

## **Central Wisconsin Farmer Participates In Global Forum**

**BERLIN, Germany** – Chris Holman, co-owner and operator of Nami Moon Farms near Stevens Point, joined other young farmers from around the world in Berlin Jan. 19-21 for The Global Forum on Food and Agriculture (GFFA). The GFFA is an international conference focused on central questions concerning the future of the global agri-food industry.

The conference gives representatives from the world of politics, business, science and civil society an opportunity to share ideas and enhance understanding on a selected topic of current agricultural policy. This year, the main topic was “Agriculture and Water: Key to Feeding the World.” Only around one percent of the water on Earth is freely available as freshwater, and over the last 50 years, water consumption has roughly tripled. As water becomes scarcer and competition over water usage intensifies, political stability and economic and social development are put at risk.

Eight young farmers were nominated by the World Farmers Organization and then invited and hosted by the German Ministry of Food and Agriculture to participate in the forum alongside 83 ministers of agriculture from around the world. This was the first year that young farmers were invited to be a part of the process, and the farmers hailed from Uganda, Cambodia, New Zealand, Argentina, the United States, Ireland, Italy, and Germany. The young farmers crafted their own policy message that was then presented to and shared with the gathered ministers and incorporated into the wider policy discussion that took place.

“As representatives of young farmers from each continent, our group brought a message that policymakers don’t often hear,” Holman said. “Our point of view is key because farmers are the ones who will be implementing local, national, and global policies on the ground. We are those farmers, and we are ready and motivated to take on these issues and to carry agriculture forward into an uncertain future. In order to do that, though, we need to be represented in the policymaking process, and our voices need to be heard. To have more than 80 ministers of agriculture take us seriously, engage us on the issues, and incorporate our vision into their own is a real testament to the seriousness that global leaders in agriculture have when it comes to addressing key issues. We need to see more initiatives like this in the United States.”

“Wisconsin Farmers Union was honored by the opportunity to send one of the eight young farmers nominated by the World Farmers Organization to participate in The Global Forum on Food and Agriculture (GFFA),” said Wisconsin Farmers Union President Darin Von Ruden. “Chris has been an active and thoughtful leader in the grassroots efforts of Farmers Union here in Wisconsin, and we were pleased to have him join a global discussion focused on our most precious natural resource, water. WFU has supported watershed projects around Wisconsin for years, and we believe farmers should be taking an active part in the discussion on how to preserve and protect our groundwater for future generations.”

GFFA participants also attended Berlin’s International Green Week, which is held each year in January. This event attracts nearly half of a million people from all over the world and includes a massive farm trade show, high-level panels discussing the GFFA’s theme for the year, cultural events highlighting the food and farmers of Germany, and many other opportunities for people to network and learn about agriculture.

**Photo outline:** Wisconsin Farmers Union board member Chris Holman (second from left) traveled to The Global Forum on Food and Agriculture in Germany Jan. 19-21, where he was among a delegation of young farmers who participated. Also pictured (center) is Peter Bleser, a member of the German Parliament and Ministry of Food and Agriculture.

*Wisconsin Farmers Union, a member-driven organization, is committed to enhancing the quality of life for family farmers, rural communities, and all people through educational opportunities, cooperative endeavors, and civic engagement. For more information visit [www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com](http://www.wisconsinfarmersunion.com).*

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