



National  
Farmers  
Union

2020

# ANNUAL REPORT

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**NATIONAL FARMERS UNION**

# AMERICA'S FAMILY FARM ORGANIZATION

## VISION

To advocate for family farmers and their communities through education, cooperation, and legislation.

## MISSION

A world in which farm families and their communities are respected and valued and enjoy economic prosperity and social justice.

## VALUES

### Integrity

Maintaining the highest standards of honesty, accountability, and morality.

### Influence

Driving political, educational, and social change on behalf of family farmers, ranchers, and their communities.

### Leadership

Inspiring and empowering future leaders of agriculture and rural communities.

### Stewardship

Responsible and respectful use and caring for all resources—human, natural, and financial.

### Inclusivity

Ensuring all people are welcome and valued in Farmers Union, and all members are represented fairly in policy, education, and society.

### Transparency

Being clear, honest, and forthright in our words, processes, and actions.



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# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**Rob Larew, President**

Executive Committee  
Budget/Audit Committee  
Education/Co-Op Committee  
Legislative Committee  
Membership Committee

**Patty Edelberg, Vice President**

Executive Committee  
Budget/Audit Committee  
Education/Co-Op Committee  
Legislative Committee

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(Wisconsin)**

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Budget/Audit Committee  
Membership Committee

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Membership Committee

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Membership Committee

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**Jim Benham, (Indiana)**

Legislative Committee  
Membership Committee

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Membership Committee

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Budget/Audit Committee  
Legislative Committee

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Legislative Committee  
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Executive Committee  
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Legislative Committee

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Membership Committee

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Legislative Committee  
Membership Committee

**Anne Schwagerl**

*Next Generation Advisory Representative*  
Legislative Committee  
Membership Committee

**Jeff Kippley**

*Next Generation Advisory Representative*  
Education/Co-Op Committee  
Legislative Committee

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# STAFF

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**Rob Larew**

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**Patty Edelberg**

*Vice President*

**Martha Van Dale**

*Director of Finance*

**Ava DeBovis**

*Food Safety Project Director*

**Abby Ferris**

*Membership Director*

**Jenny Hopkinson**

*Senior Government Relations Representative*

**Janan Lenzy**

*Financial Operations Manager*

**Emma Lindberg**

*Education Director*

**Charlie Michel**

*Education & Outreach Coordinator*

**Billy Mitchell**

*Food Safety Training Coordinator*

**Hannah Packman**

*Communications Director*

**David Schuller**

*Digital Media & Graphic Design Specialist*

**Aaron Shier**

*Senior Government Relations Representative*

**Layla Soberanis**

*Senior Government Relations Representative*

**Mike Stranz**

*Vice President of Advocacy*

**David Thews**

*Assistant to the President*

**Dave Velde**

*Chief Counsel*

**Ethan Whitmore**

*Vice President of Operations*

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## CONSULTANTS

**Chris Kircher**

*Insurance Consultant*

**Anne Steckel**

*Senior Advisor*

**Barbara Stewart**

*Iowa Resources Stewardship Evaluation*

*Outreach Contractor*

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## HONORARY

**Tom Giessel**

*Farmers Union Historian*



# A Letter from the President

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## 2020 WAS CERTAINLY NOT THE YEAR ANY OF US EXPECTED.

After enduring a difficult stretch of global trade wars, depressed commodity prices, and climate-related disasters, many farmers had hoped that this year would finally offer some relief from their financial difficulties. Though newly implemented trade deals with key partners alleviated some of the pressure, with the onset of the covid-19 pandemic came a litany of new, more vexing problems.

Almost overnight, stay-at-home orders and school and business closures caused the commercial foodservice market—which typically accounts for about half of U.S. food expenditures—to all but vanish. The farmers who sell into those markets scrambled to adapt and find new customers before their goods spoiled. Many were successful in setting up CSAs or diverting food to charities, but others who weren't so fortunate were faced with the prospect of dumping their harvest—which not only cost their income for the season, but also their time, energy, and input expenditures.

