

EMERGE

FALL 2025



MEXICO

TAKES A REAL LOOK AT E10

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

OF MAKE AMERICA
HEALTHY AGAIN

A SOUTH DAKOTA CORN PUBLICATION

BUMPER
CROPS
AND TOP-DOLLAR
INPUT PRICES

SDSU RESEARCH

PROJECT PROJECTED TO
STRENGTHEN MARKETS

 **SD CORN**

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FARMER SENTIMENT SURVEY

South Dakota Corn Growers Association

A RECORD YEAR?

South Dakota producers could be on the verge of a record-breaking corn crop, according to the latest production forecasts.



ERIK GERLACH
State Statistician
with the USDA
National Agricultural
Statistics Service

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's September 1 report projected an average yield of 167 bushels per acre across the state. Multiplied by the 6.11 million planted acres, that comes to more than 1.02 billion bushels of corn, well above last year's record of 884 million bushels.

"If it happens, it would be a record," said Erik Gerlach, state statistician with the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Gerlach noted that while the numbers are strong, they remain estimates until harvest begins.

Crop condition ratings also support the optimistic outlook, he said. Nationally, the percentage of corn rated good to excellent is higher than in any of the last four years.

However, Gerlach said forecasts rely heavily on producer surveys and field samples, and can shift as harvest progresses.

"There's no one thing to point to," Gerlach said. "Our yield forecast is based heavily on producer expectations, along with objective yield plots randomly sampled across fields. It's shaping up to look pretty good, but again, it's a forecast, and it can change."

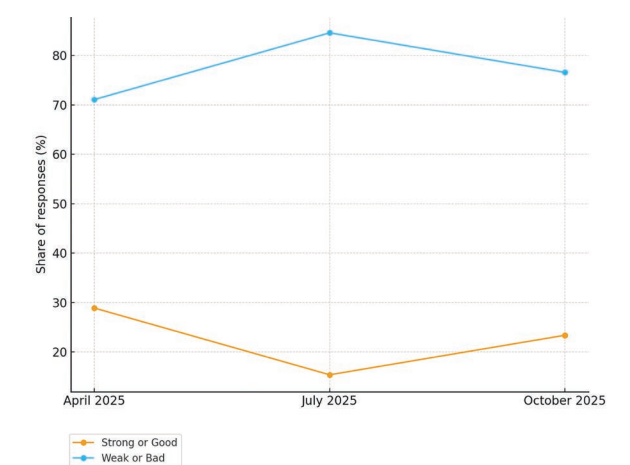
The official production figures will be published in January 2026, after producers report their actual yields in December. Until then, optimism is high but tempered with caution.

"The combine will be the confirmation," Gerlach said.

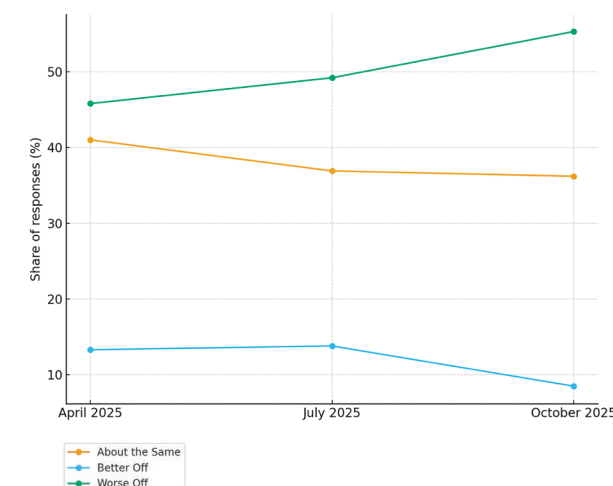


SDCGA conducted member surveys in April, July, and October to gauge farmer sentiment. Modeled after the *Purdue University Ag Economy Barometer*, the effort invited members to share their perspectives on challenges and opportunities shaping South Dakota agriculture this year. The anonymous responses help paint a clearer picture of a potential developing dichotomy in outlooks.

