THE NORTH DAKOTA
Soybean
GROWER MAGAZINE

VOLUME 14 • ISSUE 2
APRIL 2025

INSIDE:

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On the cover

With winter turning to spring, farmers are gearing up for the 2025 growing season. In this issue, learn how getting soybeans off to a good start is important to success and how laboratory facilities at NDSU can help growers identify and deal with problems.

—Photo by Wanbaugh Studios

The North Dakota Soybean Grower is published six times a year by the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association, 4852 Rocking Horse Circle South, Fargo, ND 58104. Website: www.ndsoygrowers.com.

To update subscription information, please call (701) 566-9300 or email info@NDSGA.com.

Send editorial and advertising materials to Nancy Johnson, 4852 Rocking Horse Circle South, Fargo, ND 58104, nancy.johnson@NDSGA.com. Publication of editorial or advertising material in the North Dakota Soybean Grower magazine does not imply endorsement by the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association. Check agronomic advice with local sources and always read and follow product labels.

Rural Caucus Legislators Fight for Solutions and Funding

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Legislative crossover is in the rearview mirror. Crossover is the halfway point when House and Senate bills must be approved by each chamber in order to move to the other chamber for approval or rejection. Only legislation that is approved by both bodies and signed by the governor will be enacted. Actions occurring in March and April will, ultimately, decide the rural legislative agenda's success, with significant funding decisions from the appropriations committees not likely until the end of April.

The Rural Caucus is a new and important development; it is a huge factor to advocate for rural North Dakota. The Rural Caucus was the idea of Sen. Janne Myrdal (Dist. 19, Edinburg). She co-chairs the caucus with Rep. Jared Hagert (Dist. 20, Emerado). Myrdal says that the caucus will address the government's core functions and will promote agricultural issues; rural development; property-tax relief; infrastructure; and healthcare, including rural nursing homes and hospitals. The caucus has about 50 members, and it presents a unique and valuable opportunity for the legislators to advocate with a united message.

There is a prevailing attitude which was captured by Sen. Mark Weber (Dist. 22, Casselton): "I'm not going to apologize for our asks for rural North Dakota. Others are not bashful about asking for their purposes ... we in agriculture should not be reluctant to do so either. We are not going to apologize for asking you to take care of us. The big cities will take care of themselves." Myrdal notes how the ag industry should garner the same support that other industries receive. "We all fully support oil, gas and coal. Every commodity North Dakota brings to the world, whether it is feeding the world or bringing world energy independence, comes from a mile of township dirt roads," says Myrdal. These legislators don't see the caucus as a split from their urban colleagues, expressing that legislators are working cooperatively on behalf of all citizens.

The Rural Caucus is very engaged with rural property-tax relief; water issues; and funding for roads and bridges, agriculture diversification and development, regional planning councils, rural grocery stores, and all things in between.

An initial property-tax relief bill, HB 1176, omitted agricultural property. There are now multiple bills that, if enacted, will provide much property-tax relief for agricultural properties. These bills include HB 1168 and HB 1575, and SB 2363. Ultimately, these bills could move forward separately, be combined or be defeated.

Rural North Dakota desperately needs significantly more infrastructure funding this legislative session. I am cautiously optimistic that road and bridge funding is getting serious traction with intentions to provide motor vehicle excise-tax funding to the four buckets of townships, counties, cities and bridges.

The legislature has been very generous with its funding for agriculture. North Dakota State University has released a report, sponsored, in part, by soybean growers, finding that agriculture's total economic contribution in North Dakota is $41.8 billion. We hope that the legislature will keep investing in rural North Dakota.

When this session is completed, I am convinced that the Rural Caucus will have had an immense influence on the most significant or favorable outcomes for rural North Dakota. When you have the opportunity, please let your legislators know that you appreciate their hard work and commitment to rural North Dakota.

Keeping Up with the Change

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It seems like I was just saying that the fall harvest had finally wrapped up, only to find myself scrambling to get things ready for the fast-approaching 2025 planting season. Where did the winter go? Perhaps like me, you have either been trying to stay indoors to avoid the bitter cold temps we experienced much of this winter, or you've been trying to keep up with the feverish pace of major policy events happening in Washington, D.C., and Bismarck. There has been no shortage of things to keep agriculture people on our toes. Rest assured that, whenever possible, the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association (NDSGA) has been there monitoring and providing input on matters which are important to soybean producers across the state.

In this month's magazine, you'll find several articles with important information about the work that the NDSGA and the American Soybean Association (ASA) are doing on your behalf in relation to biofuels. This information includes details about how we are trying to expand the use of new biofuels using soybean feedstocks as well as the ongoing efforts to implement or to improve the 45Z tax credits.

You'll also find information about the continued importance of developing and maintaining good relationships with our international customers as well as how tariffs can negatively affect soybean-export opportunities. While it's worthwhile to try and rebalance some of the trade issues that the United States has with certain countries, it's also important to remember that, as soybean farmers, we have benefited immensely from international trade. We are excellent at growing crops and producing many value-added products here in the United States, and if we can export these products to friendly countries and can purchase other products or even types of food that we don't grow here in the U.S. (think avocados or tequila), then people on both sides of those transactions can benefit.

You'll also learn more about the grassroots process through which the ASA sets policy priorities for the coming year. Many of those objectives find their way into discussions when advocating for a new and improved farm bill. This process takes several months as well as countless virtual and in-person meetings, starting at the state level. The effort includes several review stages where states come together to discuss changes or new policy language, culminating in a session during the Commodity Classic where delegates from each state approve the final changes for the coming year. Our state soybean organizations truly bring farm-level insights and knowledge to the table when we meet with policymakers. I invite you to get involved and to partake in this process.

If you've not been to either our NDSGA annual meeting or the Commodity Classic, I strongly urge you to consider doing so in the next year. These events are worthwhile experiences to network with your fellow soybean producers from around the state and nation. These meetings also allow you to provide input about how you want farm policy to look.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to be a part of these amazing organizations. I hope to see you soon at some of our upcoming events.

Membership Application

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

Name: _____

Spouse: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Farm/Company Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

County: _____

Phone: _____

Cell: _____

Email Address: _____

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)
Recruited in person; Recruited by phone; Magazine; Internet; Social Media; Mailing; Radio; Event; Other

❑ 3-Year Professional Membership: $250 ❑ Retired Farmer: $25
❑ 1-Year Professional Membership: $110 ❑ 1-Year Student: Free
❑ Check enclosed (please make checks payable to NDSGA)
❑ Credit Card: Visa / MasterCard / Discover / American Express
Card Number: _____
Expiration Date: _____/_____ CVC: _____
Name on Card (Please print): _____
Signature: _____

Mail application with payment to: North Dakota Soybean Growers Association, 4852 Rocking Horse Circle South, Fargo, ND 58104

Making Her Dream Come True

Billie Lentz isn't waiting for her farming future to unfold. She's making it happen. After spending over two years working for John Deere in a development program that took her to three different regions of the country, the 2022 North Dakota State University (NDSU) graduate has returned to her home area of Perth in Towner County.

"I knew that it was time to head home because the farm was still my long-term plan," Lentz says. "I was grateful to have that experience out of state to build my network, but I chose to move back home with the new skills I had."

While a return to familiar ground was always her plan, Lentz came back to rural North Dakota better equipped to deal with the challenges and demands of farming.

"I would say I learned adaptability and have a lot more ability to anticipate and embrace when a lot of changes happen, especially when it comes to policy and markets," Lentz explains. "Even though we would like to have perfect situations, we have to be prepared for the imperfect parts of it, too. I'm really just embracing the opportunity that's in front of me for what it is."

In addition to working full time at Legacy Cooperative, an exciting opportunity for Lentz is the chance to operate her own farm.

"I've been slowly taking over my grandpa's share of the farm, and it all became official this past winter," Lentz states. "This upcoming year will be my first full year of farming."

Diving Headlong

Working a full-time job while growing her farm operation puts plenty on Lentz's plate, but she's continuing a track record of involvement with ag advocacy. Lentz served as North Dakota's state FFA treasurer and was a

Billie Lentz is operating her own farm for the first time this year. She's also working with her father Doyle on a transition plan.

North Dakota Soybean Growers Association (NDSGA) scholarship winner at NDSU. Now, she is participating in the American Soybean Association's Corteva Young Leader program.

"From a young age, my dad was involved in commodity groups, and I could see how it definitely was a benefit to him and his farm-management skills," Lentz contends, "so it was the type of thing I knew I wanted to pursue down the line. When I learned about the Young Leader program, I thought that would be a really good way to get my foot in the door, where I could start to establish those relationships and really build up the knowledge on a lot of the policy issues within the industry, and then be able to move on from there and to, hopefully, further involvement with the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association down the road as well."

Lentz didn't have to wait long to make that next step. In February, she was elected to serve as a director on the NDSGA board, representing soybean farmers in seven counties.

Lentz describes how her work with John Deere, her job at the local cooperative and her ascent into farm management has made her keenly aware of many issues that farmers face.

Lentz and her fellow NDSGA directors spend time at the state capital in Bismarck working on behalf of North Dakota soybean farmers.

"A huge area is, of course, markets and being able to have that accessibility and availability to everything we need, then on the other end of things, being able to sell to as many places as possible," Lentz says. "Other things that have really started to pique my interest since returning to the farm would be labor shortages across the board, from the people that I work with at the co-op, and trying to do recruitment on behalf of the co-op to my own farm, and making sure that we have the right people in place to be able to do everything we need to do."

Lentz notes that she's an advocate for rural mental-health awareness. She's also a proponent of having farmers create plans to help the next generation of farmers get started.

"Succession planning is a huge thing for me," Lentz explains. "I'm very grateful to have been able to have a very successful succession plan with my grandpa and my dad, and it's been very clear to all of our family from the start with our farm set up for down the line. But, I see a lot of my peers that struggle with that transition and are having a really difficult time knowing what those next steps will be. Especially as a young farmer myself and trying to lead fellow young farmers, I really get passionate about ensuring that those individuals can be set up for success down the line."

Stepping Up

Lentz sees more of her fellow young farmers transitioning into farm ownership, which is encouraging, even in a time of rapid changes within the agriculture industry.

"As I've started to take the reins at my family farm, I'm starting to see a lot of my neighbors are working on that secession as well," Lentz states. "It's very energizing to see my neighbors be fellow young people and be able to see that there are a lot of changes that are approaching very quickly. To be able to embrace those changes is just going to, hopefully, launch me further along the way and, hopefully, set me up for more long-term success with farming."

Taking over a farm during a difficult economy may provide an additional layer of challenge, but Lentz remains undeterred.

"It's definitely daunting, but at the same time, it feels very rewarding just because it feels like this has been a dream a long time in the making, and to feel that it's finally going to happen is just extremely rewarding to see that the hard work is coming to fruition," Lentz asserts. "Of course, I don't know what the markets will play out to be, but just to know that I'm finally doing what I've dreamed of doing is rewarding in itself."

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photos by The Creative Treatment

In February, Lentz was elected to the NDSGA board of directors.

Biodiesel is Growing

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend the Clean Fuels Conference, and as usual, I came away all fired up about renewable fuels, especially biodiesel. As a feedstock producer, I am so proud to be part of an industry with products that are on an upward trajectory with increasing demand. In 2024, the U.S. reached 5 billion gallons of biodiesel and renewable diesel consumption for the first time! Demand has doubled in 4 years (I can't take any credit for that increase, although I did begin working on biodiesel projects in 2020.) In California, renewable diesel and biodiesel make up 75% of the diesel pool, meaning that biobased diesel is more common in California than petroleum diesel. What a concept! PepsiCo, one of the largest commercial fleets, runs 300 trucks on B100 using the Optimus Vector System. I'm also a huge train buff and was elated to see that all six Class 1 railroads fully support biofuels now. With all this positive news about renewable fuels, I want you to get fired up, too!

