The 2012 Agri-Growth Annual Meeting and Speakers Conference will be held on November 13th at the Minneapolis Convention Center. The impressive schedule includes notable industry leaders like the Deputy Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, the Senior VP of Market Transformation at the World Wildlife Fund, leading election pundits from both The Cook Political Report and Politico.com, and two authorities on Minnesota Politics. However, one of the most notable speakers of the day may be Richard Berman. Although you may not recognize the name, you’ll recognize his work. Richard Berman is the President of Berman and Company, a Washington, D.C.-based public affairs firm specializing in strategic research, communications and creative advertising. Berman is also the executive director of Center for Consumer Freedom (consumerfreedom.com) and HumaneWatch.org.

Berman and Company isn’t your average PR firm. Their mission is to “change the debate,” not simply contribute to it. Through their fact-based, hard-hitting approach to public relations and issue advocacy, Berman and Company makes the public think twice about commonly held assumptions. “My goal is to make people say, ‘I’ve never thought of it that way before,’” says Berman. And this is exactly his approach to dealing with industry bullies like the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). Berman addresses falsehoods propagated by HSUS through the group HumaneWatch.org. While HSUS claims to benefit animal shelters and support abused or neglected dogs and cats, HumaneWatch.org has shed light on the fact that HSUS only gives one penny from every dollar donated to animal shelters. The remaining dollars go toward attacking the food and agriculture industry.

Berman will speak to attendees about changing the dialog and promoting a positive image of the industry. Through increased transparency and continued efforts combating attack ads, the food and agriculture industry can change the public perception. Don’t miss this chance to hear from an expert on dealing with animal activists and misinformation.

Registration is open for this event, but filling up fast. Register today by filling out the form inside this newsletter or online at agrigrowth.org/AM.

Panel Features National and Local Pundits to Comment on Election Outcomes
The Agri-Growth Conference will conclude with a panel to review the outcome of the 2012 election and what the impacts will be from both a national and local perspective. Featured on the panel are two national political reporters and two local experts on Minnesota politics.

The national speakers are Jennifer Duffy, Senior Editor with The Cook Political Report; and James Hohmann, National Political Reporter with Politico.com. Duffy has 26 years of experience in campaign politics, the last 23 of which have focused on non-partisan political analysis. In 1985, she served as Press Secretary for the National Republican Senatorial Committee. Hohmann is a Minnesota native who graduated from Stanford University. Prior to working at Politico.com, Hohmann wrote for The Washington Post. Previously he wrote for The Los Angeles Times’ Washington bureau, The Dallas Morning News and The San Jose Mercury News.

The state perspective panelists include Dr. Lawrence Jacobs, Director of the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance at the University of Minnesota; and Blois Olson, Founder of Fluence Media and Editor of The Morning Take. Jacobs has published 14 books and edited dozens of articles on elections, legislative and presidential politics. Jacobs co-edits the “Chicago Series in American Politics” for the University of Chicago Press. Olson founded Fluence Media in the belief that the silos of marketing and media have crashed. His morning take daily tip sheet and radio segment are a must read and listen for business and political leaders in the Midwest.
**Member In Focus**

**Company:** West Central Ag Services  
**Website:** www.westcentralag.com  
**Locations:** The main location is in Ulen, MN, with Minnesota branches in Beltrami, Ada, Gary, Bejou, Waubun, Lake Park, Park Rapids, Perham, Perley, Felton, Foxhome.

West Central Ag Services (WCAS), a Minnesota based cooperative, was formed in August of 2000 when two long standing co-ops – Tri County Co-op and Felton Farmers Elevator – underwent a merger. The co-op has been very progressive in growing to meet the needs of the producers in the area. In 2001 WCAS became one of the first grain shuttle shippers in the area. Investments like this have continued within the company to accommodate the changing markets with the construction of a 38,000 ton dry fertilizer distribution center in 2003. Growth continued with the expansion into an agronomy LLC partnership in 2006 with five other local co-ops called Triangle Ag LLC. With this continued growth in the agronomy business, the dry fertilizer terminal was expanded to 53,000 tons, a 1,500,000 million gallon liquid fertilizer distribution terminal was added, and a 49,000 square foot crop protection distribution center was built.

In 2008, WCAS expanded its North Dakota based agronomy business into a partnership with CHS Inc. to create a new agronomy LLC named Central Plains Ag Services (CPAS) in Hannaford, ND. A 25,000 ton dry fertilizer terminal was built on a loop track capable of transporting 110 car shuttles of dry fertilizer. In 2010 the CPAS dry fertilizer facility was expanded to 38,000 tons. Additionally in 2011, construction started on a 2.5 million bushel grain shuttle elevator at the CPAS site in Hannaford.

