

Wisconsin Farmers Union: Represented at National Farmers Union Convention

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Thirty Wisconsin Farmers Union members are among the nearly 500 farmers and ranchers who have gathered from around the country for the 116th National Farmers Union Anniversary Convention, which kicked off yesterday in Kansas City and continues through tomorrow. This afternoon, members are taking part in the important task of shaping NFU policy for the coming year.

“As a family farmer-driven organization, NFU’s convention is the organization’s most important event of the year. It’s an opportunity to celebrate what makes Farmers Union truly unique – and that is family farmers of all types, sizes, ethnicities, regions and religions banding together to make sure they all can enjoy the American dream,” said NFU President Roger Johnson.

“We’re pleased to have such a large delegation of Wisconsin Farmers Union members this year,” said WFU President Darin Von Ruden. “We’ll be bringing some important policy forward supporting an incentives-based inventory management program that aims to provide relief for our struggling dairy producers. We’ll also be speaking up on the need to increase federal spending to establish an effective dairy safety net and to create programs that better account for the actual costs of dairy production.”

Throughout the convention, attendees will engage with industry experts, policymakers, thought leaders and fellow farmers on topics of vital importance to family farm agriculture. Top of mind for most attendees and speakers are the

severely depressed farm economy, negotiations on the upcoming Farm Bill, extreme consolidation in the agricultural sector, and the success of the next generation of family farmers.

The information learned will provide context for the organization's annual line-by-line policy review by Farmers Union delegates in the final days of the convention. "NFU's grassroots policy adoption process allows our members to dictate the direction of the organization, and it is very important to deciding the policy we bring to the table in Washington, D.C.," Johnson explained.

"This year's deliberations will be especially important, as family farmers and ranchers face a dismal farm economy, waves of consolidation, and upcoming farm bill negotiations, among the normal volatility that they deal with on a day-to-day basis," Johnson added. "We look forward to our members setting positions that are representative of policy solutions that work for family agriculture and rural communities."

Keynote remarks at this year's convention will be delivered by Jason Kander, president of Let America Vote, and Art Cullen, Pulitzer-prize winning editor of The Storm Lake Times. NFU President Roger Johnson will deliver his annual State of the Farmers Union speech. The convention will also feature a conversation on the opioid crisis gripping farm and ranch families. Sarah Tyree, Vice President of Government Relations at CoBank, will moderate a panel with NFU President Roger Johnson, American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall, and USDA Assistant to the Secretary for Rural Development Anne Hazlett. The panel will focus on NFU's and AFBF's joint Farm Town Strong campaign and USDA's efforts to combat opioid misuse in rural America.

Convention attendees will also be treated to a local farm tour of Shatto Milk Company, award ceremonies, NFU education programming events, and a screening of the new documentary on beginning farmer issues, "Farmers For America."

The National Convention marks the end of a year-long participation in the Beginning Farmers Institute for several WFU members, including Jess Bernstein, Klevenville; Mary Jo Borchardt, Poynette; Jacob Marty, Monticello; and Alicia Razvi, Stevens Point. BFI develops leadership and farm management skills in beginning farmers and encourages them to apply those abilities in their community organizations.

Jessica Jurcek of Jefferson is attending the convention as part of her role on NFU's

National Youth Advisory Council, which she was elected to this past summer at All-States Camp in Bailey, Colo.

Caleb and Lauren Langworthy of Blue Ox Farm in Wheeler are among farmers from across the Midwest and Great Plains who are taking part in the Farmers Union Enterprises Leadership Program, which includes leadership and personal development activities that aim to amp up Farmers Union involvement and networking skills.

The 2019 NFU Convention will be in March 2-5 in Bellevue, Washington. Learn more about the convention and NFU at www.nfu.org.

Wisconsin Farmers Union is a member-driven organization committed to enhancing the quality of life for family farmers, rural communities, and all people through educational opportunities, cooperative endeavors, and civic engagement. Learn more at www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com.