Consumers, especially younger generations, are asking more questions about sourcing and environmental impact.

"Lots of governments now are putting in sustainability practices and quotas," Hansen added. "The U.S. grows a very sustainable crop compared to some other regions. We track our carbon footprint. Our emissions are lower than in some competing areas. Buyers are paying attention to that."

Sustainability conversations are no longer theoretical. They influence procurement strategies and long-term contracts. Being able to speak directly with farmers about conservation practices, crop rotation, precision agriculture and responsible land use adds credibility.

Having farmers in the room makes a difference. "When customers can ask questions directly and hear answers from the people who grow the crop, it builds confidence," Hansen stated.

Relationships Close the Gap

While product performance and sustainability credentials are important, relationships often tip the scale.

One Thai buyer shared a candid story with the delegation.

"He told us he used to buy Canadian beans because they came to visit him," Montgomery declared. "When U.S. representatives started showing up consistently, he shifted to U.S. soy. That face-to-face connection made the difference."

In many parts of the world, purchasing decisions are relational. Trust develops over time, through repeated visits and honest conversations.

"They were so appreciative of being able to talk to farmers," Cook explained. "They told us they prefer our beans. Yes, they can be more expensive. But when you have that personal relationship and connection, that carries weight."

For Milo Braaten, the NDSC secretary and a farmer from Portland, the trade mission highlighted how those connections compound over time. One industry representative whom the group met had previously visited Braaten's North Dakota farm as part of a trade delegation.

"That's a building block," Braaten said. "They've seen our farms and facilities. Now, we're showing up on their side of the world. It shows we care. It shows we value the partnership."

That reciprocity strengthens loyalty and keeps communication channels open, even when markets fluctuate.

Learning with Purpose

For many of the participating farmer leaders, it was their first international trade mission. The experience broadened their understanding of how interconnected agriculture has become.

Soy foods, including soy milk are dietary staples in Vietnam and Thailand.

"Gaining global perspective is increasingly important in agriculture," stated Billie Lentz, an NDSGA director and a farmer from Perth. "Seeing how food, culture and livelihoods connect across borders changes how you view your own role as a producer."

Hansen echoed that sentiment. "You can read reports and look at data," she said. "But until you walk through a tofu plant or watch fish feed being made, it doesn't fully click. Seeing it firsthand gives farmers a deeper appreciation for where their soybeans go."

That perspective often returns home with them, influencing conversations with neighbors, local elevators and industry partners.

A Strategic Investment in the Future

China remains a dominant force with global soybean demand. As Thompson pointed out, "China crushes the equivalent of a 110-car shuttle train of soybeans every 45 to 50 minutes. You can't replace that overnight."

Diversification is not about replacement. It is about resilience.

Trade missions like this one are funded by soybean checkoff dollars. Those funds are carefully invested to build demand, to expand market access, and to protect the value of the crop grown by North Dakota farmers.

"North Dakota farmers continue to compete in a global marketplace, and missions like this make clear how essential it is to keep expanding our reach," said Stephanie Sinner, the NDSC executive director. "When our farmer leaders meet customers face to face, they are not just promoting North Dakota soy. They are building trust that protects the future of our industry. Diversifying markets across southeast Asia is not simply a smart strategy. It is a necessary investment in resilience for every soybean grower back home."

The delegation returned from southeast Asia energized. The delegates saw firsthand the scale of opportunity, the importance of consistency and the value of showing up.

From beverage production lines in Thailand to aquaculture platforms in Vietnam's Mekong Delta, North Dakota soybeans are helping feed a growing world. The demand in those markets does not build itself. It requires presence, patience and persistence.

Standing on that floating fish farm, watching feed hit the water, Montgomery saw the result of those efforts. "It really makes you think differently about what we do back home," he exclaimed. "We're not just growing soybeans for the elevator down the road. We're growing for families halfway around the world."

That fact is exactly why North Dakota's soybean leaders are determined to keep building a more resilient future for North Dakota's soybean farmers.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photos by staff

The delegation learned about the process of making soy foods, some of which were made with soybeans from North Dakota.

Symposium Builds on Research Communication

The annual North Dakota State University (NDSU) Soybean Symposium, held each year in Fargo, has grown into an international event. Farmers, researchers, and students from North Dakota and across the Midwest and Canada gathered on the NDSU campus in March for the symposium that bridges multiple disciplines.

"We try to highlight soybean agronomy, breeding, and new uses to foster collaboration and build exchanges between different researchers and different labs so that we can do cutting-edge soybean research and stay innovative," says Miki Miheguli, North Dakota Soybean Council (NDSC) Director of Agronomy and Research. Miheguli was part of the event's planning committee.

The Soybean Symposium provides a forum to showcase soybean research, including projects supported by the soybean checkoff.