North Dakota soybean farmers put skill, experience and hard work into growing soybeans. We not only feed the world, but we also fuel it. Started by U.S. soybean farmers, the biodiesel industry has seen tremendous growth in the last 25 years, creating a strong market for soybean oil, which helps support the demand and price for soybeans. Our great state is benefiting from the growth of the renewable fuels industry by having a renewable diesel refinery in Dickinson, which can produce 184 million gallons per year, and two new soy crush facilities with the ability to crush 275,000 bushels of soybeans a day. Just two years ago, we did not have any soybean processing to support renewable fuels. Our annual soybean production rank went from #9 in 2023 to #8 in 2024. The economic effect is real.

Biodiesel, the first soy-based renewable fuel, is a high-quality, high-performance fuel that is available to fleet managers and farmers right here in North Dakota. Fueling our farms with biodiesel provides an opportunity to create local demand for the crops we grow and to bring it back full circle to the farm. Spring and summer are the perfect times to use B20, a blend of 20% biodiesel and 80% petroleum diesel. There are many great reasons to utilize biodiesel for your equipment this coming spring during the planting season. Biodiesel blends up to B20 have the same power and performance as petroleum diesel, however, biodiesel improves the ultra-low sulfur diesel you use by providing excellent lubricity, preventing wear, and prolonging engine life. Biodiesel also keeps your equipment's fuel system and injectors clean. Biodiesel is naturally high in cetane and low in sulfur. If biodiesel works great for large commercial fleets such as PepsiCo, I'm certain that it will work wonders for you, too. I am proud to say that I have been using it on my farm for the last few years and will continue again this year.

If you have any questions about using biodiesel, fuel handling, and storage, or if you ever need help troubleshooting a fuel-related problem, contact our partners at the Regional Diesel Helpline at (800) 929-3437 or email them at info@megcorpmn.com. Follow the Regional Diesel Helpline Facebook page at facebook.com/RegionalDieselHelpline for tips, seasonal reminders, and webinar notifications.

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Support the amazing fuel industry you helped create. Ask your fuel supplier to deliver B20 this spring!

Rob Rose, fourth from left, attended the Clean Fuels Conference in January, where he had the opportunity to meet and network with United Soybean Board (USB) farmer-leaders, including USB CEO Lucas Lentsch, third from left. Through the soybean checkoff program, farmers have invested in growing the demand for biofuels.

EARLY CHOICES CAN PAY Dividends

There are many circumstances that farmers face which are outside their control, but a lot of little decisions before and during the growing season can play a big role in soybean profitability at the end of the year.

Among the first decisions is choosing which variety to plant. The maturity group and yield potential are important, but so is having an understanding of each field.

"It's always about knowing your field, knowing which diseases you have before deciding what are you going to plant," says North Dakota State University (NDSU) Extension Broadleaf Agronomist Ana Carcedo, Ph.D. "If you know diseases are present in your field, like soybean cyst nematode, you'll want to check varieties that have better tolerance. Every field will be different. It's something that you have to take into account when you're choosing your variety. If not, you are going to face yield penalties."

Carcedo states that NDSU has soybean variety trial results and information available to help growers make variety selections.

The planting date can have a big influence on yield. NDSU research has shown that, for every day planting is delayed after May 1, growers lose 0.3 bushels per acre in yield potential. That loss assumes soybeans could be planted into uniform field conditions with adequate moisture and warm temperatures, which is no guarantee.

The planting date is important because it allows soybeans to absorb as much sun energy as possible during the growing season. However, the soil's temperature at the time of planting is also crucial.

Having soil temperatures consistently at a minimum of 50 degrees is optimal. "Check soil temperatures before you plant to avoid germination issues. If seeds are planted into cool soil, they are not going do anything in the soil," Carcedo explains. "Then, you're just exposing them more to soilborne diseases and seedling diseases."

With cool conditions likely for soybean planting in 2025, seed treatments have an increasing value.

"If this year's forecast is correct, it's going to be cool; the seeds might be sitting in the soil for a while before germinating, so seed treatments are going to be important," Carcedo asserts.

If planting is delayed for a substantial amount of time, growers may need to change their seed choices and go to a faster maturing variety. However, that decision may come with a cost.

"Every time that we make those changes, we are losing yield potential, but we are going to be more comfortable during the growing season knowing we might have frost or dry-down problems," Carcedo contends.

NDSU recommends 170,000 seeds per acre as a planting rate for much of eastern North Dakota. However, plant populations in the drier areas of central and western North Dakota could skew closer to 140,000 to 90,000 seeds per acre. Carcedo says that the cost of soybean seed could factor into the equation.

"Sometimes, we focus too much on having the highest yield possible," Carcedo explains. "Having higher planting rates may help you to have the best yield, but that's not always the same as being the most profitable. Sometimes putting more plants in is just too expensive."

Row spacing is another important decision because narrower rows can help close the canopy sooner, allowing soybean plants to soak up the sun while also shading out weeds. On the other hand, narrow rows can be problematic if diseases such as white mold are an issue.

Farmers have months to watch and to manage their soybean crops as plants grow toward maturity. However, the actions taken early in the season are crucial to what those growers will find in the fields when fall arrives.

"If we don't have a good start, it's really hard to come back from that," Carcedo says.

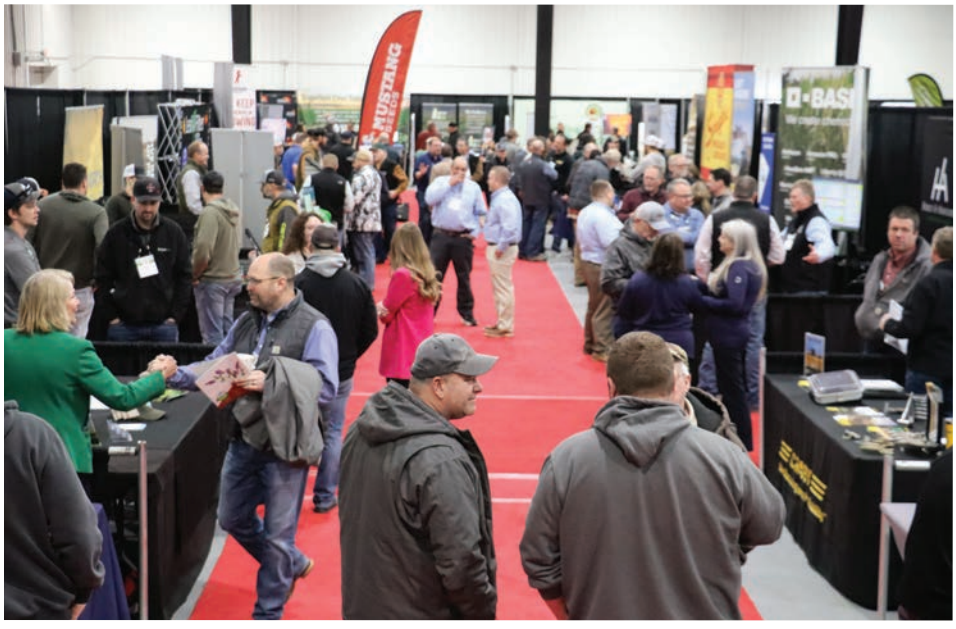
—Story by Daniel Lemke, photo by Wanbaugh Studios

Northern Corn and Soybean Expo Sees Success with Strong Attendance and Diverse Exhibits

The 2025 Northern Corn and Soybean Expo was a great success. The February 4th event was held at the Butler Machinery Arena on the Red River Valley Fairgrounds and drew approximately 400 participants. The event also featured 62 trade show booths, offering a wide range of resources for attendees.

Farmers had the opportunity to connect with industry experts, to network with peers and to explore the latest in agricultural innovation. The expo, presented by the North Dakota Soybean Council, the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association, the North Dakota Corn Growers Association and the North Dakota Corn Utilization Council, brought soybean and corn farmers from across the region together for a day filled with thought-provoking speakers, valuable production and trade information, and networking opportunities.

The agenda included Jacob Shapiro of Cognitive Investments. He provided an in-depth analysis of the current geopolitical climate, offering insights about what North Dakota corn and soybean producers might expect in the coming months and how farmers can prepare. Brad Rippey from the U.S. Department of Agriculture reviewed the 2024 growing season and gave a



Hundreds of North Dakota farmers trekked to the Northern Corn and Soybean Expo.

Naomi Blohm of Total Farm Marketing delivered an outlook on the 2025 markets.

Delta Airlines Vice President Jeff Davidman detailed opportunities for sustainable aviation fuel.

Wide-ranging educational topics drew in hundreds of attendees.

North Dakota Soybean Council Director Evan Montgomery visited with attendees at the Expo.

The NDSC showcased some of the new, value-added soybean products including shoes, firefighting foam and chainsaw bar and chain oil.

glimpse of what the 2025 season might look like in terms of weather. Jeff Davidman of Delta Air Lines shared valuable insight about how sustainable aviation fuel is boosting crop demand, highlighting opportunities for U.S. producers to lead in this emerging market. A panel of experts discussed the future of farm machinery and the innovations which are shaping the industry. Naomi Blohm of Total Farm Marketing provided a detailed outlook for grain markets in 2025. Frayne Olson, professor and crop economist at North Dakota State University, discussed the potential economic challenges that growers may face in the near future. The event wrapped up with Cory-Ann Wind of Clean Fuels Alliance America and Kent Hartwig of Gevo leading a conversation about the evolving role of renewable fuels and the implications for farmers.

Looking ahead, the 2026 Northern Corn and Soybean Expo will be on Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at the Red River Valley Fairgrounds in West Fargo.

—Story by staff, photos by staff and Daniel Lemke

Video presentations from the 2025 Northern Corn and Soybean Expo can be viewed by scanning the QR.

Presentations from industry-leading speakers help attendees stay up to date on current ag issues and opportunities.

Geopolitical observer Jacob Shapiro made sense of all the changes happening in the U.S. and around the world.

Emcee Clinton Griffiths (far left) spoke with a panel of experts who discussed the future of farm machinery and the innovations shaping the industry.

Soil health was a focus of the Research Pavilion, which included NDSU researchers Chandler Gruener, Ph.D., (left), and Carlos Pires, Ph.D.

A Multipolar World

Geopolitical change in the U.S. and around the world is happening so rapidly that it can be hard to keep up.

Jacob Shapiro, a speaker, consultant, and global politics author who monitors geopolitical shifts, observes that the world is moving from a unipolar to a multipolar structure as countries strive for greater self-sufficiency.

"Multipolar is just a way to say that there is not one dominant power in the global system today," Shapiro told attendees at the 2025 Northern Corn and Soybean Expo.

For the last 30 to 40 years, Shapiro says that it has been a unipolar world where the U.S. largely called the shots. Prior to that, there was a bipolar world, dominated by the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

It is no longer about making the best product for the cheapest price, and somebody will buy it in the global marketplace. Shapiro believes that politics will dominate in the future.

"Even at the top level, trade between powers like the United States, China is decreasing," Shapiro explains.

Shapiro notes that the U.S. is losing or has lost its status as the low-cost producer of corn and soybeans. Brazil is going to be the country which has that title going forward. That scenario doesn't mean the end for U.S. corn and soybeans, but something fundamental is changing in the markets with Brazil serving as an alternate supplier.

"That means if a country like China doesn't want to buy U.S. soybeans anymore, they don't have to," Shapiro asserts.

Shapiro contends that the best potential ag market for the United States may be the United States.

"Food insecurity in this country, the most agriculturally blessed country in the entire world, averages 10.4%," Shapiro states. "We've been told, for most of our lives, that it's our responsibility to feed the world, and maybe it's our responsibility to feed ourselves first."

Trade Policy Impact

The Trump administration's tariff threats and policy decisions will likely continue to cause volatility and will affect agriculture.

