

# THE NORTH DAKOTA **Soybean** VOLUME 15 • ISSUE 1 FEBRUARY 2026 GROWER MAGAZINE



## SPECIAL ISSUE: 2026 Northern Corn and Soybean Expo



## SPECIAL INSERT North Dakota Soybean Council 2025 Research Report





**DIFFERENT ROLES,  
COMPLEMENTARY MISSIONS  
ALL FOCUSED ON DRIVING VALUE  
BACK TO THE U.S. SOYBEAN FARMER.**



## NORTH DAKOTA SOYBEAN GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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Justin Sherlock, Dazey | justin.sherlock@NDSGA.com

### VICE PRESIDENT

Chris McDonald, Leonard | D1 | chris.mcdonald@NDSGA.com

### SECRETARY

Josh Gackle, Kulm | josh.gackle@NDSGA.com

### TREASURER

Stephanie Cook, Davenport | D3 | stephanie.cook@NDSGA.com

### DIRECTORS

Scott German, Fullerton | D2 | scott.german@NDSGA.com

Dustin Helmick, Courtenay | D4 | dustin.helmick@NDSGA.com

Caylor Rosenau, Carrington | D5 | caylor.rosenau@NDSGA.com

Brian Jodock, Northwood | D6 | brian.jodock@NDSGA.com

Billie Lentz, Perth | D7 | billie.lentz@NDSGA.com

Michael Doll, New Salem | D8 | michael.doll@NDSGA.com

Andrew Cossette, Fargo | At-Large | andrew.cossette@NDSGA.com

Mark Knutson, Fargo | At-Large | mark.knutson@NDSGA.com

Todd Stutrud, Barton | At-Large | todd.stutrud@ndsoybean.org

### AMERICAN SOYBEAN ASSOCIATION DIRECTORS

Josh Gackle, Kulm | josh.gackle@NDSGA.com

Brent Kohls, Mayville | brent.kohls@ndsoybean.org

Justin Sherlock, Dazey | justin.sherlock@NDSGA.com

## NORTH DAKOTA SOYBEAN COUNCIL

### CHAIRMAN

Jim Thompson, Page | D4 | jthompson@ndsoybean.org

### VICE CHAIRMAN

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Milo Braaten, Portland | D8 | mbraaten@ndsoybean.org

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Dallas Loff, Wahpeton | D1 | dloff@ndsoybean.org

### DIRECTORS

Ted Brandt, Enderlin | D2 | tbrandt@ndsoybean.org

Jeremiah Udem, Oakes | D3 | jundem@ndsoybean.org

Preston Burchill, Page | D5 | pburchill@ndsoybean.org

John (JP) Lueck, Spiritwood | D6 | jlueck@ndsoybean.org

Paul Anderson, Harvey | D9 | panderson@ndsoybean.org

Adam Redmann, Saint Thomas | D10 | aredmann@ndsoybean.org

Phillip Neubauer, Bottineau | D11 | pneubauer@ndsoybean.org

Jennifer Meyer, Wilton | D12 | jmeyer@ndsoybean.org

## UNITED SOYBEAN BOARD DIRECTORS

Matt Gast, Valley City | mgast85@gmail.com

Darren Kadlec, Pisek | dkadlec@polarcomm.com

Cindy Pulskamp, Hillsboro | cpulskamp@rvn.net

## STAFF CREDITS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | Stephanie Sinner | ssinner@ndsoybean.org

PUBLISHER/EDITOR | Nancy Johnson | publisher@ndsoybean.org

### STAFF WRITER

Suzanne Wolf, NDSC Communications Director

swolf@ndsoybean.org | (701) 566-9300

### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Daniel Lemke | Stephanie Sinner

Jena Bjertness

Miki Miheguli

Shireen Alemadi

### CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER

Wanbaugh Studios

### NORTH DAKOTA SOYBEAN COUNCIL

4852 Rocking Horse Circle South, Fargo, ND 58104

(701) 566-9300 | www.ndsoybean.org

### NORTH DAKOTA SOYBEAN GROWERS ASSOCIATION

4852 Rocking Horse Circle South, Fargo, ND 58104

(701) 566-9300 | www.ndsoygrowers.com

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# On the cover

The 2026 Northern Corn and Soybean Expo offers a one-day opportunity to access industry-leading speakers and information vital to transportation and policy. The free event also provides access to researchers and representatives of many of the state's leading farm organizations and agribusinesses. Join your friends and neighbors at the 2026 Northern Corn and Soybean Expo, February 3 at the Butler Machinery Arena on the Red River Valley Fairgrounds in West Fargo.

—Photos by staff



## Register to Attend the 2026 Northern Corn and Soybean Expo!

### Scan the QR Code

Use the camera on your phone to scan this QR code, and you'll be taken to the registration page: [northerncornsoyexpo.com/producer-registration](http://northerncornsoyexpo.com/producer-registration)

### Visit the Northern Corn and Soybean Expo Site

For more information, please visit our website: [northerncornsoyexpo.com](http://northerncornsoyexpo.com)



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# Rural Health Transformation Grants a Gamechanger for Farmers and Rural Residents

**N**orth Dakota has received a substantial federal grant to support the first year of the five-year statewide Rural Health Transformation Program. The nationwide initiative and funding through the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) will provide \$199 million for North Dakota to strengthen and modernize rural health care infrastructure, to prevent hospital closures, to improve access to medical services, and to ensure the sustainability of rural hospitals and clinics across the state. To secure its share, the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services submitted a comprehensive application to the CMS.

The state's Rural Health Transformation Plan shows how North Dakota will improve rural access to hospitals and clinicians, enhance community health outcomes, strengthen financial stability, and deploy technology for prevention

and chronic disease management. Additional requirements include identifying the root causes of rural-hospital distress, addressing workforce shortages, and designing sustainable operating models for rural facilities.