**Q & A with Wes Roll, COO:**  
**What is new with West Central Ag Services?**  
In January 2011, WCAS became the sole owner of the Triangle Ag LLC and ran it though the co-op structure. Further change took place in 2011 when the co-op merged in the Ada-Beltrami Co-op to expand the services in the bulk petroleum, LP, and C-store businesses. The success and growth has continued into 2012 when WCAS merged in the Beltrami Farmers Elevator. A 1.5 million bushel expansion to the Beltrami Elevator site is currently underway to create another shuttle-capable grain shipping site. All of this growth has been achieved while maintaining the necessary profitability and an aggressive equity retirement program to add value to the customers that are served.

**What are the key trends affecting your organization?**  
With the advent of corn moving further into the upper Midwest, the game has changed for us. We are dealing with a significant increase in demand for input products and storage for the resulting crop. This has changed the agriculture economy and has created significant crop shifts in our area. The traditional acres of wheat have quickly been replaced by corn.

Additionally, the average farm size seems to be growing larger every year in this area. This means we are dealing with fewer customers, but larger ones in many of our areas. The demands and needs seem to be different with every class of customer.

With the extreme volatility in crop production these days, retailers and producers have done a much better job of risk management. It has become essential to the future success of their businesses.

Obtaining and retaining a quality and knowledgeable staff has become has become a bigger challenge for our growing businesses. Our customers are more educated and demanding as they are running a larger enterprise, with larger equipment, along with using more technology to plant and care for the crop.
The 2012 Minnesota Agri-Growth Council Annual Meeting and Speakers Conference will be November 13 at the Minneapolis Convention Center. To attend this event, please register online at agrigrowth.org/AM or complete this form and return via fax (651.905.8902) or mail (408 St. Peter Street, Suite 20, St. Paul, MN 55102).

In the table below, indicate the number of tables and/or individuals who will attend.

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**billing information:**
 Select One: □ Invoice me □ Pay by credit card below □ Enclosed is my check, payable to MN Agri-Growth
 Your Name: ____________________________________________________________
 Organization Name (Name to appear in Program): ____________________________
 Mailing Address: _______________________________________________________
 City: ______________________ State: ___________ Zip: ____________
 Phone: ____________________ Fax: ___________ Email: __________________
 Credit Card: ____________ Expiration: ___________ Security Number: ____________

Visa or Mastercard Only

*Please note that cancellations will not be accepted after November 1st and “no shows” will be billed.*
Agri-Growth Conference:
November 13, 2012

8:30 a.m. — Welcome, Reports and Elections
9:30 a.m. — Richard Berman, Center for Consumer Freedom, Berman & Company
10:30 a.m. — California’s Proposition 37: How GMO labeling won/lost and what it means for the future of farming and food ingredients in the U.S. and elsewhere; Brandon Castillo, Bicker, Castillo & Fairbanks Public Affairs

Annual Members Meeting: Members Program

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Noon Luncheon and Welcome — Agri-Growth Chairwoman Kristin Weeks Duncanson, Duncanson Growers
Recognitions and announcements:
- Consul General Jamshed Merchant, Canadian Consulate Minneapolis and Rep. Kurt Zellers, Speaker, MN House of Representatives
2012 Distinguished Service Award Presentation
Keynote Remarks:
- David Redfield, Senior Vice President, Northern Plains Division, Walmart
- Michael Taylor, Deputy Commissioner for Food, U.S. Food & Drug Administration
2:15 p.m. — Global Ag Economy Outlook; Dr. Michael Swanson, Chief Ag Economist, Wells Fargo
3:15 p.m. — Global Sustainability, Corporate Social Responsibility and the Role of the Food and Agriculture Industry; Dr. Jason Clay, Senior VP, Market Transformation, World Wildlife Fund, accompanied by Dr. Jonathan Foley, Director, Institute on the Environment, U of M
- Audience discussion and Q&A led by Steve Peterson, Director Sustainability Sourcing and CSR, General Mills
4:15 p.m. — Plenary Panel: “Reviewing the 2012 Election from State and National Perspectives”
- Jennifer Duffy, Assistant Editor, The Cook Political Report
- James Hohmann, National Political Reporter, Politico
- Dr. Lawrence Jacobs, Director of the Center for the Study of Politics and Governance, U of M
- Blois Olson, Minnesota Political Pundit, Fluence Media, and Editor, The Morning Take

Afternoon Panel:

Morning Program:
Luncheon Keynote:
• AgStar Financial Services, ACA
• CHS
• RDI
• Wells Fargo
• AgStar Financial Services, ACA
• CHS
• RDI
• Wells Fargo

Premium:

Platinum:
• Land O’ Lakes, Inc

Morning Luncheon Keynote: Fægred Baker Daniels
• AgStar Financial Services, ACA
• CHS
• RDI
• Wells Fargo

Luncheon Banquet and Speakers Program

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- Blois Olson, Minnesota Political Pundit, Fluence Media, and Editor, The Morning Take

5:30 - 7:00 p.m. — Reception