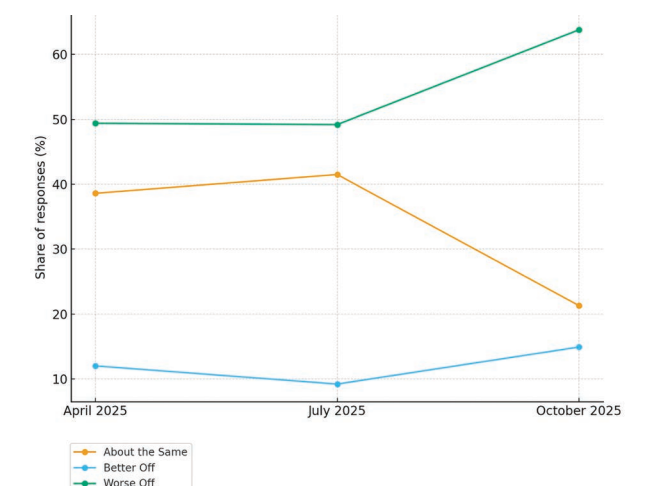
DO YOU THINK THAT THE GENERAL AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY OVERALL IN ONE YEAR WILL BE -



IS YOUR OPERATION TODAY FINANCIALLY COMPARED TO ONE YEAR AGO -



DO YOU THINK THAT YOUR OPERATION IN ONE YEAR WILL BE FINANCIALLY -



T A R I F F S



AND TRADE DEALS

With low commodity prices, high input prices, and a global trade environment that remains in flux, many South Dakota corn producers are watching closely as the Trump Administration continues to adjust tariffs while pursuing new trade agreements.



Photos submitted by the U.S. Grains & BioProducts Council.

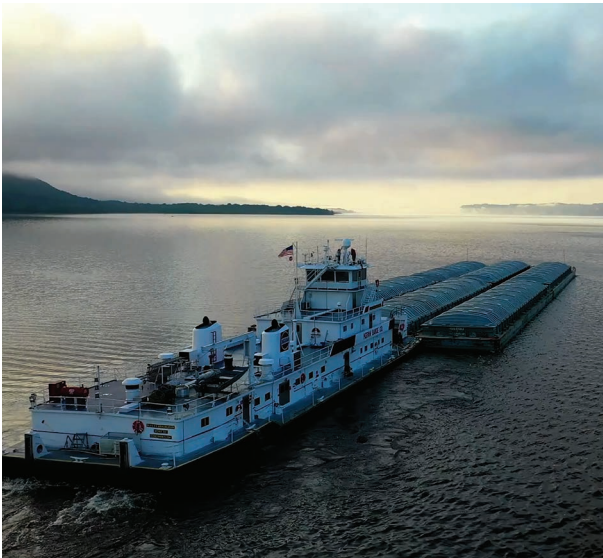
Earlier this year, President Trump issued an executive order modifying reciprocal tariff rates for dozens of trading partners and creating direct implications for producers' export opportunities and input costs. For producers, these changes carry direct implications for both export opportunities and input costs.

The Trump Administration is working to advance new trade deals aimed at expanding agricultural exports. At press time, the United Kingdom and Japan are the only countries with finalized agreements spelled out in Executive Orders. Japan's deal includes \$8 billion in U.S. agricultural purchases including corn, soybeans, bioethanol, fertilizer and sustainable aviation fuel, while setting a 15% baseline tariff on Japanese imports into the U.S.

and other critical inputs remain exempt from some reciprocal tariffs—good news for corn producers concerned about rising input costs.

For corn producers, the message is mixed. On one hand, finalized trade deals like the Japan agreement promise stronger demand for U.S. exports. On the other, ongoing tariff volatility could reshape markets overnight. Producers selling corn abroad should prepare for both opportunity and risk as negotiations unfold.

“WE KNOW TARIFFS CAN BE A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD,” SAID SOUTH DAKOTA CORN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DANITA MURRAY. “ON ONE HAND, FAIR TRADE LEVELS THE PLAYING FIELD AND CAN OPEN NEW DOORS FOR U.S. CORN ABROAD. ON THE OTHER, HIGHER INPUT COSTS HIT FARM FAMILIES HARD. OUR FOCUS AT SOUTH DAKOTA CORN WILL ALWAYS BE ADVOCATING FOR POLICIES THAT TRANSLATE INTO REAL OPPORTUNITY AND PROFITABILITY FOR SOUTH DAKOTA CORN PRODUCERS EVERY DAY.”



The Trump Administration's latest tariff modifications produced some surprising shifts. Vietnam and Sri Lanka saw steep reductions in their reciprocal rates, while Switzerland's tariff rate increased from 31 percent to 39 percent. Fertilizer

The U.S. Treasury Secretary and U.S. Trade Representative will continue to advise the President on potential changes. That means tariff rates may shift quickly depending on progress—or lack thereof—in trade talks.

In short, global demand for U.S. corn looks strong, but producers should expect the trade environment to remain unpredictable going into 2026 planting.



Photo submitted by SDSU.