To accept the federal funding, North Dakota lawmakers must appropriate it before it can be spent. Governor Kelly Armstrong convened the Legislature for a special session in late January. CMS requires states to fund at least three designated activities.

North Dakota's Rural Health Transformation Program centers on four strategic initiatives including strengthening and stabilizing the rural health workforce; making North Dakota healthy again with preventative care and healthy eating; bringing high-quality health care close to home; and connecting technology, data and providers for a stronger North Dakota.

Prior to submitting its application, the North Dakota Depart-

ment of Health and Human Services (HHS) conducted extensive stakeholder engagement, including a statewide public survey and three virtual listening sessions. North Dakota HHS also engaged in ongoing collaboration with the legislature's Rural Health Transformation Committee, which met on multiple occasions, and HHS will be preparing necessary implementation legislation, and overseeing grant execution throughout this legislative interim.

For rural communities and agricultural producers, this initiative promises a transformational investment and significant benefits, including stabilizing rural hospitals, strengthening emergency care, expanding mental health and substance use services, improving chronic disease management and accelerating telehealth infrastructure. Because rural health access is essential to workforce retention and community vitality, if not survival, this investment represents

## LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



**Parrell Grossman**  
Legislative Director, NDSGA

**Email:**  
[parrell.grossman@ndsga.com](mailto:parrell.grossman@ndsga.com)

the most substantial rural-health funding opportunity in North Dakota's history. Soybean farmers and other rural residents are encouraged to remain engaged as planning progresses and implementation begins during the funding period commencing in 2026 and throughout the next five years.

## Bank of North Dakota Offers Farmer Aid Programs

**T**he North Dakota Industrial Commission has announced two new agriculture relief initiatives to support farmers and ranchers. The 2026 Farm Financial Stability Loan Program and the 2026 Grain Inventory Loan Program are offered through the Bank of North Dakota (BND). Farmers should consult with their local lender to begin the application process.

North Dakota farmers are facing a convergence of challenges, including severe weather effects, high input costs, trade policy uncertainty and low commodity prices. The loan programs are intended to give producers support

for the 2026 growing season.

The 2026 Farm Financial Stability Loan Program is designed for ag producers with an oper-

ating shortfall in 2024 or 2025.

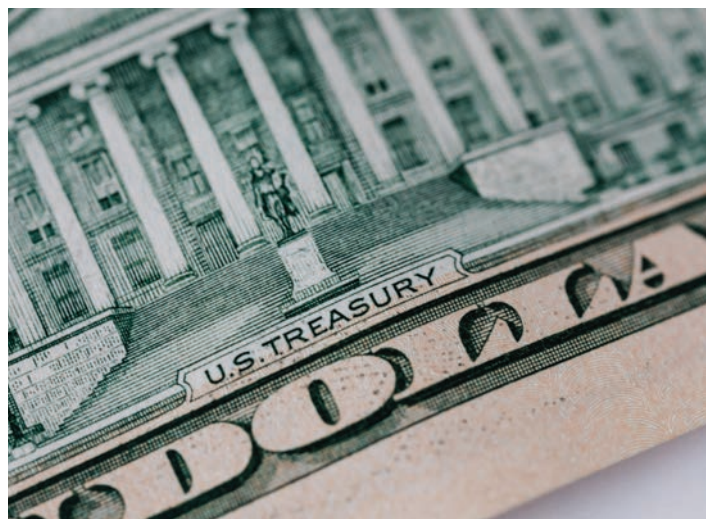
Funds can be used to replenish working capital, to term out operating carryover or to restructure

existing term debts.

The 2026 Grain Inventory Loan Program provides short-term financing for the remaining grain inventory. BND will provide funds with a variable interest rate at 0.75% below its Base Rate, which is determined at the time of funding.

To access either loan program, producers should contact their local lender to submit an application. The application period closes on June 30, 2026. More information about the BND program can be found at [bnd.nd.gov/ffslp](http://bnd.nd.gov/ffslp) and [bnd.nd.gov/gilp](http://bnd.nd.gov/gilp).

—Story by Daniel Lemke



# A Fresh Perspective

**T**here's little question that most North Dakota farmers have faced a challenging year. We've dealt with severe storms, unpredictable weather conditions, high crop input costs and low commodity prices. It's also been a rough year for trade because tariffs and trade disruptions are taking a toll. It can be easy to get bogged down in all the things that weigh on us, as farmers, and affect our operations.

The Northern Corn and Soybean Expo will feature some top-notch speakers who will help keep us informed about key issues facing us in the future, including the good, the bad and the ugly. The expo is a chance to stay up to date, but it's also time for all of us to

come together; to see our friends, neighbors, and colleagues from around the state and the region; to share our battle stories; and to just reminisce a bit. It will be a good time to step away from the day-to-day duties of the farm, to reflect on the year and to reconnect.

We hope that the people who attend the expo will come away with some valuable information they can apply to their farms moving forward. We also hope that attendees will leave the event more energized and prepared for the year ahead.

The expo also gives growers an opportunity to provide input to the North Dakota Soybean Growers Association (NDSGA). The NDSGA will hold its annual meeting during the expo, where

attendees will hear updates on what our farmer leaders have been doing to advocate for the state's soybean farmers and affiliated industries. Equally important, farmers will have the chance to share their concerns directly with NDSGA leaders. This year, we're especially excited to welcome American Soybean Association CEO Steve Censky to our annual meeting, where he will provide comments on Ag Policy and share insights on why membership matters to soybean farmers.