The day-long event covered three overarching areas, including agronomy, plant pathology, and new uses.

"The value of this event is that it is an opportunity to have different disciplines as well as different backgrounds of people in the same room," says NDSU Soybean Pathology Specialist Wade Webster, Ph.D., another of the event's organizers. "We had farmers, consultants, industry reps, graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, and faculty under the same roof. That allowed for really in-depth conversations, and also some really simple questions that can help us understand where each individual role fits into the system."

University students from North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Manitoba took part in the symposium, and many of them had the opportunity to present their soybean-related research work through poster sessions and short presentations.

The overall theme for the symposium focused on communicating science, which was an appropriate topic for a room full of people interested in soybean research.

"One of the things that we've noticed over the past few years is that there's a gap in the fact that we can have really great research that's being done at our universities, but it's not getting relayed out to the people," Webster explains, "If it is being relayed, it may not be in a format that's digestible, that's easily understood and applied in production systems. So, we were trying to focus on the solutions."

Symposium keynote speakers included Shawn Conley, Ph.D., from the University of Wisconsin, Dylan Mangel, Ph.D., from the University of Nebraska, and Ignacio Ciampitti, Ph.D., from Purdue University. All three addressed various communication strategies they have used to help students and researchers better understand how to share research information.

"It's very important that we stay focused on research and provide science-based information to our stakeholders," Miheguli explains. "But it's equally important how we communicate—how we reach our target audience on different platforms in ways that make the information easier to understand and use. Doing the research is only one part; we also need to bring the results to the people who actually apply them. There is a gap between innovation and adoption, and we're working to understand what it takes to close that gap."

NDSC vice chairman and Grand Forks farmer Evan Montgomery was one of the farmers who participated in the symposium. He found value in understanding more about pests and pathogens affecting soybean productivity.

"It's complicated for farmers," Montgomery explains. "I'm not an expert in this in any means, but it is nice to have this information network support, so we know what's going on and we are making well-informed decisions. Without that, it would be way less efficient, so it helps us a lot."

"For NDSC, investing soybean checkoff dollars into research is about delivering a strong return on investment for farmers," Miheguli adds. "Just as important as conducting the research is making sure the results reach farmers in ways that are practical and useful. By supporting events like the Soybean Symposium, we help ensure that the knowledge generated through checkoff-funded research is shared and ultimately put to work on the farm."

With a focus on communication, Webster noted the Soybean Symposium helped researchers and students connect with farmers and other professionals working in the agriculture industry.

"There were researchers, faculty, students, farmers, and industry representatives all talking with one another," Webster says. "Faculty understand their piece of the world very, very well, but seeing people in academia connect directly with farmers and industry representatives who work in the field every day was great."

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photo by staff

8 Predictions for U.S. Soy Trade in 2026: Tighter Supplies, Smarter Tools, and Stronger Partnerships

Looking ahead to 2026, the world of soy continues to move faster, grow more complex, and demand more from all of us who serve it, including the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC).

Where do I see this next year going? We've got long-term macro trends, shifting dynamics in the way the world does business, potential policy changes, and the continued effect of long-term investments to consider.

From where I sit today, I see the following trends as having the greatest influence on U.S. Soy exports in 2026.

1. Expect a Tightening Global Soy Balance and More Price Volatility

The global soy complex story of the last several years has been largely around record production. What will be different for the 2025-26 year is that the pace of the production increase will drop.

Even if total global production clocks in at a new year-over-year high this year (likely), the slowing rate is unlikely to match the rising global demand for soy,

Indeed, recent low global soy prices, combined with rising consumer demand, have resulted in good profit margins for protein producers in the world markets over the last year, profits which were subsequently reinvested into infrastructure and growth. This situation will keep global protein increasing.

The short-term wild card is the weather. We've had several back-to-back years of favorable weather in both North and South America. We've already been hearing about some early weather concerns coming from South America's prime soybean regions.

All told, even if we have another great growing year, we're looking at a tighter supply and demand picture in the coming year. Stack that on top of very good economics for global meat-producing industries and poor economics for soy producers, and I think there is a strong potential for more price volatility.

2. A Better U.S.-China Relationship Will Stabilize U.S. Soy Exports

The U.S. and China are entering a new phase in their soy relationship, one that I hope will be more stable, and more strategic than the headline cycles of the past 12 months.

China accounts for nearly half of all U.S. soybean exports, emphasizing how central the Chinese market remains to U.S. soybean farmers and the entire U.S. Soy value chain. At the same time, China relies on imports for the vast majority of its soybean needs and purchases around 60% of the beans in the global soybean markets to fuel its feed and food sectors, making secure supplies from partners like the U.S. a strategic necessity.