SDSU RESEARCH PROJECT PROJECTED TO STRENGTHEN MARKETS



South Dakota producers are already proving that sustainability and profitability can go hand in hand. Now, new research led by South Dakota State University agronomist Dr. David Clay aims to take that success story to the next level by documenting the practices already happening on the farm and turning them into market opportunities.

For producers, this research offers more than just recognition. It's a chance to show that what they've been doing for decades has real economic and environmental value.

When it comes to sustainability, corn producers are already doing a great job. The next step is making sure non-producers around the nation understand how the critical work producers are doing promotes sustainability.

"A LARGE CHUNK OF WHAT WE HAVE TO DO IS SIMPLY SHOW PEOPLE WHAT PRODUCERS ARE DOING AND QUANTIFY THE BENEFITS," CLAY SAID.

PROOF OF PROGRESS

The numbers speak volumes. Between 1987 and 2017, sheet and rill erosion in South Dakota decreased by 31%, according to NRCS data. That progress is visible across the countryside.

"When I came to South Dakota in the late 80s, the road ditches in the spring were full of soil. That's not the case anymore," Clay said. "We're keeping the soil on the land, and the land is more productive than it's ever been."

This research will help put hard data behind those successes, translating on-farm progress into measurable carbon savings that ethanol plants can use to help qualify for the 45Z tax credit, recently extended by Congress. The goal is to ensure that value is recognized and shared with producers making it possible.

SMARTER INPUTS, STRONGER RETURNS

Another focus of the project is refining nitrogen recommendations. By studying fertilizer needs in both upland and lowland soils, Clay's team is testing whether rates can be cut even further when producers use reduced tillage and other conservation systems.

"When I've run the numbers, it looks like we certainly can," Clay said.

That efficiency means multiple wins: lower input costs for producers, lower emissions for ethanol plants, and a stronger case that South Dakota corn is the sustainable choice for global markets.

That's also great news for producers who are facing low commodity prices and high input costs.

TURNING RESEARCH INTO OPPORTUNITY

Along with field trials, Clay's team will re-analyze decades of published research to pull out fresh insights, an approach that has already earned national recognition for previous work on cover crops. By building on proven data and connecting it to South Dakota's conditions, the research aims to provide straightforward, credible answers that both ethanol plants and policymakers can use.

For producers, the bottom line is clear: this isn't research for research's sake. It's about creating practical tools that make their work more valuable in the marketplace.

EXPANDING MARKETS, SECURING THE FUTURE

At its core, this effort is about keeping markets strong and opening new doors for South Dakota corn producers and stakeholders. Maintaining existing markets is the first step, followed by working to expand them, something Clay is hopeful the research will benefit, especially with current corn prices.

That hope is backed by hard data and a strong belief that producers are part of the sustainability solution.

"A lot of people don't believe we're beneficial to the environment," Clay added. "But the data show otherwise. We are sequestering carbon in our soils and as a result our soil carbon levels are increasing, erosion is decreasing, and our soils are more productive."

"PRODUCERS ARE PART OF THE ANSWER TO SUSTAINABILITY, AND THIS PROJECT WILL HELP US CONTINUE THESE GAINS LEADING TO INCREASED MARKETS AND IMPROVED ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH."



Caskey addresses Corn Congress delegates during the July Washington, D.C. fly-in.



NEIL CASKEY
National Corn
Growers Association
[NCGA] CEO

BUMPER CROPS AND TOP-DOLLAR INPUT PRICES

What NCGA is doing to find new markets for corn growers

As corn producers gear up for what could be a record-breaking harvest, they're facing a troubling contrast: bumper crops paired with bottom-dollar prices.

While corn prices are in the basement, input costs are through the roof, compounding an already frustrating profitability problem. Presently, input costs are an estimated \$900 per acre to produce corn, while producers only receive about \$800 per acre for their harvest, National Corn Growers Association [NCGA] CEO Neil Caskey said.

"Everything is more expensive," he said, citing increased costs for fertilizer, seed, chemicals and land.

The conundrum is lighting a corn-burning fire under the National Corn Growers Association as they work with industry leaders and policy makers to find market-driven solutions.

"We need some good news on the market front," Caskey acknowledged, recognizing farmers' anxiety as harvest progresses.

ETHANOL EXPANSION IS KEY

Caskey sees ethanol demand expansion as the most immediate path forward. At the top of NCGA's priority list is securing passage of year-round, nationwide E15 sales before Congress adjourns this calendar year, he said.

Currently, the ethanol blend rate sits at approximately E10. According to NCGA estimates, every one percent increase in the blend rate translates to roughly half a billion bushels of new corn demand. The organization is also working toward an octane standard that would allow E20 or E25 blends over the next seven to ten years.