The NDSGA directors are all farmers who have knowledge and diverse expertise. Our experiences may be different than yours, so we welcome conversations from our fellow growers about issues or concerns that affect you. We will use that information to help craft

## NDSGA PRESIDENT LETTER



**Justin Sherlock**  
President, North Dakota  
Soybean Growers  
Association

lawmakers in Bismarck and Washington, D.C., to do what we can to brighten the outlook for 2026.



## USDA Delivers Farm Aid Program

**T**he U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has made \$12 billion available in one-time bridge payments for American farmers to help offset trade-related market disruptions and increased production costs.

Of the \$12 billion provided, up to \$11 billion will be used for the Farmer Bridge Assistance (FBA) Program, which provides broad relief to row-crop farmers who produce a variety of crops, including soybeans, corn, wheat, and canola.

U.S. soybean farmers have faced a perfect storm of low crop prices, high production costs, and a loss of markets. The FBA Program, which was announced in December, will provide farmers with limited financial assistance to help cover carried debt from the 2025 growing season.

USDA released the payment rates for affected commodities on December 31. The per-acre payment rate for soybeans is set at \$30.88. Other notable rates include corn at \$44.36 per acre, wheat at \$39.35, barley at \$20.51, and canola at \$23.57.

"American Soybean Association (ASA) is

grateful to the Trump administration and USDA for recognizing the economic losses farmers are experiencing, but due to significant trade losses this year, the payment rate for soybeans will likely not be enough for soybean farmers to keep their operations financially solvent as we move into the next planting season," said ASA President and Ohio farmer Scott Metzger. "While the assistance provides some relief, farmers need strong, reliable markets to guarantee the long-term success of the U.S. soybean industry. We urge the Trump



administration to focus on immediate, achievable actions which will support domestic soybean markets, including finalizing policies that create a preference for soy-based biofuel feedstocks through the 2026-2027 Renewable Volume Obligations, robust biomass-based diesel volumes, and 45Z Clean Fuel Production Credit tax guidance. Reliable markets depend on policies that grow demand, strengthen rural economies, and provide certainty for the next generation."

The FBA Program applies proportional support to producers using a uniform formula to cover a portion of modeled losses during the 2025 crop year. This national loss average is based on the Farm Service Agency's report for planted acres, the Economic Research Service's cost of production estimates, the World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates' yields and prices, and additional economic modeling.

Farmers who qualify for the FBA Program can expect payments to be released by February 28, 2026.

—Story by Daniel Lemke



# New WOTUS Definition Proposed

**N**orth Dakota farmers and agricultural organizations offered their input on the new proposed definition of “Waters of the United States” (WOTUS) at a public hearing in Bismarck. U.S. Sen. Kevin Cramer hosted Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) officials at a December listening session at Bismarck State College on the proposed WOTUS rule. U.S. Sen. John Hoeven and Gov. Kelly Armstrong also participated in the hearing.

Many farm organizations, including the American Soybean Association (ASA), applauded the EPA and USACE for proposing a WOTUS definition that was deemed more workable for agriculture. The proposal aims to bring clarity to how the Clean Water Act applies on working farmland and to better reflect the realities that farmers face on the ground.

For decades, defining WOTUS has been a complex and contentious issue. Since the Clean Water Act’s passage in 1972, multiple administrations and courts, including several Supreme Court decisions, have wrestled with how

far federal jurisdiction should reach over wetlands and water features. The court’s 2023 Sackett ruling found the previous WOTUS rule inconsistent with the law, and the ASA strongly opposed that 2023 version, urging the EPA and the USACE to develop a definition that protects water quality while remaining workable for farmers.

The proposal released in November came after the EPA held nine public listening sessions across the country during 2025. The EPA and USACE developed this proposed rule by using input from multiple sources; information from the listening sessions; and consultation comments from states, tribes, and local governments.

The new proposal defines key terms such as “relatively permanent,” “continuous surface connection” and “tributary” to appropriately delineate the scope of WOTUS consistent with the Clean Water Act and Supreme Court precedent. The proposal establishes that jurisdictional tributaries must connect to traditional navigable waters either directly or through other features that provide predictable and consistent flow. The proposed language reaffirms

that wetlands must be indistinguishable from jurisdictional waters through a continuous surface connection, which means that they must touch a federal jurisdictional water and hold surface water for a requisite duration year after year.

The EPA and USACE proposal strengthens state and tribal decision-making authority by providing clear regulatory guidelines while recognizing the entity’s expertise regarding local land and water resources. The proposed rule also preserves and clarifies exclusions for certain ditches, prior converted croplands and waste treatment systems. It adds new exclusions for groundwater and incorporates locally familiar terminology, such as “wet season,” to help determine whether a water body qualifies as WOTUS.

In addition, the limitation to wetlands that have surface water at least during the wet season and about a jurisdictional water will further limit the scope of permanent wetlands that are considered to have a continuous surface connection under the proposed rule. These proposed changes are intended to provide clarity and consistency for the definition of a continuous surface connection.

“When it comes to the definition of ‘Waters of the United States,’ (the) EPA has an important responsibility to protect water resources while setting clear and practical rules of the road that accelerate economic growth and opportunity,” said EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin when the proposal was released.

Dazey farmer, North Dakota Soybean Growers Association President and ASA Director Justin Sherlock is hoping for a lasting decision on the WOTUS definition that seemingly changes with each presidential administration. That lack of clarity has been a source of frustration for farmers across the country.

“At the end of the day, our members need finality,” Sherlock explains. “Our members need the certainty of having a final rule that works for them and won’t change every time we get a new presidential administration. That is no way to operate a business if the rules are completely different every time there’s a new president.”

When finalized, the rule is intended to cut red tape and to provide predictability, consistency and clarity for permitting under the Clean Water Act.