"President Trump is cashing checks that sometimes you are going to have to pay because U.S. agriculture is such an important part of how the United States makes foreign policy," Shapiro explains. "If you're thinking about what are the most important questions to consider for the next two years when it comes to geopolitics, it's does President Trump really mean these things? Is he bluffing? Is this all about making better trade deals in the rest of the world, or does he really believe that 'tariff' is the most beautiful word in the English language?"

Shapiro expects the energy policy to have a dramatic effect on farmers.

"Corn and soybeans, you guys are unique in the U.S. agricultural complex, in the sense of how deeply intertwined you are with energy," Shapiro says. "In some ways, when I'm prepping to talk to this specific audience, it has to be as much an energy preparation as it does an ag preparation and a geopolitical preparation. That's because roughly half of the corn and soybeans that are grown in this country, ultimately, find their way into the U.S. energy complex."

Shapiro maintains that one reason President Trump can throw his weight around is that, for the first time in almost 100 years, the U.S. is a net energy exporter.

"You want him to drill, baby, drill as much as possible, but you also want him to export, baby, export as much as possible because, if you surge production and you don't export it abroad, then fuel prices could collapse in this country," Shapiro asserts.

With all the change and uncertainty in the world, Shapiro says that there's a great deal of opportunity.

"I think the exact wrong thing to do in the current international environment is to get in the fetal position and say things are bad, or the government needs to come save me, or I'm not sure because there's all this uncertainty and volatility," Shapiro contends. "There is always uncertainty and volatility. But the people who are going to do the best are the ones that see the change in front of them and are not afraid to go tackle it."

—Story and photos by Daniel Lemke

Jacob Shapiro of Cognitive Investments says global and market uncertainty also presents opportunities.

NEXTILE Challenge: NDSU Students Innovate with Soy-Based Textiles

In November, the North Dakota Soybean Council (NDSC) and North Dakota State University (NDSU) proudly announced the winner and runner-up for the school-level NEXTILE: The Soy in Textiles Design Challenge.

For NEXTILE's second year of competition, design students from 21 colleges and universities were invited to leverage their creative and problem-solving skills to produce the next sustainable innovation for textile design. The challenge? To create products using one versatile ingredient: soybeans.

Each participant or team received a design kit that included sustainable, soy-based materials: soy silk, soy cashmere, organic pigment, soy wax and other soy products. Submissions leveraged three or more of the ingredients to create new textile threads, dyes, paints, designs and more. Judges included representatives from the design and textile industries as well as soybean farmers from across the country.

"Serving as a judge for this competition highlighted the incredible potential of soy products," said Jennifer Meyer, an NDSC director from Wilton. "The innovative solutions presented by each team demonstrated soy's diverse applications and emphasized its versatility as a sustainable resource."

Winners from each school received a $500 scholarship, with runners-up earning a $250 scholarship. Additionally, the winning teams from each competition were invited to participate in the national competition.

The NDSU competition recognized the following teams:

- ***Winning Team:*** Hayden Pritchard, Emersyn Campbell, Madeline Kersten, Avi Rai, Alivia Winter, Gift Nweemuu and Kiera Booth: innovative design for plant-embroidered blankets.
- ***Runner-Up Team:*** Megan Hill, Grace Helm, Brekka Blessum, Kaylee Kern, Alexis Swendsrud, Samantha Ferch and Tacy Gullund: creative, dyed star-pattern handbag.

U.S. Soy has been a key ingredient for product innovation since Henry Ford used soy-based materials in automobile design. Today, soy is used in countless industries, from biofuels to textiles. With over 1,000 soy-based products on the market, U.S. Soy is essential to a wide range of industries.

U.S. soybean farmers and industry partners are continually pushing the limits of innovation to discover and to deliver solutions for the world's most significant challenges, such as food security and climate change. NEXTILE was created to put sustainable soy materials in the hands of the brightest young minds in design, encouraging the students to create the next generation of eco-friendly, biobased textile solutions. Through the Soy Checkoff, farmers benefit by funding research and development that opens new markets, supports sustainable practices and creates higher-value opportunities for U.S. soybeans, driving long-term profitability and growth in agriculture.

Learn more about NEXTILE, the participating schools and students, and the next round of soy-based sustainable innovation at ussoy.org/nextile.

—Story and photos courtesy of the United Soybean Board

Looking North for Opportunity

Soybean products from the U.S. are shipped around the world on a regular basis, but export markets don't have to be half a world away. Sometimes, the best opportunities may be close at hand.

With two soybean crushing plants currently operating in North Dakota, the state has an ample supply of soybean meal. Some of that meal is consumed locally and regionally, but soybean industry leaders recognize the need to find additional markets outside North Dakota.

"We aren't going to feed ourselves out of this situation," says Craig Kleven, North Dakota Soybean Council (NDSC) director of industry relations.

The NDSC worked with William Wilson, Ph.D., in the North Dakota State University Agribusiness and Applied Economics Department on a study to evaluate the potential of exporting meal to Canada. The research illustrated that up to 30% of the state's soybean meal could be used to feed livestock in Canada.

"The basics of the study showed that about a third of this meal produced in North Dakota was going to go north to Canada as a natural market flow based on price point, desire and need," Kleven explains.

The NDSC's Market Development Committee recognized the need to learn more about the Canadian swine, poultry and aquaculture industries.

Even though Canada is closer to North Dakota than most U.S. states, it is still a foreign country. The NDSC worked with the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) to create a trade mission to Toronto and Winnipeg in order to begin building relationships with Canadian ag officials and agribusinesses.

Carlos Salinas is USSEC regional director for the Americas, which includes Latin America and Canada. Salinas says Canada had largely been viewed as a mature market with limited growth opportunity for soy products. With the development of North Dakota's crushing capacity, the market dynamic changed.

"To go from almost zero crush to crushing close to 2.2 million metric tons a year is a significant amount," Salinas says. "That's probably 1.7 or 1.8 million metric tons of soybean meal that is being produced in North Dakota. If you take that into context, in the U.S. we export about 14.8 million metric tons of soybean meal. So, in the context of exports from the U.S, all of a sudden North Dakota is playing a significant role."

The delegation of North Dakota farmers and NDSC leaders headed to Canada in January.

Diverse Agriculture

Canada has active poultry and aquaculture industries, which could be viable markets for North Dakota soy meal. However, the biggest opportunity likely lies with that country's robust swine sector, especially in Manitoba.

"They (Canada) have a swine industry that is in need of feed, and they don't have the soybean meal in Manitoba," Kleven notes. "They have a very small crush plant, so they import soybean meal. Now, with the two crush plants in North Dakota, there's a natural fit for meal to go to Manitoba."

Canadian Pork Council representatives shared that their swine industry is heavily reliant on exports, with a large focus on Japan and China. Canada is the world's fourth largest pork exporter. The

North Dakota soybean farmers braved January weather in Canada to learn more about market opportunities for soybean meal.

In addition to swine and poultry production, Canadian aquaculture offers market potential for North Dakota soybean meal.

U.S. is also a destination for live hogs, especially weanling pigs. About 3.1 million weanlings go from Manitoba to Iowa each year.

"There are significant opportunities to leverage that growth in pork exports linking it with U.S. soybean meal," Salinas says. "That industry hasn't been developed because a few years ago there was not significant soybean meal available. Things have changed. They're not the same as they were four years ago, for sure. I think this could be the beginning of a very beautiful relationship to expand the pork industry, which is very much aligned with the growth and crush that has happened in North Dakota."

North Dakota soybean producers learned that Canadian swine companies, along with Manitoba soybean farmers, are already working with North Dakota crush plants for feed sources.

For Bottineau farmer and NDSC director Philip Neubauer, the concept of marketing into Canada isn't new.

"We've shipped commodities north up into Canada, and it's been really valuable to have those markets available," Neubauer says. "I think that we work pretty hand in hand together. We've really benefited from living this close to the border and both of our countries working together to provide markets."

Even though the Canadian market isn't far geographically, the delegation still learned plenty about the opportunities offered by the northern neighbors.

"The size of their livestock industry is immense," says Evan Montgomery, a farmer from Grand Forks and the chair of the NDSC's Market Development Committee. "The opportunity, the environment is there."

"It was really eye-opening, seeing how much capacity they have in their animal operations between swine, poultry and aquaculture," Neubauer states. "It was interesting to see those industries, and I hope that we can continue to supply them or maybe even help grow their markets by supplying them with quality feed ingredients."

Laying the Foundation

Even though North Dakota borders Canada and some commerce is already taking place, there is an opportunity for more. The goal of the NDSC mission was to learn more about Canada's agriculture industry and to build stronger relationships.

"The hog operations and our soybean operations are a lot more intertwined than I would have expected," notes Montgomery. "It's all tied together."

"There will be a future relationship between North Dakota and these Canadian markets as soybean meal continues to flow in that direction," says Jena Bjertness, NDSC's director of market development. "The key takeaway from this mission is that it marks the beginning of ongoing communication efforts between us and Canadian customers for North Dakota soybeans."

While the North Dakota soybean leaders desired additional information about the opportunities for soybean meal, the Canadian companies wanted to learn more about the product coming from North Dakota.

"They (Canadian companies) had a lot of questions about the protein level and fat content in our soybean meal," Kleven explains. "They're studying it and fitting it into their feed rations."

In addition to offering a potentially expansive market for North Dakota soybean meal, Canadian swine companies could invest in further developing North Dakota's livestock industry.

"When they (Canadian companies) look at expanding, we shared that there might be an opportunity for us to help them if they looked to invest in North Dakota in some more actual swine operations," Kleven says. "They are getting short on space in Manitoba. We have the space here in North Dakota, and it's been a directive of the legislature and the North Dakota Livestock Alliance to grow animal ag in North Dakota."

Whether soybean meal heads north or Canadian livestock companies set up in North Dakota, the goal is to move soybean meal so that North Dakota soybean farming remains profitable.

"We have different things to worry about now than we did even three years ago," Montgomery contends. "The mission to Canada was the primer that we needed because of the changing dynamics of what's going to leave the state. It's a whole lot less whole beans and a lot more meal and oil."

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photos by staff

The North Dakota delegation met with agriculture ministry officials to build relationships with one of the United States' key trading partners.

EYES ON DC

With any new administration comes change, and the second Trump presidency is no different. With rapid-fire executive orders and policy moves, ag industry leaders have had to keep up with a high volume of change coming from Washington, D.C. These modifications have the potential to significantly affect farmers.

Tariffs are among the moves that President Trump has threatened on neighbors and trading partners: Canada and Mexico. Tariffs and threats of tariffs on multiple products in recent weeks have caused uncertainty and concern among farmers. A sweeping 10% tariff has been imposed on goods from China, which prompted China to establish target tariffs in retaliation. The president has also rolled out a plan to increase U.S. tariffs so that they match the tax rates which other countries charge on U.S. imports.

American Soybean Association (ASA) Chairman Josh Gackle of Kulm says that he and other members of the organization have been outspoken about their concern regarding how tariffs could affect agriculture.

"We're telling Congress and the administration that we remember what happened in 2018 under the tariffs in the first Trump administration," Gackle states. "We saw that immediate impact on the market with a $1 to $2 drop in the price of soybeans at that time. The other message we're sending is that the farm economy, in general, is struggling so much with lower commodity prices that the margin for error and the cushion isn't really there this time around in farm country."

Gackle knows that China could place more tariffs on U.S. ag products. He describes how there's a lot more risk that the U.S. could potentially face from retaliatory tariffs on farm goods.

"China knows that that's still a pressure point," Gackle notes. "We're just urging Congress and the administration to be careful."

Gackle is hopeful that the tariff threat is being used judiciously as a negotiating tactic. The administration did garner some concessions from Canada and Mexico after the first tariff threats were made.

"If it ends up that that's the case, it may be a little different outcome than what we saw in 2018," Gackle contends. "But even the talk of tariffs, a trade war and now reciprocal tariffs that the president has put on almost every country that we do business with, things could escalate even further."

