



June 2020 Minnesota Grain & Feed Association Newsletter

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MGFA Schedules Annual Summer Golf Outings in Red Lake Falls & Hutchinson

The Minnesota Grain and Feed Association has traditionally held two summer golf outings for members – one up north and one in the south central part of the state. This year, due to the pandemic and the restrictions on gatherings, the planning for these events has been delayed; however, we'd like to announce the date for the Red River Valley Golf Outing will be **July 15th in Red Lake Falls at Oak Knolls Golf Course**. This is a 9-hole event beginning at 11:00 a.m., followed by a tasty steak luncheon graciously provided by our friends at the Minnesota Wheat Growers Association. Please click [here](#) for the registration form for this event.

For our southern Minnesota golf outing, please mark your calendars for **Wednesday, August 26th at the Crow River Golf Club in Hutchinson**. This will be an 18-hole event. We are still finalizing the details for this outing & will share a registration form with you in the near future.

Required by June 29: COVID-19 Preparedness Plans for Critical Sector Businesses

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, some businesses have been defined "Critical Businesses" based on [federal guidance](#) from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). These businesses were

able to continue operations – with safety protocols in place – due to the essential nature of their work in areas such as healthcare, public safety, food and agriculture, energy, manufacturing, transportation and more.

In the weeks and months since Governor Walz first declared a peacetime emergency and Stay at Home order in Minnesota, we've now seen tens of thousands of businesses begin to safely reopen across our state. Businesses that are reopening are now required to adopt a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan to explain the policies, practices and conditions that the business will take to protect the health and safety of their workers and customers.

Critical Businesses have always been required to follow the same MDH and CDC guidelines and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards as non-Critical Sector businesses, but they had not previously been required to adopt and implement a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan.

Governor Walz and state leaders have recognized that a more consistent approach across industries and businesses in Minnesota was important – and that workers at Critical Businesses deserve the same clarity about their employers' plans to protect health and safety as those at non-Critical Sector businesses. **To ensure that happens, [Executive Order 20-74](#) requires that by June 29, 2020, all businesses – including Critical Businesses – fully adopt and implement a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan.**

Our state agency partners at the Department of Labor & Industry (DLI) and the Department of Health (MDH) have created a [template COVID-19 Preparedness Plan](#) that any business may use – it is not required, but all businesses must address a variety of components outlined in the template.

In addition, the State of Minnesota has created [industry-specific guidance](#) for several industries that have unique work environments, may pose higher risks for potential virus transmission, or that employ more vulnerable workers, including:

- [Construction](#)
- [Manufacturing](#)
- [Grocery and Convenience Stores](#)
- [Janitorial and Custodial Services](#)
- [Transportation, Distribution and Delivery](#)
- [Agriculture](#)

For other industries and businesses, the [General Guidance for All Businesses](#) should be sufficient for writing and developing a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan.

Minnesota OSHA is also prepared to assist any business with the development of their COVID-19 Preparedness Plans – if you need help, you can contact MNOSHA Workplace Safety Consultation at 651-284-5060 or OSHA.compliance@state.mn.us. You can find more information about Critical Sector exemptions and Executive Order 20-48 [here](#).

As we return to work and activities we enjoy, we have a shared responsibility to look out for each other and save lives. For extensive additional information about Minnesota's Stay Safe plan, guidance about staying safe, or to submit other questions, please visit staysafe.mn.gov.

Source: Minnesota Department of Employment & Economic Development (DEED)

MDA Presents COVID-19 Preparedness Webinar

Minnesota farm businesses, farmers' markets, and other ag business are invited to attend an informational webinar this week to learn more about the required COVID-19 Preparedness Plan.

As per the Governor's new Executive Order 20-74, farm businesses, farmers' markets, and other agricultural businesses that were designated critical businesses must have a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan that complies with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) COVID-19 guidelines and OSHA standards by June 29.

You can join Friday's webinar to learn more about COVID-19 Preparedness Plans for farm and farm businesses, who should have one, and what they should include. Presenters will be from Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and University of Minnesota Extension.

Friday, June 26, 3:00 - 4:00 pm: [Register here](#)

This webinar will cover the basic requirements that all critical businesses have a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan as well as highlight resources such as templates that farms can use to create a plan. Preparedness Plans are intended to assist and support businesses in protecting employees, customers, and all Minnesotans from COVID-19. Plans will not need to be submitted to any regulatory entity unless requested.

