



January 11, 2021

Chair Jamie Long
House Climate and Energy Finance and Policy
517 State Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Long and members of the committee:

On behalf of Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), I write to thank you for your leadership on climate and for actively working to ensure that Minnesota's family farmers have a seat at the table during these important conversations. I also wanted to take the opportunity to briefly share both a handful of stories from MFU members who are experiencing climate impacts firsthand and some paths forward our members support.

MFU is a grassroots organization that has represented Minnesota's family farmers, ranchers and rural communities since 1918. In so many ways, family farmers are on the front lines of the climate crisis, experiencing some of its early effects in the form of extreme weather, unpredictable growing seasons and increased risk of plant and animal diseases. That said, farmers are also coming up with creative ways to remain resilient and even put carbon back in the soil.

That's why this past November, delegates to our annual state convention identified mitigating climate change as a top priority in a special order of business.

Given your focus on impacts for Tuesday's hearing, I thought I'd share a few examples that I've heard from members about how they're experiencing climate change on their farms.

- In Western MN, I've heard from members who had to give up growing small grains due to excessively wet springs. For one farm family, these were economically important to their diversified organic crop and livestock operation.
- In East Central MN, I recently heard from a member for whom excessive rainfall in her pasture is leading to increased problems with parasites.
- In Southwest MN, I spoke with a member who is concerned about what rising sea levels will mean for import-export ports, which he relies on to market some of his harvest of conventional corn and soybeans.
- And finally, on my own farm in Renville County – which my son now operates – it's easy to see that rainfall is far more unpredictable than when I started farming. This presents added difficulty to an already challenging career.

These are just a few examples from recent conversations. Of course, there are many more, some of which you'll hear today. But with challenges come opportunities and many of our members are actively working to not only remain resilient, but also mitigate and even reverse the worst effects of climate change.

That's why at our state convention this November, delegates specified their support for:

- helping farmers earn a fair return on voluntary investments in practices that sequester carbon and deliver other ecosystem benefits;
- incentivizing on-the-ground practices that promote soil health and improve the climate; and
- expanding the use of biofuels, on-farm renewable energy, perennial plants and energy efficiency.

We're eager to work with you on these priorities and others, recognizing that the future of many family farms will be strengthened through smart work to address climate change.

Thank you for your hard work on this critical issue. If you have any questions, please contact our Government Relations Director, Stu Lourey, at stu@mfu.org or (320) 232-2047 (C). Thank you for considering the needs and perspectives of Minnesota's farm families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Wertish". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gary Wertish
President, Minnesota Farmers Union