"There's a lot more to give in ethanol," Caskey noted, emphasizing that an octane standard could also require auto manufacturers to build higher-performing vehicles designed to run on these higher ethanol blends.

South Dakota's congressional delegation, including Senate Majority Leader John Thune, has been instrumental in championing E15 legislation, Caskey said.

BEYOND TRADITIONAL MARKETS

While ethanol expansion offers near-term opportunities, NCGA is also eyeing longer-term market development. Sustainable aviation fuel represents a potentially transformative market that could do for the next generation of farmers what the Renewable Fuel Standard has accomplished for current producers.

"This would be a new, really really big market," he said, though indicated that the opportunity is likely about a decade away.

Bio-plastics present another emerging market. With estimates suggesting one to five trillion single-use plastic bags are used globally each year, replacing even a portion with corn-based alternatives could create substantial new demand, Caskey said.



NCGA CEO, Neil Caskey, visited South Dakota corn leaders in January 2025 to discuss national farm priorities and policies impacting corn growers.



Left to Right: Neil Caskey [NCGA CEO], Kenneth Hartmann, Jr. [NCGA Chairman], U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar [MN], Harold Wolle [NCGA Past Chairman] and Matt Frostic [NCGA First Vice President].

CRITICAL TRADE DEALS

International market access remains integral to NCGA's strategy. The organization is working to ensure corn and ethanol are included in trade agreements currently under negotiation. President Trump's announcement of a trade deal with the United Kingdom in May 2025 specifically mentioned ethanol and beef, which Caskey views as an encouraging sign for future agreements.

FARM BILL AND POLICY OUTLOOK

Looking ahead to 2026, NCGA anticipates addressing unfinished business with the farm bill. While portions were included in President Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill, "There is work left to be done," Caskey said.

Primary concerns will be a continued push for ethanol-related policies and ensuring corn remains prominent in ongoing trade negotiations.

"We are focused on getting year-round nationwide E15 done this year and making sure that corn shows up in every trade deal," Caskey said.

Caskey's message to corn producers emphasized that NCGA leadership, made up of fellow corn producers, understands the current difficulties and is committed to finding market-oriented solutions.

"We've got your back," Caskey said.

SOUTH DAKOTA CORN GROWERS REPRESENT THE STATE AT NCGA CORN CONGRESS

Corn growers from across the country gathered in Washington, D.C., July 15-17, 2025, for the bi-annual NCGA Corn Congress.



Grower leaders visit Leader John Thune. Left to right: Scott Stahl, Jay Esser, Chris Nickeson, Trent Kubik, Taylor Sumption, Jim Ketelhut, Reno Brueggeman and Chad Blindauer.

The event brought together grower leaders from corn-producing states to discuss policy, make key decisions for the National Corn Growers Association (NCGA), and advocate for the future of the corn industry.

Representing South Dakota were Taylor Sumption, SDCGA President; Trent Kubik, SDCGA Vice President; Scott Stahl, SDCGA District 8 Director; Jim Ketelhut, SDCUC President;

Jay Esser, SDCUC Vice President; Chris Nickeson, SDCUC Secretary/Treasurer; Reno Brueggeman, SDCUC District 7 Director; and Chad Blindauer, SDCUC District 8 Director.

During Corn Congress, South Dakota's delegation joined fellow growers from across the nation to engage in important discussions about key policy issues facing agriculture. The group also met with South Dakota's congressional delegation—



Grower Leaders visit Congressman Dusty Johnson. Left to right: Chris Nickeson, Scott Stahl, Reno Brueggeman, Chad Blindauer, Taylor Sumption; Congressman Dusty Johnson, Jim Ketelhut, Trent Kubik, Jay Esser and DaNita Murray.



Grower leaders visit Senator Mike Rounds. Left to right: Chris Nickeson, Chad Blindauer, Jim Ketelhut, Senator Mike Rounds and Trent Kubik.



Corn Congress Delegates pose with SD Corn Executive Director. Left to right: Reno Brueggeman, Trent Kubik, Scott Stahl, Taylor Sumption, Jim Ketelhut, Chad Blindauer, Jay Esser, Chris Nickeson and DaNita Murray.

Leader John Thune, Senator Mike Rounds, and Representative Dusty Johnson—to share firsthand perspectives on the farm bill, ethanol, and other pressing priorities that impact farmers and rural communities.

In addition to these meetings, several South Dakota growers contributed their expertise through NCGA Action Teams, which play a critical role in guiding the association's programs and setting its policy agenda.

