

# EMERGE

FALL 2024

## SDSU PRESIDENT BARRY DUNN

SDCUC SUPPORT CREATES  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR CORN'S FUTURE

RADICLE  
CHALLENGE  
CREATING NEW  
USES FOR CORN

A SOUTH DAKOTA CORN PUBLICATION

EPA ATRAZINE  
PROPOSAL  
SERIOUS  
QUESTIONS  
REMAIN

NICK  
OLSON  
VERMILLION YIELD  
CONTEST WINNER

 SD CORN



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JIM KETELHUT

PUKWANA  
SDCUC PRESIDENT, DISTRICT 9

As you are reading this, harvest is completed for most of us. 2024 has been memorable, to say the least. Mother Nature has presented us with a wide variety of weather conditions. In the limited areas of the state I have traveled, you can observe the entire spectrum of crop conditions.

One thing I've learned over the years is that a few miles can make a significant difference in crop conditions. Just because you didn't receive your timely August rain doesn't mean the person you're speaking with isn't having a bumper crop. We do the best we can with the situation we are given. The only certainty is change; next year will be different.

This challenge mirrors the way we manage checkoff dollars—balancing what is important now with what might be important down the road. We strive to allocate those dollars in ways that will have the greatest impact on future demand and the profitability of producers in our state. Our investments in research, promotion, education, and the maintenance and expansion of export markets for corn, ethanol and livestock are all aimed at these goals.

When we work together across the agricultural sector, we can make a meaningful impact on our industry and enhance the economic viability of our producers for years to come.

ON THE COVER:  
SDSU President Barry Dunn

CHECK OFF DOLLARS AT WORK

If you see this badge on a story, it designates that Check Off Dollars have been utilized in an effort to increase corn grind for South Dakota corn farmers.



DISTRICT 5 BOARD  
POSITION OPEN  
Harding, Perkins,  
Corson, Campbell,  
Walworth, McPherson  
and Brown counties.

Call the SD Corn office at  
605.334.0100 for more  
information.

2025 DISTRICT 2  
BOARD ELECTION  
Miner, Lake, Moody and  
Minnehaha counties.

Election notices will be  
posted in winter 2024  
for March 1st position.



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**39TH ANNUAL SD  
CORN CONFERENCE**  
*January 18th, Sioux Falls  
Convention Center*

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*Call the SD Corn office at  
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# DAVE ELLENS

## MADISON SDCGA PRESIDENT, DISTRICT 2

Well, the kids are back in school, the crops are mature, and the grain trucks are busy on the country roads as I write this column. That means one thing: harvest is just about finished, and we'll soon see what kind of crop Mother Nature has left us this year.

As always, the weather has been challenging, either giving us too much rain or too little. One thing is certain, though—I'm not sure we know what a "normal" year is anymore. However, looking at my own farm, I remain optimistic that the good ground has strong potential and may help offset the drowned-out acres we battled earlier in the year.

As we gear up for the busy season, I encourage everyone to pause and focus on safety as we

harvest. The most important thing we can do each day is come home to our families at night. The fast-paced nature of the season can lead us to hurry and make decisions or take actions we wouldn't normally consider.

There's much to complain about this year in farming, but there's also much to be thankful for. Fall, my favorite season, is when we get to harvest the crop we've worked so hard to cultivate. Seeing the results of our labor is what makes being a farmer so rewarding.

I hope you all have a productive and safe harvest. Remember to take the time to slow down and ensure you return home safely to the loved ones for whom you work so hard.

# FARM SAFETY

*Operating equipment around powerlines and poles is serious business.*

The weather has turned crisp, the leaves are changing colors, and there are just a few precious days left to get the corn into the bin. But no matter how much work is left and how little time, you need to make sure you're aware of your surroundings and the powerlines that are near your fields. Not doing so, and not knowing what to do if you happen to hit a powerline, could make this your last harvest.

As safe as farmers are in our region, each year in the Midwest electrical poles are struck by farming equipment during harvest. With thousands of miles of electrical poles and wires across the countryside, it can happen. But these incidents are preventable and avoidable.

- When you're out harvesting, make sure to maintain a safe distance from overhead powerlines and do your best to stay clear of power poles.
- Use a spotter to help navigate large equipment around power poles and lines and take special care when you're entering or exiting a field through an approach.

Farmers need to remember a few important steps if they're ever caught in a situation where they contact a powerline:

- If you hit a powerline, don't get out of the vehicle.
- The first thing you should do is dial 911. Authorities will contact the electric cooperative to make sure they de-energize the line right away.

- Wait in the vehicle until authorities give you the all-clear signal.
- If the vehicle is on fire and you must get out of the cab, make sure you jump as far away from the vehicle as you can.
- And never, ever touch the ground and the vehicle at the same time.
- Keep others away from the vehicle and never touch another person to get help exiting.
- If you have to make a jump for it, keep hopping with your feet together until you're at least 40 feet away from the vehicle and then call for help. Keeping your feet together as you hop away is important. It keeps one foot from stepping into a higher voltage zone on the ground than the other foot, which could cause electrocution.
- Do not approach your vehicle again until utility crews and emergency responders tell you it is safe.