For producers who didn't lose access to markets, there were still obstacles to overcome. Covid-19 outbreaks among food chain workers caused disruptions across the food system, highlighting the dangers of high levels of concentration in food processing, packaging, and transportation. Nowhere was this more dramatic than in the meat sector, where production capacity was reduced by nearly half at the height of plant closures. With nowhere to process livestock, ranchers often had to keep livestock long past the ideal harvest date, incurring additional feed costs, diminishing the quality of the final product, and negatively affecting the wellbeing of the animals. In a handful of cases, the wait was simply too long and producers were left with no choice but to euthanize their hogs and chickens.

If that weren't enough, it was another bad year for natural disasters. Between extreme drought conditions and destructive wildfires across the West, hurricane-force winds tearing through 14 million acres of Iowa's farmland, and a record-setting hurricane season, farmers have incurred millions worth of damage to their crops, livestock, machinery, and buildings.



**Rob Larew**  
**President**  
*National Farmers Union*

Despite these challenges, National Farmers Union, with the unceasing support of our members, has continued to fight every day to guarantee the long-term prosperity of American farm families and rural communities. Over the past 12 months, we have advocated policies that will help farmers, rural communities, and hungry Americans withstand the pandemic. We have promoted programs that will help agriculture adapt to and mitigate the climate crisis. We have supported endeavors to remedy racial inequities in the industry and give all farmers a shot at success. And we have pushed for structural reforms that would address corporate control of food production and strengthen local and regional food systems.

While we remain committed to providing educational opportunities for youth and adults alike, in order to protect the health and wellbeing of our members through the pandemic, National Farmers Union has moved our programming online. Over the last year, we have reached thousands of farmers through our cooperative webinar series and food safety trainings.

These efforts have helped us expand the reach and diversity of the Farmers Union family, one member at a time. In 2020, NFU grew by more than 6,000 members. Despite the uncertainty and challenges of 2020, twelve state Farmers Union divisions grew year-over-year, including nearly 75% growth in Arkansas and an almost 2,000 member increase in South Dakota. 2020 was NFU's third consecutive year of growing by more than 4,000 members thanks to the hard work of our membership and state divisions.

It wasn't an easy year. But through it all, Farmers Union members have stood by each other and lifted each other up. While no one can say what 2021 will bring, I do know that our solidarity and our commitment to community will help us confront anything to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Larew". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Rob Larew  
President  
National Farmers Union

# ADVOCACY

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# ADVOCACY

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**THE ROOT OF NATIONAL FARMERS UNION'S SUCCESS AND** credibility in political organizing is its grassroots structure. The organization's policy-setting procedure is driven wholly by its nearly 200,000 farmer and rancher members, who debate and adopt policy positions and priorities in a democratic process every year. The resulting policy book and special orders of business directly guide advocacy efforts of NFU's federal-level government relations team. This process ensures that all voices in the organization are heard equally, and that those voices are amplified loudly and clearly in Washington, D.C. in support of family agriculture.

NFU's government relations team spent countless hours in 2020 lobbying on behalf of members, meeting with top administration officials at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Food and Drug Administration, as well as Congressional leadership and their staff members.

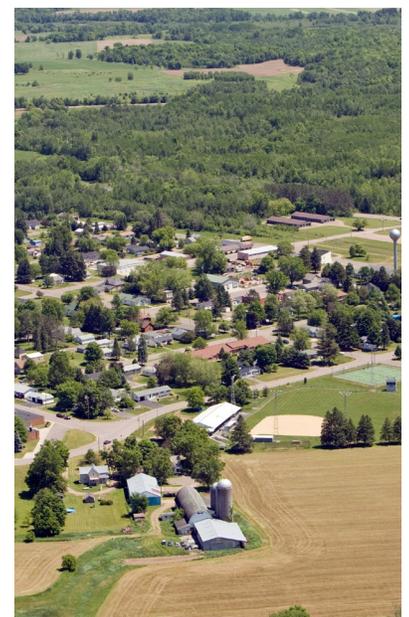
The organization is the oldest and strongest progressive force in agriculture policymaking, spearheading coalition efforts to build diverse and competitive markets, establish a strong farm safety net, support and incentivize climate smart agriculture, and prepare the next generation of family farmers. In 2020, NFU focused in particular on securing pandemic relief, promoting homegrown biofuels, and building out local food systems.



