



December 2019 Minnesota Grain & Feed Association Newsletter

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UMSCA Agreement Reached; Contact Your Legislator Today to Urge Swift Ratification

On Dec. 10, the House Democrats' Trade Working Group and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer resolved the remaining provisions in the U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), reaching a deal. The deal must now be ratified by all three countries; a U.S. House of Representatives vote is scheduled for this Thursday.

If you have not yet asked your Congressperson to bring the agreement to a vote, now is the time. [Click here](#) to find your representative and then take a minute to contact them (call, email or tweet) and urge them to swiftly ratify the trade deal.

USMCA will advance United States agricultural interests in two of the most important markets for American farmers, ranchers, and agribusinesses. This high-standard agreement builds upon our existing markets to expand United States food and agricultural exports and support food processing and rural jobs.

Canada and Mexico are our first and second largest export markets for United States food and agricultural products, totaling more than \$39.7 billion food and agricultural exports in 2018. These exports support more than 325,000 American jobs.

All food and agricultural products that have zero tariffs under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) will remain at zero tariffs. Since the original NAFTA did not eliminate all tariffs on agricultural trade between the United States and Canada, the USMCA will create new market access opportunities for United States exports to Canada of dairy, poultry, and eggs, and in exchange the United States will provide new access to Canada for some dairy, peanut, and a limited amount of sugar and sugar-containing products. (Source: USDA)

[Click here](#) for more information from the U.S. Department of Agriculture on the trade provisions, as well as Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue's statement on the agreement.

Make Plans to Attend the 113th Annual MGFA Convention & Industry Trade Show

The 113th Annual Minnesota Grain and Feed Association Convention & Industry Trade Show is scheduled for March 3-5, 2020 at the DoubleTree By Hilton Hotel in Bloomington, MN. We look forward to hosting everyone for an exciting & informative event, so be sure to share the following information with your staff, board of directors and spouses and make your plans to attend today. The preliminary agenda is posted below and we plan to announce a few more speakers soon.

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

Noon	MGFA Board Meeting
Afternoon	Pre-Convention Tour – <i>Information coming soon</i>
Evening	Hospitality Suites

Wednesday, March 4, 2020

7:00 a.m.	Convention Registration & Breakfast
8:00 a.m.- 10:30 a.m.	Concurrent Session Breakouts

Co-op Director Session –

- Legislative Update – Grain Law Changes – **Nick Milanowski, MN Department of Agriculture Fruit, Vegetable & Grain Section Manager**
- Mental Health & Stress Management Discussion – Speaker TBA
- Co-op Board Responsibilities – Contemplating decisions that impact the financial and strategic position of co-ops & their members – **Dr. Keri Jacobs, Iowa State University Associate Professor of Economics and Extension Economist**

Manager/Employee/Owner Session –

- Credit Policy Discussion – Speaker TBA
- Legislative Update – Grain Law Changes - **Nick Milanowski, MN Department of Agriculture Fruit, Vegetable & Grain Section Manager**
- Prevention & Control of Grain Elevator/Feed Mill Air Emissions – **Emily Ohde, Business Assistance Specialist, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency**

10:45 a.m.	113 th Annual MGFA Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Officer Elections• Awards Presentation
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11:00 a.m.	Spouse Luncheon & Program – Courtney Godfrey, FOX9 TV Reporter
11:15 a.m.	Keynote Speaker - TBA
Noon – 5:30 p.m.	Trade Show Opens / Silent Auction – Lunch in Trade Show
4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.	Happy Hour in Trade Show
Evening	Hospitality Suites

Thursday, March 5, 2020

7:00 a.m.	Convention Registration
7:30 – 9:30 a.m.	Re-Opening & Closing of Trade Show <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast in Trade Show
9:30 a.m.	Final Session Market Update – TBD
10:15 a.m.	Closing Keynote U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue – Invited

MGFA Convention Hotel Now Accepting Reservations – Book Your Rooms Today

The DoubleTree By Hilton – Bloomington, site of the 113th Annual MGFA Convention and Industry Trade Show, is now accepting room reservations. Please use the following link to make your reservations online: https://doubletree.hilton.com/en/dt/groups/personalized/M/MSPBSDT-MGF20200301/index.jhtml?WT.mc_id=POG.

If you prefer to make reservations by phone, please call 952-835-7800 and **use the group code MGF**. The convention room rate is \$113/night. We encourage members to make plans to attend the entire convention to take full advantage of the networking, educational opportunities, industry trade show and other events we've planned for you. We would greatly appreciate your participation in this event designed specifically for grain and feed industry members.

