

PFMD UPDATE

A BULLETIN FROM THE PESTICIDE AND FERTILIZER MANAGEMENT DIVISION

SPRING/SUMMER 2026

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Director's Update

From Misunderstanding to Momentum

By Joshua Stamper

When fewer than one in a hundred people work the land, it's no surprise that the public — and sometimes the media — miss the mark on agriculture issues. I don't see this as a setback. I see it as an opening: a chance to connect, clear things up a bit, build a little trust along the way.

Reaching people who are generations removed from farming isn't always easy. The best tool we have is the simplest one: listening. Real listening — the kind where you let folks lay out what's on their mind without jumping in. That kind of space opens the door a crack, and a crack is all that's needed to let facts in.

If someone is upset about pesticides, fertilizer, drift, or water quality, they're usually not looking for the this-is-how-it-all-works part yet. They want to be heard.

Ask Questions

A couple of things help:

Ask: "What's on your mind?" or "Where did you hear that?"
Reflect what you heard: "You're concerned how pesticides are affecting bees, right?"
Offer a bridge: "You OK to hear how most farmers plan a spray day?"

Sometimes just asking "Have you talked to people on the ground who deal with this?" can turn what could've been a debate into a conversation. When people feel heard, they're a whole lot more willing to listen — even when they disagree with you.

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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Every Decision Counts

BMPs help farmers make the most of them

By Commissioner Thom Petersen

On a farm, every decision matters — from when to apply fertilizer to how to protect soil after harvest. These choices aren't getting easier. Weather patterns are shifting, input costs keep rising, and farmers are being asked to do more while managing more risk. Every acre, every application, and every rainfall carries weight. That's why practical, reliable tools matter.

Best management practices (BMPs) are science-based strategies that help farmers protect water quality, reduce nutrient loss, and build healthier soils. MDA's BMPs are voluntary, flexible, and rooted in real-world farming experience. They're not about adding complexity; they're about helping farmers make informed decisions that work.

BMPs begin with science. The MDA reviews research from the University of Minnesota and other trusted partners to understand how nutrients and pesticides move through soil, how weather affects application timing, and which practices consistently keep inputs where they belong. But Minnesota agriculture is diverse, and no single approach fits every farm. That's why farmer input is central. Through on-farm trials, field demonstrations, and advisory meetings, producers help shape BMPs so they reflect the realities of day-to-day farming.

BMPs give farmers a practical framework for managing risk. They help limit off-site movement, protect drinking water, and support long-term productivity and economic viability. In a changing climate, BMPs provide stability — a roadmap for making decisions when conditions are unpredictable.

BMPs don't stand alone. The MDA backs them with programs that make adoption practical and affordable:

- **Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program** – Recognizes farmers who implement conservation practices and offers financial assistance to adopt new methods.
- **Minnesota Ag Weather Network** – Delivers real-time soil and weather data to guide application timing and water-use decisions.
- **Soil Health Financial Assistance Grant** – Supports purchases or retrofits of equipment that improve soil structure and resilience.
- **Nutrient Management Initiative** — Supports farmers working with crop advisers to identify economically optimum nitrogen rates for their field conditions.
- **AgBMP Loan Program** – Offers low-interest financing for projects that reduce runoff from feedlots, fields, and other priority concerns.

These tools make BMP adoption practical, affordable, and effective — supporting decisions that protect water while strengthening operations.

Agriculture is changing, and our BMPs change with it. The MDA regularly reviews new research, technologies, and emerging issues so that guidance reflects current realities, not outdated assumptions. That commitment ensures our BMPs remain practical, effective, and grounded in good science.

At the end of the day, we share the same goals: strong farms, clean water, and thriving rural communities. Every decision counts — and BMPs help make those decisions smarter. When farmers lead, Minnesota succeeds.

Director's Update: From Misunderstanding to Momentum

(Continued from page 1)

LEAP: A Field Tested Framework

I lean on LEAP (**Listen. Empathize. Apologize. Problem Solve**.) because it keeps conversations steady and real. LEAP works because it builds trust — and trust is the bedrock of any good talk. Let me put it in real terms. Here's one I hear a lot these days: drift near a pollinator habitat.

You might say:

> "Tell me what you've been seeing."
> "I get it. I'd be wondering the same thing."
> "I'm sorry this has been stressful."

Then, once the temperature drops:

> "I can walk you through how applicators plan around wind and inversion conditions. PFMD and Extension also have some good, practical guidance on keeping pollinators safe."

Short, simple, respectful. It's not more complicated than that.

Make People Feel Heard

In agriculture, we're wired to fix things. But solving a problem before someone trusts you is like planting before the ground is plowed: You won't get the yield you want. Listening prepares the soil. Empathy waters it. Then, when the facts show up, they've got somewhere to take root.

If there's one thing this work has taught me, it's this: Make people feel heard. Do that, and tough conversations can turn into something more: understanding.