## BOLSTERING RURAL COMMUNITIES

Throughout the pandemic, Farmers Union has been working with the administration and Congress to ensure that rural communities remain at the forefront of relief discussions. Given the lack of medical and technological resources in those communities, many were unprepared to treat acutely ill patients or efficiently move day-to-day life online. Consequently, the organization has particularly focused on strengthening rural hospitals and broadband access, and made significant inroads on both fronts. In a number of its pandemic relief bills, Congress provided funding for testing, contact tracing, and treatment in rural areas, as well as better broadband coverage mapping, interagency coordination, and telehealth—all of which were priorities for NFU.

Furthermore, to help farmers and farm workers coping with heightened levels of stress and social isolation as a result of the pandemic, Farmers Union's policy team urged lawmakers to bolster rural mental health services. They accommodated the request, providing \$10 million for the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network in the spending bill for fiscal year 2021.



## By the numbers...

**400**

members attended  
NFU's Virtual Fly-In

**13**

sets of comments  
submitted to the  
federal register

**37**

letters sent to the  
administration and  
Congress

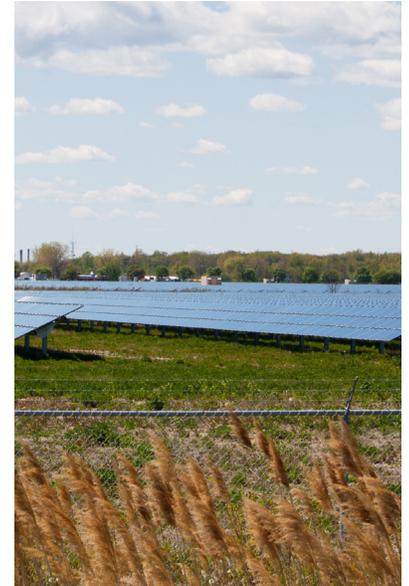
**7**

testimonies for the  
Congressional record

### ACTING ON CLIMATE

As climate change threatens life as we know it, it continues to be a central focus of National Farmers Union's policy outreach. In 2020, the organization expanded its ongoing work with the implementation of a new Climate Action Plan. As part of the plan, NFU unveiled a new Climate Resource Center, which compiles materials to help farmers and ranchers advocate policies that will help them adapt to and mitigate the climate crisis. Additionally, Farmers Union selected 16 farmers and ranchers for its new Climate Advisory Panel, which will guide the organization's climate-related legislative work, educational programming, and communications.

On top of its solo activities, NFU continues to work with other organizations on climate action. Along with the American Farm Bureau Federation, the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, and the Environmental Defense Fund, Farmers Union co-founded the Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance (FACA). The group, which has since expanded to incorporate additional organizations, collaborated to develop 40 recommendations to guide the development of federal climate policy.



### BUILDING LOCAL AND REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Supply chain disruptions during the pandemic have revealed how high levels of concentration across the supply chain can threaten food security and farmers' livelihoods. To complement its decades-long drive to strengthen antitrust enforcement and prevent agribusiness megamergers, National Farmers Union has intensified its focus on developing local and regional food systems. The group helped gin up Congressional support for several pieces of legislation that help small and mid-sized meat processors expand capacity and sell across state lines.

NFU also worked quickly to secure pandemic relief for farmers with small-scale operations and those who sell into alternative markets, as they were initially excluded from federal assistance programs. By sharing its concerns with the USDA, Farmers Union helped the agency restructure the program to make it more accessible to farmers of all types and sizes.



### PROMOTING HOMEGROWN BIOFUELS

As it was for other agricultural sectors, 2020 was a challenging year for biofuels. With fewer cars on the road, demand for biofuels sharply declined and prices dropped to a record low. As a result, the industry lost 2 billion gallons of production, equating to 700 million bushels of corn that were not ground. To buoy up the sector, NFU led an aggressive push for higher level blends of ethanol through several lawsuits against the EPA, regulatory actions, and legislative opportunities.



# EDUCATION

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# EDUCATION

## ENSURING THE SUCCESS OF THE NEXT GENERATION OF FARM FAMILIES

Typically, National Farmers Union hosts a number of in-person educational events to equip farm families with the skills they need to succeed. This year, however, looked a bit different. In order to protect the health and wellbeing of its members, the group pivoted to primarily online outreach, with webinars, virtual conferences, free toolkits for beginning farmers, and agricultural curriculum for teachers. As always, these programs centered around cooperative principles, risk management, and leadership training.