U.S. Feed Industry Praises FDA for Creating Process to Improve Trade

The American Feed Industry Association applauded the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) for achieving a long-awaited major milestone that will bring about improved trade for U.S. animal food products abroad. [The federal agency announced Monday](#) that it will start issuing Current Good Manufacturing Practice (CGMP) certificates to animal food manufacturers looking to export feed, feed ingredients and pet food products, making it possible for facilities located across America to obtain these certificates for export where and if required and eliminating inconsistencies in state regulations.

"With an increasing number of international regulatory bodies requiring Good Manufacturing Practice certificates from manufacturers to document their compliance, it was imperative that the United States establish a mechanism for obtaining such a certificate. AFIA has been pushing for this process that will allow the continued flow of animal food products to our international buyers and stem the ongoing loss of millions of dollars in missed trade opportunities," said AFIA's President and CEO Constance Cullman. "Thanks to the hard work of the staff at the FDA CVM, animal food manufacturers in all 50 states, not just the dozen states that already had processes for issuing GMP certificates, will have the ability to obtain these certificates."

Brazil has required GMP certificates for over a decade. Without a mechanism in place for a U.S. federal authority to issue GMP certificates, only manufacturers operating in 12 states with a state-based GMP certification program could export their products to Brazil. Inconsistencies across the state-issued certificates also caused confusion and highlighted the need for a federal program as more countries begin requiring certification.

Mexico, the feed industry's largest export destination, is expected to implement a GMP certificate requirement soon. Without this program, over \$1.6 billion in exports to Mexico would be at risk.

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) gave the FDA the authority to issue and charge fees for export certificates for animal food; however, the agency opted to delay issuing the certificates until all-sized manufacturing facilities were required to be in compliance with FSMA's CGMP regulations and could be inspected. As of last October, all-sized facilities must comply with these regulations and inspections are ongoing. Once all facilities were in compliance, AFIA sent a [letter](#) last fall urging the FDA to move forward on this process.

The CGMP compliance language will be added to the Certificates of Free Sale through the CVM's Export Certification Application and Tracking System (CVM eCATS). Step-by-step instructions for submitting an application for a CGMP certificate into CVM eCATS are listed on [FDA's website](#).

Grain Standards Act Advances Out of Senate Ag Committee

During a June 24 business meeting, the Senate Agriculture Committee advanced a bill by a voice vote reauthorizing the U.S. Grain Standards Reauthorization Act for another five years. The bill was widely supported by agricultural groups who depend on the reauthorization to provide the structure for the grain inspection system.

The Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture establishes official marketing standards for grains and oilseeds under the authorization of the U.S. Grain Standards Act, which was first signed into law in 1916. The existing authorization law, which passed in 2015 and included provisions to ensure uninterrupted export inspections, expires Sept. 30.

“The entire federal grain inspection system needs the certainty, predictability and transparency that the bipartisan U.S. Grain Standards Reauthorization Act of 2020 provides,” Senate Agriculture Committee chairman Pat Roberts (R., Kan.) said. “The Senate Agriculture Committee has never let this reauthorization lapse, and as is customary in our committee, we have listened before putting pen to paper. I appreciate our stakeholders’ input while crafting this bill. It will serve them well and help maintain our country’s reputation as a reliable exporter of quality grain.”

Support came from many major agricultural groups, including the National Grain & Feed Assn. (NGFA), North American Export Grain Assn. (NAEGA) and American Farm Bureau Federation, as well as soy, wheat, sorghum, corn and canola groups.

NGFA and NAEGA said in a [June 23 support letter](#) to Roberts and Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D., Mich.): “Stakeholders – ranging from producers to grain handlers and processors to end users and consumers – benefit when [FGIS] and its delegated and designated state and private agencies provide state-of-the-art, market-responsive official inspection and weighing of bulk grains and oilseeds and do so in a reliable, uninterrupted, consistent and cost-effective manner.”

“As our farmers face unprecedented uncertainty and trade instability, it is vital that we maintain the integrity of our grain inspection system,” Stabenow said. “This bipartisan bill protects the interests of American farmers and ensures our credibility as a reliable producer of high-quality crops.”