“The fact that EPA chose to partner with Sen. Cramer to host this first listening session in the country on the new proposed WOTUS rule goes to show the level of involvement and attention his office has placed on defending North Dakota wetlands from additional government overreach,” Sherlock says. “While there are many wetland issues yet to resolve, protecting farmers from a bad WOTUS rule is an important first step.”

A public comment period for the proposed WOTUS rule closed in early January 2026. The North Dakota Soybean Growers Association submitted formal comments on behalf of its members on January 5.

—Story by Daniel Lemke,  
photo by staff



**A public hearing on the proposed Waters of the U.S. at Bismarck State College drew a robust audience. Officials taking part in the hearing included (from left) Gov. Kelly Armstrong, U.S. Sen. Kevin Cramer, EPA Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator Peggy Browne, U.S. Sen. John Hoeven and Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works) Lee Forsgren.**

# Farmers Address Hearing on Phase One Follow-Through

**L**auded as a victory when it was first announced, the 2020 U.S.-China Phase One trade agreement has not delivered what was expected because China has not lived up to the terms.

American Soybean Association leader and North Dakota soybean farmer Josh Gackle testified before the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) during a public hearing to review China's follow-through on commitments made as part of the Phase One Agreement.

The December hearing was held as part of a Section 301 investigation examining whether China had fully implemented its commitments under the Agreement. Gackle urged USTR to avoid repeating the mistakes of the last trade war and instead focus on enforcing existing commitments while keeping markets open for U.S. soybean farmers.

"When trade breaks down, soybean farmers are the first to feel it," Gackle said. "The last trade war caused a 76% drop in the value of U.S. soybean exports to China and cost U.S. agriculture more than \$27 billion. Soybean farmers don't need another trade fight; we need certainty. That means enforcing past commitments and working toward agreements that keep markets open and predictable for the long term."

Gackle explained that soybeans are the nation's largest agricultural export and that China remains the single most important market for U.S. soybeans. In Marketing Year (MY) 2023/2024, China purchased nearly 25 million metric

tons valued at approximately \$13 billion. The Chinese market represents more than half of all U.S. soybean exports, and no other market can replace that demand.

Gackle pointed to the 2020 Phase One Agreement as a reminder that easing tariffs helped restore market access and reduce damage to farm country.

—Story by Daniel Lemke,  
photo courtesy of American  
Soybean Association



**Josh Gackle, North Dakota ASA board member, represented ASA at the USTR hearing.**



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## Expo(se) Yourself to New Ideas

**M**ost of us don't farm the same way we did 10 years ago. In fact, in 2026, we probably won't farm the same way we did last year. Each growing season offers a learning opportunity for us, as growers, to get better and more efficient with our ongoing hunt for profitability.

The Northern Corn and Soybean Expo gives North Dakota farmers a chance to spend one productive day learning from experts who understand the challenges we face. The Expo takes place February 3 at the Butler Machinery Arena at the Red River Valley Fairgrounds in West Fargo. This year's program tackles topics that are front and center for farmers right now, including weather risk, markets, transportation, and policy. I'm also looking forward to hearing from our keynote speaker, Ken Gilliam, as he applies strategic lessons learned as a colonel in

the U.S. Army to today's agricultural landscape.

The issues facing U.S. soybean farmers have perhaps been felt even more strongly here in North Dakota. Leaders at the national level are aware of that, which is why Lucas Lentsch, CEO of the United Soybean Board, and Steve Censky, CEO of the American Soybean Association, will be on stage to talk directly about the issues affecting you and how farmer-led organizations are responding.

As always, the Expo includes a strong trade show with dozens of vendors and industry representatives ready to answer questions about products, services, and new technologies. The Research Pavilion will be staffed by North Dakota State University (NDSU) researchers and Extension specialists, along with commodity group experts, who can help with questions about pests, disease, and production challenges.

The Expo is also a good opportunity to better understand how commodity organizations work for you. The farmer leaders who serve on soybean and corn boards will share how checkoff dollars are invested and how associations advocate on your behalf in Bismarck and Washington, D.C.

Just as important, the Expo gives us time to connect with other farmers from across the state. Sharing ideas, comparing notes, and simply visiting with one another adds a lot of value to the day.

We're always better when we keep learning. When we stop learning, we risk getting stagnant. The Northern Corn and Soybean Expo is a place to stay informed, make connections, and enjoy a day focused on agriculture.

Staff from the North Dakota Soybean Council, North Dakota Soybean Growers Association, North Dakota Corn Utilization Council, and North Dakota Corn Growers Association have put together a solid program that speaks



**Milo Braaten**

**Portland, North Dakota**

**North Dakota Soybean Council Secretary and Expo Co-Chair**

**Email:**  
mbraaten@ndsoybean.org

**Website:**  
ndsoybean.org

directly to the issues farmers are dealing with today.

This is my first year serving as co-chair of the Northern Corn and Soybean Expo, but it's certainly not my first time attending. I've always found the Expo worthwhile, and I've never left disappointed. I'm confident this year will be no different, and I hope to see you there.

## Access Experts at the Research Pavilion

**W**hen production problems arise, farmers need answers. The Research Pavilion at the 2026 Northern Corn and Soybean Expo will give growers access to some of North Dakota's leading experts to answer disease and insect questions.

This year's Research Pavilion will focus on the Science of Plant Protection, Disease and Insect Insights for 2026 and Beyond.

The pavilion will be staffed by experts from North Dakota State University (NDSU) who focus on corn and soybean disease issues. Researchers include Extension Entomologist Janet Knodle, Ph.D.; Extension Soybean Pathologist Wade Webster, Ph.D.; Extension Broadleaf Agronomist Ana Carce-

do, Ph.D.; Extension Cereal Crop Plant Pathologist Andrew Friskop, Ph.D.; Extension Agronomist Clair Keene, Ph.D.; along with North Dakota Soybean Council Director of Agronomy and Research Miki Miheguli, and more.