## PROMOTING THE COOPERATIVE MODEL

Since it was established in 1902, Farmers Union has been dedicated to cooperative principles. Though much has changed since then, those principles remain central to its mission. In its educational programming, NFU promotes cooperatives as a means to enhance competition in the market, encourage innovation, empower workers, and improve and strengthen rural economies.

In addition to incorporating cooperative education in both youth and adult programs, Farmers Union offers programming dedicated solely to cooperatives. The College Conference on Cooperatives, which is open to students from universities across the country, provides an interactive learning experience on the importance, structure, and operations of various types of cooperative businesses. Additionally, in 2020, NFU started a new webinar series, which engages members on the organization's cooperative legacy, encourages active involvement in local co-ops and the wider cooperative movement, and explores the potential for co-ops across sectors and industries to revitalize rural communities.



## EMPOWERING WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

Through our annual women's conference, in-person events, and online education forums, NFU's education and communications departments work to ensure women have equal footing and opportunities in American agriculture and government.



## *By the numbers...*

**\$6,500**

in scholarships provided to Farmers Union youth

**84**

people participated in Women's Conference

**80**

students participated in the College Conference on Cooperatives



## ENCOURAGING BUSINESS HEALTH

NFU expanded its Farm Business Toolbox to include a series of instructional webinars. These self-paced videos focus on how an operation’s resilience and profitability rely on a fundamentally sound approach to business management. The series provides a roadmap for setting personal learning goals and implementing improvements in areas such as cash flow planning, operating agreements, and legal and financial relationships.



## FOSTERING A FOOD SAFETY CULTURE

NFU manages the Local Food Safety Collaborative (LFSC), as well as other food safety contracts, with funding from a variety of federal sources. NFU is committed to providing farmers the tools and peer-to-peer knowledge needed to strengthen their business models, remain competitive in the marketplace, and comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). To create farmer-friendly resources and ensure food safety education is accessible and affordable to all, NFU partners with like-minded organizations and agencies.





## FOOD SAFETY: KANSAS

An active member of NFU’s Local Food Safety Collaborative, Kansas Farmers Union first met Maggie and Adam Pounds of Simple Abundance—a diversified urban farm with commercial kitchen and on-farm storefront—at a soil health workshop. They connected again at a KFU hosted Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Grower Training. Then, KFU featured the couple in a virtual farm tour highlighting post-harvest activities, refrigeration, and processing. Now the Poundses are official KFU members and have dreams of offering their land and tunnels as an incubator for beginning farmers who share their commitment to producing healthy and safe food for the local market.

For Maggie, attending KFU’s PSA Training was a turning point. “It gives you a sense of professionalism about what you’re doing,” she told the KFU team during a recent conversation. “It flows into other areas like how you carry yourself, how you run your farm, and how you talk to customers. It gives you a really good sense of, ‘I’m a professional. I’m running something important, and I want to be really on it.’”



## FOOD SAFETY: ALABAMA

In Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, the Mobile Farm Innovation Project takes a holistic view that focuses on food safety and farm financial sustainability. The goal is simple: use hands-on education to increase farm viability with food safety and conservation practices. The Mobile Farm Innovation Project trailers, which feature interactive activities, demonstrations and presentations, will reach hundreds of socially disadvantaged, limited resource and minority farmers. This USDA-funded partnership is led by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System at Auburn University, and includes National Farmers Union and the Deep South Food Alliance, a group of organizations whose mutual goals ensure maximum reach, quality resources, and networking strength.

Andrew Williams with the Deep South Food Alliance notes that this project differs from many others. “This project focuses on a core group of farmers that the project will serve. It compensates farmers and allows them to share in the project design.”