Yes, there are always going to be some differences of opinion between the two largest economies in the world, but neither country can afford to go back to the lose-lose relationship of the past year.

Over this coming year, I predict a rebuilding of the U.S.-China soy relationship that was put on hold in 2025, creating a stable platform for growth and expansion. Both countries have learned the benefits of diversification, and I expect this to continue.

3. We'll Get Smarter, Be More Efficient, and Have Better Tools

Just like for the rest of the world, data-driven tools–including the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI)–are transforming soy exports.

I've been around long enough to remember two decades ago when the internet reshaped how business gets done; AI is the next evolution in that journey for global agriculture. At the USSEC, AI is viewed as a tool–not a replacement for people–to help the team work smarter, faster on behalf of U.S. soybean farmers and our international customers.

For instance, we've recently introduced tools that make actionable, new, better scientific insights around the true value of soybean meal in driving animal performance and profitability, helping nutritionists and feed manufacturers move toward value-based metrics that capture

Jim Sutter serves as the CEO of the U.S. Soybean Export Council.

digestible amino acids, energy, and other factors that truly reflect the quality of U.S. Soy.

As these innovations roll out, we'll see the adoption of a new "Gold Standard" for how soybean and soybean meal value is measured: one that aligns scientific insight, animal performance, and customer economics.

4. The USMCA–A Potential Wild Card–Will Be Improved and Renewed

What happens with the U.S.-Mexico-Canada (USMCA) trade agreement is a pivotal moment for the future of U.S. Soy exports across North America.

If the three countries choose to renew and actively strengthen the agreement, the most likely outcome is a more predictable, rules-based environment that keeps tariffs at zero, reduces inspection and regulatory frictions at the border, and reinforces Mexico's position as a leading destination for U.S. soybeans and soybean meal. That kind of recommitment would give crushers, feed manufacturers, and livestock producers in Mexico and Canada the confidence to keep investing in soy-dependent supply chains, which, in turn, supports steady growth.

If the agreement is renewed but largely left as-is, U.S. Soy exports to Mexico and Canada will likely remain solid, building on the billions in additional ag exports that have flowed to both markets since the USMCA took effect in 2020. Nagging issues, such as grain inspection delays and occasional misalignment with international guidelines, could continue to add uncertainty and transactional costs. In that scenario, U.S. suppliers stay competitive while our competitors from South America and the Black Sea would have opportunities to chip away at the market share where buyers are especially sensitive to logistics.

Trade negotiators have their work cut out for them, but looking ahead, I don't predict a dramatic overhaul. There should be efforts to strengthen, rather than scrap, the current agreement, supporting the stable growth of U.S. Soy exports to our most immediate neighbors at our northern and southern borders.

5. Sustainability Will Continue to Drive U.S. Soy Demand

As the global demand for sustainable, deforestation-free supply chains accelerates, 2026 is shaping up to be a year when U.S. Soy gains more market share precisely because of the sustainability edge.

More feed, food, and crush buyers are expected to move from "sustainability as a bonus" to "sustainability as a requirement," and that shift will favor origins that can prove their performance at scale. Specifically, the European Union's new Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)–even with its delayed implementation–will start to separate suppliers that can deliver verification and a low risk of deforestation from those that cannot.

As European and global customers adjust their supply chains, many buyers will pivot additional volume to U.S. Soy in order to de-risk compliance and to protect market access by using tools such as the U.S. Soy Sustainability Assurance Protocol (SSAP).

The efforts to capture U.S. Soy's sustainability value that the USSEC, the American Soybean Assoc. (ASA), and the United Soybean Board (USB) launched in 2013 with SSAP have already been reaping rewards for U.S. Soy exports, especially in 2025. For 2026, that trend should continue.

6. Coming Trade Balance Deals Will Generate New Opportunities for U.S. Soy

To reduce the Liberation Day tariffs announced on April 2, 2024, and to improve their balance of trade situation, many countries agreed to buy more products from the U.S., and U.S. Soy is high on many of those shopping lists.

The team at the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) has been working hard to get the pending agreements finalized, but many have lingered into the new year. These deals will be inked in the coming months, resulting in new and unique demand opportunities for U.S. Soy.

This work by the USTR and the industry is an important part of diversifying the markets for U.S. Soy.

7. The U.S. Soy Family Will Work Together, Better for Improved Results

In 2026, U.S. Soy is well-positioned to grow by leaning even more heavily into what we already do best: working together!

In the year ahead, expect to see U.S. soybean farmers have a more significant voice in a team-based model for U.S. Soy, where the ASA, the USB, and the USSEC play to their core strengths while staying tightly aligned on long-term goals for demand, profitability, and sustainability. This coordination will be essential as markets become more competitive and as customers ask tougher questions about value, reliability.