**THESE GROWER-LED TEAMS
FOCUS ON BUILDING DEMAND
FOR CORN AND ITS PRODUCTS,
ADVANCING SUSTAINABILITY
AND PRODUCTIVITY, MITIGATING
RISK, AND ADVOCATING FOR
FAVORABLE TRADE AND TAX
POLICIES.**

Through their active participation and leadership, South Dakota's corn growers continue to ensure that the voices of farmers are heard in Washington and that the policies shaping American agriculture reflect the realities of life on the farm back home.



SDCGA President, Taylor Sumption, shares remarks on the floor of Corn Congress. Photo provided by Ohio Corn & Wheat.



JERRY SCHMITZ

**SOUTH DAKOTA SOY
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

TO RETIRE IN 2026



From there, his involvement only grew. In 1984, Schmitz and other young leaders helped establish South Dakota's soybean checkoff program—a feat that passed in its very first year despite warnings it might take several sessions.

"We didn't know any better, but with strong support we got it done," he said.

Over the years, Schmitz's work has carried him far beyond South Dakota's borders. He counts among his most memorable moments being invited to the White House in 2020 for the signing of the U.S.-China Phase One trade agreement and meeting personally with U.S. Ambassador Christopher Landau at the Mexican Embassy during negotiations for the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

One trade mission brought a deeply personal memory: while abroad in a hard-line communist country, a man quietly whispered to him, "I'm a Christian," a moment Schmitz still describes with chills.

For Schmitz, these experiences always came back to one thing: serving South Dakota producers. "Sometimes I just sit back and wonder why someone like me has had these opportunities," he said. "It's got to be God opening doors."

Over his career, Schmitz has watched the industry transform. From the early days of landline calls for fertilizer orders to today's artificial intelligence tools capable of grading grain, technology has reshaped farming. Yet he emphasizes that relationships remain at the heart of progress.

“NETWORKING AND PEOPLE ARE THE HIGHEST PRIORITY. IF YOU FOCUS ON THAT, THE REST WILL FOLLOW,” HE ADVISED FUTURE LEADERS.



Photos provided by our friends at South Dakota Soy.

When asked what he'll miss most, Schmitz pointed to the people—producers, board members, legislators, and colleagues from across commodity groups. "That's one of the greatest things about this position, the chance to meet so many wonderful people," he said.

Retirement will give him more time with his wife, Sally, their two children, and his granddaughter. His son AJ now manages the family farm, while his daughter Emily works as a helicopter flight nurse. Schmitz also looks forward to spending more time outdoors and volunteering locally, things he said his travel and leadership duties have limited.

Even so, he doesn't plan to disappear. Schmitz hopes to remain a resource for the next executive director and continue supporting projects that benefit producers.

"I love everything we do here," he said, referring to the South Dakota Soybean Association.



After more than four decades of leadership and service to South Dakota agriculture, Jerry Schmitz will retire in July 2026, leaving behind a legacy that stretches from the founding of the South Dakota Soybean Association to representing farmers on the global stage.

While he has served as executive director of South Dakota Soy since 2019, Schmitz's dedication to soybean producers, and indeed the entire ag industry throughout the state, has extended over four decades.

Schmitz's path into agricultural leadership began shortly after graduating from South Dakota State University in 1980. What started as a conversation at a co-op dinner turned into the eventual formation of the South Dakota Soybean Association.

"We set up a phone bank in Elk Point in an ambulance barn and called producers from a list we got from county agents," Schmitz said. "We got enough members to start the association. That's really how it all began."

MEXICO TAKES A REAL LOOK AT E10

Recently, President Claudia Sheinbaum publicly indicated support for opening the biofuel industry in Mexico. This positive development came as several Executive Directors from various corn states were in-country on a U.S. Grains and Bioproducts Council (USGBC) export mission trip. The USGBC has worked on access to the Mexican market for years.

Another recent step was the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding between Mexico and Brazil regarding technical support towards establishing Mexico's biofuel industry. Galo Galeana, director general of the Biomovilidad association and advisor to USGPC, was quoted after these developments as saying, "We are gradually seeing how a framework is taking shape and how the different elements are being put in place to develop the Mexican market."

Both Mexico and Brazil use sugarcane as ethanol feedstock, with Mexico also intending to utilize sorghum. Currently, the regulatory framework in Mexico prohibits ethanol use as fuel in its top three cities by population—Mexico City, Monterrey and Guadalajara. Mexico City's population alone is around 20 million consumers. It's law also limits the maximum blend of ethanol in fuel to 5.8%.

