Dear AgriGrowth Members and friends,

2018 brought a great deal of change to AgriGrowth which included a shift in leadership and a 50th anniversary celebration. I would like to thank Perry Aasness for his years of service as Executive Director of AgriGrowth. Perry stepped aside at the end of August, and is now serving as a multi-state governmental policy director for Compeer Financial.

It has been a pleasure working with Gene Hugoson in his interim director role. I’m very thankful that Gene, with his experience and expertise as a farmer, former legislator, and Minnesota Commissioner of Agriculture for multiple governors, was willing to step forward in September to fill in, making sure that we didn’t miss a step in our activities.

We are thankful for each of you as members, and for celebrating with us on this 50th year of the Minnesota AgriGrowth Council. When we think of the networking and advocacy that has transpired over the years in this organization, we must pause and thank the pioneers that had the vision of AgriGrowth.

1968 was a time of tremendous contrast and societal upheaval. On one hand, we were racing to put a man on the moon, but back on the farm, most work was done by hand. Communication was done with a typewriter and snail mail. Telephones had cords, and in rural areas were usually on a party line. Food processing and distribution was mostly local and perhaps regional. But technology and communication was about to seriously change how things were done.

The pioneers that formed AgriGrowth wanted Minnesota to be at the forefront in ag and food production and knew that we needed to network and solve issues together to make us a leading ag state. We not only needed dialogue between food companies and ag organizations, we also needed coordination with our education and research entities, as well as communication with our legislators, the governor and his agencies.

Out of that came the Minnesota AgriGrowth Council. In its 50 years, AgriGrowth has served as a catalyst, bringing people together, telling our story, and working behind the scenes to influence positive change.

In our AgriGrowth boardroom, we have a new tradition of what we call “around the room”. We find time at our meetings to individually share the successes and hardships of our business and sector with the entire group. Sometimes we commiserate, and sometimes we celebrate! Through that we find common ground, focus on real solutions, and determine what strategy and policy we need to pursue. In reality, this is an extension of the vision our founders had, which is communicating with each other to create a common sense solution.

We have much to be proud of in this state. We have farmers that work hard, caring for the land, while providing productivity unheard of in 1968. We created a food processing system that employs people of all backgrounds, quietly striving to put perfect food on everyone’s plate. We have an incredible marketing and distribution system ranging from farmer’s markets to fortune 500 companies selling our products around the world. To back that up, we have both private and public research entities working hard to find the next small improvement, or big breakthrough on how to feed the world.

At AgriGrowth, we believe in this Minnesota tradition of excellence. We believe we need to work together to create positive change. And with your support, we will continue to advocate for you, honoring the vision of our pioneers 50 years ago.

Thank you!

Pat Lunemann
BOARD CHAIR, AGRIGROWTH
PARTNER AND GENERAL MANAGER, TWIN EAGLE DAIRY
OUR MISSION:
Advocating for Minnesota’s Agriculture and Food Sector

AGRIGROWTH MEMBERS HAVE ACCESS TO:
INFORMATION, ENGAGEMENT, ADVOCACY

• Access to state and national experts on agriculture policy.
• Regional Workforce meetings that took place across the state allowed AgriGrowth members and others participate in learning about strategies and labor tools associated with attracting, recruiting and retaining quality talent.
• Minnesota Ag & Food Summit gathered experts from policy and economics to share insights on the biggest challenges and opportunities that US agriculture will face in the coming decades.

ACCESS TO:
ADVOCATES AND A PLATFORM TO ADVOCATE FOR YOUR ISSUES

Public Policy Team
AgriGrowth’s Lobbyist, Cory Bennett, Director of Government and Member Relations, Gary Kay, and Interim Executive Director, Gene Hugoson, all work to help express our member’s interests on federal and state policy issues.

Member Engagement
AgriGrowth engages with our membership through the legislative luncheon series, the Annual Public Policy Member Survey, Regional Meetings, the Annual Legislative Reception and, new to 2018, the AgriGrowth Day at the Capitol.

AgPAC
MN AgPAC is a Minnesota political action fund, affiliated with the MN AgriGrowth Council, organized by individual supporters across Minnesota to promote the election of pro-agriculture candidates.

AgriGrowth Leadership testifies to a Senate Joint Meeting of the Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, and Housing Finance and the Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, and Housing Policy

Gary Kay and AgriGrowth members meet with Senator Bill Weber at AgriGrowth Day at the Capitol

Senator Tina Smith meets with former executive director Perry Aasness, AgriGrowth board chair, Gary Kay, Director of Government and Member Relations, and AgriGrowth member Scott Dohmen from CF Industries.
The AgriGrowth mission statement is, “To advocate for Minnesota’s food and agriculture sector.” During each legislative session and throughout the year, AgriGrowth actively represents the interests of our members in the Minnesota legislature, with the Governor and his staff, and with state agency officials.