With each organization focused on its strengths–the ASA on policy, the USB on checkoff-driven innovation, and the USSEC on international marketing–I am confident that all bases are covered to maximize the opportunities for U.S. Soy in 2026.

8. Our Biggest Strength Will Remain: The U.S. Soy Farmer

One thing that won't change in 2026: the strength that the U.S. Soy family farm brings to our industry.

U.S. Soy farmers will continue to produce the world's most sustainable, reliable and nutrient-rich soybeans in the world, backed by rigorous national sustainability goals and third-party verification. The growers' farm-level decisions–conservation practices, data-driven management and continuous improvement–are what allow U.S. Soy to deliver consistent quality, superior nutritional value, and a lower carbon footprint.

U.S. Soy farmers make the USSEC's work easier. By pairing an industry that has a world-class export and logistics system with the work farmers put in every day, every farming season, and every generation of their farming heritage, we will continue to translate the U.S. Soy farmer's commitment into a supply chain that is dependable, cost-effective and resilient, even as global markets shift and as new regulations reshape demand.

A Great Year Ahead for U.S. Soy Trade

In 2026, U.S. Soy is well-positioned to grow by leaning even more heavily into what we already do best: working together!

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With each organization focused on its strengths–the ASA on policy, the USB on checkoff-driven innovation, and the USSEC on international marketing–I am confident that all bases are covered to maximize the opportunities for U.S. Soy in 2026.

—Story courtesy of Jim Sutter, CEO, U.S. Soybean Export Council, photo by Daniel Lemke

From the Field to the World:

How Your Checkoff Dollars Open Doors for U.S. Soy

Standing inside a large crush facility in Cairo, Egypt, North Dakota farmer Matt Gast asked a soybean buyer a simple question: Did he wish that more of his soybeans came from the United States?

The answer was immediate.

"I wish it was 100%," the buyer said. "Your quality is top-notch. We don't want anything else. When we get beans from other origins, that's when we run into quality issues."

Gast, who's the vice chair of the United Soybean Board (USB), was in Egypt as part of the USB's February 2026 "See for Yourself" trade mission, which cultivates the next generation of checkoff leaders. He saw the relationship that U.S. soybean farmers have been building for decades.

A Market that Was Decades in the Making

Egypt sits at the crossroads of Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. With more than 111 million people, it is the largest consumer market in the Arab world. Egypt imports 3.5 to 4 million metric tons of U.S. soybeans annually, serving as the fourth largest market for U.S. soy, to fuel the country's booming poultry, aquaculture, and dairy sectors.

"There was a time, back in the day, when Americans went to Egypt when they were going through tough times, and they haven't forgotten that," Gast stated. "They loved having us there for a trade mission. I think that goes a long way."

Another thing that goes a long way: a quality soybean.

When international buyers explain why they prefer U.S. soy, quality is always present in the conversation. U.S. soybeans naturally dry down in the field, a stark contrast to the artificial drying processes used in competing origins, such as South America. Buyers notice the difference, and the Soy Checkoff works to protect and to promote that advantage in every market it enters.

Sustainability is, increasingly, part of purchasing decisions, too. Gast believes that U.S. farmers are better positioned than they may realize. "We're already the most sustainable soy producers in the world," he added. "We've got to keep telling that story. The world is always looking to us to set the bar even higher."

What Beans in Cairo Have to Do with North Dakota

"North Dakota beans ship to export customers through the Pacific Northwest, and those same types of relationships, connections and messaging are happening in the regions where those beans end up; it's a collective effort," said Gast. "We want to move the pile, tell the story, and spread the message about what we're doing around sustainability and quality. And I think it gives farmers a great look at what their checkoff dollars are actually doing."

That collective effort extends well beyond any single market. "We need to rely on the whole world to send our beans to," Gast declared. "Because the more places we can touch with our beans, the better price improvement and the more return on investment farmers are going to get."

Soy Checkoff investments support demand growth across 90+ global markets, and diversification to countries such as Egypt and other parts of the world has increased U.S. soy exports by 12% year-over-year.

Knowing Where your Soy Checkoff Dollars Go

Gast admits that, before he was elected to the North Dakota Soybean Council, he had no idea what the Soy Checkoff did, and he had been farming for years. "I had to research it myself," he stated. "It's eye-opening for farmers who aren't aware of the checkoff's impact, and after serving now on the board, it's clear our dollars are being invested in us."

Empowering the next generation of Soy Checkoff leaders is a priority for Gast, and his advice to farmers who are curious but unsure about where to begin is straightforward.

"Start at your state level," Gast explained. "Get involved on a small scale."

State involvement builds a foundation that makes national leadership a natural next step rather than a leap.