Researchers will have information to share, but the primary purpose of the pavilion is to give farmers one-on-one access to experts to get their questions answered.

"We had some challenging growing conditions this year," Miheguli says. "Some areas had too much moisture, others had too little, and the excess moisture increased disease pressure. The main soybean diseases we saw were white mold, Sudden Death Syndrome (SDS), and Soybean Cyst Nematode (SCN). We also dealt with hail



**North Dakota Soybean Council Director of Agronomy and Research Miki Miheguli (left) will be on hand with researchers and experts to answer questions in the Research Pavilion at the Northern Corn and Soybean Expo.**

and early frost. Insect issues weren't major, but it's still important to continue monitoring. All of this makes our theme especially timely. Farmers and agronomists can connect with researchers and ask questions as they plan for next season."

Experts in both corn and soybean-related pests and diseases will be available at the Research Pavilion.

"Our goal isn't just to have these experts present," Miheguli says, "we want attendees to bring their challenges, ask questions, and take full advantage of their expertise."

Researchers will be available at the Research Pavilion, located on the tradeshow floor, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

—Story and photo by Daniel Lemke





**Tuesday, February 3, 2026 • Butler Machinery Arena • Red River Valley Fairgrounds • West Fargo**

# Tentative Agenda

## 7:30 a.m. | Butler Arena

Registration, Light Breakfast, and Visit the Research Pavilion and Trade Show

## 8:15 a.m.

**Welcome**  
Emcee Clinton Griffiths, Farm Journal

**Early Riser Sessions**  
**Weather** with Daryl Ritchison, ND Agricultural Weather Network (NDAWN)  
**BNSF Ag Update: Crop Year and Rail Update** with Rachel Lemieux, BNSF Railway

## 9:15 a.m.

**ND Soybean Growers Association & ND Corn Growers Association Annual Meetings**

## 10:30 a.m.

**Market Outlook & Economy**  
Dr. Ben Brown, University of Missouri's Food & Agriculture Policy Research Institute

## 11:30 a.m. | Hartl Building

Lunch, and Visit the Research Pavilion and Trade Show

**Meet & Greet**  
Ag With Emma Emma Seamons



## 12:30 p.m.

**National Industry Panel**  
Steve Censky, CEO of the American Soybean Association; Lucas Lentsch, CEO of the United Soybean Board; Krista Swanson, chief economist of the National Corn Growers Association; and Ellen Zimmerman, director of industry relations for the U.S. Grains & BioProducts Council, will share key updates on markets, policy, and opportunities for growers.

## 1:30 p.m. | Break

Visit the Research Pavilion and Trade Show

## 1:45 p.m.

**Practical Strategy, Hard Decisions and Farmer of the Future**  
Retired U.S. Army Colonel and former West Point instructor Ken Gilliam of The Directions Group shares practical frameworks to help guide tough decisions and prepare farms for the future.

## 2:45 p.m.

**Reception Kickoff: ND Soybean & Corn Leaders**  
Hear from Jim Thompson of the NDSC, Justin Sherlock of the NDSGA, Carson Klosterman of the NDCUC, and Brian Leier of the NDCGA during a kickoff reception discussion. What keeps these leaders up at night? Get a quick round-robin update on the work of their farmer-led organizations.

## 3:00 p.m.

**Industry & Partners Reception**  
Enjoy a casual gathering of farmers, industry representatives, and exhibitors for networking, conversation, and connection, with beverages and snacks available.

## 4:30 p.m.

**End of the 2026 Northern Corn and Soybean Expo: See you on February 9, 2027!**  
Agenda subject to change

For more information visit [bit.ly/NorthernCornSoyExpo](https://bit.ly/NorthernCornSoyExpo)  
**Online registration is open!**



# Speakers Highlight Expo Events

A slate of agriculture industry experts and thought leaders will share unique insights and in-depth perspectives at the 2026 Northern Corn and Soybean Expo. Presenters will offer valuable information about a wide range of pertinent topics, from weather and transportation to the outlook for markets and ag policy issues, which are sure to affect every North Dakota farm.

The presenter lineup features well-known experts with both national and local knowledge. These top-notch speakers will provide unmatched insights that farmers can use to make informed decisions to benefit operations.

## Master of Ceremonies

Veteran communicator and broadcaster Clinton Griffiths will serve as the Expo's emcee. Griffiths is the anchor and editorial director for AgDay Television. He was recently named the 12th editor of Farm Journal Magazine, the nation's oldest farming magazine. Originally from New Mexico, Griffiths lives on a farm in Indiana with his wife and three children.

Griffiths will offer his unique perspective and industry knowledge, including lively interactions with guests and presenters.

## Early Riser Sessions

New for 2026 are two Early Riser sessions that will kick off the morning discussions.

*Daryl Ritchison, North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network*

Daryl Ritchison is the North Dakota state climatologist and the director of the North Dakota Agricultural Weather Network (NDAWN). Ritchison is a well-known presenter. He had years of experience as a broadcast meteorologist before moving into the state climate office in 2014. Ritchison will address weather issues from 2025 and will look towards what lies ahead as growers prepare for the 2026 growing season.

*Rachel Lemieux, Market Manager of Soybeans, Milo and Oats, BNSF*

BNSF Railway is the nation's largest freight railway with more than 33,000 miles of track covering the western two-thirds of the U.S., including North Dakota. Farmers across the state are deeply affected by the movement of grain via rail. Rachel Lemieux, BNSF's manager of soybean and oats, will provide an update about the 2025 crop year and will discuss rail issues moving forward.