PFMD Update

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The purpose of this newsletter is to provide comprehensive, accurate information about the MDA Pesticide and Fertilizer Management Division's events, programs, policies and regulations. No endorsement is intended or implied of products or companies mentioned within. Printing and postage is paid for by the Pesticide Regulatory Account.

The PFMD Update is, and will continue, to be mailed to all licensed pesticide and fertilizer applicators. Use the QR Code to sign up to receive electronic copies of the PFMD Update newsletter.

mda.state.mn.us/chemicals/pfmdupdate

Farmers Turning Data into Decisions

Across Minnesota, landowners host weather stations that help producers make smarter, real-time decisions

By Stephan Bischof, MDA Hydrologist

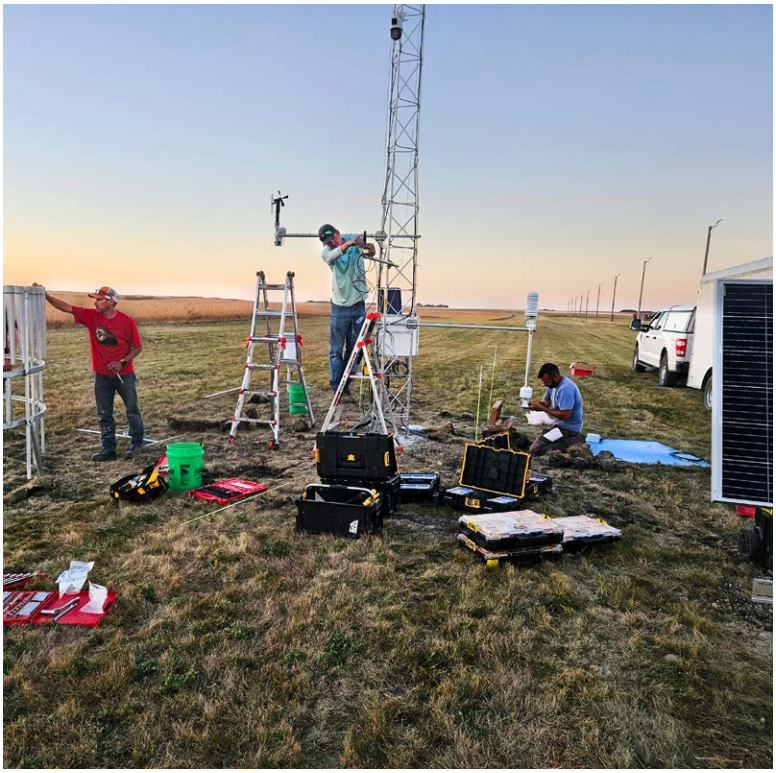
The Minnesota Ag Weather Network (MAWN) has become one of the quiet workhorses of the state's agricultural landscape. Across fields and farmsteads, dozens of automated towers gather continuous weather and soil data: temperature, wind speed, humidity, rainfall, solar radiation. It all happens from 33 feet in the air down to 7.5 feet below the soil surface. Every five minutes, these measurements are transmitted via **cell technology**, processed, and posted online for public use.

MAWN was created to give farmers and land managers reliable, real-time information — growing into a trusted resource across the state. Farmers, crop consultants, Extension educators, irrigation managers, and others rely on these site-specific measurements to guide everyday decisions. By capturing hyperlocal conditions that broader forecasts often miss, the network helps users optimize management choices — improving profitability while reducing input losses and protecting surface and groundwater.

In 2023, the MDA received financial support from the Clean Water Fund to expand the network. Phase 1 — adding 40 stations to the 24 owned and operated by the North Dakota Ag Weather Network — began in 2024 and will continue over the next several years in cooperation with local partners. The goal is to have a station within 20 miles of all agricultural land in Minnesota, ensuring producers in every region have access to high-quality data. The MDA estimates that at least 80 weather stations are needed to achieve this long-term goal.

MAWN's strength comes from the farmers and landowners who host stations. The network depends on individuals willing to provide a small, suitable location — about 30 feet by 30 feet — and a commitment to supporting long-term operation. Because of program rules, stations can't be placed on Conservation Reserve Program or Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program land. Ideal sites offer reliable access and open ground with minimal shading to ensure accurate sensor performance.

The data MAWN provides help users understand real-time field conditions and long-term patterns. Growing degree days, soil temperature benchmarks, temperature inversion alerts, evapotranspiration rates, and soil moisture readings guide key decisions throughout the growing season.



Minnesota's varied landscapes make localized information especially valuable. Conditions can differ dramatically across short distances: One farm may receive heavy rain while another nearby stays dry. By recording these differences, MAWN offers a clear picture of field-level conditions across the state — offering reassurance in a landscape where weather can be unpredictable and turn at a moment's notice.