# GROWING MEMBERSHIP

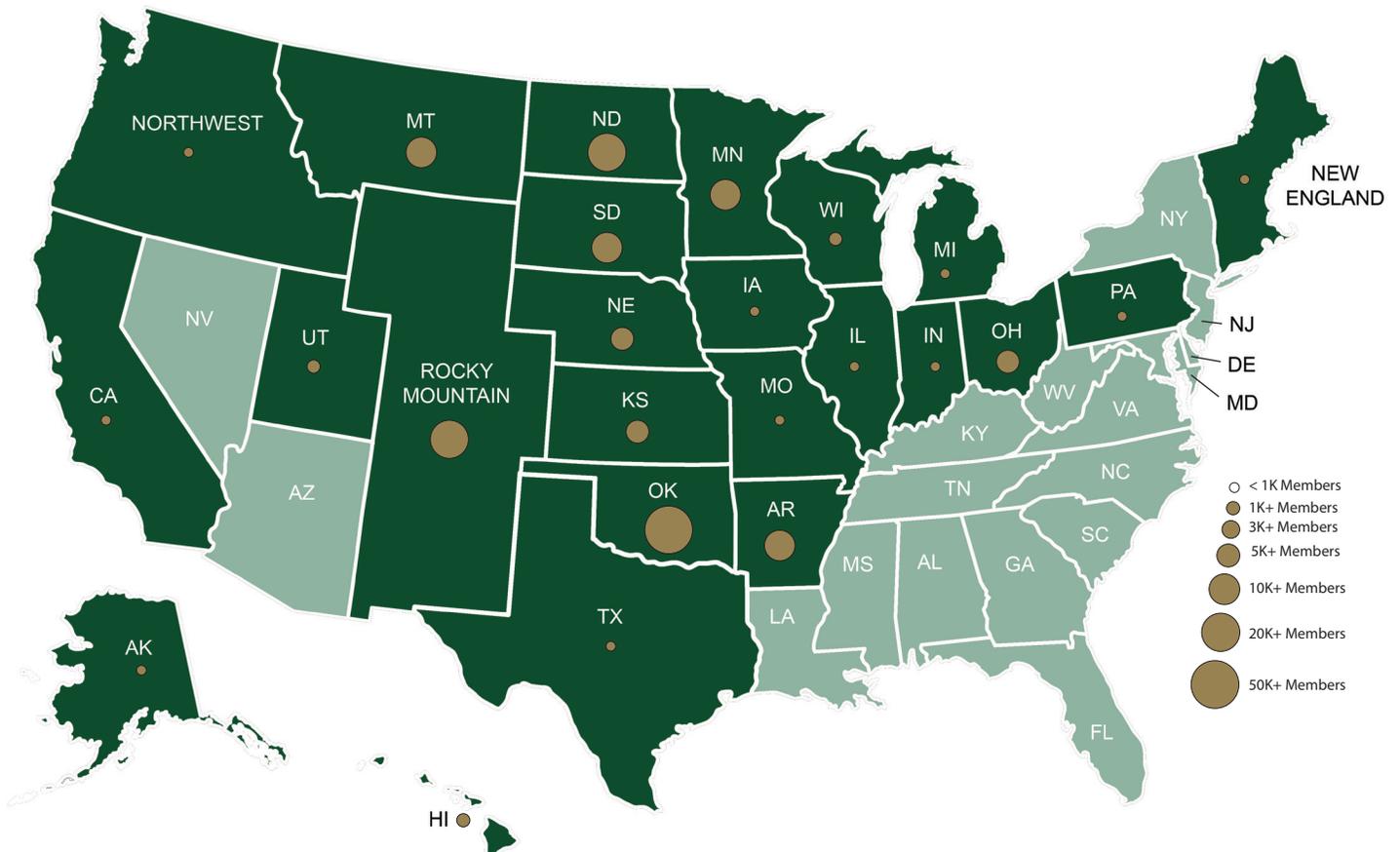
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# GROWING MEMBERSHIP

In 2020, NFU grew by more than 6,000 members. Despite the uncertainty and challenges of 2020, twelve state Farmers Union divisions grew year-over-year, including nearly 75 percent growth in Arkansas and an almost 2,000 member increase in South Dakota. 2020 was NFU's third consecutive year of growing by more than 4,000 members thanks to the hard work of our membership and state divisions.