Water Quality

AgriGrowth understands the importance of water quality to all Minnesotans, including agriculture. We support and promote practices that are based on comprehensive data and sound science. AgriGrowth supports ongoing research efforts by commodity organizations, the University of Minnesota and state agencies that both protect Minnesota’s natural resources and enhance agriculture productivity.

AgriGrowth is proud to play a part in water quality by supporting the 2018 bonding bill which provided $25.35 million for city water and waste needs. In October, AgriGrowth submitted comments to the Office of Administrative Hearings regarding the Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s Groundwater Protection Rule.

Environmental Regulatory Reform

Minnesota’s environmental permitting system and processes continue to be a deterrent to new investment and expansion of both farms and agribusinesses. AgriGrowth supports efforts to reform the state of Minnesota’s environmental review and permitting process in ways that are more focused on outcomes, rather than processes. Additionally, AgriGrowth encourages environmental review agencies to adopt more certainty in permitting timelines that will provide for a more predictable process to the applicant.

In line with this policy priority, AgriGrowth testified on behalf of HF 2940, a bill which would have required the legislature to approve any water permitting fee increases proposed by the MPCA. The bill was passed by both chambers of the legislature, but was ultimately vetoed by Governor Dayton.

Additionally, AgriGrowth joined other farm groups to contest MPCA overreach in October. Daley Farms in Winona County has diligently followed MPCA guidelines and requirements to obtain the environmental permits necessary to expand their dairy farm. One of those requirements is a 30-day public comment period, a timeline that MPCA unilaterally extended. AgriGrowth will continue to be a part of this effort to provide more certainty in the permitting process to Minnesota farmers.

Tax Conformity

With the passage of federal tax reform, AgriGrowth encouraged the legislature and state policymakers to move to full federal tax conformity on items such as Section 179 expensing and bonus depreciation. Conforming to these provisions would have provided much needed tax relief, keep our industries competitive with neighboring states, and provide for ease of filing. AgriGrowth also advocated for a buffer tax credit funded with Clean Water Fund dollars, a clarification that certain food and beverage containers could not be taxed by local governments, and an agricultural homestead clarification. Unfortunately, the final tax bills were vetoed by Governor Dayton. Tax conformity will likely be a top priority for the 2019 legislature when they convene in January.
Federal Policy Priorities

In 2018, AgriGrowth engaged with federal policy makers on issues relating to Minnesota’s ag and food sectors. In early March, AgriGrowth leadership and staff conducted Congressional office visits with some of Minnesota’s congressional delegation. The conversations focused on how trade agreements and immigration impact the ag and food sector in Minnesota. Over the course of the year AgriGrowth also submitted letters to Members of Congress urging resolutions regarding a comprehensive solution for DACA, tax reform, the Farm Bill and Treaty NAFTA Visas. Additionally, AgriGrowth has voiced opinions through statements to the press regarding national issues related to trade and the 2018 Farm Bill.

Other Notable Efforts

In addition to our advocacy on issues directly related to ag and food production, AgriGrowth also supports bills and legislation that better the communities and regions where our members are located. This includes supporting the bonding bill’s $35 million for the Rural Finance Authority to, in part, help beginning farmers and restructure other farm loans. The bonding bill, signed by the Governor, also contained $200 million new dollars for road and bridge projects which support moving products to market and $18 million to construct a new Second Harvest Heartland charitable food facility.

Additionally, AgriGrowth supported the U of M Data Privacy Legislation which will strengthen data privacy for farmers who offer data to the University of Minnesota to be used for research to continue the develop of best practices and outcomes. Governor Dayton signed this legislation after it was passed unanimously by both chambers.

Finally, AgriGrowth supported a fugitive emissions bill which would exempt temporary storage facilities, like grain elevators and ethanol plants, from fugitive dust emission limits. This provision was included in an omnibus bill that was ultimately vetoed by the Governor.

Election Engagement

AgriGrowth encourages contributions to MN AgPAC. This PAC supports a variety of state candidates who have demonstrated their interest in supporting Minnesota’s agriculture and food sector regardless of party affiliations.

A Greater Minnesota (AGM) was formed to keep Minnesotan voters informed about agriculture and food issues. This initiative was created by AgriGrowth, the Minnesota Pork Producers Association, the Minnesota Turkey Growers Association, the Chicken and Egg Association of Minnesota, the Minnesota Milk Producers Association, the Minnesota Corn Growers Association, the Minnesota State Cattleman’s Association, the Minnesota Wheat Growers and various other Minnesota farm and food entities.
2018 HIGHLIGHTS

The NAFTA Works luncheon in March featured Congressman Tom Emmer, Gerardo Guerrero, Consul of Mexico in Saint Paul, and Canadian Consul General Paul Connors.