Kulm farmer Josh Gackle, American Soybean Association chairman addresses the impacts policy decisions have on farmers.

Trade Focus

Domestic soybean use has increased in North Dakota since the 2108 trade war with China because two soybean crush plants came online in the state. However, U.S. farmers produce more soybeans than can be used here, so export markets remain vital for soybean profitability.

Many ag industry leaders and farm group representatives were disappointed with the lack of new trade agreements forged during the Biden administration. Farm groups are hoping that more progress is made in Trump's tenure in order to find new markets for U.S. ag commodities.

"We produce more than we're going to be able to use, even with expanded crush and, hopefully, larger biofuels markets," Gackle says. "International markets continue to be important, and our number one customer is China. ASA and our partners at the U.S. Soybean Export Council and United Soybean Board work to develop other markets and find new markets, but it's really difficult to just replace that Chinese market."

USDA Changes

In mid-February, Brooke Rollins was confirmed as the next secretary of agriculture, an important step in filling positions to lead agencies under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) umbrella, including the Farm

Service Agency (FSA), National Agricultural Statistics Service and the Risk Management Agency.

"Farmers continue to rely on our state and local FSA offices and other local federal government offices to keep our farm businesses going and to work with the programs that are there," Gackle asserts.

In mid-February, thousands of USDA employees across many of the department's agencies were fired by the Trump administration in cost-cutting moves. It remains to be seen how that downsizing will affect programs and farmers' access to those programs.

The shutdown of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has an agricultural component, including the Food for Peace Program. Also of concern within the USDA is a freeze on federal funds for several categories, such as conservation and rural energy programs, which includes reimbursing farmers for work they've already done.

"I've heard a number of stories from farmers from across the country who have signed up for some of the climate smart programs under the Inflation Reduction Act," Gackle explains. "They've done work on their farms to implement some of those programs. They've spent money in partnership with the federal government, and now, there are questions on how those programs are going to reimburse some of the costs because farmers were depending on those funds. They've signed contracts, and that money, right now, is not going out in many cases."

Gackle testified before the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee, chaired by Sen. John Boozman of Arkansas (right).

Farm Bill

For more than two years, farm organizations have been pushing Congress to get a new, five-year farm bill passed. So far, those efforts have been unsuccessful. With a new administration and many new members of Congress, the task of getting a new bill crafted remains tall.

"It's difficult to move legislation and get things passed in D.C.," Gackle contends, "especially big policy items. We've always said that getting something done sooner is better than later. Farmers, lenders, rural communities and all in the ag value chain need the certainty going into this growing season."

Farmers are making plans for 2025, facing challenging economics for the year ahead. Having a farm bill and certainty with farm programs is vital because, as Gackle states, "there's not a lot of margin for error."

—Story by Dan Lemke, photos courtesy of ASA

GACKLE TESTIFIES ON AG ECONOMY

American Soybean Association (ASA) Chairman and Kulm farmer Josh Gackle recently testified before the U.S. Senate Agriculture Committee about the state of the agricultural economy.

Gackle emphasized the need for a comprehensive, five-year farm bill and the desire for urgent action on the economic challenges facing U.S. soybean farmers. He warned that potential tariffs and trade uncertainty, particularly with key export partners, threaten global market access.

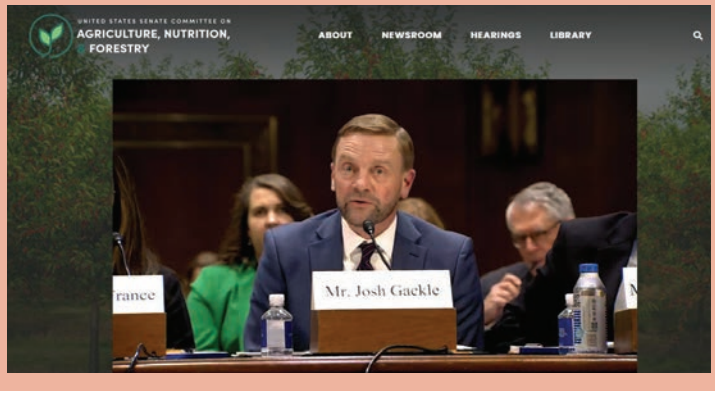
Gackle also expressed concern about domestic policies, such as biofuel tax credits and regulatory uncertainties. "On the domestic front, undersized Renewable Volume Obligations under the Renewable Fuel Standard and the lack of clarity about the future of tax credits for biobased diesel from the Inflation Reduction Act—most notably the 45Z Clean Fuel Production Tax Credit—and regulatory uncertainty threatening the availability of pesticides and biotechnology weigh heavily on the minds of ASA members," Gackle testified.

While acknowledging support from the American Relief Act, Gackle noted that the legislation has not fully offset ongoing challenges such as falling commodity prices and high input costs.

"Domestic soybean oil use is split almost evenly between biofuel production and human consumption, making the edible soybean oil market equally as important to our growers. Due to misinformation, this market is under threat of being erased," Gackle said, highlighting market risks which stem from misinformation.

Gackle stressed the need for a new farm bill, noting the 2018 Farm Bill's failure to adequately support farmers during the U.S.-China trade war. He explained that the tariffs imposed during the trade dispute severely affected U.S. soybean exports, with Brazil surpassing the U.S. as the top producer of soybeans.

Closing his testimony, Gackle urged Congress to pass a comprehensive farm bill and to implement policies that support agricultural growth, stating "U.S. soybean farmers continue to face threats and uncertainty, but Congress can help shape policies that bolster soy and all of agriculture. Passing a comprehensive five-year farm bill, supporting programs that encourage growth throughout the agricultural value chain, and blocking harmful policies that restrict market access at home and abroad will result in an improved economic footing for all rural America."



Roadmap Set at Commodity Classic

American Soybean Association (ASA) delegates gathered in Denver as part of the 2025 Commodity Classic. ASA's voting delegates session is where the organization sets the roadmap for soy policy over the next year. The collaborative resolutions process is the final stage as the voting delegates approve ASA's guiding principles for the next 12 months.

The session, which featured nearly 200 delegates from 30 soybean-producing states was led by ASA Chairman and Kulm farmer Josh Gackle.

"We are a grassroots policy organization, and we develop the policies that we advocate for in Washington D.C. from our state delegates, our state members, our state associations," Gackle says.

"That's a process that starts early in the year with our state caucuses and state committees, moving that up through advocacy teams at ASA and through subcommittees at ASA. It truly is grassroots driven, trying to get the ideas that are bubbling up from our states. That what's important for us to advocate for in D.C.

Prior to the ASA delegate session, North Dakota Soybean Growers Association (NDSGA) delegates caucused with representatives from South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin and New York.

"Our policy is driven from bottom to top," says NDSGA President and ASA director Justin Sherlock. "We have amazing staff that we can reach out to as we're developing policy and ask questions and provide feedback, but at the end of the day, these policy positions still originate from the farmers."

The ASA policy guidebook supports ongoing issues like the passage of a new farm bill, support for increased trade, and access to crop protection products.

New resolutions this year included support for increased domestic production of pesticides, fertilizers and seed. ASA opposed local, state and federal laws, tariffs, regulations and marketing plans that discriminate against the use of domestic soy oil or protein in foods. Delegates also voted to support increased recognition of biofuels for use in ocean going vessels and railroads under the Renewable Fuel Standard.

ASA supported resolutions recommending that the Department of Interior be prohibited from entering into conservation easements for longer than fifty years. Delegates also voted to recommend exempting all wetlands or farmable wetlands that are determined to be one acre or less in size from any USDA or Department of Interior water management restrictions.

"Wetlands are one area where hopefully we can find some improvements that help everybody, not just North Dakota producers," Sherlock says. "We will continue to focus on biofuels because its a fast moving, always changing environment. I think some of the policy changes we put in limiting the biofuel tax credits to domestic feedstocks is going to be really important to address the issue of used cooking oil that was coming in and flooding the market."

The ASA policy positions address key farmer-driven issues and give staff and farmer leaders direction when speaking with lawmakers and administrators.

"It guides us and our staff in D.C. on what we are going to be advocating for when questions come up," Gackle explains. "It gives a clear picture of where the organization stands and where the farmers in the organization stand on our key issues."

—Story and photos by Dan Lemke

Eleven North Dakota farmers represented the North Dakota Soybean Growers at the American Soybean Association voting delegates session at Commodity Classic in Denver.

American Soybean Association Chairman Josh Gackle from Kulm presided over the ASA delegate session.

THE POWER OF YOUR SOY INVESTMENT

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$9.8B

added to the U.S. GDP

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generated in tax revenue in 2023 alone

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30,932

U.S. jobs created

***$2.6B**

in U.S. employment income

DRIVEN DEMAND FOR U.S. SOY

***1.8B** bushels

or 18% increase in U.S. soybean exports

Increase in meal exports by 5.2M short tons and oil exports by 3.4B pounds

1B bushels

or 9% increase in domestic demand

Increase in meal demand by 10M short tons and oil demand by 4.6B pounds

DELIVERED VALUE TO YOUR FARM

$12.30

return for every $1 invested

AT LEAST 4.5-TO-1 RETURN ACROSS FOUR CATEGORIES:

1. *Export market development*
2. *Domestic demand-enhancing research*
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Learn more at unitedsoybean.org and ndsoybean.org

*Export initiatives supported by United Soybean Board, Qualified State Soybean Boards, the U.S. Soybean Export Council and USDA Foreign Agricultural Service. Source: Kaiser, H.M. 2024. An Economic Analysis of the United Soybean Board and Qualified State Soybean Boards' Demand- and Supply-Enhancing Programs. Cornell University.

Fanning the Flames of Soy-Based Suppressants

Fire departments across North Dakota have a new tool at their disposal thanks, in part, to the North Dakota Soybean Council (NDSC) and the soy checkoff.

Over the past year, the NDSC worked with Cross Plains Solutions to familiarize fire departments with an innovative fire suppressant. SoyFoam™ is a soybean-based, fire-suppression product developed by Cross Plains Solutions that is free of polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). PFAS are often referred to as forever chemicals and are commonly used in fire-suppression products, but they can leak into the environment and have been linked to negative health effects, including cancers, thyroid dysfunction, and more.

The NDSC and Cross Plains Solutions held several demonstrations across North Dakota, including at Big Iron in West Fargo and at the North Dakota Fire School in Minot. The NDSC also provided more than 215 complimentary pails of SoyFoam™ to fire departments statewide as part of this initiative.

Through their soy checkoff, U.S. soybean farmers have supported much of the extensive testing of SoyFoam™ environmental and performance benefits, establishing it as a safer, more sustainable alternative to conventional fire suppressants.

"We provided SoyFoam™ samples to fire departments across North Dakota to promote sustainable, soy-based products," says Shireen Alemadi, NDSC outreach and engagement director. "SoyFoam™ is an environmentally friendly, PFAS- and florine-free alternative to traditional firefighting foams. This aligns with the council's mission to expand soy's practical applications. By offering samples of foam at no cost, NDSC enhanced firefighting capabilities while demonstrating soy's versatility in everyday products, supporting both public safety and sustainability."

Worthwhile Promotion

The Soyfoam™ demonstrations were done across the state, engaging fire departments that are often volunteer units staffed by farmers.

"It's such a good story with respect to the circularity of it, where it comes from, where it ends up, where it's crushed, and then how it's repurposed, and its effectiveness to do what it's designed to do, which is to keep our fire departments, frontline defenders, safe and the communities we live in safe," states Dave Garlie, chief technology officer for Cross Plains Solutions.

Casselton Fire Chief John Hejl has helped raise awareness of the product with demonstrations at fire school and Big Iron, as well as through conversations with other fire departments.