Times are tough on the farm right now, and Gast knows that taking on a volunteer role is not easy. At the same time, every relationship created in a market like Egypt, every buyer convinced that U.S. soy is worth a premium, and every new crop use discovered flows back to the farm gate.

That work has been underway for 35 years strong. Every day, the Soy Checkoff is focused on delivering a return on investment (ROI) for the nearly half-million U.S. soybean farmers.

The United Soybean Board's 77 farmer-leaders serve on behalf of all U.S. soybean farmers to increase demand, strengthen on-farm resilience, and help farmers maximize the value of their Soy Checkoff investments.

To learn more about the United Soybean Board, visit unitedsoybean.org.

—Story and photo courtesy of United Soybean Board

United Soybean Board farmer leaders visit a crush facility in Cairo.

Decision Time for Soybean Farmers

Farmers make many decisions about their crops and management plans before the first seed is put in the ground. For 2026, higher input costs and challenging market conditions may influence some choices, but to achieve the maximum yield potential, some factors can't be overlooked.

Planting Date

Getting soybeans planted early maximizes their yield potential. North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension Agronomist for Broadleaf Crops Ana Carcedo, Ph.D., reminds growers that soil temperatures should be at least 50 degrees for 3 consecutive days with a favorable forecast before putting soybeans in the ground.

Carcedo says that there is a reason why farmers may be inclined to push the planting date envelope.

"The earlier that we plant, the higher the yield potential that we can attain," Carcedo explains. "Every day that we delay the planting from May 1 to May 15, we are losing 0.3 bushels per acre of yield per day. Every day after May 15th, you might be losing 0.8 bushels per day."

Jason Hanson, owner of Rock and Roll Agronomy in Webster, operates primarily in Ramsey County. He states that growers there typically plant cereal crops first, then move right into soybeans. The soybean planting window has been moving up while yields have risen, but last September's frost took the top off the yield potential.

"I will still tell my guys to go early," Hanson asserts. "There are some varieties that have better tolerance to certain conditions, so probably the best thing to do is stretch out your maturities for harvest, and then don't grow just two varieties, grow three or four varieties."

Carcedo adds that there are risks to planting early, especially if the soils are cool and wet.

"Those seeds are vulnerable," Carcedo asserts. "You're increasing the risk of having soil-borne diseases."

Seed Treatments

The Climate Prediction Center is showing a higher probability of above normal precipitation and below normal temperatures for March and April. If that forecast holds true, seed treatments may be beneficial.

"This might be a good year for seed treatments," Carcedo maintains. "We might get a good response if we are cool and wet. Protecting your seed means that those plants are going to be healthier, and you're going to see that at the end of the season."

"I am generally pro seed treatment because my guys will pick up bulk beans, and if you're going to get them inoculated, you might as well get it treated," Hanson declares. "We're seeding earlier, so the soil is cooler. We have more issues to deal with in that situation." Hanson says that, in 2025, farmers in his area dealt with a major infestation of soybean aphids that required spraying. Growers who had an insecticide treatment on their soybean seed did not have to spray their soybeans because their aphid numbers didn't climb.

Variety Selection

Selecting the right soybean variety is a key to soybean success, but the correct choice goes beyond just picking soybeans with the highest yields. Farmers also have to consider weed management plans and to select varieties with the needed herbicide tolerance traits. Yield-robbing pests, such as soybean cyst nematode (SCN) and iron deficiency chlorosis (IDC), or diseases, such as white mold, can be managed by selecting resistant or tolerant varieties.

Growers should check for varieties that yield consistently well in their area, Carcedo explains. Because some seed varieties are only on the market for a few years, it can be difficult to find consistent data for those soybeans. NDSU offers a variety-trial booklet with data generated from research at the regional Extension centers.

"It's really valuable information when you're deciding a maturity group," Carcedo states. "If you are aiming to yield potential, always try to go as late of a maturity as your region allows."

Seeding Rates

With high farm input costs and challenging economics, farmers may be tempted to reduce planting rates because of seed costs. NDSU recommends a target of 150,000 established plants per acre to optimize soybean yield, regardless of row spacing. To achieve this stand, seeding rates often range from 150,000 to 175,000 seeds per acre.

"Maybe you can plant at a rate slightly lower than the recommended seeding rate just to save on seed costs," Carcedo suggests.

Row Spacing

Carcedo describes how, for the eastern side of the state, narrow row spacing tends to offer a higher yield potential. However, row spacing can be influenced by disease or weed issues.

"If you have problems with white mold in your field, you might be better off using wider row spacing," Carcedo explains. "If you have weed problems, then maybe narrow row spacing is a good choice. It depends what your problem is, which way you should be leaning."