Another significant change is the posture of Pemex, the state-owned petroleum corporation controlled by the government of

Mexico. Currently, imports of methyl tert-butyl ether (MTBE) increase the octane content of gas and improves performance. Pemex may be interested in replacing MTBE use with ethanol, likely due to cost and environmental considerations. If so, this would also represent a change in posture helping to pave the way for in-country market development for ethanol blends.

While the primary focus of these changes is to bolster sugarcane farmers in Mexico, initially Mexico would likely need imports to meet new domestic E10 demand, estimated at approximately 80,000 barrels of ethanol per day.

TRANSLATED TEXT OF THE RECENTLY STATED SUPPORT BY THE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT:

THE DECLARATION OF INTENT ON BILATERAL COOPERATION ON THE PRODUCTION AND USE OF BIOFUELS DEALS WITH TECHNOLOGICAL EXCHANGE IN THE BIOFUELS SECTOR.

THE OBJECTIVES INCLUDE DRIVING ORDERLY AND PROPERLY REGULATED GROWTH IN THE SECTOR IN MEXICO, LEVERAGING BRAZIL'S RECOGNIZED EXPERIENCE IN PRODUCING ETHANOL FROM SUGARCANE.

BRAZIL IS THE WORLD'S LARGEST SUGARCANE PRODUCER AND EXPORTER AND ALSO STANDS OUT FOR ITS ADVANCEMENT IN THE USE OF BIOFUELS, SUCH AS ADDING ETHANOL TO GASOLINE. THE



SD Corn Executive Director, DaNita Murray, joined corn buyers and government officials in Mexico City to share updates on the U.S. corn crop and production practices. Murray, alongside leaders from other state corn organizations, participated in a U.S. Grains & BioProducts Council trade mission in September to Mexico and Canada—two of the largest markets for U.S. corn and corn products.

DECLARATION ALSO CALLS FOR PROGRESS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE AVIATION FUELS.

The Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in Investment Promotion and Capacity Building between the Mexican Ministry of Economy and the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (Apex) aims to strengthen the relations of friendship, understanding and economic development that unite Brazil and Mexico with the objective of promoting a framework of interaction that facilitates the exchange of goods, services and investments, as well as the generation of new business opportunities.

CLAUDIA SHEINBAUM PARDO PRESS CONFERENCE 09/30/2025*

? *Olga Ojeda Lajud, correspondent for the Imagen del Golfo de Veracruz corporate newspaper. Madam President, if you allow me, I'll go briefly to the state of Veracruz, because sugarcane producers are warning that cheap sugar imports are plummeting local prices and threatening the sugar agroindustry, which is very important for the state.*

We would like to know what measures your government will take to protect sugarcane producers and guarantee the viability of this industry in Veracruz.

🗣️ *Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, President of Mexico*

- 🟢 We are working with them, through the Secretary of Agriculture. There is a comprehensive program under development that does not affect the contribution of sugar to the diet. This program contemplates ethanol production, an alternative we are promoting with advice from Brazil.
- 🟢 We will present it; we are in the process, and although it will take a few more months, it will be established this year.

APPROXIMATELY
80,000
BARRELS OF
ETHANOL PER DAY.

KENTUCKY PROGRAM AIMS TO KEEP
FARMLAND IN
PRODUCTION

U.S. farmland is disappearing at an alarming rate, but one state is taking a stand, working to keep land in production.

“IN SOME COUNTIES, 30% OF FARMLAND HAS BEEN LOST IN 20 YEARS. SEEING THAT DATA REALLY DRIVES HOME HOW SERIOUS THE ISSUE IS,” BOTTS SAID.



ALETA BOTTS
Kentucky Farmland
Transition Initiative
(KFTI) Project
Coordinator



Kentucky has lost 1.4 million acres of farmland and 17,000 farms over the past 20 years, according to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, an alarming statistic that led leadership at Kentucky Farm Bureau to get together to find a resolution.

The result was the formation of the Kentucky Farmland Transition Initiative (KFTI).

Launched in April 2024, KFTI combines education, networking and policy work to address the pressures threatening farmland ownership and access.

“When those census numbers came out, it really crystallized what we’ve all been seeing,” said Aleta Botts, KFTI’s project coordinator.

“WE’RE HEARING FROM PEOPLE WHO WANT TO ACCESS LAND BUT CAN’T, BECAUSE THERE’S LESS AVAILABLE. WE’RE SEEING DEVELOPMENT PRESSURE AND MORE INVESTMENT FIRMS BUYING FARMLAND AND RENTING IT BACK TO FARMERS. THAT MEANS FARMERS ARE LOSING EQUITY, AND THAT’S A SERIOUS PROBLEM.”