Your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives are committed to the safety of our members, and we want to make sure everyone knows the steps to take to stay safe. Visit [yourcooppower.com](http://yourcooppower.com) to learn more about your local Touchstone Energy Cooperative and about staying safe during harvest.

Here's to a safe and bountiful harvest!  
*Farm safety message provided by East River Electric.*





# A BRIEF AG LAND TAX REFRESHER

*Productivity-based property tax system has served farm and ranch South Dakotan families well.*

In 2009, South Dakota changed its agricultural land taxes, which previously utilized a market-based assessment methodology, to become the 44th state in the Nation to utilize a productivity assessment methodology. However, this is now being questioned, frequently by individuals who look at the Department of Revenue's annual report on who paid property taxes and assume that agriculture is not paying its fair share.

According to SD Corn Executive Director DaNita Murray, "Agricultural property taxes collected increased as a result of the change to productivity, and we encourage our elected officials not to remove a system that has worked fairly well overall for the last 14 years."

## HISTORICAL AGRICULTURE GROUP SUPPORT

In 2008, every South Dakota agriculture group in addition to multiple non-agriculture groups supported the change to productivity based on three principles:

1. No change in statewide ag value at that time. The market was broken.
2. No shift between crop and non-crop.
3. A stable, equitable, and predictable tax system where agriculture pays its fair share.

The SD Farm Bureau worked extensively with other states that had already adopted this type of assessment to examine what worked and what didn't. Productivity also equalized the values of agricultural land across South Dakota. A good example is:

**A BUSHEL OF CORN IN LINCOLN COUNTY, SD, HAS A SIMILAR TAX BURDEN AS A BUSHEL OF CORN RAISED IN LYMAN COUNTY, SD.**

Also of note, HB1325 [2022] allowed Class 4 Soils to be either crop or non-crop. This macro adjustment authorized west river counties to adjust their values accordingly.

Murray states, "We should not start over from the beginning on the assessment of agricultural land. Are there adjustments to make it better that can be made? Sure. However, let's work to build on what we have versus throwing it out completely."



Alcester, SD

## PRODUCTIVITY FORMULA

The productivity formula is based on yields and crop prices for cropland and cash rental rates for non-cropland. Directors of equalization can make adjustments to more accurately reflect the productivity value of the land.

Within the productivity formula, there can be adjustments between what should be considered crop and non-crop. For example, in SDCL 10-6-131, you can make an adjustment for 8 different factors.

1. LOCATION
2. SIZE
3. SOIL SURVEY STATISTICS
4. TERRAIN
5. TOPOGRAPHICAL CONDITION
6. CLIMATE
7. ACCESSIBILITY
8. SURFACE OBSTRUCTIONS

*Productivity-based property tax information provided by SD Farm Bureau.*

# THE FUTURE FACE OF AG

*South Dakota Corn Growers Association student member Charles Tesch.*

From Henderson, MN, Charles Tesch grew up on a family farm raising cattle and hogs as well as corn and soybeans. He recently earned dual degrees at South Dakota State University in Agronomy and Precision Agriculture with minors in Soil Health Management and Crop Protection. Currently, Charles is pursuing his master's degree in Plant Science while conducting research in the SDSU Precision Ag Cropping Systems Lab.

## Q: YOU'RE CONDUCTING RESEARCH AS PART OF YOUR MASTER'S PROGRAM, CAN YOU EXPLAIN THAT?

**A:** For my research, I am studying how different tillage practices and fertilizer placement strategies influence grain yield and nutrient uptake in corn. For the tillage component of my study, I am investigating the effects of conventional tillage, strip-tillage, and no-till practices on crop development and yield. For the fertilizer component of my study, I am comparing the effects of broadcasted and banded placement of phosphorus and potassium fertilizers on yield and nutrient uptake.

## Q: WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOLLOWING GRADUATION?

**A:** Following the completion of my master's degree, I hope to work as a research agronomist in South Dakota or Minnesota.



Brookings, SD



Charles Tesch is a first-year graduate student studying Plant Science at SDSU, working on a strip-tillage fertility placement study in the Precision Ag Cropping Systems Lab. This study investigates how phosphorus and potassium management strategies under different tillage systems influence corn yield components.

## Q: WHAT VALUE DO YOU FIND IN THE SOUTH DAKOTA CORN GROWERS ASSOCIATION (SDCGA)?

**A:** While my work experience and education have helped me develop a strong understanding of crop production practices, I felt as though I was lacking a clear understanding of agriculture policy. By joining the SDCGA as a student member, I have been given the opportunity to learn extensively about agriculture policy at the state and national level, as well as attend the annual SD Corn Conference. As I plan to build my career in agronomy research within this region, I fully intend to retain my SDCGA membership. I highly encourage fellow students and farmers to get involved with SDCGA as well.

## Q: YOU WERE ONE OF 11 STUDENTS NATIONWIDE WHO RECEIVED A SCHOLARSHIP FROM THE NATIONAL CORN GROWERS ASSOCIATION, WHAT DID THAT MEAN TO YOU?

**A:** Receiving the National Corn Growers Association Graduate School Scholarship is an incredible honor that acknowledges the importance of agronomic research in shaping the future of corn production. This scholarship provides both financial support and motivation to help me advance in my education and research of corn production practices.