## Market Outlook and the Economy

Market movers are often outside a farmer's control, but understanding market influences can help make farmers more effective and profitable. The Northern Corn and Soybean Expo is tapping into expertise from one of the nation's leading policy institutes.

For more than four decades, the Food Agriculture Policy Research Institute (FAPRI) at the University of Missouri has provided decision makers with information about how changes in policies or market conditions affect the agricultural sector. The institute uses economic models for key commodity markets to estimate how different policy options affect prices and quantities, producers, consumers and government costs.

*Ben Brown, Food Agriculture Policy Research Institute*

Ben Brown is a senior research associate at FAPRI, leading farm-level and ag-sector outreach initiatives. His work focuses on U.S. farm policy, commodity markets and farm finance. Recent work includes an analysis of the effects on crop basis under extreme weather scenarios, an examination of U.S. agricultural producer consolidation, educational seminars for agricultural lenders, farm policy education to producers and agricultural service providers, weekly grain market outlooks and hosting international trade groups that are interested in U.S. agriculture.

## National Industry Panel

North Dakota farmers are represented by both state and national organizations which are dedicated to supporting agriculture's needs. That industry support includes policy work in Washington, D.C., and efforts to build worldwide markets for corn and soybean products.

A panel of leaders will deliver an in-depth view of the factors shaping the soybean and corn sectors globally, including markets, policy and emerging opportunities.

*Steve Censky, ASA*

Steve Censky is the chief executive officer (CEO) of the American Soybean Association (ASA). Censky returned to the role in 2020 after serving as deputy U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) secretary from 2017 to 2020. Prior to his USDA experience, Censky was the ASA CEO for 21 years. A native of Jackson, Minnesota, Censky has an unparalleled understanding of the soybean industry and the effects that policy decisions can have on U.S. farmers.

*Lucas Lentsch, USB*

Lucas Lentsch is the CEO of the United Soybean Board (USB), which oversees the investment of soybean checkoff funds. The USB is comprised of 77 farmer leaders and 31 qualifying state soybean boards. The USB works collectively to create value through research, education and promotion investments propelling a return on investment back to the farm. Lentsch became the USB's CEO in 2023. He previously served in leadership roles for several organizations, including as the CEO of Midwest Dairy. He also served as South Dakota's secretary of agriculture.



**Clinton Griffiths**



**Daryl Ritchison**



**Rachel Lemieux**



**Ben Brown**



**Steve Censky**



**Lucas Lentsch**



### *Krista Swanson, NCGA*

Krista Swanson is chief economist for the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA), ascending to that position in 2025. Swanson has been an economist with NCGA since 2023. She has authored numerous reports and analyses on how policy or market decisions could affect farmers. Prior to joining the NCGA, Swanson was a research specialist for the Gardner Agricultural Policy Program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.



**Krista Swanson**

### *Ellen Zimmerman, USGBC*

The U.S. Grains & BioProducts Council (USGBC) develops export markets for U.S. barley, corn, sorghum and related products, including ethanol. Ellen Zimmerman is the USGBC's director of industry relations. She is responsible for the development and execution of marketing plans for current and potential members; she works with international staff and offices to understand U.S. industry concerns, to facilitate U.S. industry involvement and to support global export market development programs.



**Ellen Zimmerman**

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photos courtesy of the speakers

# NEW This Year at Expo!

At the end of the day, join us for a kickoff reception with North Dakota soybean and corn leaders as they share what's on their minds and what their organizations are working on. The conversation continues with a relaxed Industry & Partners Reception, providing an opportunity to connect with fellow farmers and industry partners.



## Strategic Thinking, from the Battlefield to Your Field

Farming today requires constant decision-making with incomplete information.

Weather, markets, policy, and technology are all moving targets, and the margin for error keeps getting thinner. Strategic thinking is no longer something reserved for large corporations or government agencies. It is a skill farmers need every season.

That is where retired Colonel Ken Gilliam brings a unique and practical perspective. Gilliam spent 27 years in the U.S. Army helping leaders make high-stakes decisions in uncertain and rapidly changing environments. His work focused on building decision-making frameworks, testing assumptions, and thinking several steps ahead, the same challenges farmers face when planning their operations.

For several years, Gilliam served as the Director of Strategic Wargaming at the Army War College. He was responsible for leading

strategic wargaming efforts that examined complex problems by bringing the right people into the room to identify friction points and choke points before they became major issues. He also taught decision analysis at West Point, helping cadets learn how to structure difficult decisions.

"I spent the last five years of my Army career doing that type of thing both inside the classroom with senior leaders, and also working with everything from colonels to two- and three-star generals, giving them some tools, and sometimes making them roll the dice to figure out what their future was going to be like," Gilliam says.

After retiring from the Army, Gilliam applied that same strategic approach to agriculture while working for The Directions Group, an integrated insights firm. There, he worked with organizations across the agricultural value chain to help them prepare for

disruption and adapt to change.

"We conducted an industry wargame every year where participants from across the value chain could think deeply about a big problem that was going to disrupt agriculture in the future," Gilliam says.

Gilliam will bring those insights to the 2026 Northern Corn and Soybean Expo as the keynote speaker, focusing on Practical Strategy, Hard Decisions and the Farmer of the Future.

"We'll cover some practical tools that they can walk away with and have a better understanding of what it means to build a strategy," Gilliam explains. "We'll talk about the key elements of a strategy and help them build a decision-making framework that they could apply to just about any decision they make in their life."

Gilliam will also help attendees connect the dots between the information shared throughout the day and their own operations. By

using examples tied to real-world farming challenges, he will encourage farmers to think more intentionally about how they process information and make decisions.

"Even small farms today are big operations, but they don't have the luxury of having the big margins that you would want to go with a business that size," Gilliam says.