NGFA and NAEGA said they support reauthorizing all expiring provisions of the current law for another five years, including: the ability for Congress to appropriate funding for standardization and compliance activities that have broad societal benefits, including to farmers and consumers; authorization for the USDA Grain Inspection Advisory Committee to operate, and the current statutory limitation on the amount of money FGIS can spend on administrative costs not associated with direct inspection and weighing activities.

The reauthorization bill also includes a number of improvements NGFA and NAEGA advocated for that they said will promote increased data and information sharing to benefit the system and its users, including:

- Requiring delegated state agencies to notify users of official inspection or weighing services at least 72 hours in advance of any intent to discontinue such services;
- Ensuring that FGIS user fees are directed solely to inspection and weighing services;
- Reporting requests for waivers, exceptions and other specific services received and granted by FGIS, and
- Directing FGIS to complete a comprehensive review of the current boundaries for the officially designated grain inspection agencies in the domestic marketplace.

NGFA and NAEGA also highlighted their concerns about ongoing non-tariff trade barriers that have restricted exports of U.S. grains and oilseeds, noting that the reauthorization bill retains the provision that prohibits the “use of false or misleading grade designations” for U.S. grain exports.

The National Association of Wheat Growers (NAWG) and U.S. Wheat Associates (USW) applauded the advancement of the bill.

“Thanks in part to the advantage and premium international buyers place on the grain inspection system, U.S. wheat continues to maintain its competitiveness in the international market. Given the current uncertainty in trade agreements and many of the bearish factors working against U.S. wheat exports, it is critical we maintain one of our key advantages,” said NAWG president Dave Milligan, a Cass City, Mich., farmer. “To avoid any disruption in inspection services and keep the flow of grain moving NAWG encourages Congress to act quickly to reauthorize the Grain Standards Act before expiration in September.”

USW chairman and Paulding, Ohio, wheat farmer Doug Goyings added, “Our exports markets are critical to U.S. wheat farmers’ bottom lines as they see 50% of U.S. wheat exported each year. The grain inspection system is one of our key advantages over our competitors that has helped wheat and other U.S. commodities grow export markets. Our overseas customers value the independent system in place through the Grain Standards Act.”

Port worker negotiations

During comments at the business meeting, Stabenow and Sen. Sherrod Brown (D., Ohio) also acknowledged the ongoing labor negotiations at export grain terminals in the Pacific Northwest.

“I have heard troubling reports that certain foreign-owned grain companies may be failing to make good-faith efforts to reach an agreement with their workers. It’s concerning to hear they are threatening workers’ pensions and access to health care,” Stabenow said. “I would urge all parties to engage in the process in good faith. If left unresolved, these negotiations will undermine certainty for everyone involved in the grain trade, which is the purpose of our meeting today.”

Thousands of West Coast dock workers are covered by contracts with Marubeni, Mitsui and Louis-Dreyfus that expired more than two years ago, on May 31, 2018. All three companies began the bargaining process by demanding that workers forfeit long-standing benefits and work rules. Company officials have refused to compromise on their take-away demands for more than two years while remaining profitable, the International Longshore & Warehouse Union stated in a release.

“Our families cannot and will not give up living standards that American workers have fought so hard to win,” said Jared Smith, a grain worker at the United Grain terminal owned by Mitsui in Vancouver, Wash. “Our families deserve a secure future from these foreign-owned companies that are healthy, profitable and control much of the world’s grain supply. They’re supposed to negotiate, not dictate.”

The company’s “take-it-or-leave-it” approach has effectively ended meaningful negotiations since the spring of 2019.

Workers remain committed to reaching a fair agreement with the companies, noting that they were able to reach a settlement in May 2018 with the only remaining U.S.-owned grain export terminal operator, Cargill-CHS (TEMCO). The TEMCO agreement protects working families, assures no disruptions in grain exports and maintains a highly skilled workforce in export terminals that benefit farmers, workers and the U.S. economy.

“We won’t allow big foreign corporations to bully workers into giving away long-established pension and health care benefits that help 3,000 American workers in Oregon and Washington,” ILWU president William Adams said.

“We’re committed to working with America’s farmers to ensure that grain exports get the government inspections needed by overseas customers but can’t allow foreign corporations to attack the health, welfare and pensions of American workers – then receive a government seal of approval for their exports,” Adams said. “It’s time for these ‘big three’ conglomerates to bargain in good faith for the benefit of American workers and farmers.”

Source: Feedstuffs

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