Research in the western part of the state didn't show much difference between wide and narrow row spacing, according to Carcedo. Hanson says that some of the growers he works with are going back to 7.5-inch rows to get quicker canopy closure.

Weed Management

Farmers may be looking for ways to cut costs this year, but Hanson doesn't believe that weed control is the place to do it. For years, kochia has been the most troublesome weed in his area. Recently, waterhemp has established itself as a formidable challenge. Both kochia and waterhemp are resistant to several herbicide modes of action, so farmers have to be proactive with their weed-management approach.

"I'm on team super aggressive," Hanson explains.

Hanson recommends putting down pre-emerge herbicides with multiple modes of action.

Nutrients

Hanson states that there was a tremendous amount of nitrogen mineralization in 2025, so some fields have high nitrate levels, which may not be the best choice for planting soybeans. With the high cost of fertilizer and sub-par grain prices, Hanson doesn't see farmers getting too aggressive with their soybeans' nutrient plans in 2026.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photo by Wanbaugh Studios

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SOY CHECKOFF™

Updating Policy at the Commodity Classic

North Dakota soybean delegates held caucus meetings with fellow farmers from South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin and New York to discuss policy concerns.

In late February, soybean farmers gathered in San Antonio, Texas, to discuss policy positions as part of the American Soybean Association's (ASA) delegate session at the Commodity Classic. Every year, the ASA updates its position on various federal policies and actions that affect U.S. farmers. That information is used to advocate for the nation's soybean farmers in Washington, D.C.

Nine North Dakota soybean farmers served as delegates to the ASA session; there were also two alternates. State leaders had previously caucused with farmers from South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin and New York in order to build support for issues relevant to the growers in those states.

"We added some additional language reaffirming national support for the Prevent Plant and the buy up endorsement," said Dazey farmer, North Dakota Soybean Growers Association President and ASA Director Justin Sherlock. "We also reaffirmed that we believe free and open trade is the way to go."

Sherlock stated that there was a discussion about drones, but there weren't many major changes to the ASA policy because the organization already had robust policy positions for most pertinent issues. Sherlock added that there were also discussions about markets and inputs, both of which are having a major influence on farm economics.

Farmer leaders heard from representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) about the agency's desire to provide more timely and accurate information.

"(The) USDA is taking a look at ensuring and trying to provide certainty that their reports are accurate and timely," Sherlock declared. "This past year showed us that (the) USDA is acknowledging, along with other parts of the government, that, yes, we need better information on input costs, costs of production, acreage and yield, just more timely information."

More than 12,000 people attended the Commodity Classic, setting another attendance record.

Sherlock attributed some of that attendance growth to farmers being proactive about their situation.

"I think all of the trade disruptions and the input price questions have raised farmer and farmer leader engagement because, all of a sudden, farmers are having to pay more attention to markets that, maybe, a lot of people took for granted," Sherlock explained. "Something positive that's come out of all the trade issues, I think, is that farmers are feeling the need to reengage and understand where their inputs are coming from and are looking at ways to better manage their cost."

—Story and photos by Daniel Lemke

NDSGA Annual Meeting

Participants at the Northern Corn and Soybean Expo were also part of the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association (NDSGA) annual meeting, held in conjunction with the expo.

NDSGA President Justin Sherlock chaired the meeting, which included a review of the organization's financial position and minutes from the previous annual meeting.

NDSGA President Justin Sherlock led proceedings at the organization's annual meeting.

Sherlock also highlighted the work that the NDSGA has been doing to meet the organization's mission of supporting policy that benefits North Dakota soybean growers through farmer-led advocacy and partnerships.

"This is truly what drives your board of directors to focus, sit in meetings and go have conversations with our folks out in Washington and in Bismarck," Sherlock said. "You're all our friends and neighbors; we're all part of our small, rural communities. Without each other, our voice is pretty limited, but together, we carry a lot of weight."

American Soybean Association (ASA) CEO Steve Censky provided a policy update on some issues which the ASA was addressing.

"We've had quite a year," Censky stated. "We have had some successes, despite the current economic situation."

Censky highlighted the tax provisions that Congress passed. He also touted the deal to sell soybeans to China, despite ongoing trade tensions.

"Twelve million metric tons this marketing year, which is about half of what we normally export, so not great," Censky declared, "but it's better than zero, and then 25 million metric tons over the next 2 years to restore us to about the average of what we'd been exporting previously."

Censky also reiterated the message that NDSGA and ASA membership gives farmers an amplified voice.

"As one person, you're shouting into the wind," Censky asserted, "but when we bring our collective voices together, we can influence policy."

Members reelected Brian Jodock of Northwood to serve as the NDSGA director for District 6 while Caylor Rosenau was reelected to represent District 5. Both Jodock and Rosenau will serve 3-year terms.