As producers navigate increasingly variable weather patterns, the need for dependable, localized data continues to grow. With long-term records, expanding partnerships, and a commitment to accessible, real-time information, MAWN remains an essential resource for Minnesotans working the land — quietly supporting the decisions that shape every growing season.

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Among the many Minnesotans who helped shape MAWN, few have done more to move the effort forward than farmer John Swanson

Swanson comes from a long line of Johns — four generations before him and now a son and grandson after. The name is rooted in the soil where his family has farmed since 1862, where the Swanson farm stretches across 2,200 acres on the south side of Maple Lake and up toward Fertile in Red Lake County.

He was born in Fosston and moved to the farm at age 2, when his father — who managed milk-drying plants for Land O'Lakes — returned to farming. John eventually did the same. After military service, he came home, married his sweetheart, Kathleen, and together they raised two boys and two girls while farming corn, soybeans, wheat, and sunflowers.

People who know John describe him as someone who pays attention to more than his own fields. Since the 1970s, he's been involved in local and statewide ag efforts, offering practical, steady perspective that makes him a go-to for neighbors, producer groups, and policy leaders.

That broad view is what pushed him to speak up about the need for better weather information in rural Minnesota. For years, the closest weather station was nearly 50 miles away — too far to be useful. The issue became impossible to ignore the day he saw aerial spray drift two miles. Without accurate data, producers struggled to make informed decisions that would impact not only their operations, but surrounding fields and water resources.

When MDA Commissioner Thom Petersen was scheduled to speak in Fosston, John suggested they meet for lunch. The two friends sat down and mapped out a plan: Expand MAWN so there's a station within 20 miles of all cropland in the state. Through direct outreach to legislators and a vigorous letter-writing campaign executed through the Minnesota Corn Growers Association and other commodity groups, the project received a giant boost in 2023 when MAWN received Clean Water Fund support for 40-plus new stations. The first in the expansion went up on Swanson's farm.

With a mix of collaboration, persistence, and clear-headed problem-solving, John Swanson helped spark one of the most widely supported efforts in Minnesota agriculture. Today, weather stations across the state reflect part of his legacy — grounded in service, shaped by experience, and built on the idea that strong communities make strong farms.

The MDA is looking for hosts for station installations in 2026 and 2027 in the following areas and beyond. Landowners interested in hosting a station can learn more and complete the **Minnesota Ag Weather Station Host Application**.

County	Town
Clearwater	Rice Lake
Houston	Caledonia
Martin	Fairmont
Nobles	Brewster
Renville	Cosmos
Rice	Lonsdale
Stearns	Melrose
Wabasha	Lake City
Winona	Lewiston
Wright	Montrose

Minnesota Farmers Are Vital Partners in Protecting Our Water

By Jeppe Kjaersgaard, MDA Research Scientist

Water in Minnesota isn't just a natural resource — it's the foundation of our agricultural economy. It fills irrigation aquifers, supports livestock health, drives soil productivity, and sustains the rural communities we call home. Protecting that water is essential to protecting our future.

Our state's farmers understand this connection. Always looking for better ways to care for their land, they take promising opportunities seriously and weigh them carefully. And because innovation naturally brings some unknowns, the MDA works to help shoulder that risk by providing the support, tools, and resources producers need to adopt new practices with confidence.

The MDA's **Biofertilizer Innovation and Efficiency Pilot Program** shows this partnership in action. The initiative — designed to help farmers improve nitrogen management and adopt technologies that protect water quality — launched this year with $233,750 available across 32 counties with the highest concentrations of nitrogen in groundwater.

Applications for the 2026 growing season opened on March 2 with a planned closing date of May 1. Interest in exploring microbial-based biofertilizers was so strong that the application window closed in just one week. This overwhelming response demonstrates how ready Minnesota farmers are to explore new tools when the right opportunity and support align.

For those who didn't get the chance to apply, the program will be offered again for the 2027 growing season. In the meantime, producers interested in improving nutrient efficiency are encouraged to connect with their retailer about discount opportunities through nitrogen enhanced-efficiency fertilizers (see story on Page 13).

All of Minnesota is benefiting from broad efforts that help farmers protect water while keeping their operations productive. Through the USDA's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), the MDA and a wide network of partners are expanding access to the tools and technical assistance needed to strengthen nitrogen management and improve irrigation efficiency.

In fall 2025, the MDA and partner organizations received $11.16 million in additional RCPP funding to advance this work — an investment aimed at improving irrigation efficiency, enhancing nitrogen and water management, and safeguarding groundwater quality across 25 counties. Over the next few years, producers in those areas will be able to access financial assistance for irrigation technology and benefit from coordinated support from technical experts, conservation professionals, and agricultural stakeholders — all working together to strengthen on-farm water stewardship and long-term resilience.

These efforts come at a critical time. Minnesota faces water-quality challenges, particularly from chemicals that reach our water resources. But the path forward is clear: Real progress happens when farmers are at the center of the solution. And across the state, producers are stepping up — testing new tools, improving efficiency, and making thoughtful management decisions that benefit their operations and their communities.