SDCGA is offering FREE student memberships for high school and college students interested in a career in agriculture. Contact the SD Corn office at 605.334.0100 for more information.





President Barry Dunn stands in front of the site for the two new wean-to-finish rooms made possible by a \$1.2 million commitment from the South Dakota Corn Utilization Council.

# COLLABORATING FOR NEW OPPORTUNITIES

## CREATING MORE THAN A COMMODITY

*South Dakota State University President Barry Dunn partners with the South Dakota Corn Utilization Council to add more value for the state's leading crop.*

**B**arry Dunn, President of South Dakota State University (SDSU), has lived a rich and fulfilling life. Once a rancher in Mission, SD, he reinvented himself as a university faculty member at the age of 48. After earning his PhD and teaching agriculture at SDSU, he was recruited by Texas A&M University – Kingsville, where he spent several years. Reflecting on his career shift, he laughs, “I’ve had two distinctly different lives, for sure. Becoming a faculty member at 48 was quite a change.”

Dunn was drawn back to SDSU to serve as the first-ever Endowed Dean of what is now called the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences, a position supported by the South Dakota Corn Utilization Council (SDCUC or Council).

Now, as president of his alma mater, he is passionate about working with industry partners like the SDCUC to build an agricultural university that rivals the best in the nation. “The investment that the SDCUC has made in SDSU over the last 14 years are the main reasons the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences is so active and impactful,” he notes.

For over a decade, the SDCUC has invested millions of dollars into SDSU, supporting infrastructure, research, and human resources. SDCUC President Jim Ketelhut asserts, “The council is selective about allocating funds from corn checkoff dollars. SDSU has proven its commitment to advancing our industry through initiatives that ultimately help to benefit South Dakota corn growers.”





“ Keeping South Dakota students interested in agriculture in South Dakota is critical. We have also attracted students from across the nation, and about one-third of those graduates stay in South Dakota. We’re importing top talent, which is a huge win, but we couldn’t achieve this without the leadership of the South Dakota Corn Utilization Council.”

– President Barry Dunn, SDSU



SDCUC joins SDSU and the SD Pork Producers Council to celebrate the two wean-to-finish rooms commitment.



The Raven Precision Ag Building ribbon cutting.

**THE SDCUC HAS SUPPORTED SEVERAL INITIATIVES AT SDSU**

**HUMAN RESOURCES**

The South Dakota Corn Endowed Dean of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences position has been a significant advantage for the college, inspiring other colleges and departments across campus to follow suit. This position has allowed the university to attract a highly talented pool of candidates and support strategic initiatives.

**AGRICULTURAL COURSEWORK**

A new certificate program in development focused on leadership that will benefit both students and their communities has been partially funded by the Council. As Dunn states, “The SDCUC recognizes that leadership is crucial for rural America, and we need to invest in it. With thousands of young people emerging with knowledge, we need them to become leaders in their communities and industries, especially agriculture.”

**RESEARCH**

SDSU is working towards achieving R1 top-tier research university status, akin to the transition to D1 sports in 2008. Dunn explains, “In the past we’ve missed out on research grants because universities like North Dakota State University, the University of Minnesota, and Iowa State University have the research capacity that we lack. It’s a challenging goal, but with our partners’ support, we aim to reach the same level of productivity and prestige.” The SDCUC regularly invites university research teams to submit their funding proposals.

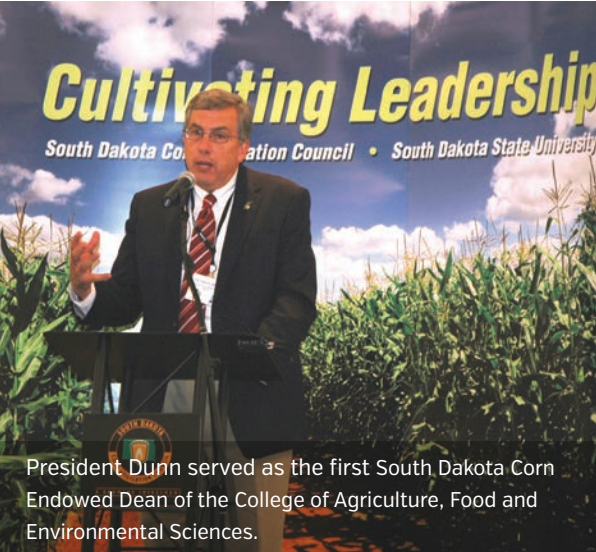
Most recently, the SDCUC committed \$1.2 million to build two wean-to-finish rooms expanding the Swine Education and Research Facility to increase nutrition research by greater than 50 percent. This will drive the swine industry and related value-chain agricultural sectors. Dunn is excited about the expansion, noting, “Our production has outgrown our facility, so the new gift from SDCUC will help us accommodate all the pigs we produce, conduct more research on corn and soybean meal, and publish findings in the scientific literature and through the National Pork Board. It’s really exciting.”

**BRICKS & MORTAR**

The Raven Precision Ag Building was strongly supported by the SDCUC, which helped contribute towards nearly half of the necessary funds for construction. Dunn emphasizes, “The state contributed the other half, but we wouldn’t have received that if we hadn’t raised the initial funds. SDCUC’s investment demonstrated the importance of public-private partnerships and helped us advance boldly into the future.”