MGFA Seeks Candidates for Annual Community Service Award

Each year at the Annual Convention, the MGFA recognizes a member of the association who has demonstrated exceptional community service and leadership. Past recipients have provided good examples of community leadership and commitment in the form of community, church and civic group volunteerism, serving as mayor, fire chief or county commissioner, serving on the school board, etc. If you know someone you think is deserving of this recognition, please let us know. A brief application (resume) form would need to be completed, along with the submission of career and family photos. The candidate chosen will be recognized at the convention general session, in the Spring edition of the MGFA member magazine, on our website and in a post-convention media press release. Complimentary convention registration and lodging will also be extended to this deserving individual. Please give this request some serious consideration! You can view the list of past recipients by going to www.mgfa.org > About Us > MGFA Community Service Award.

African Swine Fever Information

Following MGFA's recent call with the MN Board of Animal Health's Emergency Disease Management Committee, we've been asked to help distribute information about African Swine Fever (ASF) and foreign animal diseases (FAD) to members. We have two PDF's you can use to help educate your employees and your customers about ASF and FAD's. While ASF has not been found in the U.S. yet, the attached documents provide useful information about symptoms of the disease and bio-security measures. Please feel free to share the information. Click the following links to see the [ASF fact sheet](#) and the [FAD fact sheet](#).

General Manager Wanted - Elbow Lake Coop Grain

Elbow Lake Coop Grain is seeking applications for the General Manager position.

Elbow Lake Coop Grain is a multisite grain and agronomy company with shuttle loading capabilities located in West Central, MN. The General Manager is responsible for the daily operations of the Coop with grain facilities in Elbow Lake and Wendell, MN and agronomy locations in Elbow Lake and Nashua, MN.

Interested individuals should contact Elbow Lake Coop Grain for more information or send their resume to:

Elbow Lake Coop Grain
PO Box 68
109 1st Street SE
Elbow Lake, MN 56531

NGFA Testifies at STB Hearing on Rail Revenue Adequacy

During a Dec. 12-13 public hearing at the federal Surface Transportation Board (STB), the NGFA urged the agency to move forward with several rail revenue adequacy recommendations developed by the STB's Rate Reform Task Force.

Sharon Clark, senior vice president for transportation and regulatory affairs at Perdue Agribusiness in Salisbury, Md, testified on behalf of NGFA on Dec. 13 in her capacity as a member of NGFA Board of Directors and Executive Committee. Her testimony supplemented [written testimony](#) NGFA submitted to the STB on Nov. 26.

"It is vitally important that the Board restore some semblance of balanced regulatory oversight in today's rail marketplace precisely to ensure that the freight rail industry continues to be a viable part of our national transportation system, including for American agriculture," Clark said in urging the STB to issue proposed rules on the task force's recommendations.

The NGFA noted that the task force accurately had identified "systemic problems and flaws" inherent in the Board's existing rate-challenge methodologies and processes, and presented recommendations that are "a very reasonable attempt to address the nexus between revenue adequacy and rate regulation."

In her oral testimony, she stressed that the NGFA strongly supports the task force's recommendations that the STB:

- Establish a definition of long-term revenue adequacy applicable to rail carriers, which, when attained, would constrain their ability to impose non-competitive rail rates on their customers. The NGFA said it agreed with other shipper organizations that the task force's proposal on how to define long-term revenue adequacy was unnecessarily conservative because it tends to overemphasize the effects of recessions on the finances of railroads. NGFA recommended that the agency develop "a more comprehensive, accurate and defensible approach" for evaluating the financial soundness of Class I railroads.

- Implement a rate-increase constraint on long-term revenue-adequate railroads' ability to differentially price freight rates on captive shippers that subsequently file a formal complaint and demonstrate that the railroad imposing the rate has market dominance over the traffic at issue. "NGFA believes the clear intent of Congress when enacting the Staggers Rail Act (of 1980) was that once revenue adequacy was achieved, a carrier's freedom to charge higher rates to its captive shippers – in large part to achieve revenue-adequate status – would be curtailed in some manner," Clark said.
- Suspend or overrule so-called "bottleneck rule" protections for railroads determined to be long-term revenue adequate, thereby requiring carriers to offer shippers a rate to an interchange point to a connecting competing carrier.

Clark testified that the need to address these issues has become more urgent "given the ever-growing exercise of market power by Class I railroads following the consolidation of the North American rail marketplace into regional duopolies" and the adoption by most of them of the "precision-scheduled railroad" operating model under which railroads are reducing capacity, crews and other personnel in an effort to cut costs and maximize revenues to impress Wall Street investors. "In this current market environment, railroads are imposing ever-increasing freight rates and commercially unfair demurrage and accessorial charges and rules, while also dictating the frequency and conditions under which they will provide service," she noted.

Source: NGFA Newsletter



We wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!
The MGFA office will be closed in observance of Christmas on the 24th and 25th.

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