National Farmers Union

FARMERS UNION CELEBRATES

SOYBEANS





Gail Donkers jokes about how her family's farm has its own family tree. She and her husband Jim farm 2200 acres in Faribault, MN about an hour south of the Twin Cities, along with their children, Jim's father and brother, and other relatives. A solid ⅓ of their acreage is in soybean production, an important complement to their main crop of corn and the livestock they raise. She remembers being a sixth grader when her dad, whom she describes as an innovative farmer, first grew soybeans to see if they would be a good fit for the farm's hilly, clay land. Throughout years of experimentation with non-GMO beans, high oil beans, and more, the family has found soybeans to be financially rewarding for their farming operation.

Driven by a need to understand how the checkoff dollars from soy were being invested and spent, Gail pursued a board position on the Minnesota Soybean Research & Promotion Council, which oversees checkoff funds. She currently serves as Council treasurer. Gail explains, "A significant amount of money can be taken from our checks, and I was really interested in finding out where that money goes and if it's worthwhile. Being on the board has given me the opportunity to see the proposals and information that comes in. I work with a team to utilize and invest those dollars as best we can to create new avenues for soybean growers."
Gail's service on the board has only increased her excitement for soy's potential. Gail recounts how soy is being used to make Goodyear tires that reportedly wear as well as petroleum-based tires and that Skechers is even using soy to make tennis shoes. No wonder soy is called "the miracle bean." "But the biggest thing I've learned," Gail says, "is how soy protein is the number one way many people get their protein in other parts of the world, especially poorer areas of the world where they don't eat meat as often as we can."

Gail Donkers, Minnesota Farmers Union Member