The POET Bioproducts Institute, an innovative laboratory facility at SDSU’s Research Park fosters the development of biotechnologies related to specialty animal feeds and biomaterials. The SDCUC committed \$2 million towards the construction of the Institute. This 45,000 square-foot facility allows private enterprise and university scientists to collaborate, helping to move ideas discovered in laboratories into the marketplace. Dunn believes, “This facility will help scientists engage with industry from around the world.”

As SDSU continues to innovate and develop, the future of



President Dunn served as the first South Dakota Corn Endowed Dean of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences.

South Dakota’s agricultural industries remains a central focus with industry partnerships crucial to achieving these goals. Dunn reflects, “One of my favorite stories is about a recent graduate who earned a degree in Precision Agriculture at SDSU and is now working for a company in South Dakota, developing computer programs to measure the environmental benefits of corn production. Seeing him succeed—creating algorithms to help farmers earn more for their corn based on its environmental benefits—is a perfect example of what this university can achieve. By moving corn from a commodity into a value-based market, we can significantly benefit South Dakota farmers. Our goal is to maximize value for them in a dynamic, exciting world, and we’re doing that with the support of the SDCUC.”



The POET Bioproducts Center ribbon cutting.





# INVESTING IN DISCOVERING NEW USES & INCREASING DEMAND FOR CORN

*The Radicle Challenge identifies top innovators to boost corn grind.*

As one of nine state corn organizations collaborating on The Radicle Corn Value Chain Challenge sponsored by US Corn Farmers, the South Dakota Corn Utilization Council (SDCUC) is excited to support this new effort to create innovative uses for corn and to establish long-term sustainable demand for corn production. SDCUC President Jim Ketelhut notes, “The South Dakota Corn Utilization Council has a long history of supporting research and developing innovative uses for corn to increase its grind. The Radicle Challenge is a fantastic opportunity to generate new markets through innovative commercialization prospects.”

The Radicle Corn Value Chain Challenge was introduced at Commodity Classic on February 29. The Challenge sets out to invest a minimum of \$1.5 million in startup and growth companies whose innovative technologies and business models create new uses for corn. Initially targeting 100 applicants, the Challenge received 132 submissions, with just four finalists announced on September 17.

Chris Bengtson, Manager of Economic Analysis & Investments at Iowa Corn, who helped spearhead the challenge, explains, “Given the increasing corn supply and current farm economy, farmers are both increasingly efficient and feeling the strain. We are working hard to make a difference with a goal of creating new demand for corn. We connected with Radicle Growth about a year ago, and this project took off from there. Initially, Iowa Corn Promotion Board helped originate the Challenge with Radicle Growth and has been at the helm, but since we first launched, eight other corn state organizations have joined and contributed. Since the drive for increased corn demand is a national issue, it makes sense to work on this together to benefit all US farmers.”

These innovative companies presented their ideas in a 30-minute, shark tank-style pitch on October 22, with me energy claiming the top prize.



## TOP PRIZE \$1 MILLION

- **ME ENERGY GMBH** – me energy has developed technology for Rapid Chargers that generate climate-friendly electricity from low-cost ethanol. Their portable, rapid chargers, powered by renewable energy like corn bioethanol, offer a new use for corn. These stations are self-sufficient and do not require a connection to the power grid, as they generate their own electricity from sustainable bioethanol.

## SECOND PRIZE \$500,000

- **LÅKRIL TECHNOLOGIES** – Låkril’s bifunctional catalyst enables the efficient conversion of corn ethanol into bio-based acrylics, offering a sustainable alternative to traditional petrochemical methods. This innovation utilizes renewable corn resources to produce acrylics, reducing carbon emissions and aligning with the increasing demand for eco-friendly chemical production solutions.

## OTHER FINALISTS

- **CATALYXX** – Catalyxx is pioneering green technology for a sustainable future. Their unique, proven, and patented green chemistry technology produces high-value long-chain linear alcohols from corn ethanol, which are essential intermediate biochemicals for decarbonizing the downstream chemical value chain.
- **NEW IRIIDIUM** – New Iridium’s photocatalysis platform facilitates the production of low-cost, sustainable chemicals, such as acetic acid, from plants and carbon dioxide. While the acetic acid value chain currently relies on petroleum, innovations like photocatalysis could enable sustainable production from corn bioethanol.

Bengtson notes, “One of the key questions we’re addressing with each company is the potential total bushel demand for each technology. Our goal is for the winning companies to drive significant corn demand. We want to grind more corn and will continue to support these companies through mentorship, networking, policy, and market development.”



Dr. Alex Buck, Director of Industrial Innovation at Iowa Corn worked to help launch the Radicle Challenge last spring.



Groton, SD

## ABOUT THE RADICLE CHALLENGE

The Radicle Challenge seeks the most promising entrepreneurs with transformative technologies poised to disrupt the Ag and Food industries. Over six months of due diligence culminates in a 30-minute pitch to esteemed judges. The top company receives investment and access to Radicle’s ecosystem. Radicle Growth designs challenges around themes with the potential for significant positive impact on our food system. We partner with leading Ag and Food corporations worldwide, demonstrating the immense value of the Radicle Challenge, as evidenced by our portfolio’s performance.\*

\*Source: radicle.vc







Ryan LeGrand presents to the South Dakota Corn Utilization Council.