The initiative focuses on three strategies. First, it raises awareness and helps families understand how to keep their land in production. Many face complicated decisions involving estate planning, taxes and family dynamics. KFTI connects those families with attorneys, CPAs and other resources, Botts said.

The second strategy builds a statewide network of organizations working to address farmland loss. Twenty-eight groups across Kentucky now share information, provide feedback and coordinate outreach.

The third strategy targets policy at the state and federal level. One key measure is Kentucky’s Selling Farmer Tax Credit, which offers state income tax incentives for selling land to farmers. Lawmakers recently updated the credit to encourage greater use.

At the federal level, KFTI worked with U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., on legislation passed in July 2025, allowing landowners to spread capital gains tax payments over four years if they sell to buyers who commit to keeping the land in farming. The change aims to make it more financially attractive to sell to working farmers rather than developers or investors.

The initiative has reached more than 4,000 people in its first year through county meetings and presentations. Census data presented at these events often sparks conversations.

“In some counties, 30% of farmland has been lost in 20 years. Seeing that data really drives home how serious the issue is,” Botts said.

The issue gets to the core of family values and dynamics, Botts said.

“You may have some heirs who want to farm and others who don’t, and you have to figure out how to make sure what you want to see actually happens,” she said.

Even so, Botts said progress is clear. Some out-of-state landowners have decided to sell to the farmers renting their land because of the tax credit, and more families are starting succession conversations earlier.

“This is a nationwide problem. High land prices, challenges with access and equity are happening everywhere. What’s exciting about this initiative is that it puts farmers at the center of the solution.”

The program’s model has drawn attention in South Dakota, where similar pressures are emerging.

“This kind of work is urgently needed here, too,” said South Dakota Corn executive director DaNita Murray. “Our producers are facing many of the same challenges with land access and ownership. The Kentucky model shows what’s possible when agriculture takes the lead.”

Botts offered encouragement to those interested in launching similar efforts. The principles are the same whether you’re in Kentucky or South Dakota. Farmers need tools, policy support and clear pathways to keep farmland in production, she said.

HER ADVICE: START BY BRINGING A BROAD COALITION TOGETHER. “THIS AFFECTS EVERY PART OF AGRICULTURE. THE MORE GROUPS YOU HAVE AT THE TABLE FROM THE START, THE STRONGER YOUR EFFORT WILL BE,” BOTTS SAID.

As the program enters its second year, KFTI plans to expand family support services, pursue additional policy changes and strengthen partnerships statewide.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

OF MAKE AMERICA HEALTHY AGAIN

In early September, the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) Commission released its MAHA Strategy Report, outlining a multi-agency approach that the agency says is to improve public health while supporting sustainable agricultural practices.



Washington, D.C. – Jan. 29, 2025: Robert F. Kennedy Jr., nominee for Secretary of Health and Human Services, testifies during his confirmation hearing. Paid photo from Shutterstock.

While the report does not specifically address seed oils, it indicates plans for FDA rulemaking to define ultra-processed foods, which will be monitored closely. Unfortunately, the report did nothing to dispel misconceptions about high fructose corn syrup (HFCS). Consumption of HFCS has been declining in the U.S. and there is no significant nutritional difference between it and other sweeteners.

FOR PRODUCERS, THE REPORT EMPHASIZES SEVERAL INITIATIVES THAT COULD DIRECTLY IMPACT THEM. ONE OF THE CENTRAL THEMES IS THE EXPANSION AND ADOPTION OF PRECISION AGRICULTURE. USDA AND EPA PLAN TO PRIORITIZE RESEARCH AND PROGRAMS TO HELP GROWERS IMPLEMENT ADVANCED TECHNIQUES, INCLUDING REMOTE SENSING AND PRECISION APPLICATION TECHNOLOGIES.



Silver Spring, MD: Exterior view of the headquarters of US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Paid photo from Shutterstock.

The goal is to optimize crop applications, reduce pesticide volumes, enhance soil microbiomes, and deliver measurable financial benefits for producers.

The strategy also directs work to increase public awareness about pesticide regulations, highlighting the rigorous review process that ensures safety for both farmers and consumers. This approach has come under significant fire from MAHA activists who insist the current regulatory framework is inadequate to protect the health and safety of the U.S. food supply.

SOIL HEALTH AND STEWARDSHIP ARE ANOTHER MAJOR FOCUS OF THE MAHA STRATEGY.