"It's really been a grassroots effort to help make fire departments aware of the product and that, if they would like to try it out and see it for themselves, they can," Hejl contends. "That's a huge confidence booster for a lot of departments when they're looking at something new. They want to know how it works with their equipment, how it works in the cold, how it works in the heat. Lots of people have questions, and it's nice that they can get their hands on the product and see it for themselves."

Steve Baron is the chief of the West Fargo Rural Fire Department. His crew led the firefighting demonstration at Big Iron in September. It was their first time using the SoyFoam™.

"Once we learned about it, it was it was quite interesting to see how the product actually worked, encapsulating the fuel, and the fire wouldn't relight itself," Baron contends. "I was quite impressed with it."

Baron illustrates how he was impressed: he has equipped one of his department's firefighting rigs with the SoyFoam™.

Alemadi says that other departments that have used the product have had similar responses.

"Users have praised the product's effectiveness, noting that, with SoyFoam™, they feel more confident knowing they don't have to worry about the harmful chemicals left behind, unlike the PFAS-laden foams they previously used," Alemadi explains.

Well Received

Alemadi states that the feedback for the NDSC promotion and the SoyFoam™ has been overwhelmingly positive. Many users have noted how it is great that SoyFoam™ is not only safe, but also works well on Class A and B fires, and it comes from soybeans.

Having firefighters who have used the product vouch for its safety and effectiveness is valuable, lending credibility to other firefighters. Having an option that is ag-based; is safer than the alternative products; and, yet, is effective for suppressing fires is a powerful combination.

Hejl, a soybean farmer in Cass County, adds his personal perspective. "Those are all positive things," Hejl asserts. "A large part of the feedback we get is, we understand that we live in the Midwest and are surrounded by farms and all these acres of soybeans, so why not? Plus, it's something that we've been looking for quite a long time, which is a safer alternative to what we've been using."

Hejl declares that, once a

The North Dakota Soybean Council provided pails of SoyFoam™ to fire departments across the state during the North Dakota Firefighter's Association State Fire School in Minot.

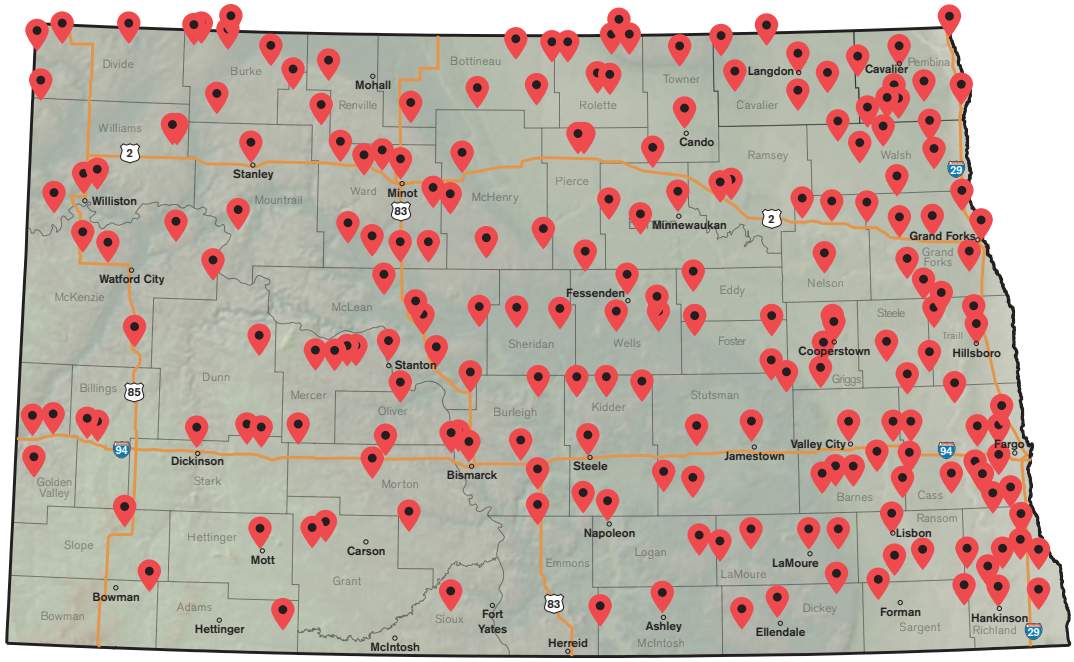
department adopts a practice or product, other departments have a resource to help them learn more about the tool's effectiveness.

"For quite a few departments, it's nice to know that they're not the first ones trying something," Hejl says. "With the SoyFoam™, it's been kind of a fun journey to be one of the early adopters."

"More and more departments in the state and nationwide are learning about SoyFoam™, its benefits and how well it works," Alemadi notes. "I have no doubt that, as time goes on, this will become a 'go to' firefighting tool for more departments."

To learn more about SoyFoam™, visit crossplainssolutions.com.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photos by staff



More than 215 fire departments across North Dakota took advantage of the NDSC promotion to try the soy-based suppressant.

Building Global Connections: Identity Preserved International Summit Highlights Trade Opportunities

The Identity Preserved International Summit, hosted by the Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance (SSGA) from February 18-20, 2025, in Honolulu, Hawaii, emphasized the critical role of relationships in global agriculture. The event gathered nearly 100 participants, including U.S. growers, suppliers, exporters and international buyers from 13 Asian countries, to explore opportunities for U.S. Identity Preserved (IP) agricultural products in an evolving trade landscape.

"The demand for traceable, premium agricultural products continues to expand," says Bob Sinner of Casselton, North Dakota, the chair of the SSGA. "The Identity Preserved International Summit provided a vital platform to connect stakeholders across the entire supply chain and discuss key issues important to our customers' businesses."

Matt Tripodi, senior global territory director at Euromonitor International, highlighted the potential for U.S. IP products to stand out in the global market. He encouraged attendees to leverage the U.S. Identity Preserved brand to differentiate and to elevate their businesses, stating, "U.S. Identity Preserved is the ultimate driving machine in the ag space. This is your brand to build, promote and sell around the world."

International participants, including buyers, importers, and food manufacturers from countries such as China, Japan, South Korea, and Nepal, shared their experiences with U.S. IP crops. Jin Yoon of Jinhwa Food in Korea emphasized the quality and marketing advantages of U.S. IP products, noting that those products offer a compelling narrative of safety and health benefits for consumers.

Gaurav Agrawal, managing director at Shree Radne Rani International Trading in Nepal, credited the summit for fostering valuable connections and insights. His company facilitated the first commercial sale of U.S. IP soybeans to South Asia, marking a significant milestone when the shipment arrived in Birgunj, Nepal, in 2024.

Bob Sinner (third from right) engages with buyers, importers, and food manufacturers during a tour of a tofu factory at the Identity Preserved International Summit. The summit fosters connections in the global agricultural market.

Attendees also engaged in networking opportunities, visited exhibitor tables, and participated in industry tours. A notable visit included the Aloha Tofu Factory, Hawaii's largest tofu manufacturer, which utilizes U.S. IP soybeans. The tour provided insight into the practical applications of IP crops for food production and allowed participants to sample soy-based products.

The summit, co-sponsored by the North Dakota Soybean Council, underscored the importance of building and maintaining strong relationships in the global agricultural sector. By focusing on quality, traceability and collaboration, U.S. IP agricultural products are well-positioned to meet the evolving demands of international markets.

—Story and photo courtesy of Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance

A Farmer's Early Warning System

Whether in humans, animals or plants, the earlier that a disease diagnosis is made, the sooner treatment actions can be taken.

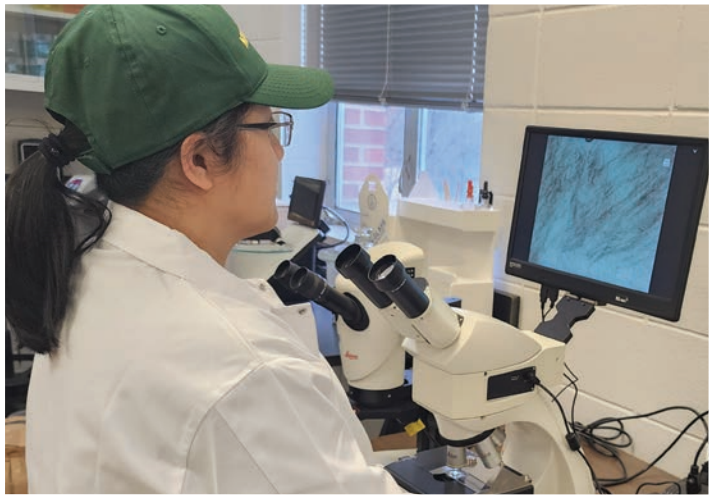
For more than 60 years, the North Dakota State University (NDSU) Plant Diagnostic Lab (PDL) in Fargo has given the state's farmers, agronomists, landowners and gardeners access to facilities and expertise in order to correctly identify disease issues.

"To me, the diagnostic lab is like an early warning system," says Sam Markell, Ph.D., NDSU plant pathologist. "If you see something happening, you can take a sample and get an answer on a lot of different things right away."

"Our main goal is to provide unbiased assistance to growers, agricultural professionals, crop consultants and the general public in identifying disease and pests affecting their crops, gardens and home lawns," states Suzette Arcibal Baldwin, NDSU plant diagnostician and Extension specialist.

The PDL is set up to provide an accurate diagnosis for soybean diseases, rapid detection of soybean pathogens as well as the identification and monitoring of new and emerging diseases. That information can be valuable to make informed management decisions during the growing season, or in most cases, test results from the PDL can help farmers plan for the next growing season and beyond.

"By identifying issues early in the season, farmers can take proactive measures to manage them. If detected later in the growing season, it helps growers plan and make informed decisions for the following year," Baldwin contends. "Don't guess, test."



Rapid detection of soybean diseases can be key to treatment and future management decisions.

Battling Diseases

As soybean production has grown across North Dakota, so have the encounters with soybean diseases. Because many root and seedling diseases cause similar visual symptoms, getting an accurate diagnosis is imperative.

"There's a lot of issues that are emerging," Markell asserts. "Soybean cyst nematode is moving around, and there are other diseases that some farmers haven't seen before like Phytophthora. Diseases move and follow the crop, and the crop is moving. There's a lot of knowledge to be gained by simply sending in a sample or two."

Sudden death syndrome (SDS) was identified in two North Dakota counties, Cass and Dickey, in 2024.

"We have high capacity to run through a lot of different types of diagnostic assays, specifically for soybean farmers," explains Wade Webster, Ph.D., NDSU Extension soybean pathology specialist. "We have a lot of soybean diseases here, so if you are questioning what you're seeing in your fields because some of these diseases look very similar to each other, the diagnostic lab can separate them out. We can get you an idea of what you're actually dealing with so that you can make some good management strategies and changes to your production system in that next year."

Boosting Capabilities

Because soybean diseases are problematic and the correct diagnosis is critical, the North Dakota Soybean Council (NDSC) has invested in the PDL, giving scientists additional capability to quickly diagnose soybean root diseases. Researchers can run molecular assays to detect multiple soybean stem and root rot pathogens, such as Fusarium, Rhizoctonia, Phytophthora and Pythium. Rather than running consecutive tests that take more time, the simultaneous tests deliver answers much more quickly, saving resources and valuable time.

"It's really important that we have accurate diagnostics on the diseases because there are so many diseases that farmers fight every single year, and some of those pathogens can be misdiagnosed if they're not diagnosed at the lab at the molecular level," says Miki Miheguli, NDSC director of agronomy and research. "We worked with the Plant Diagnostic Lab to develop technologies so it is possible to diagnose a few different pathogens accurately at the same time, which increases the efficiency. Those efforts are very important for us, for the industry and the farmers as well."

"Early in the season, these diseases look very similar, and they're very difficult from the naked eye to distinguish," Webster states. "We often need molecular tests to evaluate the differences. What we're trying to do is take individual assays and combine them together so that, instead of running four tests for each sample, we can run them together simultaneously. Then, we can get a more accurate picture of which particular pathogen is causing disease on that root."