# RYAN LEGRAND

*Behind the Scenes with the U.S. Grains Council President and CEO*

Ryan LeGrand, a self-professed country boy from rural Oklahoma, has steadily climbed the ranks, transitioning from a grain trader in export markets to leading the U.S. Grains Council (USGC) as its President and CEO.

Through the support of numerous commodity groups, including the South Dakota Corn Utilization Council (SDCUC or Council), the USGC works to develop export markets for corn and related products, such as distiller's dried grains with solubles (DDGS) and ethanol.

LeGrand asserts, "We're at the forefront when it comes to opening markets for ethanol, DDGS, and other value-added products, all of which contribute to the economic basis of the United States. Our job is to open, defend, and maintain markets to help reduce excess supply here in South Dakota."

SDCUC President Jim Ketelhut explains, "Supporting the U.S. Grains Council goes to the heart of what we do as a Council. We exist to develop and maintain new and existing markets, promote new uses, and increase profitability for all South Dakota corn producers. As exports remain critical for corn growers, so does our support for initiatives that drive demand for corn across the globe."

Beyond advocating for foreign trade, the USGC also provides industry expertise to the U.S. government. "Without our influence, we would likely see product backups in the U.S., which would ultimately drive down commodity prices," shares LeGrand.

The USGC operates with a staff of 35 in Washington, D.C., and maintains offices in nine countries, with full-time employees in 29 countries running programs in 60 countries globally. Most recently, they signed a memorandum of understanding

with Taiwan's largest state-owned oil refinery, Chinese Petroleum Corp (CPC), to collaborate on research initiatives and technical exchange programs aimed at introducing gasoline blended with 10 percent ethanol (E10) in Taiwan.

According to the USGC, the value of South Dakota's corn exports to the economy in 2022 was \$916.5 million, with a total output of over \$1.7 billion.

## CREATING DEMAND FOR CORN ACROSS THE GLOBE

"We have many concerns and opportunities. Some countries believe they can achieve self-sufficiency when they realistically cannot, and this disrupts global trade. We see significant opportunities in exporting value-added products, particularly ethanol, which is poised for exponential growth over the next several years," says LeGrand.

## ABOUT THE U.S. GRAINS COUNCIL

The U.S. Grains Council develops export markets for U.S. barley, corn, sorghum, and related products, including DDGS and ethanol. With a full-time presence in 28 locations, the Council operates programs in more than 50 countries and the European Union. The Council believes that exports are vital to global economic development and the profitability of U.S. agriculture.\*

*\*Taken from the U.S. Grains Council website*



From L to R: Jim Ketelhut, Jay Esser, Reno Brueggeman, Nick Fickbohm, Ryan LeGrand, Grant Rix, Chad Blindauer, Chris Nickeson and Doug Noem.



Ryan LeGrand at the India Office Grand Opening.

# EPA ATRAZINE PROPOSAL

*Flawed science creates serious questions and concerns for growers.*

When the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed an increase in the atrazine aquatic level of concern (CE-LOC) in early July, it seemed that growers had reason to celebrate. Previously, levels were ultra-low at 3.4 parts per billion (ppb) level, which were increased nearly three times higher to 9.7 ppb. This announcement came on the heels of a Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP) for atrazine held last August, which was requested by the Triazine Network, an alliance of grower organizations including the South Dakota Corn Growers Association.

However, while the CE-LOC did increase, the mitigation maps of impacted areas only minimally changed. According to Triazine Network Co-Chair Greg Krissek, "In its June update, EPA more than tripled the CE-LOC for atrazine, however, the area of farmland that will require mitigation is basically unchanged. This is because the EPA continues to use the Watershed Regressions for Pesticides for multiple pesticides (WARP-MP) model for its mitigation maps, which is not suitable for predicting atrazine concentrations. The model is useful for predicting runoff in watersheds but was not designed to accurately predict atrazine concentrations in watersheds." He continues, "To make matters worse, EPA continues to rely on the upper 95% prediction interval concentrations, rather than mean concentrations, from the WARP-MP model to determine which watersheds potentially have atrazine concentrations exceeding the CE-LOC. This results in atrazine concentrations being dramatically overestimated compared to actual water

sampling data from an EPA-required program."

In addition to flawed studies, the EPA also took a one-size fits all approach for all ag land which doesn't account for variable topography and climate. Krissek states, "The mitigation maps generated through WARP-MP continue to identify areas of CE-LOC exceedances in areas where runoff to streams is highly unlikely or nearly impossible. For example, areas in the Great Plains are flat with a semi-arid climate with few if any streams with running water (let alone any aquatic life). The WARP-MP model predicts many of these areas to exceed the 9.7 parts per billion CE-LOC. Growers in these flat, dry areas would be required to use mitigation practices from the picklist (like contour farming on flat land) that are impractical and have no tangible benefit because of the lack of aquatic plant communities."