What you can do next:

- Talk with your retailer about enhanced-efficiency fertilizer options and stay connected with your local soil and water conservation district about conservation programs, RCPP opportunities, and field demonstrations.
- Follow best management practices (see Commissioner Petersen's column on Page 2) for fertilizer and pesticide use.
- Enroll in the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program, which offers technical and financial support to implement water conservation practices (see story on Page 14).
- Share what you're learning — farmer-to-farmer knowledge remains one of our greatest strengths.
- Make use of free resources like the Minnesota Ag Weather Network, which helps optimize management decisions to improve profitability while reducing input losses and protecting water (see story on Page 4).
- Mark your calendar for next year's biofertilizer grant opening.

Minnesota farmers have always been innovators, leaders, and stewards. Your willingness to adopt new practices, evaluate emerging technologies, and safeguard our shared water resources is helping build a stronger, more resilient agricultural future.

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Farm Stress Continues: Programs support farmers' mental and financial health

By Meg Moynihan, MDA Senior Advisor

A new analysis from the American Farm Bureau Federation shows that farm bankruptcies continued to rise nationwide in 2025, marking another year of tight margins, high interest rates, and unpredictable markets. Minnesota followed this trend, although numbers remain below peak levels of a decade ago. Still, even a small increase is a clear reminder that many farmers are operating under real and sustained financial pressure.

This strain also shows up in Minnesota Farmer–Lender Mediation (FLM) cases, according to the University of Minnesota Extension. Minnesota law requires creditors to offer mediation on secured farm debt over $15,000 before they move to foreclose, repossess, cancel a contract, or collect a judgment. From October 2025 through February of this year, creditors filed 866 mediation notices with FLM — the highest year-to-date total since FY2020.

Higher input costs, volatile commodity prices, and extreme weather have made it harder for farms of every size to plan ahead. And when farm finances are strained, personal and family stress often increase. The MDA and partner organizations offer free, confidential programs to support both the financial health and the mental well-being of Minnesota farmers and their families. If you need help figuring out where to start, call the Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline at **833-600-2670.**

Financial Help

Minnesota Farm Advocates
833-600-2670
Farm Advocates have experience in agricultural lending, mediation, lender negotiation, farm programs, crisis counseling, and disaster programs and can locate legal and social services.

Farmer–Lender Mediation
218 935 5785
FLM provides mediation services for farmers experiencing difficulty with a loan or lender.

Farmers Legal Action Group
877 860 4349
Provides legal services, referrals, and support for family farmers.

Farm Business Management (FBM) Education
218-894-5163 or
507-389-7263
FBM programs help farmers build management skills to meet business and personal goals.

Minnesota Rural Finance Authority
651-201-6556
MRFA partners with local lenders to offer a wide range of low-interest loans for farmers.

Farm Aid's Farmer Resources
800-FARM-AID
The organization offers multiple services, resources, and opportunities specific to individual needs.

Stress Management and Mental Health Resources

Minnesota Farm & Rural Helpline
833-600-2670
Text: FARMSTRESS to 898211
Confidential, 24/7 support from trained counselors for anyone experiencing stress, anxiety, depression, or emotional strain.

Minnesota Agricultural Mental Health Providers
Western MN:
Monica | 218-280-7785

Northern MN:
Jennifer | 218-820-6626

Southern MN:
Tracie | 507-514-7057

Licensed counselors provide help to farmers and their families.

Mobile Crisis Teams
Available in every Minnesota county. Counselors provide in-person support in crisis situations. Responders generally arrive within two hours.

University of Minnesota Extension
Extension provides programs to help families and communities manage economic, environmental, and mental health challenges. Its Coping with Rural Stress page connects people to financial and mental-health resources.

Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
Phone: 988

Crisis Text Line
Text: MN to 741741
Both offer immediate, free, confidential support for people in distress or worried about someone else.

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Ensuring Safe Well Waters

Testing and treatment options for Southeast Minnesota

By Nikol Ross, MDA Hydrologist

Free, local, certified testing is available for private well users in Southeast Minnesota while supplies last. Households that rely on private wells for drinking water in Dodge, Fillmore, Goodhue, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Wabasha, and Winona counties can test for nitrate, arsenic, bacteria (total coliform and E. coli), lead, and manganese. Test kits with easy-to-follow instructions are mailed directly to you. Testing is supported through the Clean Water Land and Legacy Amendment.

TAP·IN
SAFE DRINKING WATER FOR SE MN

Financial assistance for water treatment also is available depending on test results. If nitrate tests above 10 mg/L in the well water, homeowners are eligible for a reverse osmosis system at no cost. In some cases, well repair or well replacement cost-share dollars are available. These mitigation funds were supported by the Minnesota Legislature.