—Story and photos by Daniel Lemke

ASA CEO Stephen Censky outline the work the organization is doing on behalf of farmers across the U.S.

OTT Dicamba Returns for 2026

Dicamba is back on the list of approved herbicides after the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reinstated dicamba use for farmers in 2026. Farmers will, once again, be able to use dicamba over-the-top (OTT) for weed control in soybeans after the product was not available for OTT use in 2025.

"This action reflects this administration's commitment to ensuring farmers have the tools they need to succeed while protecting the environment with the strongest safeguards ever imposed on OTT dicamba use," the EPA stated in a news release.

The EPA described how it conducted a thorough pesticide evaluation, by using data and hundreds of publicly available, independent, peer-reviewed studies and real-world field results to do a human health and ecological risk assessment.

"To be clear, these studies involved pesticide applicators with decades of intensive exposure, not typical consumers," the EPA said.

The EPA designed new label restrictions to address the risks associated with off-target dicamba movement and drift. The EPA now limits dicamba applications to 1 pound per acre per year, with only 2 applications allowed per year. Applications must include 40 ounces of volatility-reduction agents per acre. The new registration also restricts applications during periods of high temperature when the volatility risks increase. Farmers must use proven conservation methods, such as buffer strips, cover crops, reduced soil tillage or contour farming, on every treated field. A 240-foot safety buffer is required on the field's downwind edge.

American Soybean Association (ASA) leaders welcomed the EPA decision, contending that dicamba remains an essential part of integrated pest management systems (IPMs), ensuring that growers can maintain long-term control of destructive herbicide-resistant weed populations. The EPA action came at an opportune time when growers were making critical decisions for the 2026 planting season. Without access to effective post-emergence tools, farmers face higher costs, reduced yields and fewer sustainable options for protecting their crops.

"We're grateful to see (the) EPA finally move forward with the label," says Justin Sherlock, a Dazey farmer, an ASA director and the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association president. "We've been eagerly waiting to see it as many of our members want to have that option available to them."

Sherlock is hopeful that the courts won't vacate the dicamba label, but he also acknowledges that there are many crops grown in North Dakota which are sensitive to dicamba, so not everyone welcomes this product's return.

—Story continued on page 33

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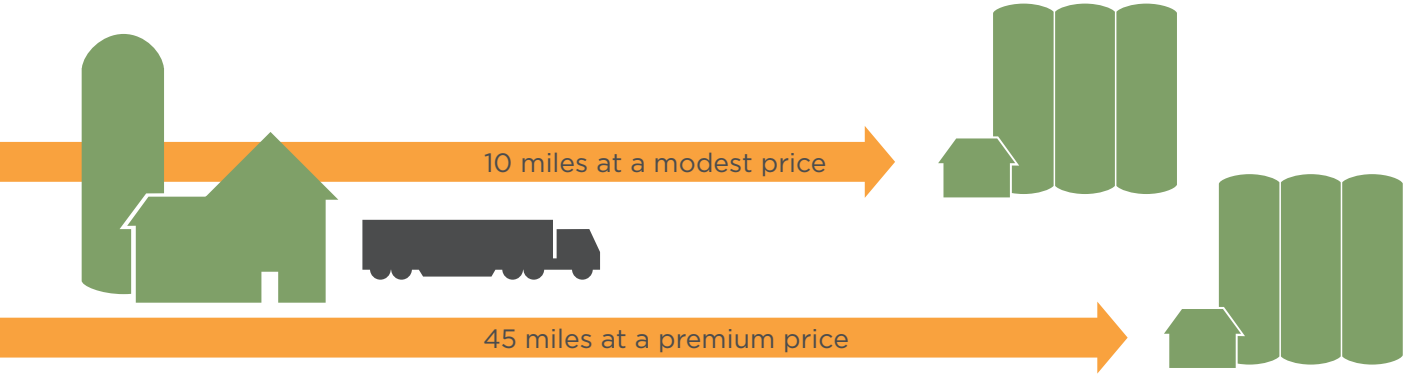

Farmers must not only be mindful of the price received, but also the costs associated with the delivery. After all, the goal is to maximize profit vs. maximize revenue.

The calculator works for soybeans, corn, wheat and other commodities. In a few short steps, farmers can determine not only how much money will be received but also how much will be spent.

The calculator can be accessed online at *soytransportation.org/calculator.*

Established in 2007, the Soy Transportation Coalition is an organization comprised of the North Dakota Soybean Council, thirteen other state soybean boards, the American Soybean Association, and the United Soybean Board. Funded by the soybean checkoff.

Sen. Mark Weber

Even while serving in numerous leadership roles within North Dakota's agriculture industry during his career, Sen. Mark Weber thought that, at some point, public service might be in his future.