Plant samples can be mailed to the PDL or dropped off at the Waldron Hall location on the NDSU campus.

"We assist farmers and ag professionals in making informed management decisions or recommendations during the season or for the next growing season," Baldwin explains. "This enables them to optimize cultural practices, variety selection and seed treatments in order to minimize yield losses and maximize overall profitability."

The diagnostic lab is increasing its technical capability. Additionally, Markell describes how the expertise that NDSU offers to support the facility is also valuable.

"The Plant Diagnostic Lab here has immediate access to experts in nearly every agricultural discipline," Markell contends. "The number of resources that the Plant Diagnostic Lab has around it to tap into almost immediately is second to none. If farmers see an issue in their fields, address it right away. They have access to all the people at NDSU who can help you figure out the management tools to deal with it the following year."

In addition to providing data to the people who submit samples, test results will help provide information for NDSU Extension publications that are available to all North Dakota farmers.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photo courtesy of NDSU

Scan the QR code to learn more about the Plant Diagnostic Lab

Planting-Green Practices for North Dakota Farmers

As North Dakota farmers seek to enhance sustainability, to improve soil health and to boost crop yields, one practice gaining traction is planting green: planting cash crops into a living cover crop. This practice offers both environmental and economic benefits.

What is Planting Green?

"Planting green" refers to the practice of planting cash crops, such as soybeans, into an actively growing cover crop, such as rye, to achieve the benefits of continuous ground cover without harming the cash crops' yield potential. The cover crop is terminated shortly after planting or at a later stage. This technique provides multiple benefits, including weed suppression, soil health improvement, moisture management and nutrient cycling.

Challenges of Planting Green in North Dakota

While planting green offers significant benefits, it comes with challenges, especially considering North Dakota's diverse growing conditions.

Weather Variability: North Dakota's harsh winters, short growing seasons and late spring frosts can make planting green more complicated.

"The weather in North Dakota is unpredictable, and the length of the growing season is often a limiting factor for planting green," notes North Dakota State University (NDSU) Soil Scientist at the Carrington Research Extension Center Sergio Cabello Leiva, Ph.D.

Seeding-Rate Management: Achieving the right cover crop seeding rate is critical. Cabello Leiva emphasizes how finding the right balance requires more research because improper seeding rates can lead to failed cover crops or reduced cash-crop yields. "Seeding rates are a key factor in determining the success of planting green. It's an area that needs more research," says Cabello Leiva.

Risk of Disease and Pest Pressure: While cover crops can help manage soil diseases and pests, the crops can also harbor new challenges. Cover crops might create environments which are conducive to pests or pathogens that affect cash crops.

Timing of Cover Crop Termination: The timing of cover-crop termination is a critical factor in North Dakota's climate. If the cover crop grows too long, particularly in dry conditions, it may compete with the cash crops for moisture and nutrients.

Implementation of Planting Green in North Dakota

To successfully implement planting green, North Dakota farmers should consider the following steps:

Choose the Right Cover Crop: Selecting the appropriate cover crop species is key. Common choices for North Dakota include cereal rye, oats and clover, radishes and camelina.

"The choice of cover crop depends largely on your soil and climate conditions. Cereal rye works well in most cases, but it's important to consider local factors," says Cabello Leiva.

Timing: Proper timing for planting and termination is essential for success with planting green. Farmers should establish the cover crop early to allow for adequate growth before planting the cash crop. The termination timing should also be considered for optimal benefits.

Seeding Techniques: No-till or strip-till methods are ideal for planting green because they minimize soil disturbance. However, getting the seeding rate right is critical.

Monitor Growth: Regularly monitor both the cover crop's and the cash crop's growth. "There are benefits to planting into green mulch, but it comes with challenges," notes Cabello Leiva. "Monitoring both crops closely will help you make better decisions about when to terminate and adjust your strategy."

Equipment Considerations: Successfully planting green requires specialized equipment, such as no-till drills or planters designed to handle planting into living cover crops without causing damage. Farmers may need to invest in or modify equipment in order to ensure proper seeding depth and to minimize soil disturbance. "Having the proper equipment is essential for planting green. Without it, the practice may not yield the desired results," says Cabello Leiva.

In conclusion, while planting green offers North Dakota farmers a valuable tool to improve sustainability and soil health, the option requires careful management and a thorough understanding of local conditions. Balancing the benefits with the challenges is key for making this practice a success.

—Story by Daniel Lemke and staff

Scan the QR code for info from NDSU about planting and managing cover crops.

Soybean Diseases in 2024 and Emerging Threats for 2025

The 2024 growing season presented a challenging environment for soybean farmers across North Dakota. Extended periods of rainfall early in the season created ideal conditions for several diseases. While some well-known diseases reemerged as significant concerns, new and expanding threats began to establish themselves. Looking ahead to 2025, farmers should remain vigilant, particularly regarding Phytophthora root rot, white mold, sudden death syndrome (SDS) and the persistent issue of soybean cyst nematode (SCN).

Phytophthora Root Rot: A Constant Challenge

Phytophthora root and stem rot (PRSR), caused by Phytophthora sojae, was widespread in 2024, particularly in fields with prolonged soil saturation. This soilborne oomycete pathogen thrives in wet conditions, and the frequent, heavy rainfall this past season provided a conducive environment for disease development. PRSR can affect soybeans throughout the growing season, leading to seedling damping-off, root rot and stem lesions that creep upward from the soil line (Figure 1). Affected plants often wilt and die, significantly reducing the plant stand and yield potential.

Management strategies remain centered on genetic resistance and seed treatments. The use of Rps (resistance to Phytophthora sojae) genes in soybean varieties provides an essential line of defense, but pathogen races continue to evolve, reducing the effectiveness of some resistance genes. Partial resistance (field tolerance) can provide additional protection, particularly in combination with seed treatments that have activity against oomycetes. Heading into 2025, farmers should carefully evaluate variety selection and field drainage to minimize the risk of PRSR outbreaks.

White Mold: A Season of Uncertainty

White mold (Sclerotinia sclerotiorum) remained a concern in 2024 (Figure 2), although its impact varied across the state. Early season weather conditions, including frequent rainfall and mild temperatures, were highly conducive for disease development. White mold remains a major threat for 2025, particularly in fields with a history of the disease. Farmers should continue to monitor conditions by using risk-assessment tools such as Sporecaster and should implement timely fungicide applications during the flowering periods if the weather conditions favor disease development. Additionally, improving airflow within the canopy by widening the row spacing, lowering planting populations and selecting partially resistant varieties can help to reduce disease severity.

Figure 2. A soybean field affected by white mold with typical "flagging" of dead plants.

Sudden Death Syndrome: Expanding its Territory

One of the most concerning developments for 2024 was the increased detection of SDS in North Dakota. Historically, SDS was limited to isolated areas within the state, but this season saw a broader distribution of symptomatic fields, particularly in the southeastern corner of North Dakota. Caused by Fusarium virguliforme, SDS infects soybean roots early in the growing season, with foliar symptoms—including interveinal chlorosis and necrosis—developing later during the reproductive stages.

This disease is often associated with high moisture conditions and fields with soybean cyst nematode pressure, which exacerbates the infection rates (Figure 3). SDS management relies heavily on resistant varieties and seed treatments, particularly products containing fluopyram or pydiflumetofen, which have shown effectiveness for reducing the early root infection. Additionally, minimizing soil compaction and managing SCN populations will be critical strategies moving into 2025.

Figure 1. A soybean plant that died prematurely from Phytophthora stem rot. Symptomatic, chocolatey brown lesions can be seen developing upward from the soil.

Figure 3. A mix of beginning and advanced foliar symptoms of Sudden Death Syndrome

Soybean Cyst Nematode: The Silent Yield Robber

Soybean cyst nematode (Heterodera glycines) remains the most significant yield-limiting pest for North Dakota soybean production. SCN continues to expand its range, with increasing detections in the state's central and western areas. This nematode damages soybean roots, reducing water and nutrient uptake, ultimately leading to stunted growth and reduced yield. Unfortunately, SCN infestations often go unnoticed until the populations reach damaging levels.

The most effective management strategy is routine soil testing to determine SCN presence and population densities. The SCN Sampling Program provides free soil testing, allowing farmers to make informed decisions about variety selection and rotation planning. Resistant varieties remain the primary tool for SCN management, but the widespread use of PI 88788-derived resistance has led to nematode populations potentially overcoming this genetic resistance. Farmers are encouraged to incorporate varieties with alternative resistance sources, such as Peking, and to rotate to non-host crops like wheat or corn. Additionally, new seed treatment options, including biological nematicides, may offer another layer of protection in 2025.

—Story courtesy of Wade Webster, Ph. D., NDSU soybean pathology specialist, photos courtesy of NDSU

North Dakota Soybean Council Partners with Port of Kalama to Increase Export Competitiveness

In October 2024, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) announced that the Port of Kalama (Kalama, Washington) was awarded $26,323,386 from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program for the rail expansion project at the Tacoma Export Marketing Company's (TEMCO; a joint venture by Cargill and CHS) soybean and grain export terminal.

The Port of Kalama and TEMCO are in the process of expanding the terminal's rail unloading and staging infrastructure. The facility routinely experiences significant delays due to its limited trackage. Once a train is unloaded, it often remains stationary due to the railroads (Both BNSF and Union Pacific) not being able to quickly collect and dispatch it elsewhere. This scenario results in loaded trains being held from the facility and delayed until the empty train is moved.

The project at the Port of Kalama and TEMCO will result in an expansion of 25,000 linear feet of rail track that will be used to stage loaded or unloaded trains so that the actual unloading infrastructure is free and available to operate when needed. The port estimates that this investment will increase efficiency by 25-30%, especially during October through January, which is the key export window for soybeans. The biggest beneficiary of this project is soybeans. The project will also benefit the broader rail industry because the expansion will increase efficiency along the network by mitigating the current logjam at Kalama.

The soybean farmer organizations listed approved $200,000 for the project's pre-engineering, design, analysis, and research costs. Farmers are naturally drawn to opportunities where their investments can be leveraged for greater outcomes.

- United Soybean Board
- Soy Transportation Coalition
- Iowa Soybean Association
- Kansas Soybean Commission
- Nebraska Soybean Board
- North Dakota Soybean Council
- South Dakota Soybean Research and Promotion Council

Investing $200,000 to help secure a $26 million grant showcases the power of strategic investments for long-term growth.

"One of the most effective ways to improve the competitiveness of U.S. soybean exports is to improve the transportation system that connects farmers with our international customers," says Jim Thompson, a soybean farmer from Page, North Dakota, and a director on the Soy Transportation Coalition on behalf of the North Dakota Soybean Council. "The investment at the Port of Kalama will increase the efficiency of one of our country's leading soybean export terminals by 25-30%. I am proud of my fellow soybean farmers for supporting this important project."

There were two motivations for soybean farmer organizations to offer funding for this project: 1. To provide meaningful investment for a project that will enhance U.S. soybean exports, and 2. To assist the Port of Kalama and TEMCO in highlighting the funding commitment from farmer organizations, which would enhance the viability and competitiveness of the grant application. Soybean farmers have a long history of seeing their funding leveraged, which helps accelerate project completion and expand its scale and scope. The investment in the Port of Kalama project is another demonstration of this approach.

"Port commissioners and staff have worked for years to secure grant funds for this project," says Randy Sweet, Port of Kalama commission resident. "We'd like to acknowledge and thank the Soy Transportation Coalition and its many American farmers for their support and contribution to this project."

To learn more about the Soy Transportation Coalition, visit soytransportation.org.

—Story and photo courtesy of the Soy Transportation Coalition

The See for Yourself group at Grupo Cresta, a large-scale egg facility in Guatemala. Darren Kadlec is second from the left, and Matt Gast is on the far right.