Grassroots efforts, which have been proven to help shape policy in the past, remain a critical factor today in situations like this. Krissek asserts, "The voice of the grower is vital in efforts to protect inputs like atrazine from overregulation based on poor scientific evidence. Growers can best explain how they use the herbicides as well as the economic and environmental impacts of losing access to herbicides like atrazine. Comments from real farmers has been very effective in the past."



“Under the current proposal, the use of atrazine would be seriously impacted on about 70 percent of U.S. corn acres, as well as other crops. Growers would be forced to prove the adoption of multiple mitigation practices to be able to use atrazine. The strict regulations would amount to a ban on the use of atrazine for many farmers. Because atrazine is a key herbicide to control weeds in no-till farming practices, the loss of this herbicide would have devastating impacts on sustainable farming practices. Farmers also rely on atrazine as a lower cost weed control tool, and losing its use will have a direct impact on profitability.”

*Triazine Network Co-Chair Greg Krissek*





Dave and Karli Ellens with their daughters in Madison, SD.

Ellens, a third-generation farmer and Pioneer dealer, lives and farms in rural Madison with his wife, Karli, and their four daughters: twins Juliet and Luella, Sophie, and Willa. He also co-owns and operates Lakeco Crop Services, a startup ag company he and a college friend launched together in 2019.

Serving as a board member and now President of the SDCGA has been transformative for Ellens. Not only has he witnessed the positive changes the organization has brought to fellow farmers, but he has also formed lifelong friendships. However, it hasn't always been smooth sailing. "As someone with a people-pleaser mentality, it was challenging to push for decisions that do not have complete consensus.

However, the decisions we make today will impact the agricultural industry my children will be part of in the future. I've always seen myself as a middle-man in our farming operation. I may be running the show now, but my goal is to improve it for when my children take over. I approach my role in the SDCGA similarly: I might be president now, but my aim from day one has been to enhance this organization and the ag industry for the future."

As a father of a young family, Ellens finds time increasingly valuable, but his work with the SDCGA remains a top priority.

*"I always say you'll find time for the things that matter to you. Farming, my ag businesses, and SDCGA are all crucial to me, so balancing them can be challenging. Nonetheless, I've done my best to make time for each of them."*

He adds, "It's incredibly important that my wife, Karli, supports my work with the SDCGA. It wouldn't be possible to manage all the travel and time away from my family without her backing and belief in the difference we're making with SD Corn. Her support makes all of this possible."

# FAMILY MAN, *FARMER,* ENTREPRENEUR, ADVOCATE

*South Dakota Corn Growers Association President  
Dave Ellens finds time to make an impact.*



Five years ago, Dave Ellens wasn't focused on the South Dakota Corn Growers Association (SDCGA). In fact, he knew little about the organization. Reflecting on his early involvement, he recalls, "When I first joined the SDCGA, it was for personal reasons. I wanted to network with other farmers and ag leaders in the state and to be seen as a community leader involved in local and state organizations." He adds with a shrug, "But as I became more engaged with SD Corn, I realized the significant impact we have on agriculture in this state. That's why I continue to serve on this board. I believe in the difference we make for South Dakota corn farmers."





# NICK OLSON

## PUSHES FOR THE WIN

*Yield Contest boosts innovation through friendly competition.*

Farming, in many ways, is a lot like playing football.

Coaches develop players, send out their starting teams and hope they have the skill, heart, and drive to win, ultimately leading to a championship season.

Farmers plant the seeds they believe will thrive in their fields, resilient enough to withstand South Dakota's erratic weather, while applying optimal levels of nutrition and protection—all in the hope of producing a bumper crop that can be sold at a decent profit.

Just as the end of a football season culminates in playoffs, harvest time is also around the corner, marking the moment when hard work should pay off.

For Nick Olson who farms in rural Vermillion, the competitive spirit of the



“

**I believe most producers are trying to maximize yield while minimizing expenses. The Yield Contest shows that there is a way to plan and learn from the results, which, in turn, brings better farming practices to the operation.”**

**– Nick Olson, Vermillion**

Yield Contest drew him in and motivated him to participate. “I heard about the contest a few years back, and it sparked something in me to join. I grew up playing different sports, and the Yield Contest has a competitive spirit that I enjoy. The challenge of trying to maximize not just the contest acres, but all the row crop acres, is a fun process.”

Growing up in Meckling, SD, on the family farm, Nick began his own farming operation while attending South Dakota State University (SDSU). “I started small, farming 80 acres while I was in school. My dad had equipment that he let me borrow and use during my first few years in business. Additionally, I was able to take advantage of the first-time farmer program through the Farm Service Agency (FSA), which allowed me to purchase some row crop land and start operating after graduating from SDSU in 2007. My uncle and grandpa also farmed together on my mom's side as I was growing up. My grandpa has since

retired, and today I farm alongside my uncle and his son.”

In 2023, Nick competed in the Yield Contest for the first time, placing 2nd in the Strip-Till, includes Minimum-Till, Mulch-Till, Ridge-Till Irrigated category. He hopes to achieve an even better result this year. “I found the experience both fun and educational. Last year was my first time competing in the contest, so it was enjoyable to learn the process and planning involved. There's a lot of thought that goes into selecting the variety, location and practices. It's also rewarding to see how well your plan performs and the results it yields.”