Residents interested in learning more about testing and mitigation options should visit the **TAP IN website** using the QR code below. TAP-IN is administered by a collaborative of local partners across Southeast Minnesota.

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The MDA Reminds Ag Businesses How to Verify PFMD Inspectors

Clear steps to confirm identity and understand what to expect

By Carlos Sanchez Barahona, MDA Agricultural Chemical Inspector Specialist

The PFMD conducts statewide inspections conducts statewide inspections to protect public health, the environment, worker safety, and ensure compliance with federal and Minnesota laws. This notice outlines what businesses can expect during PFMD inspections and how to verify inspector credentials before granting access.

What to Expect During PFMD Inspections

Activities vary by facility and circumstances. The items below are common examples but are not exhaustive.

- License and credential checks (e.g., commercial/ noncommercial applicators, dealers, and private applicators)
- Review of pesticide and fertilizer purchase, distribution, application, and recordkeeping
- Inspection of storage areas, bulk tanks, secondary containment, load pads, spill response supplies, PPE, and labeling
- Worker Protection Standard (WPS) compliance checks where applicable
- Follow-up investigations regarding complaints, misuse, spills, or incidents

How to Verify an Inspector

Verify credentials before granting access. Valid inspectors will:

- Present state-issued photo ID with MDA branding and a badge number
- Clearly state the purpose and scope of the inspection (e.g., records review, storage inspection, license verification)
- Provide a written Notice of Inspection referencing MDA authority and your rights under state law
- Offer a business card or contact information for follow-up

You can authenticate MDA inspection staff by calling the phone number printed on the back of their state-issued ID (651-201-6023). Report suspicious activity to local law enforcement.

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The MDA Reminds Farmers About Proper Fertilizer Storage

By Matthew Parins, MDA Agricultural Chemical Advisor

Ahead of planting season, the MDA is reminding farmers to follow proper storage rules for bulk fertilizer. Bulk liquid fertilizer can contaminate soil, surface water, and groundwater if tanks or pipes leak. Dry fertilizer also can harm the environment if stored on the ground and mixes with rain or snow.

To prevent this, liquid fertilizer tanks must be placed inside a secondary containment system that can hold spills. Dry fertilizer must be stored on an impervious surface and under a roof to protect it from weather. There may be other requirements depending on the location of the stored dry fertilizer.

Farmers must have an MDA bulk storage permit to store any amount of dry bulk fertilizer. A permit also is required if storing more than 6,000 gallons of liquid fertilizer.

The permit application must include storage plans and a $105 fee, and it must be submitted before construction or storage begins.

Failure to follow these rules may lead to enforcement action and expensive environmental cleanup. Any fertilizer spill must be reported immediately to the Minnesota Duty Officer at 800-422-0798.

For more information on bulk storage and permits, contact Matthew Parins.

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Precipitation Management for Fertilizer Storage

Managing precipitation is crucial for safe and compliant fertilizer storage. Accumulation of rain or snow in secondary containment can reduce containment capacity and accelerate corrosion of tanks and appurtenances, potentially shortening equipment lifespan and compromising tank stability.

The best approach is to prevent accumulation. Roofed containment and loading areas are ideal. When covering isn't possible, maintain areas by promptly cleaning spills, removing residues, and using drip pans, well-maintained pumps, and valves. Seepage in load-area pits also should be managed to avoid nitrate contamination.

Any collected water should be treated as potentially contaminated. Test it before discharge using field kits for immediate results or lab analysis (7–10 days). Store water safely until results are available.

Facilities should test accumulated precipitation at least quarterly. If contamination exceeds safe levels, test after each precipitation event or manage the water as contaminated until safe.

Routine testing and proactive management protect both infrastructure and the environment.

For more information on precipitation management, contact the MDA at 651-201-6274.

Private Applicator Certification Policy Changes

By Brian Clark, MDA Recertification Project Manager

The following statutory changes related to private applicator certification were changed in 2024, and are in effect for the 2026 growing season:

- All applicators must be 18 years of age
- Anyone other than the applicator handling open Restricted Use Products must be certified
- Exams must be proctored

An additional policy change allows commercial and non-commercial applicators who are in good standing and holding a license in categories A (Core) and C (Field Crops Pest Management) to transfer their license to a private certification without additional testing. For more information contact, **pesticide.licensing@state.mn.us**. Private applicators wishing to become commercial or non-commercial applicators still are required to take category exams.

A third policy change allows private applicators to add a General Aerial (B) endorsement to their certification instead of being non-commercial applicators. This endorsement ends at the same time as of private certification, so applicators will need to get recertified before that time. All endorsement recertification requires additional training beyond private applicator recertification.