In 2020, Farmers Union divisions provided members with over 200 virtual programming hours, including sessions with legislators, industry professionals, and community leaders. Iowa Farmers Union, for example, conducted weekly Lunch & Learn virtual sessions on a broad range of topics, including climate, conservation, and farm resiliency. Their members also had the opportunity to hear Senators Grassley and Ernst. These quality sessions contributed to a 7 percent growth in membership for Iowa Farmers Union. We are proud to serve our members and continue developing new programs to expand our reach, engagement, and representation. Although we connected very differently in 2020, NFU plans to build upon what we learned and continue to serve our members.

National Farmers Union continues to grow as the progressive leader for family farm agriculture, and 2020 showed the grassroots strength of the organization remains as vibrant as ever.



# COMMUNICATIONS

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# COMMUNICATIONS

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## LEADING THE WAY FOR PROGRESSIVE AGRICULTURE

In both its educational outreach and political advocacy, National Farmers Union had many successes in 2020. One metric of that success is the high-profile media coverage of those efforts. Throughout the year, Farmers Union leaders and members were featured on a number of prominent television programs, including “The Daily Show with Trevor Noah,” “60 Minutes,” CNN, Fox News, and BBC World News. Additionally, NFU was quoted or referenced in such notable publications as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Bloomberg*, *Forbes*, *Politico*, *The Star Tribune*, *AP News*, *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, and *Argus Leader*. These media mentions ranged in subject matter, but particularly focused on the pandemic, trade issues, corporate consolidation, and racial equity in agriculture. By garnering this exposure, the organization reached hundreds of thousands of people with its message.



## GROWING OUR AUDIENCE

We continue to grow NFU’s reach and impact on social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, at an impressive clip. Across all three platforms, the organization’s audience grew 29 percent in 2020 and saw significantly above average engagement. With more dedication to visual content, NFU has seen particularly strong gains on Instagram, ending the year with 50 percent more followers than it started with.



## AMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE

The Farmers Union Media Association is a collective of Farmers Union state and national communications staffers who collaborate to amplify the messaging of the organization. The efforts of this group has led to a more unified voice for family farm agriculture in policymaking at both the local and national level.

### *By the numbers...*

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**82,723** Facebook followers

**20,556** Twitter followers

**8,347** Instagram followers

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# COOPERATION

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# COOPERATION

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## STRENGTHENING DIVERSITY IN AGRICULTURE

In light of the fact that racial and ethnic minority groups are vastly underrepresented in agricultural professions, National Farmers Union (NFU) and Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) are working together to foster diversity and inclusion in the field. In 2020, the two groups formalized their joint commitment to agricultural education by signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The document summarizes the ways in which NFU and MANRRS will provide educational and leadership opportunities for young people of all racial and ethnic identities, develop federal policy priorities, and extend each other's reach within agricultural communities.



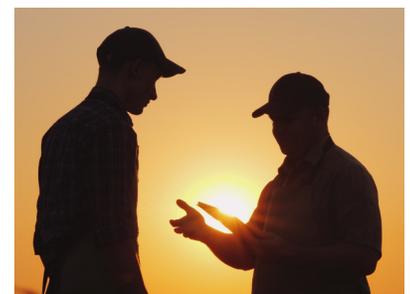
## UNITING THE WORLD

As a founding member of the World Farmers' Organisation (WFO), National Farmers Union collaborates with other international farm groups to strengthen the voice of family farmers on a global scale. NFU Chief Counsel Dave Velde represents NFU at WFO and the United Nations.



## ADDRESSING FARM STRESS

Recognizing the high levels of stress affecting America's farmers and ranchers, Farm Credit, American Farm Bureau Federation, and National Farmers Union partnered on a program to train individuals who interact with farmers and ranchers to recognize signs of stress and offer help. A series of online and in-person sessions helped reduce stigma related to mental health concerns and connected farmers and ranchers with appropriate mental health resources.