Nutrien Ag Solutions agronomist Mason Mueller who works with Nick shares, “I provide Nick with knowledge of agronomic data to be successful on every decision he makes throughout the season whether it's from the soil, which is where it all starts, specific hybrid placement or timing of different specialized products in season.



The yield contest allows all those key decisions that Nick and I made together to be recognized on a state and national level, which is why I enjoy the contest as an agronomist.” He continues, “I aim for my clientele of producers to be involved in the contest because I know how much hard work it takes them, day in and day out, to be as successful as possible. There is nothing more rewarding than seeing the results at the end and they should be recognized for it.”

Not just interested in competing with other producers, Nick believes the contest has driven him to be more innovative and effective in his own farming practices. “I see the contest as a tool for learning and interacting with other corn growers. Corn production is ever-evolving, and the Yield Contest provides an opportunity to push the envelope and discover the potential of those acres. Individually, you get to plan the process and see the results, but there are also opportunities to share those practices with other growers at the South Dakota Corn Growers Association meeting or even the National Corn Growers Association meeting, which can be beneficial.”

Another new experience for Nick was joining the South Dakota Corn Growers Association in order to compete in the Yield Contest. “I didn't hesitate to purchase a three-year membership and look forward to future Yield Contests and the annual South Dakota Corn Growers banquet. My longer-term plan is to attend the National Corn Growers meeting and interact with other Yield Contest contestants.”

All winners and their seed corn representatives will have the opportunity to attend a Winner's Circle celebration as well as an evening banquet to be recognized at the South Dakota Corn Conference held on January 18th, 2025 at the Sioux Falls Convention Center in Sioux Falls.



### ANNUAL YIELD CONTEST

The Yield Contest is a National Corn Growers Association (NCGA) competition held annually. It has been organized to encourage the development of new, sustainable and innovative management practices resulting in higher yields and to show the importance of using sound agricultural practices in United States corn production. Trophies are awarded to the first, second and third place national winners, and first, second and third place state winners in each class.

### CONTEST CLASSES

- Conventional Non-Irrigated
- No-Till Non-Irrigated
- Strip-Till, includes Minimum Till, Mulch-Till, Ridge-Till Non-Irrigated
- No-Till Irrigated
- Strip-Till, includes Minimum-Till, Mulch-Till, Ridge-Till Irrigated
- Conventional Irrigated



Nick and Mason Mueller check corn entered in the Yield Contest.



Nick and Rachel Olson with their children in Vermillion, SD.

“

**My experience with the contest has been great to be a part of. I attended the Commodity Classic in San Antonio in 2020 with a producer that had been rewarded with a trip for placing in the contest. The experience was something that I will never forget as it was a special moment seeing him being recognized on a national stage for his success.”**

**– Mason Mueller, Agronomist, Nutrien Ag Solutions Yankton**





# CORN COB OPEN SCORES A HOLE IN ONE

## Golf Tournament Supports the South Dakota Corn Growers Association

Every year, the South Dakota Corn Growers Association (SDCGA) hosts a golf tournament, one of their two annual fundraisers, to support their mission of increasing the profitability of all South Dakota corn farmers through a strong legislative voice. This year, the tournament was held at the Brookings Country Club, with 38 teams competing.

SDCGA President Dave Ellens emphasizes, "The Corn Cob Open is a great opportunity for us to connect with agribusiness and other growers to help advance our organization. We were fortunate to enjoy beautiful weather on a great course, but more importantly, we appreciate the support of our friends and sponsors who make this event possible."



Brookings FFA students helped run games for the tournament.



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## THE FUTURE LOOKS PROMISING FOR E30

*Study supports E30's affordable, high-octane, low carbon viability for majority of cars on the road today.*

In 2019, the Nebraska Ethanol Board (NEB) launched a study to determine the long-term adaptability and effects of non-flex fuel vehicles (FFV's) using E30, a blend of 30 percent ethanol with 70 percent regular gasoline. The study demonstrated the effects of the biofuel on 50 state-owned vehicles with amazing results. It found that the biofuel had no negative mechanical effects on the tested vehicles but saved thousands of dollars at the pump.

According to Executive Director of the NEB Reid Wagner, "Our first phase of this study in 2019 was very limited in scope and more of a proof of concept, but the point was to conduct a peer review and publish it in an academic journal." In 2022 the NEB gained approval by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to further their work on a much larger scale with the help of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL).

Today, the NEB is approved to conduct research on a Nebraska state-owned fleet of 825 vehicles using roughly 90,000 gallons of E30 every month, with various vehicles utilizing onboard diagnostic tracking devices. "We are tracking 16 to 32 data points per second on each one of those vehicles, and one of my favorite

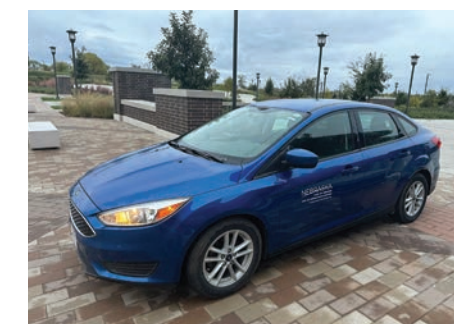
statistics to share is that we have had zero problems utilizing E30. The vehicles just have the run-of-the-mill maintenance codes that you would normally see from cars at various points in their lifetimes. Nothing attributable to the fuel," Wagner said.