More information can be found at:

Private Pesticide Applicator Certification
www.mda.state.mn.us/private-pesticide-applicator-certification

License Types
www.mda.state.mn.us/licensing/licensetypes/pesticideapplicator/recertreqs

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A Refresher on Chlorpyrifos Products Use in Minnesota

By Haley Johnson, MDA Pesticide Management Unit Supervisor

Chlorpyrifos has undergone major regulatory changes in recent years. In December 2024, the EPA proposed revoking most food and feed tolerances and adding restrictions related to location, application rates, and protections for workers and vulnerable species. In Minnesota, only alfalfa, soybeans, sugar beets, and winter wheat remain approved uses.

Products that were not updated to meet the EPA's new food and feed labeling requirements — and were therefore canceled by the EPA and MDA — may still be used on non-food crops, as long as the work is not done for hire and all label directions are followed. This allowance remains in place until February 2027.

For 2026, the MDA has conditionally registered several chlorpyrifos products. During this transition, applicators must follow label requirements:

- **Products with old labeling** – These may only be used for non-food purposes.
- **Products with new labeling** – These may still be used for food purposes, provided they comply with updated EPA guidelines.

Chlorpyrifos can reach surface waters through runoff with sediment, spray or vapor drift, and applications made too close to water, so label-required setbacks and drift-reduction measures are essential to protect aquatic life. When applying near permanent water bodies — such as rivers, lakes, streams, reservoirs, marshes, ponds, and commercial fishponds — mandatory setbacks must be followed based on the application method.

Application Method	Required Setback (buffer zone in feet)
Gound boom	25
Chemigation	25
Orchard airblast	50
Aerial (fixed wing or helicopter)	150

Check the label for additional chlorpyrifos application requirements.

To further reduce contamination risks, the MDA recommends following chlorpyrifos best management practices (BMPs), including using field scouting and economic thresholds to make insect management decisions, applying multiple Integrated Pest Management tools, following all label-specified application limits, and rotating chlorpyrifos with other modes of action insecticides within and between seasons. Scan the QR code to view the full list of chlorpyrifos BMPs. The sale and use of chlorpyrifos remains restricted to products currently registered in the state of Minnesota. Please check the MDA's **Registered Product Search**.

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Dicamba Restrictions Announced for 2026 Growing Season

The formulations are volatile and can move off-site through drift and volatilization

By Eric Burkness, MDA Research Scientist

Three over-the-top (OTT) dicamba herbicide products are registered for use in Minnesota on dicamba-tolerant soybeans during the 2026 growing season. All three products will have Minnesota-specific restrictions. The restrictions are aimed at reducing off-site movement and protecting neighboring crops and vegetation.

The restrictions apply to Engenia (BASF), Tavium (Syngenta), and Stryax (Bayer) — all restricted-use dicamba formulations are approved only for OTT applications on dicamba-tolerant soybeans. Only certified applicators may purchase or apply them, and applicators must follow all federal and state requirements — which includes checking the manufacturer's website for the most current directions within seven days of application.

Dicamba was unavailable to producers in 2025 following a federal court ruling that vacated its U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registration. The EPA re-registered the three products on Feb. 6 for the next two growing seasons. The MDA subsequently re-registered the three products for use in Minnesota with additional restrictions.

Since dicamba first became available for dicamba-tolerant soybeans in 2017, the MDA received complaints each year, except 2025, related to off-target injury. Dicamba is volatile and can move off-site through drift and volatilization, especially under certain weather conditions.

The three OTT dicamba products, Engenia®, Stryax™, and Tavium®, include the following state-specific restrictions on the product labels.

- **Cutoff date:** Do not apply south of interstate 94 after June 12. Do not apply north of interstate 94 after June 30.
- **Cutoff temperature for the entire state:** Do not apply if the air temperature of the field at the time of application is over 85 degrees Fahrenheit or if the National Weather Service's forecasted high temperature for the nearest available location for the day exceeds 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Forecasted temperature must be recorded at the start of the application.

These federal registrations are valid until Feb. 6, 2028. Compliance with Minnesota-specific and other restrictions listed on the product label is mandatory. For more information visit Over-the-Top Dicamba | Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

If you are planning to use one of the restricted-use dicamba products, licensed applicators must complete annual training specific to OTT dicamba use. The training is offered by dicamba registrants and is intended to keep users informed of label requirements, best practices, and environmental protection guidelines. Licensed applicators also must follow requirements of the Minnesota Pesticide Control Law.