# FINANCE

# FINANCE

## CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS FAR THE YEARS ENDED DECEMBER 21, 2019 AND 2018

	2019		
	WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS	WITH DONOR RESTRICTIONS	TOTAL
<b>REVENUE</b>			
Membership	\$ 1,785,540	\$ -	\$ 1,785,540
Government Grants	1,512,490	-	1,512,490
Use of name fees	923,985	-	923,985
Contributions	765,982	-	765,982
Interest and dividend income, net of fees	550,939	-	550,939
Grants administrative fee	440,669	-	440,669
Convention	373,300	-	373,300
Rental income	103,550	-	103,550
Crop insurance advocacy fees	69,715	-	69,715
Commissions and fees	51,084	-	51,084
Registration fees	23,870	-	23,870
Newsletter subscriptions	4,732	-	4,732
Net assets released from donor restrictions	4,500	(4,500)	-
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 6,610,356</b>	<b>\$ (4,500)</b>	<b>\$ 6,605,856</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Program Services:			
Convention	\$ 437,309	-	\$ 437,309
Foundation Educational Programming	2,173,884	-	2,173,884
WFO	140,337	-	140,337
Government Relations	1,078,896	-	1,078,896
NFUPAC	8,000	-	8,000
Communications	184,850	-	184,850
<b>TOTAL PROGRAM SERVICES</b>	<b>\$ 4,023,276</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$ 4,023,276</b>
Supporting Services:			
General and Administrative	\$ 1,384,682	-	\$ 1,384,682
Organization and Board	566,979	-	566,979
Membership	426,741	-	426,741
<b>TOTAL SUPPORTING SERVICES</b>	<b>\$ 2,378,402</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$ 2,378,402</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 6,401,678</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$ 6,401,678</b>
<b>Changes in net assets before other items</b>	<b>\$ 208,678</b>	<b>\$ (4,500)</b>	<b>\$ 204,178</b>
<b>OTHER ITEMS</b>			
Net unrealized and realized gain on investments	\$ 1,199,262	-	\$ 1,199,262
Pension liability adjustment	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL OTHER ITEMS</b>	<b>\$ 1,199,262</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$ 1,199,262</b>
<b>Changes in net assets</b>	<b>\$ 1,407,940</b>	<b>\$ (4,500)</b>	<b>\$ 1,403,440</b>
<b>Net assets at beginning of year</b>	<b>\$ 19,640,953</b>	<b>\$ 34,921</b>	<b>\$ 19,675,874</b>
<b>NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$ 21,048,893</b>	<b>\$ 30,421</b>	<b>\$ 21,079,314</b>

## CONSOLIDATED STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2019 AND 2018

ASSETS	2019	2018
	2019	2018
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Cash and equivalents	\$ 580,727	\$ 758,281
Accounts receivable	979,670	879,672
Notes receivable	113,978	63,077
Prepaid expenses	167,915	170,371
<b>TOTAL REVENUE</b>	<b>\$ 1,842,286</b>	<b>\$ 1,871,401</b>
<b>PROPERT AND EQUIPMENT</b>		
Land	\$ 335,377	\$ 335,377
Furniture	803,383	803,383
Leasehold improvements	348,704	348,704
Less: Accumulated depreciation and amortization	\$ 1,487,464 (1,026,971)	\$ 1,487,464 (987,965)
Net property and equipment	<b>\$ 460,493</b>	<b>\$ 499,499</b>
<b>OTHER ASSETS</b>		
Investments—long-term	\$ 19,046,622	\$ 12,781,229
Notes Receivable, net of current portion and allowance of \$10,000 and \$10,000, repectively	1,270,536	1,127,294
Total other assets	<b>\$ 20,317,158</b>	<b>\$ 18,908,523</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 22,619,937</b>	<b>\$ 21,279,423</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 737,025	\$ 574,844
Life member earning paybale	6,226	7,069
Deferred dues	9,730	11,758
Refundable advance	167,352	140,852
Deferred convention revenue	55,500	10,000
Deferred foundation registration	-	4,775
Current portion of deferred rent abatement	60,911	60,911
<b>TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$ 1,036,744</b>	<b>\$ 810,209</b>
<b>LONG-TERM LIABILITIES</b>		
Deferred rent abatementm net of current portion	\$ 94,039	\$ 154,950
Life memberships payable	409,840	638,390
Total long-term liabilities	<b>\$ 503,879</b>	<b>\$ 793,340</b>
Total liabilities	<b>\$ 1,540,623</b>	<b>\$ 1,603,549</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Without donor restrictions	\$ 21,048,893	\$ 19,640,953
With donor restrictions	30,421	34,921
Total net assets	<b>\$ 21,079,314</b>	<b>\$ 19,675,874</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 22,619,937</b>	<b>\$ 21,279,423</b>