Not only is the study targeting the biofuel's effect on non-FFV's, it is also tracking the effects it is having on the infrastructure dispensing it. Wagner asserted, "This infrastructure is robustly offering this fuel with no problems, and it's also been approved by our fire marshal."

Regarding why the jump from E15, which is still not available for sale 12 months of the year in all states due to EPA regulations, to testing E30, Wagner shares interesting data. "E30 actually has a lower volatility than either E10 or E15 so it's solving a problem that the EPA has an issue with. In addition, it's a higher-octane fuel so your car will actually perform better with more power." E30 blends typically have an octane rating of 92 or 93 compared to 88 from E15, and is friendly for consumers because it costs less at the pump.

Wagner hopes to have the study wrapped up in 2026 and credits their ability to conduct it to support from UNL, corn growers associations as well as their past and current governors. "It's been a really great partnership with UNL and our former Governor Pete Ricketts and now Governor Jim Pillen who both really helped get this off the ground."

Chief Executive Officer Jim Seurer of South Dakota based Glacial Lakes Energy, LLC says, "Ethanol is woefully underutilized, so it was nice to see the Nebraska study and I was pleased to see that it has expanded so much since it was first launched in 2019. We believe there is a case for higher blends, and I think the ethanol board in Nebraska has proved it "



Realtime data for E30 is pulled from small tracking devices that are plugged into the interior of the vehicle being tested.

## 16-32 DATA POINTS

are recorded every second the vehicle is in operation.







Teen driver Jersey is learning how to pump gas as well as the cost-saving benefits of ethanol from her parents in Sioux Falls.



# SD CORN SUMMER OUTREACH



The South Dakota Corn Utilization Council (SDCUC) is passionate about education. SD Corn staff members work with kids, teachers, and families across the state year-round—whether at fairs, field days, in classrooms, or at local events. Agriculture is South Dakota's number one industry, and we believe it's important for future generations to understand its impact.

This summer, the SDCUC actively engaged in numerous community outreach events across the state. From the Brown County Fair in Aberdeen to the South Dakota State Fair in Huron, education was at the forefront of our efforts. These events provided opportunities to connect with local communities, promote agriculture, partner with other commodity groups, and share knowledge about corn. Additionally, the South Dakota Corn Utilization Council supported and attended other fairs, including the Turner County Fair, Ag PhD Field Day, the Sioux Empire Fair, and Dakotafest, where they hosted interactive educational activities.



## FUEL UP SD

As part of the Fuel Up SD campaign, the South Dakota Corn Utilization Council (SDCUC) aimed to reach teen drivers who may not know that they can use ethanol-blended fuel in their gas tanks with a two-pronged approach.

Last Spring, teens and young adults were encouraged to nominate their friends to win gas cards. SD Corn partnered with Kwik Star to give away prizes for 10 weeks.

Nine \$100 Kwik Star giftcards were given out every Friday leading up to National Best Friend Day on June 8. The grand prize winner won a \$500 Kwik Star gas card!

The campaign was designed to increase awareness and understanding of the benefits of ethanol-based fuel, while helping to diminish any negative perceptions around ethanol's impact on fuel-efficiency and vehicle performance.

Additionally, SDCUC teamed up with Sioux Falls South Dakota Community Education to reach impressionable driver's education students with facts about fuel choices at the pump. Each student received a glove box "What's What at the Pump" handout to help them identify fuel labeling, and why ethanol is good for their wallet!



SD Corn crowns were a hit with children this summer during fair season.





**South Dakota Corn  
Utilization Council**

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Keynote Speaker "Blackhawk  
Down" Ranger Keni Thomas

## SPEAKER LINE-UP

### MARKETING

Peter Meyer, Principal/Crops  
Economist, Muddy Boots Ag LLC

### WEATHER

Drew Lerner, Senior Agricultural  
Meteorologist, Founder and  
President World Weather, Inc.

### EVENING KEYNOTE

Keni Thomas

# 39TH ANNUAL SD CORN CONFERENCE

**Saturday, January 18<sup>th</sup> • Sioux Falls Convention Center**

Join us for the premier agricultural event of the year hosted by the South Dakota Corn Growers Association!

Enjoy complimentary daytime educational sessions led by nationally renowned experts in weather and market trends.

Lunch is included with pre-registration.

The evening features fellowship and celebration including awards, a plated meal, and the Silent CORNPAC Auction. Keynote speaker and extraordinary storyteller Keni Thomas will captivate you with his experience as a Ranger in the infamous "Blackhawk Down" 18-hour fire fight in Mogadishu Somalia where 19 Americans died and 78 were wounded.

Call 605-334-0100 or email [amandab@sdcorn.org](mailto:amandab@sdcorn.org) to reserve a table, donate an auction item, or secure a sponsorship.



**RSVP at [eventcreate.com/e/39th-annual-south-dakota-co](https://eventcreate.com/e/39th-annual-south-dakota-co)  
or call the SD Corn office at 605.334.0100**

*This ad is paid for by the South Dakota Corn Growers Association.*