Other restrictions include:

- A maximum of two applications of 0.5 lbs of dicamba acid equivalent per acre annually, for a maximum of 1.0 lb per acre of all dicamba products each year.
- Use of both an approved drift-reduction agent and a pH-buffering volatility-reducing agent be tank-mixed with the dicamba products before any over-the-top (post-emergence) application.
- Adoption of a 240-foot downwind buffer between the last treated row and the nearest downwind field/area edge.
- Growth-stage specific restrictions for Tavium® prohibit use after the V4 growth stage, while Engenia® and Stryax™ use are prohibited after the R1 growth stage..
- Achievement of 3 runoff/erosion mitigation points from the Environmental Protection Agency's certified conservation practices (Mitigation Menu | US EPA) on each treated field to protect endangered or threatened species. In pesticide use limitation areas (PULAs), identified through EPA's Bulletin's Live Two, especially vulnerable species require additional safeguards, in which 6 mitigation points are required. These practices — such as vegetative buffers, contour farming, and cover crops — physically prevent dicamba from moving off-field in runoff or eroded soil, protecting waterways and habitats. For more information see Pesticides and the Endangered Species Act | Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

Additional information on state-specific restrictions and OTT dicamba can be found on the MDA's website. **Always consult and follow the product label before use.**

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Select PFMD Enforcement Actions

By Peter Bergquist, MDA Regulatory Case Advisor

The MDA's statewide Agricultural Chemical Inspectors (ACIs) conduct routine and unannounced inspections of farms, operations, and facilities that use, store, handle, distribute, or dispose of agricultural chemicals. Under state law and within the Pesticide & Fertilizer Management Division (PFMD), ACIs check for compliance and safety, documenting any required corrections. After inspections, PFMD staff complete compliance reviews, including evaluation of any Orders or Notices of Violation. Noncompliance may result in additional non-penalty or penalty actions. Throughout this process, the MDA works with regulated parties to achieve and maintain compliance with Minnesota regulations.

The following are recent enforcement actions:

Pennock

An agricultural establishment with a Minnesota noncommercial pesticide applicator paid a $1,900 penalty for Worker Protection Standard (WPS) violations, including: failing to display pesticide safety information, failing to keep pesticide application record and hazard information, failing to provide WPS pesticide safety training to agricultural workers and a pesticide handler, and failing to provide PPE and a clean change of clothing for a pesticide handler.

Rushford

An agricultural establishment paid a $1,500 penalty for failing to provide WPS pesticide safety training to agricultural workers and pesticide handlers.

Maple Grove

An agricultural establishment paid a $1,000 penalty for WPS violations, including: failing to provide WPS safety training, PPE, and a clean change of clothing to a pesticide handler.

Le Roy

An agricultural facility with a Pesticide Dealer License and Bulk Storage Permit paid a $1,250 penalty for failing to install an approved backflow prevention device and develop an Incident Response Plan.

Oakdale

A pest-control facility paid a $3,500 penalty for making structural pest-control applications without valid Minnesota structural pest-control applicator licenses.

Brainerd

A mosquito-control facility paid a $250 penalty for applying pesticides for hire without a valid Minnesota commercial pesticide applicator license.

Alden

An agricultural facility with a Minnesota Pesticide Dealer License and Bulk Storage Permit paid a $1,250 penalty for storing minibulk pesticide containers without adequate safeguards.

Janesville

An agricultural operation with a Minnesota commercial pesticide applicator paid a $750 penalty for using pesticide inconsistent with the label resulting in drift.

Ham Lake

A pest-control facility with a Minnesota commercial pesticide applicator paid a $1,000 penalty for using pesticide in a manner that endangered humans.

Willmar

An agricultural facility with Minnesota private pesticide applicators paid a $500 penalty for using pesticide in conditions that exceeded the labeled maximum wind speed.

Owatonna

An agricultural facility with a fertilizer license and anhydrous ammonia (NH3) storage facility permit paid a $2,700 penalty for NH3 storage and equipment violations including, in part: inoperable storage tank thermometer, failing to mount toolbar applicator coupling devices in a manner that permits the device to swivel freely in all directions and maintain coupling devices in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations, and failing to maintain records indicating nurse tank pressure relief valve installation dates.

Ormsby

An agricultural facility with a fertilizer license and anhydrous ammonia (NH3) storage facility permit paid a $2,775 penalty for NH3 storage and equipment violations including, in part: failing to lock riser hose end valves, failing to maintain pressure relief valve installation records, and failing to maintain safety water container fill cap.

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Opportunities Help Farmers Cut Nitrogen Loss, Boost Climate Practices

By Megan Moland, MDA Conservation Programs Administrator

The Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP) received funding from Minnesota's $200 million **climate-smart food systems** (CSFS) initiative to support growers across the state in implementing agricultural practices with climate benefits. Two of these MAWQCP financial opportunities funded through CSFS are detailed below.

The Nitrogen Enhanced Efficiency Fertilizers (N EEF) Discount Program will provide financial support to selected agricultural retailers to pass on point-of-sale discounts to farmers purchasing nitrogen-enhanced efficiency fertilizers for use on agricultural lands in Minnesota. Retailers selected through the competitive RFP will offer farmers discounts on eligible N EEF products for the 2026 growing season. Funding is awarded to retailers, but at least 80% of the value must be provided to farmers as a discount on eligible fertilizer purchases. MAWQCP is offering up to $10/acre for the documented sale/application of eligible N EEFs, not to exceed 75% of product cost. These discounts are expected to be available starting in May.