North Dakota Soybean Farmers Experience Checkoff's Global Reach at *See for Yourself Mission*

Each year, the United Soybean Board (USB) hosts its See for Yourself mission to give farmers a deeper understanding about the soy value chain; an overview of the checkoff's international marketing portfolio; and a firsthand look at partner organizations that help increase exports of U.S. soybeans, poultry, and meat products. During a recent mission to Honduras and Guatemala, USB directors from North Dakota, Darren Kadlec and Matt Gast got up close and personal with checkoff investments in emerging global markets.

Kadlec, a ninth-year farmer leader on the Audit & Evaluation Committee, grows soybeans, corn, wheat, edible beans and canola in Pisek. He attended the mission to evaluate the checkoff's work and its value to farmers. "Twenty years ago, the soybean export market in Central America was severely underdeveloped compared to today," Kadlec said. "The growth we've seen is very impressive. There is a strong upward bias in potential demand for Guatemala. It's the 15th-largest market for U.S. agricultural exports, and the demand for U.S. soybeans has never been higher."

The nine-day mission included stops in Tegucigalpa, Honduras; Guatemala City, Guatemala; and Antigua, Guatemala. Ten U.S. farmers who have started careers in production agriculture were accompanied by checkoff leaders; the delegates visited key sites where U.S. Soy products are making a difference, such as the Terminal de Granos del Pacifico in Guatemala. The port handles over 50 million bushels of U.S. soybeans every year and imports 80% of Guatemala's food and livestock. The group also visited the U.S. Soybean Export Council's Soy Excellence Center at El Zamorano University; the center trains professionals from more than 40 countries about soy utilization in the poultry, swine, dairy, aquaculture and feed milling sectors.

The mission showcased how U.S. Soy supports both animal and human nutrition. At Alimentos S.A., U.S. soy protein is used in consumer products, such as Incaparina, a hot cereal mix of corn and soy that provides a necessary source of protein for 98% of families and schoolchildren across Guatemala. Grupo Cresta, a large-scale egg facility in Guatemala, uses U.S. soybean meal to feed its hens. The company produces about 1.1 million eggs per day. Co-op feed manufacturer Comayma uses the "Sustainable U.S. Soy" mark on its packaging for animal feed products, displaying a direct connection with U.S. farmers.

Gast, a sixth-year farmer leader and the treasurer for USB, who grows soybeans and corn in Valley City, also participated in the mission. "The See for Yourself program offers an opportunity to help grow the next generation of farmer leaders," stated Gast. "One of the best parts of this experience was meeting young farmers eager to understand how U.S. soybeans impact the global market after they leave the farm. This program highlights the checkoff's commitment to creating value for U.S. soybean farmers."

The See for Yourself mission emphasizes the importance of partnerships with organizations such as the U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC), the World Initiative for Soy in Human Health (WISHH), the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF), and the USA Poultry and Egg Export Council, which are essential for growing soy exports and improving global food security.

The influence on international markets is clear. Nearly 60% of U.S. Soy products are exported. With partnerships and investments in Honduras and Guatemala, U.S. Soy is helping to nourish the world while delivering sustainable soy solutions to every life, every day. For more information about the 2025 See for Yourself mission, visit unitedsoybean.org/see-for-yourself-2025.

—Story and photos courtesy of the United Soybean Board

Matt Gast tours the Comayma co-op feed manufacturer in Guatemala.

Darren Kadlec prepares a U.S. pork lunch at USMEF's Porkshop, which is designed to educate and to promote U.S. pork to butchers and retailers in international markets.

NDSCS Students Cook Up Winning Soy-Based Dishes

Two North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS) culinary students earned top honors in the 2025 North Dakota Soybean Council's (NDSC) Soy Recipe Competition by creating dishes featuring soy-based ingredients.

Dakota Erickson of Alexander, North Dakota, took first place in the Entrée category with his Tofu Curry with Vegetables and Rice. Parker Ellingson of Bemidji, Minnesota, won in the Appetizer and Dessert category with Buffalo Chicken Dip and Pumpkin Snickerdoodles.

Both students received $800 scholarships for each of their winning recipes, awarded by the North Dakota Soybean Council in recognition of their creative soy-based dishes. The annual competition at NDSCS encourages culinary arts students to explore innovative ways to incorporate soy into everyday meals.

"The creativity these students demonstrated was outstanding," said NDSC Treasurer Dallas Loff of Wahpeton. "This competition pushes them to step outside their comfort zones and experiment with soy, helping them gain valuable skills for their careers. Supporting these students is an investment for NDSC and North Dakota soybean farmers."

Soy foods provide high-quality protein and are a sustainable ingredient for a variety of dishes. Shireen Alemadi, NDSC outreach director, stressed the competition's importance: "Soy is a nutritious ingredient key to global cuisines. This event gives future chefs hands-on experience with soy in innovative ways."

Linda Funk, executive director of The Soyfoods Council, praised the winning dishes: "It's exciting to see young culinary talent embracing soy creatively. Their recipes show how soy enhances flavor, texture, and nutrition in both savory and sweet dishes."

The NDSC is proud to support future chefs finding new ways to showcase soy's versatility and benefits.

"These students are the future of the culinary world, and understanding agriculture and plant-based foods like soy is essential," Funk added.

April is National Soyfoods Month. Soy protein is a high-quality, plant-based protein that is naturally low in saturated fat and cholesterol free. To learn more about adding soy to everyday meals, visit TheSoyfoodsCouncil.com and SoyConnection.com.

—Story and photos by staff

For more information and full recipes, scan the QR code.

Pumpkin Snickerdoodles

Tofu Curry with Vegetables and Rice

Buffalo Chicken Dip

NDSC Congratulates Scholarship Recipients

Annually, the North Dakota Soybean Council (NDSC) sponsors scholarships for undergraduate and graduate students at North Dakota State University (NDSU).

The NDSC's Undergraduate Scholarship is awarded to sophomores or juniors in crop and weed sciences, soil science, food science, animal science, agribusiness or agricultural economics who have a demonstrated tie to soybeans, are U.S. citizens and have a minimum 3.0 GPA.

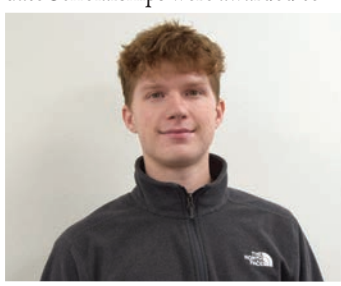
The NDSC's Graduate Student Scholarships are awarded to graduate students who are involved with research that benefits the soybean industry.

This year, the NDSC's Undergraduate Scholarships were awarded to Hannah Reuter of Harvey, North Dakota, and Malcolm Stubbe of Devils Lake, North Dakota. The NDSC's Graduate Student Scholarships went to Rachel Konshok of Park Rapids, Minnesota, and Joshua Wianecki of DeForest, Wisconsin.

—Story and photos by staff

Rachel Konskok

Hannah Reuter



Malcolm Stubbe

Joshua Wianecki

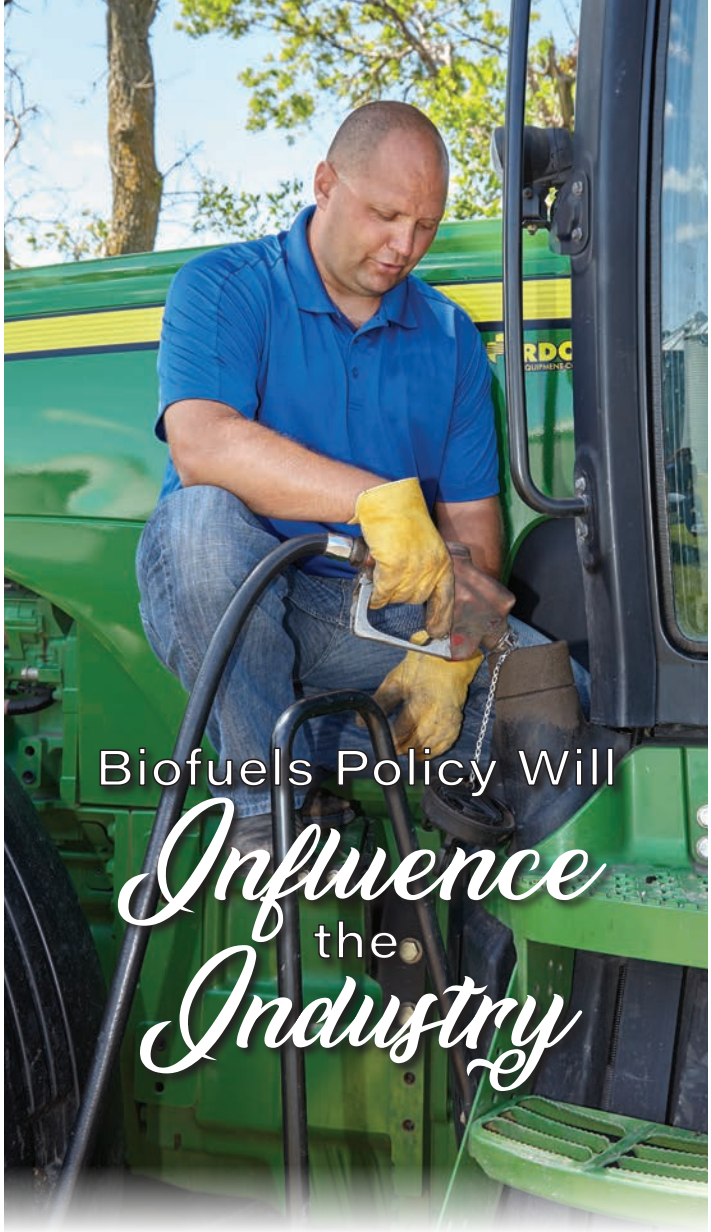
FROM INVESTMENT TO INFRASTRUCTURE

In the last five years, soy checkoff investments have generated a 4.5-to-1 ROI in export market development and an 18% increase in U.S. soybean exports.[1] Investing $400,000 for infrastructure research, analysis and design at the Port of Gray's Harbor helped to expand the facility and increase capacity for the export of soybean meal.[2]

SOY CHECKOFF™

Learn more at unitedsoybean.org

[1]ROI Study: Kaiser, H.M. 2024. An Economic Analysis of the United Soybean Board and Qualified State Soybean Boards' Demand- and Supply-Enhancing Programs. Cornell University. [2]United Soybean Board, 2022.



Biofuels Policy Will Influence the Industry

Agriculture leaders and biofuel proponents are bullish about the continued development of ag-based renewable energy, but federal and state policies will have a hand in the speed and degree to which that advancement happens.

The Clean Fuel Production Credit (45Z) provides interim guidance for taxpayers to claim credits while developing a roadmap to spur additional investment in the domestic biofuel industry, including biodiesel, renewable diesel and sustainable aviation fuel. The U.S. Treasury Department provided interim guidance in January, so biofuel producers could claim that credit almost immediately, according to American Soybean Association (ASA) Executive Director of Government Affairs Alexa Combelic.

"It is something that is available to producers, but in a bare bones form," Combelic says.

The interim guidance states that, when the Treasury releases final information related to 45Z, it could include the climate-smart agriculture provisions on which the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) was working. For now, what can be claimed is a relatively small credit in terms of a soy-based renewable diesel or soy-based biodiesel credit.

Combelic describes how Congress is seeking to improve this credit.

"As we move forward, shifting from a blender's credit to a producer's credit was something that was very worthwhile because it removed the ability for finished biofuel from being imported to this country for the purposes of claiming the tax credit on that imported fuel," Combelic explains.

A comment period is still open to provide input on what the industry wants included in the 45Z tax credit. The ASA would like to see improved carbon intensity scoring for soybean oil to help soy products qualify as a feedstock.

