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Farm Bill Listening Session Highlights Farmfest Forums

A U.S. House Agriculture Committee listening session on the next Farm Bill will highlight the feature Forums at Farmfest this year.

The schedule for 2017 will include an exciting lineup of feature forums, with a heavy emphasis on key topics and agricultural policy issues affecting farm families and rural communities. The forums will be held August 1, 2, and 3, in the Wick Buildings Forum and Education Center at Farmfest, which is located at the Gilfillan Estate, 7 miles southeast of Redwood Falls, Minnesota.

The Farm Bill listening session will be held on Thursday, August 3, from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and is titled: **"The Next Farm Bill...Conversations in the Field."** The event will be hosted by U.S. House Agriculture Committee Chair, Congressman Michael Conaway, R-Texas, and Committee Ranking Member, Congressman Collin Peterson, D-Minnesota. Other members of the U.S. House Ag Committee have been invited to participate in the Farm Bill forum at Farmfest, and several U.S. House members from the Upper Midwest are expected to attend. During the listening session, there will be opportunities to hear from the U.S. House Ag Committee leadership, as well as to make comments to the committee. Anyone wishing to make comments to the U.S. House Ag Committee will be able to register on August 3, prior to the event.

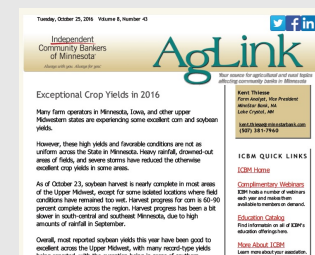
"Addressing the Rural Healthcare Dilemma" will take place on Tuesday, August 1, at 10:30 a.m. The forum will focus on the challenges rural families face in securing adequate health insurance coverage and having access to high quality healthcare services. Panel members include: Emily Piper, Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Human Services; Congressman Tim Walz; State Senator Gary Dahms; Nick Gerhart, Chief Administrative Officer of FBL Financial Group; and Jeff Nielsen, CEO of United Farmers Cooperative.

The afternoon forum at Farmfest on Tuesday, August 1, 1:15 p.m. is titled: **"Strategies for Farming in Challenging Times,"** which will focus on financial challenges and personal stressors that are facing many farm families. Panel members will include: Dave

Kent Thiesse
Farm Analyst, Vice President
MinnStar Bank, NA
Lake Crystal, MN

kent.thiesse@minnstarbank.com
(507) 381-7960

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Frederickson, Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture; State Representative Paul Anderson; David Bau, U of M Extension Educator; Bob Roesler, Southwest Minnesota Farm Business Management Instructor; Pauline VanNurden of the U of M Center for Farm Financial Management, and Bob Worth, farm operator and Minnesota Soybean Growers Association Board member.

The feature forum on Wednesday morning, August 2, at 10:30 a.m., will be a **"National Ag Policy Roundtable."** The forum will include a discussion on several important ag policy issues, including the development of the next Farm Bill, potential changes to the Federal crop insurance program, NAFTA and other ag-trade issues, immigration reform, rural healthcare, and much more. A panel of national leaders from various farm organizations and commodity groups will be present to discuss the issues. The panel will include: Zippy Duvall, American Farm Bureau President; Gary Wertish, Minnesota Farmers Union President; Bruce Schmoll, Past President of the U.S. Meat Export Federation; Tom Haag of the National Corn Growers Association Board; and Jim Compart of the National Pork Producers Council Board.

The feature forum on Wednesday afternoon, August 2, at 1:15 p.m., is titled: **"Transitioning to the Next Generation of Farmers,"** and will focus on opportunities and challenges that farm families face as they transition from one generation to the next. Panel members will include Karson Duncanson, farm operator from Mapleton, MN; Dan Helvig, farm operator and Minnesota Pork Board member from Truman, MN; Natasha Mortenson of Riverview Farms in Morris, MN; Tim Nolte, cattle producer and Past President of the Minnesota State Cattleman's Association from Sebeka, MN; Pam Uhlenkamp, Farm Business Management Instructor, from Mankato, MN; and Brad Schloesser, Director of the Southern Minnesota Center for Agriculture.

A Farmfest tradition will continue on Thursday, August 3, at 1:15 p.m., with the annual **"Farm Family of the Year"** recognition program. Approximately 75 farm families from throughout Minnesota have been selected at the county level for this special recognition. This event is jointly sponsored by Farmfest and the University of Minnesota.

Both U.S. Senators from Minnesota are scheduled to deliver keynote addresses during Farmfest. Senator Amy Klobuchar is scheduled to speak on Tuesday, August 1, at 1:00 p.m., and Senator Al Franken is scheduled to speak on Thursday, August 3, at 1:10 p.m., just prior to the Farm Family Recognition Program. There will also be a keynote address at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, August 3, by ambassador Barbara Stephenson, President of the American Foreign Service Association.

Two special forums at Farmfest will be held on Tuesday, August 1. **"DTN Ag Weather and Grain Marketing Update"** will begin at 9:00 a.m., and a forum titled **"Farm Safety: Protecting You,**

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"Your Family, Your Employees, and Your Bottom Line" will occur at 2:45 p.m. on Tuesday.

Two more special forums are scheduled for Wednesday, August 2. Mark Schultz, Commodity Marketing Analyst with Northstar Commodities, will provide a **"Grain and Livestock Marketing Update"** at 9:00 a.m., on Wednesday morning.

"Retire at Zero" is the title of the special forum being presented by Farm Bureau Financial Services on Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.

The Linder Farm Network show will be held each day at Farmfest from 12:00-1:00 p.m. The program will feature many special guests.

More information on the forums at Farmfest can be found [here](#).

For more information, contact Kent Thiesse, Farm Management Analyst and Vice President, MinnStar Bank, Lake Crystal, at: 507-381-7960 or kent.thiesse@minnstarbank.com.

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