Project proposals that promote the use of N EEF products in ways that align with nitrogen best management practices and with other state priorities will be competitively prioritized for contract selection. Payments will be dispersed on a per-acre basis, according to satisfactory documentation around the discounted sale/application of an N EFF product by the contracted organization(s). This funding opportunity opened on March 9, and closed at 11:59 p.m. on March 30. Additional information about the program can be found on the **nitrogen enhanced efficiency fertilizers** page of the MDA website.

Questions about the N EEF discount program can be sent to Ellen Friedrich, **ellen.friedrich@state.mn.us**.

The Climate Friendly Agricultural Practices (CFAP) incentive payment provides funding for the implementation of the following conservation practices:

- Conservation cover
- Pasture and hay planting
- Conservation crop rotation
- Tree and shrub establishment, which may support silvopasture, windbreak/shelterbest, and forest farming

Payments are offered at a flat rate, as established by the Natural Resources Conservation Services (NRCS). Applicants who are certified through the MAWQCP will receive 75% of the total assumed practice implementation cost up to $15,000, as identified. Applicants who are not certified will receive 60% of the total assumed practice implementation cost up to $15,000, as identified.

Applications for CFAP are anticipated to open this month. More information about this opportunity will be posted on the Minnesota Pollution Control **Minnesota climate-smart food systems** page under the "Climate friendly agricultural practices" tab.

If interested in CFAP and want the higher payment rate, you can explore MAWQCP and what certification looks on the **Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program** page of the MDA website.

Contact Megan Moland with questions about CFAP.

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For Andrew Schock, who farms with his dad, Dale, in Wadena County, the decision to become certified was straightforward. "If I'm going to be in business and carry the farm to the next generation, I have to continue to be better."

Andrew Schock and his dad, Dale

Leading the Way for Cleaner Water

How Minnesota farmers are using certification to protect land, livelihoods, and local waters

By Brad Jordahl Redlin, MDA Project Manager

Walking a field quickly reveals a story of the landscape, identifying where soil stays put or begins to shift.

It's a step that more than 1,700 farmers have taken to enroll in the Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP), an MDA program that helps farmers manage their land effectively while protecting water quality.

For a decade, MAWQCP has relied on the practical know-how of MDA staff and local technical experts to help producers respond to weather and field conditions. The program begins with a whole-farm assessment, considering what's working and where improvements are possible.

A Practical Pathway

MAWQCP gives farmers and landowners a voluntary way to adopt conservation practices that protect Minnesota's water resources. Producers say the program helps them address field challenges, improve efficiency, and plan for the future — all while gaining financial assistance and technical support.

A major benefit is regulatory assurance. Certified farms receive 10 years of certainty that they meet Minnesota's water-quality standards. Even if rules change, certified operations remain compliant for the full decade. This helps producers manage longer-term risk and make informed decisions.

Profitability is another. For six straight years (2019-2025) — through wildly fluctuating markets and prices — the Minnesota State Agricultural Centers of Excellence every year showed MAWQCP-certified farms had higher average net incomes.

Results on the Ground

Across Minnesota, certification is producing measurable results. As of March, 1,810 producers have certified more than 1.27 million acres. These acres:

- Keep an estimated 59,900 tons of sediment out of Minnesota waters each year
- Retain more than 166,600 tons of soil per year
- Prevent more than 1.2 million pounds of nitrogen from entering state waters every year
- Prevent more than 77,000 pounds of phosphorus from entering lakes and streams per year
- Program guidance led to the implementation of more than 8,100 conservation improvements

In Otter Tail County, Mark Schoening and his son-in-law, Adam Fronning, ground their operation in a shared commitment to stewardship. "We want to pass on the land to the next generation in better condition than when we started," Schoening said. MAWQCP certification helps them do that by identifying and implementing farm management and conservation practices that support soil health, productivity, and resilience for years to come.

"I've known the importance of protecting the soil and water since my childhood," says Dave Grommesh, one of the first farmers in Clay County to certify his operation. "We want to show that we take seriously our responsibility to be good stewards, especially since we farm near both the town of Barnesville and Whiskey Creek."

William and Dave Grommesh

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Want to Become Certified?

- Connect with your **local area certifier** or SWCD to discuss your operation
- Complete a whole-farm assessment to identify areas of risk regarding water quality
- Work with technical staff to implement practices that fit your farm
- Verify practices and receive certification — along with a decade of regulatory certainty
- Continue working with your local certifier as needed

What Do Producers Gain?

- 10 years of regulatory certainty
- More efficient operations and nutrient use
- Reduced erosion and improved field conditions
- A recognized credential that demonstrates stewardship
- Ongoing technical support from local area certification specialists

CLEAN WATER LAND & LEGACY AMENDMENT

Certification helps farmers protect water, support agricultural resilience, and advance Minnesota's conservation future

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Pesticide and Fertilizer Management Division
625 Robert Street North
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Inside: Read about Farmers Turning Data into Decisions