Minnesota AgriGrowth, in partnership with WCCO Radio and the Minnesota Corn Growers, hosted the “Greater Minnesota Debate” between Hennepin County Commissioner Jeff Johnson and Congressman Tim Walz. The event held at the MinnWest Technology Campus in Willmar, MN on Tuesday, October 9 was a live on air with WCCO Radio.

Senator Majority Leader Paul Gazelka speaks to AgriGrowth luncheon attendees.

Senator Bruce Anderson (R-Delano) and Brad Finstad, Minnesota State Director at USDA Rural Development enjoy the 2018 AgriGrowth Legislative Reception.

AriGrowth Co-Sponsored the “Greater Minnesota Debate”
AgriGrowth has changed the name of our Annual Meeting to better represent what our members and guests have told us our conference represents—a summit of ideas and learning. Our new name is the Minnesota Ag & Food Summit, hosted by AgriGrowth.

President of the Minneapolis Federal Reserve, Neel Kashkari presented his view on farm investments and the workforce shortage deriving from a booming economy. Dan Pearson, free trade professional, touched on the importance of competing in emerging markets and meeting customer’s needs. Dr. Jason Henderson, of Purdue University, offered insights on the economics behind the new U.S. trends in food.

The luncheon panel which included a conversation with AgriGrowth Board Members, included in the panel Adam Birr, Executive Director of Minnesota Corn Growers Association, Glenn Stolt, President and CEO of Christenson Farms, Rod Hebrink, President and CEO of Compeer Financial, and Kristin Weeks Duncanson, Owner of Duncanson Farms. The panel was moderated by Blois Olson, Principal of Fluence Media.

2018 Minnesota election insights panel was moderated by AgriGrowth Board Member Don Wick, and included these panelists: Mike Erlandson, Aurora Strategic Advisors, Sarah Walker, MZA+Co, Gina Countryman, Minnesota Action Network and Kurt Zellers, MZA+Co.
MINNESOTA
AGRIGROWTH
COUNCIL STAFF

GENE HUGOSON
Interim Executive Director

GARY KAY
Director of Government & Member Relations

CORY BENNETT
Bennett Government Consulting
Public Policy Director

DANA ELLIS
Ellis International Event Production

KURT ZELLERS & LEAH KOCH
MZA+Co Communications

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Executive Committee

CHAIR:
PAT LUNEMANN
Partner and General Manager,
Twin Eagle Dairy

IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR:
STEVE PETERSON
Owner & Manager, Peterson Farms & Retired Director of Sourcing Sustainability at General Mills

VICE-CHAIR:
ROD HEBRINK
President and CEO, Compeer Financial

SECRETARY:
TOM WEGNER
Director of Governance and Leader Development, Land O’Lakes, Inc.

TREASURER:
JAKE HAMLIN
Director, State Government Affairs, CHS, Inc.

Board Members

MIKE BERTHOUD
Vice President Dairy Farm and Biofuels, Ecolab

ADAM BIRR
Executive Director, Minnesota Corn Growers Association

BRIAN BUHR, PH.D.
Dean, College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences, University of Minnesota (Ex Officio)

MARK DAVIS
CEO, Davis Family Dairies

RANDALL J. DOYAL
CEO, Al-Corn Clean Fuel

KRISTIN WEEKS DUNCANSON
Owner, Duncanson Growers

DAVID FREDERICKSON
Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Agriculture (Ex Officio)

JEFF GREV
Vice President, Legislative Affairs, Hormel Foods Corporation

MARC KNISELY
CEO, AgCountry Farm Credit Services

BECCA MARTIN
Director Government Relations, Cargill

SHERYL MESHKE
Co-President and CEO, Associated Milk Producers, Inc.

CHARLIE NELSON
President, KLN Family Brands

ROB ORSTEN
Co-Owner, CFO, Orsten Turkeys Inc

MACIE O’SHAUGHNESSY
District Manager-Upper Midwest, Syngenta

ALAN POFF
Vice President, Government & Community Affairs, Schwan Food Company

TOM ROSEN
President and CEO, Rosen’s Diversified, Inc.

BETH SPARBOE SCHNELL
CEO, Sparboe Companies

GLENN STOLT
President and CEO, Christensen Farms and Feedlots, Inc.

TOM ROSEN
President and CEO, Rosen’s Diversified, Inc.

DON WICK
Farm Broadcaster and Partner, Red River Farm Network

INFO@AGRIGROWTH.ORG
@MN_AGRIGROWTH