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photo courtesy of Ken Gilliam



**Ken Gilliam**

North Dakota State University

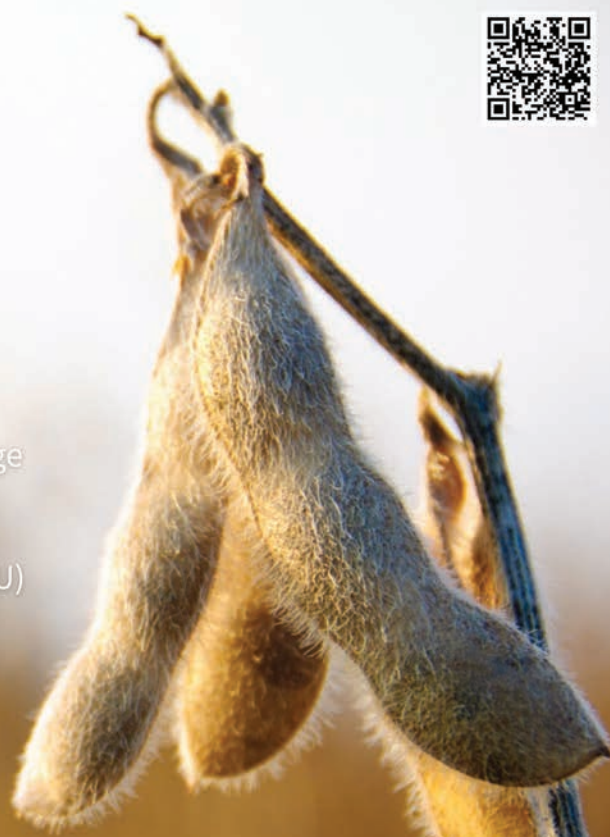
# SOYBEAN SYMPOSIUM

Learn about the latest in soybean research from NDSU experts



MARCH 5 | MEMORIAL UNION

- Accelerating soybean innovation through cutting-edge research & collaboration
- Featuring **keynote speakers**: Shawn Conley (UW-Madison), Dylan Mangel (UNL) & Ignacio Ciampitti (PU)
- Students are invited to **submit abstracts** for oral or poster presentations. Student presenters have the chance to win a cash prize. The abstract submission deadline is February 5, 2026. Don't miss this opportunity to shape the future of soybeans!
- **Register now**: [ndsu.ag/SoybeanSymposium](https://ndsu.ag/SoybeanSymposium)



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## Producer Shop Talks: Real Conversations Right Where You Farm

This spring, we're back on the road with Producer Shop Talks: casual, farmer-focused gatherings across North Dakota.

Grab a meal, hear updates from the NDSGA and the NDSC, and join open discussions with fellow farmers and ag experts. Ask questions, share ideas, and connect with others who care about the future of North Dakota agriculture.

Whether you've been farming for years or are just getting started, you're welcome. Come for the information. Stay for the conversation.

Use the QR code to register:



**March 31: Berthold**  
8:30 a.m. CT  
Cody Hansen's Farm

**April 2: Grand Forks**  
11:30 a.m. CT  
Evan Montgomery's Farm

**April 1: Fort Ransom**  
2:30 p.m. CT  
Thrill Hills

**April 8: Harvey**  
11:30 a.m. CT  
Paul Anderson's Farm

**North Dakota Soybean Growers Association**

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**FEBRUARY 18**

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NDSU NORTH CENTRAL REC

**NEW LEIPZIG, ND**

**FEBRUARY 19**

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NEW LEIPZIG COMMUNITY CENTER

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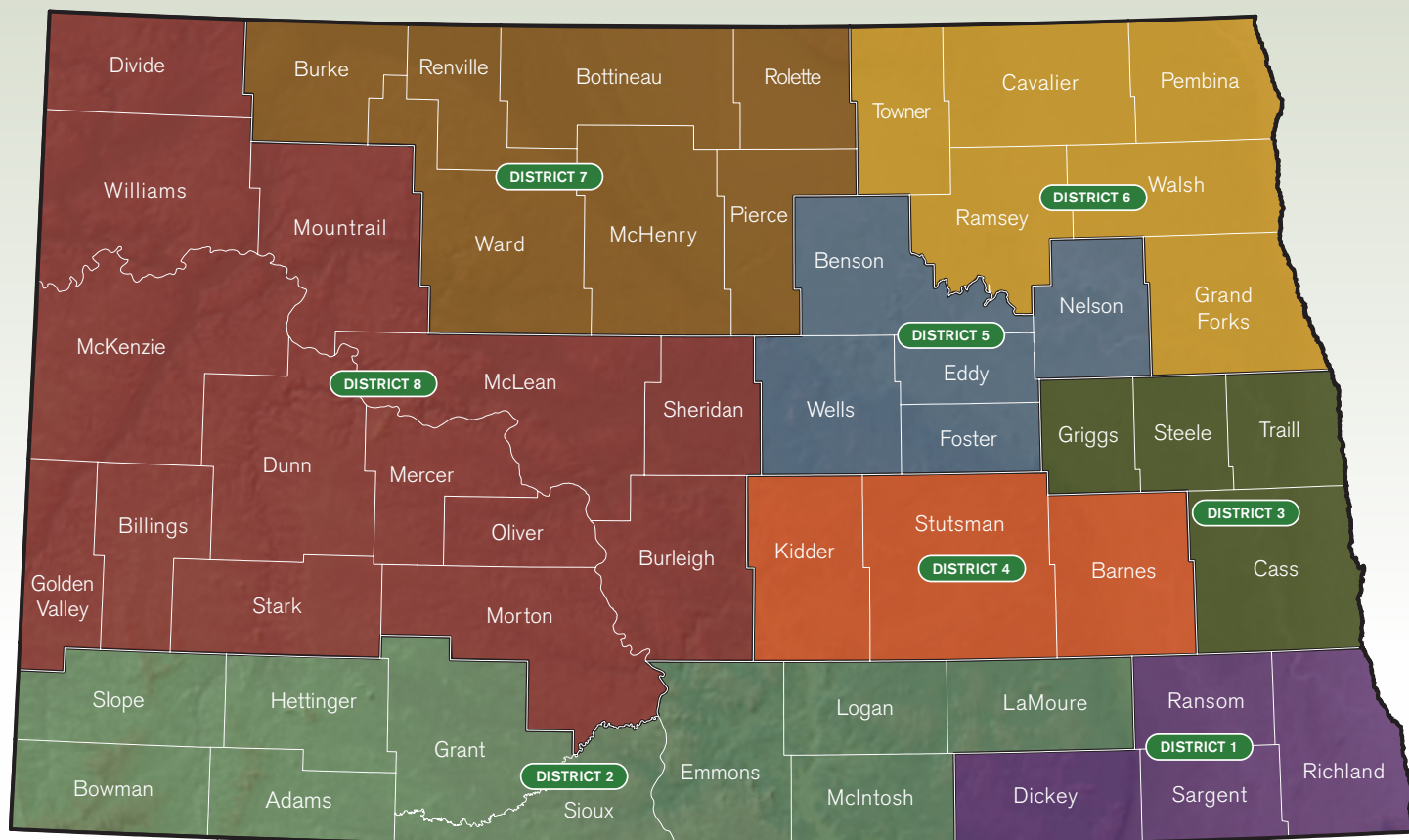