USDA and EPA intend to promote voluntary farming solutions that support long-term soil vitality, in partnership with the private sector. Programs like the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) are expected to be expanded, providing producers with additional resources and technical assistance. The report also emphasizes practices that support pollinator management, prioritizes shovel-ready conservation projects, and offers new tools to help growers maintain soil health practices effectively.

As the MAHA Strategy moves from report to implementation, USDA, EPA, and NIH are expected to provide further details on cumulative pesticide exposure frameworks and other programs that may affect growers. It remains to be seen what the inclusion of NIH regarding cumulative exposure assessments means for the agriculture industry and that lack of clarity will continue to be monitored by our sector.

GLENN MULLER

TO RETIRE IN 2026

**SOUTH DAKOTA PORK
PRODUCERS COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



After nearly 16 years at the helm of South Dakota Pork Producers Council (SDPPC), Glenn Muller is preparing to hang up his hat on June 30, 2025. His tenure has been marked by remarkable industry growth, collaborative leadership and an unwavering commitment to the state's pork producers.

Muller's path to the executive director role was anything but conventional. His resume, as he puts it with characteristic humor, "looks like a jigsaw puzzle." He taught agriculture at West Lyon High School in Iowa for three years, then farmed full-time through the challenging 1980s farm crisis. When economic pressures forced difficult decisions, he transitioned to banking, then spent 13 years teaching adult farm management at Southeast Technical College before the program closed. He later worked for Smithfield in procurement and risk management before taking the reins at SDPPC in 2010.



Photos provided by our friends at SDPPC.

Muller grew up on a family farm with hogs and knew the battles they often faced, so when the executive director position at SDPPC, he knew it was something he wanted to pursue, especially because of the value he knew the organization could bring to area producers. He saw firsthand how producers' right to operate was regularly challenged by special interest groups and local resistance to expansion.

When he started, South Dakota marketed just over 2.1 million pigs in 2011. By 2024, that number had soared to 3.7 million pigs. This growth came even as producer numbers dropped dramatically—from around 3,500 producers when Muller began to approximately 750 today, illustrating the industry's shift toward larger, more efficient operations.

Muller points to South Dakota's advantages when it comes to swine production: better biosecurity due to lower pig density compared to neighboring states, wider basis levels that mean cheaper corn inputs and producers who recognize the value of manure for fertilizer. The state has also embraced contract barn arrangements, allowing the next generation to enter the industry with smaller investments.

One thing that Muller said he's most proud of during his time as director was the renovation of the SDSU Swine Research and Education Facility.

"That was a tremendous undertaking," Muller said, noting the collaborative support from Iowa and Minnesota commodity organizations.

The facility now provides crucial public education about modern swine production while respecting the biosecurity protocols that keep commercial operations off-limits to visitors.

Muller also successfully navigated major challenges, including defeating the Wholstone ballot initiative in Sioux Falls and building bridges with unlikely allies. Relationships with corn and soybean growers strengthened as all three commodity groups recognized their interdependence, Muller said.

"We've made a lot of changes in the industry, but I think they've been positive for the most part," Muller said. Modern barns now feature sophisticated monitoring systems. Production practices have become more efficient, using less water and feed to produce protein.

Looking ahead, Muller sees continued collaboration among commodity groups as essential. "Agriculture as a whole has such a small representation. We need to work together as an ag community to address issues," he said.

After such a notable career, there are certainly things Muller is going to miss, most notably the people he's both worked with and served.

"A lot of good relationships have been built over the course of time, with producers, allied industry folks, other commodity representatives and academics," he said.

His advice to his successor is simple but heartfelt: "They're going to be very fortunate to work for a group of people and work with a contingency of people that are very progressive and cooperative."

As Muller prepares for retirement, South Dakota's pork industry stands stronger than ever; a testament to his steady leadership and collaborative spirit. The producers he's served would undoubtedly agree: those are big shoes to fill.



**South Dakota Corn
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The evening's highlight features Jeff Corle, whose story will resonate with anyone who's ever worked the land. A former fourth-generation Pennsylvania dairy farmer, Corle transformed personal loss into purpose, becoming an independent country music artist and speaker after selling his family's century-old farm. His viral hit "Empty Barn" captured the heartache of agricultural transition and struck a chord with farming communities nationwide.

Corle's "Keynote Concert" weaves original music with powerful messages about farmer resilience, and finding strength in difficult seasons. It's raw, authentic, and deeply moving. His performance acknowledges the real struggles farmers face while celebrating the unbreakable spirit that defines agricultural life.