Weber grew up on a family farm in the Casselton area, an operation for which he is still a partner. After high school, he earned his master's degree in agricultural economics from North Dakota State University (NDSU).

"I went to Washington, D.C., and worked at USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture) for one year," Weber recalls. "Then, I came back and became the first executive director of the North Dakota Soybean Council in 1985. That's when the council was first passed by the legislature."

Weber recounts that there were only 400,000 acres of soybeans in the state at the time and that the entire budget to fund soybean research at NDSU was $60,000.

Weber then became the executive director of the Red River Valley Sugarbeet Growers Association, where he led the organization's legislative efforts. He worked at the Northern Crops Institute as executive director until his retirement in 2017.

Weber was first elected to the North Dakota Senate in 2020. He represents District 22, which includes rural Cass County and part of West Fargo.

"My father was a long-time state legislator for nearly 20 years in the 1960s and '70s, so I've always had an interest in politics," Weber says. "I've spent an entire lifetime investing in our farm, lobbying for farm policy, and helping to build U.S. and international markets for our crops. Then in retirement, I had the time to run for office. I'm very grateful and humbled to have had that honor to serve in the legislature."

During the most recent session, Weber served as the chairman of the Senate Finance and Tax Committee. He was also a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee. Weber stated that he has three priority areas as a legislator. The first one is property taxes.

"Although the bill is far from perfect, I feel good about what we did at the last session," Weber declared. "We did very well for residential property. Obviously, I would have liked to have done something for commercial property and farmland. I suspect that, in the 2027 session, we'll be back fine tuning it."

Farm drainage is another priority area for the veteran senator. Weber is a strong advocate for farm drainage and drain tiling. He says that we wouldn't be farming the Red River Valley without it, but it needs more coordination between upstream and downstream landowners.

"We've got to find a way to improve the cooperation between county drain boards," Weber explains. "I really support managing water more on a watershed basis rather than on county lines."

Weber is also a proponent of improving rural infrastructure. During the previous legislative session, lawmakers made progress to deliver increased funding for townships.

"We changed the formula on the gas tax so that townships could get a bit more," Weber says. "Under the old law, townships got 2.7% of the gas tax that's collected. We raised that by about a third. It's a little less than 3.5%. We nearly doubled the per-mile payment that townships get from roughly $200 a mile to now around $400 a mile."

Weber supports the carbon-pipeline effort but feels that the state could have made more efforts to use existing right of ways along highways and railroads. He is also concerned about finding the right balance between economic development and individual property rights.

Voters passed term limits for North Dakota lawmakers, so barring any changes to that law, Weber's time in the Senate will end following the 2027 session. Weber has enjoyed working for his constituents.

"What gives me great satisfaction," Weber declares, "is when we can help people."

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photo provided by the North Dakota Legislative Assembly

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"If producers want to continue to have the label stay in place and have access to this product, it's going to be really important that they follow that label to a T and make sure they're being a good steward of that technology so that we can continue to use it going forward and not have it taken away from us again," Sherlock maintains.

The ASA and its state affiliates have urged the EPA to deliver a clear, practical and science-based label that provides certainty for farmers and applicators. Last year, the ASA and its state affiliates submitted detailed comments urging the EPA to ensure that any final registration is workable with real-world farming conditions. Those comments emphasized the need for greater flexibility around temperature restrictions; the importance of multiple modes of action, such as tank mixing, in IPMs; and reasonable spray-drift and runoff-mitigation requirements that are workable, science-based, and cost-effective for growers.

—Story by Daniel Lemke

North Dakota farmer leaders with the American Soybean Association were in Washington, D.C., the week of March 9 for the organization's board meeting. Justin Sherlock of Dazey, Brent Kohls of Mayville, and Josh Gackle of Kulm also met with staff from Rep. Julie Fedorchak and Sen. Kevin Cramer, and met in person with Sen. John Hoeven to discuss key soybean policy priorities. Conversations focused on the importance of passing a farm bill and highlighted priorities including trade, the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement, biofuels, and protecting access to critical crop inputs. These meetings help ensure the voice of North Dakota soybean farmers is heard in the nation's capital.

North Dakota Soybean Growers Association

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To join the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association and the American Soybean Association, complete and return this application with payment.

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Occupation (Please check all that apply)

❑ Farmer ❑ Retired ❑ Agribusiness

❑ Finance ❑ Elevator ❑ Other

Do you raise: ❑ Cattle ❑ Hogs ❑ Poultry ❑ Dairy

Do you currently grow soybeans? ❑ Yes ❑ No

Soybean Acres: _____ Total Acres Farmed: _____

How did you hear about NDSGA? (Please circle one)

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