## 2026 Annual Membership Meeting and Ag Policy Outlook Agenda

February 3, 2026 • 9:15 a.m. CST • Butler Machinery Arena • Red River Valley Fairgrounds • West Fargo, ND

- 1.** Welcome & Call to Order  
President Justin Sherlock
- 2.** Approve February 4, 2025, NDSGA  
Annual Membership Meeting Minutes
- 3.** President's State of the  
Association Address
- 4.** Ag Policy & Why Members Matter  
Steve Censky, CEO American  
Soybean Association
- 5.** Election of NDSGA Directors:
  - a.** District 5: Benson, Wells, Eddy,  
Foster, Nelson  
(3-year term)
  - b.** District 6: Towner, Cavalier,  
Pembina, Ramsey,  
Walsh, Grand Forks  
(3-year term)
- 6.** Concluding Remarks & Adjourn

### North Dakota Soybean Growers Association District Map



# Farm Bill Features Carried in Continuing Resolution

For more than three years, farmers and agricultural advocates have unsuccessfully pressed lawmakers to pass a comprehensive five-year farm bill. That action hasn't happened yet, but a reconciliation package passed in July and a continuing resolution to reopen the federal government after the longest shutdown in history have essentially extended the 2018 Farm Bill into 2026.

The continuing resolution which passed in November restores funding for the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the next fiscal year, prevents a lapse in key farm bill provisions and extends the U.S. Grain Standards Act through September 2026.

"The American Soybean Association (ASA), our state groups, other commodity groups have continually pushed for a long-term reauthorization of a farm bill," says Josh Gackle, a Kulm farmer and ASA director. "A one-year extension isn't ideal because it doesn't provide long-term certainty, but not having the one-year extension would be worse with (the) cancellation of some long-standing farm programs that would kick back to law from the 1930s. Another extension is not ideal, but it's better than nothing."

"We all would have loved to have seen a full, comprehensive, finished farm bill, but we're appre-

ciative of the fact that Congress did get provisions in there so that farmers have a bit of certainty as they prepare for this next year," states Dazey farmer, North Dakota Soybean Growers Association President and ASA Director Justin Sherlock. "However, we would still like to see them work on finishing a full, comprehensive farm bill soon."

The continuing resolution contained three main funding provisions, including one that funds the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The resolution authorized a full year of funding for farm programs, freeing them from concerns of another possible government shutdown before September.

Farmers may have direction for where farm programs will be for the year ahead, but Gackle describes how the ASA and others will, once again, take up the cause of authorizing a five-year farm bill.

"That's always going to be our focus," Gackle contends, "as it is for most every farm group that's working in Washington."

Gackle is hopeful that lawmakers will work on a farm bill early in 2026 because mid-term elections will take place in November.

"It's hard enough to get big policy done in a non-election year, so the longer they wait in 2026 to try and pass something, the more difficult it gets," Gackle explains. "So, yes, ASA will be urging Congress to take up

the farm bill as soon as they can."

For years, the farm bill enjoyed bipartisan support and was often an example of how lawmakers of all parties could work together. Partisanship in Washington, D.C., has made passing legislation more difficult and may change how future farm bills are crafted.

"When we talked to the chairs and ranking members of the various committees on the House and Senate side, they all see the importance of a standalone, long-term farm bill that is separate from other major spending," Gackle asserts. "The leadership in the committees would like to continue to do that, but as they work with other members of Congress and leadership, sometimes those priorities and methods shift. Hopefully,

everybody can get on the same page of trying to keep it a separate farm bill. That approach has worked well for farmers in the past, and hopefully, that's what will continue."

"Food security is something that we should all be able to agree on, and it shouldn't be something we have partisan bickering over," Sherlock contends. "It would be nice if we could all agree, as Americans, that food security is in our national interests. Whether it's nutrition programs, commodity support programs, farm safety net crop insurance, ensuring we have an adequate and safe food supply for the U.S. and to help feed the world is something we should agree on, and it shouldn't be a partisan battle."

—Story by Daniel Lemke, photo by the Creative Treatment



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## 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



**Tuesday, February 3, 2026 • 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.**  
**Butler Machinery Arena • Red River Fairgrounds • West Fargo**

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