"We think that there are ways to improve the scoring, whether that's changing the mechanism used to score that so that we're focusing on what's happening on the farm and not arbitrarily penalizing soy using indirect land use change scoring or indirect emissions scoring that isn't really taking into account what farmers are doing on the land," Combelic asserts. "We want more accurate data throughout the value chain for biomass-based diesel. That's one opportunity where the score can be improved."

The ASA supports the interim rule which prohibits claiming the tax credit for imported, used cooking oil. Combelic contends that the imported waste feedstocks had an arbitrarily low carbon-intensity score, which rewarded producers for using that product while displacing soybean oil.

The USDA is also finalizing its guidelines for how to quantify climate-smart agriculture practices for carbon-intensity scoring.

"If you include what they're looking to quantify, it makes soybean oil much more competitive as a feedstock because it takes into account conservation practices like cover crops or soil management through no till or reduced tillage," Combelic notes. "We want to make sure that gets into final guidance, that those practices are going to be rewarded in such a way that farmers throughout the country, regardless of how close they are to the value chain, can benefit from this using a book and claim traceability system rather than a mass balance traceability system."

Combelic says that the 45Z credit is an opportunity to help spur investment in the value chain and to provide the chance for farmers to benefit from the tax credit through practices that they can employ on their farm.

RFS and State Standards

The bread and butter of the U.S. renewable fuel industry is the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS), which drives the demand for the industry and the need to produce biofuels.

"We have renewable volume obligations through 2025, so the new administration is working to develop those volume obligations to set the tone for 2026 and beyond," Combelic states. "That's really going to drive the demand for the industry. While the tax credit can drive that investment, the demand is set through the renewable volume obligations."

In addition to federal policy such as the RFS, several states have their own low-carbon fuel standards which drive demand and industry growth.

California, Washington, Oregon and New Mexico have state standards while other states are considering their own requirements. Renewable diesel from Marathon's Dickinson refinery is made with North Dakota soybean oil and is shipped to California to help meet that state's low-carbon fuel standards.

The ASA is watching state low-carbon fuel standards because they will drive up the value of biofuel and the value of soybean oil.

"We are constantly watching as California implements the updates that they made to their program in November as well as what is happening in other states," Combelic asserts. "Those programs are going to determine where the demand develops."

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photos by Wanbaugh Studios


ALWAYS LEAVE IT BETTER THAN YOU FOUND IT.
Through the soy checkoff, U.S. soybean farmers are investing in new production practices to continuously improve their sustainability while protecting the air, water and soil for generations to come.
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NDSGA Holds Annual Meeting

The 2025 Northern Corn and Soybean Expo provided a fitting backdrop for the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association's (NDSGA) annual meeting.

The election of directors was one the primary actions at the meeting.

Billie Lentz of Perth was elected to serve as the director for the NDSGA's District 7, which includes Burke, Renville, Ward, Bottineau, McHenry, Rolette and Pierce Counties. Lentz is a former NDSGA scholarship recipient at North Dakota State University and an American Soybean Association Corteva Young Farmer participant. Lentz was elected to a 3-year term.

Chris McDonald of Leonard was reelected to a second 3-year term. McDonald serves District 1, which is comprised of Dickey, Ransom, Richland and Sargent Counties.

Dustin Helmick of Courtenay was reelected to a second 3-year term. Helmick serves District 4, which is comprised of Barnes, Kidder and Stutsman Counties.

Michael Doll of New Salem was reelected to a second 3-year term. Doll serves District 8, which is comprised of Burleigh, Sheridan, McLean, Oliver, Morton, Mercer, Stark, Dunn, Mountrail, Billings, Golden Valley, McKenzie, Williams and Divide Counties.

In addition to conducting the annual business meeting, NDSGA President Justin Sherlock and other NDSGA directors recognized Joshua Stutrud of Barton for his service to the organization. Stutrud termed off the NDSGA's board after 7 years of service.

—Story and photos by Daniel Lemke

NDSGA President Justin Sherlock congratulated Joshua Stutrud for his service to the organization.

Joshua Stutrud delivered the secretary's report at the NDSGA annual meeting.


WISHH leverages partnerships
for U.S. Soy to help meet the protein needs of 8 billion consumers
ASA
American Soybean Association
WISHH
WORLD INITIATIVE FOR SOY IN HUMAN HEALTH
UNITED SOYBEAN BOARD
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wishh.org

Getting to Know the Expert

Laxmi Prasad, Ph.D.
North Dakota State University Assistant Professor and Extension Water Engineer

Tell us about your background.

I'm originally from India. My grandparents used to have a family farm, and I spent a lot of my time there, so it naturally attracted me towards agriculture. I received my undergraduate and master's from India, both in agricultural and biosystems engineering.

When I was doing my master's in India, I had an opportunity to collaborate on a project with frozen soils. India is a tropical country, and the temperatures are not as cold as what we see in North Dakota, so when I had the opportunity to work on frozen soils, it naturally built my interest because the frozen soils and the weather diversity are very complex to understand. Then, I came to do a Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, which specifically focused on how frozen soils interact with agricultural management practices.

What interested you in this field of study?

North Dakota is one of those cold states where there is diversity of weather. We really have hot and dry summers, and then we get into winters with snow, so this diversity really creates lots of challenges for management and especially for water. So, my position at NDSU is specifically looking into providing best management information or developing research-based information on management practices that improve water quality and quantity related challenges.

When did you join NDSU?

I started at the end of August 2024.

Tell us about the scope of your work at NDSU.

My work will involve developing integrated research and research Extension programs that address water-management challenges, both related to quantity and quality, within and outside of agriculture. I'll be looking to conduct research and develop an Extension program that provides more evidence-based information to diverse stakeholder groups. I will be looking into irrigation and drainage related management practices, such as how we can improve irrigation efficiency or better manage our drainage system, so that we are not affecting the water quality or we're also not affecting the crop with excess drainage or inadequate drainage.

What is the best part of the work you're doing for North Dakota farmers?

Having an Extension appointment provides opportunities to interact with different stakeholder groups. It could be farmers or Extension agents or people working at the research Extension centers. It helps me to understand and learn a lot about the challenges across the state, and to use that learning in my research and Extension program. I have the fundamentals. I understand hydrology, and I understand water-related issues, but many times, these challenges are region or location specific, so having this Extension appointment allows me to interact with all these farmer groups or other industry or advisory groups.

I'm really enjoying interacting and trying to learn as much as I can from their perspective to use that information in my Extension and research program.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photo proviuded by NDSU

Bean Briefs

ASA Urges the Resumption of Climate-Smart Payments

U.S. soybean farmers are urging the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to resume processing payments to farmers and grant recipients under contracts made by the USDA under the Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities (PCSC) Program. Grant recipients were recently notified that the funds associated with the PCSC program have been paused while the Trump administration reviews various grant programs.

The Trump administration's temporary federal funding freeze affects several USDA programs, including conservation initiatives such as the American Soybean Association-supported Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).

EQIP is a voluntary, cost-share government program that provides financial and technical assistance to increase farmer practices that improve soil, water, air, wildlife and climate impact. Farmers enrolled in the program pay up front for the costs to improve conservation measures on their farms and then receive grants and loans to cover some expenses through contracts signed with the USDA.

—Story continued on page 34

—Story continued from page 33

The White House has stated that the 90-day funding pause to review various grant programs would not include federal assistance "provided directly to individuals," but many U.S. farmers say that critical funding is still halted, leaving them on the hook for payment.

U.S. soybean farmers are urging the USDA to resume processing the payments to farmers and grant recipients under these contracts in order to curb additional financial strain and uncertainty on rural America. The American Soybean Association (ASA) continues to monitor the situation and its effect on U.S. soy growers.

Supporting Food for Peace

The American Soybean Association applauded the introduction of legislation to maintain the Food for Peace Program as the Trump administration continues its audit of federal agencies and programs.

Food for Peace is the U.S.' flagship international food-aid program and supplies food-insecure communities throughout the world with nutrition assistance that includes U.S. soy. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) administers the program. In FY2024, USAID procured roughly $110 million worth of U.S. soy for Food for Peace. USAID has also utilized Food for Peace to procure Ready to Use Therapeutic Foods (RUTF), of which soy is a critical ingredient.

Lawmakers have introduced bicameral legislation to move the program's administration from USAID to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Food for Peace has fed more than 4 billion people in more than 150 countries.

Advocating for Biofuels

Reps. Adrian Smith (R-NE) and Angie Craig (D-MN), co-chairs of the Congressional Biofuels Caucus, led nearly 30 bipartisan colleagues in sending a letter to newly confirmed Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lee Zeldin. The letter underscores the importance of the American biofuels industry in promoting energy independence, affordability and job growth while urging the EPA to issue timely rulemaking on robust Renewable Volume Obligations (RVOs) for 2026 and beyond in the Renewable Fuels Standard.

The letter highlights the economic benefits of biofuels, with biodiesel contributing significantly to the U.S. economy, supporting thousands of jobs and driving millions of dollars in annual economic activity. The lawmakers call on the EPA to maintain stable and predictable growth for biofuels by setting appropriate RVOs and ensuring that regulatory barriers are removed.

Legislation Would Grow Marketing Programs

Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-WA) introduced bipartisan legislation to increase funding to the Market Access Program (MAP) and Foreign Market Development (FMD) program in order to help American farmers compete in global markets.

"By delivering our agricultural products into new markets, we can ensure that American farmers remain competitive on the global stage," Newhouse said.

MAP and FMD are vital to U.S. soybean farmers because the programs provide opportunities to develop new markets and to increase the demand for U.S. products in foreign markets. Utilizing MAP and FMD funds, the American Soybean Association (ASA), through its World Initiative for Soy in Human Health and the U.S. Soybean Export Council, has leveraged those dollars to increase market access, to address technical barriers to entry, and to create on-the-ground capacity and demand for U.S. soy.

One of the ASA's top priorities for a new farm bill is expanding trade-promotion programs to help grow and diversify agricultural markets as tensions continue with U.S. agriculture's largest export market: China. Support is also important for proposals that ensure in-kind food aid remains the foundation of international food assistance programs.

The ASA and more than 150 other stakeholder organizations support the Agriculture Export Promotion Act of 2025.

Government Payments Drive 2025 Farm Income

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has published its first look at 2025 net farm-income estimates. Government payments from the American Relief Act of 2024, minor inventory adjustments and expectations for lower feed expenses will boost 2025 net farm income by 30% from the previous year, reaching $180.1 billion. If realized, that amount will be the fifth-largest annual net farm income in U.S. history.

The optimism for more farm profits this year is less reassuring than what meets the eye. Government payments will more than quadruple from 2024 levels of $9.3 billion to $42.4 billion in 2025, meaning that the relief measures passed in the American Relief Act of 2024 will account for most of this year's farm-income growth. The 2025 payouts will be the second-largest volume of government assistance sent to farmers in U.S. history, trailing only 2020's record-breaking payout of $45.6 billion.

The USDA also projects a lower crop inventory adjustment in 2025, shrinking by $6.4 million to -$3.3 million. The smaller inventory adjustment means that fewer dollars of gross income will be subtracted from earnings, thereby supporting the farm profit's growth.

After adjusting for inflation, cash receipts from 2025 crops are expected to fall 5% from 2024 due to lower commodity prices and smaller quantities sold. Inflation-adjusted cash receipts from crops are expected to be 22% lower than in 2022 when the annual amount was the second largest in history.

Cash receipts for this year's livestock operations are expected to be 1% lower than 2024 after the inflation adjustments but will still be among the top-four largest annual cash receipts on record. Lower feed costs due to shrinking commodity prices will help support profit margins for livestock producers this year.

The USDA expects that crop producers will face lower fertilizer, fuel and pesticide expenses in 2025. That analysis does not include the economic fallout from potential tariffs that could constrict fertilizer and chemical supplies, possibly running up prices in the coming months. The USDA's analysis also projects higher land rents and seed expenses, which will keep plenty of uncertainty at play for row crop producers' profit margins this year.

—Story by Daniel Lemke

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