

Spring 2026

SOUTH DAKOTA SOYBEAN LEADER

A publication of the South Dakota Soybean Association

2026 Spring Check-In

- ▶ Soy Industry News
- ▶ U.S. Soybeans Have an Opportunity at Home
- ▶ Soybeans, Strip Tilling, and Salinity: Adding Acres into Conservation
- ▶ Soil Health Research Promotes Sustainable Success for South Dakota Soybean Farmers

Jake Storm, Ethan, South Dakota.
Story on page 20.



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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

A NOTE FROM YOUR NEW SDSA PRESIDENT, TANNER HENTO

By Tanner Hento

Thank you for making South Dakota agriculture and the South Dakota Soybean Association strong. Your commitment to your farms, your families, and your communities is what drives this organization forward.

It is an honor to serve as your President and to help continue building on the solid foundation laid by those before us.

I have served on the board since 2021, and the knowledge I gained from past presidents Jordan Scott and Kevin Deinert has been invaluable. Their leadership is evident in how far our organization has come.

I was born and raised in Avon, South Dakota, and am proud to be part of a soon-to-be fifth-generation farming operation. After earning degrees in Biology and English, I was attending graduate school at the University of South Dakota when my parents unexpectedly passed away during my first semester. My brother Scott and I moved home immediately to continue the farm. Fourteen years later, after many hard lessons and long seasons, we now raise soybeans, corn, and alfalfa.

My involvement with SDSA began through the Corteva Young Leader Program in 2022. I was elected to the board in December 2023 and have proudly served as a director for the past three years. My focus has largely centered on policy, from macroeconomics to geopolitics, and understanding how those forces shape the future of our farms.

During my first trip to Washington, D.C., with our South Dakota soybean group, I saw firsthand the influence our organization has with legislators. Our voice matters.

We are fortunate to have 15 dedicated board members representing diverse backgrounds, along with strong industry partners and a committed office team who keep everything moving forward. I have full confidence in this board's ability to address challenges thoughtfully and strategically, always with South Dakota soybean farmers top of mind.

In the 1920s, roughly 30% of Americans were directly involved in agriculture. As of 2024, that number has fallen to just 1.2%. As fewer people have direct ties to farming, misinformation spreads more easily. Now more than ever, agriculture must stand united. Whether cattle or hogs, soybeans or wheat, our differences are minor in the bigger picture. Agriculture remains one of South Dakota's most critical industries, and we should be proud, and committed to keeping it strong.

Agriculture is no stranger to uncertainty. Tariffs, drought, disease, market volatility, hard times are not new, and they will come again.

My father began farming in 1979. His first crop was lost to drought. Hog markets were bleak. He worked two jobs, unsure whether full-time farming would ever become reality. I once asked him what kept him going. He told me that in life, there are two wolves constantly fighting, one representing hope, the other despair.

Which wolf wins?

"It's the one you feed," he said.

There will always be challenges in agriculture and in life. But when we choose to focus on opportunity, resilience, and what we're building together, we create hope for the future, for our farms, our families, and our state.

I am proud to call South Dakota home and proud to represent its soybean farmers.

Let's make the 2026 crop our best one yet. ■

Tanner Hento
Tanner Hento
Avon, South Dakota



TANNER HENTO
SDSA PRESIDENT

SDSL

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- 3** Letter from the President
- 5** Letter from the Chairman
- 6** Soy Industry News
- 11** Letter from the Executive Director
- 12** U.S. Soybeans Have an Opportunity at Home
- 14** Soybeans, Strip Tilling, and Salinity: Adding Acres into Conservation
- 16** SDSU Students at Commodity Classic
- 18** Hungry for Truth: At Home with a Farmer: Tri-Tip Steak with Calli & Tate Williams
- 20** Hungry for Truth: Embracing the Future as a Fourth-Generation Farmer
- 22** Soil Health Research Promotes Sustainable Success for South Dakota Soybean Farmers
- 24** SDSU Survey Aims to Study On-Farm Drone Use
- 28** Mexico: A Vital Neighbor and U.S. Soy Success Story
- 30** Embracing Change: Jon Nelson 2026 Regional Conservation Legacy Award Winner





DAVID STRUCK, *Chairman of SDSRPC*

TURNING CHECKOFF DOLLARS INTO FARMER VALUE

By David Struck, Chairman of SDSRPC

As we turn the corner from winter to spring, I hope the shop work is wrapping up and you're feeling ready for another planting season. There's always plenty to do before that first seed goes in the ground.

For the South Dakota Soybean Research & Promotion Council, winter is our busy season as well. While you're preparing equipment, the board is reviewing research proposals and making decisions on how to best invest your checkoff dollars. Our priority is simple: support projects that provide real value back to South Dakota soybean farmers.

That includes research at SDSU and with other partners focused on practical production challenges, improving weed and disease control, addressing insect pressure, enhancing soil management, and exploring new tools and technologies that can help farmers make informed decisions in the field.

At the same time, we continue working to strengthen demand for soybeans both here at home and across the globe. Promoting soybean meal in domestic and international markets remains a key focus. We are also investing in efforts that expand livestock feed usage and develop new industrial and agricultural

applications for soy-based products. From bio-based fuels like renewable diesel to innovative biobased materials, these projects help create additional opportunities for our crop.

Our collaboration with Dakota BioWorx is another exciting step forward. Their facility is advancing a number of soy-based initiatives aimed at bringing new ideas and added value to the agriculture industry. Partnerships like this help position South Dakota soybeans for long-term growth.

Everything we do comes back to one objective, enhancing opportunities and profitability for soybean farmers across South Dakota. Thank you for the trust you place in the checkoff program.

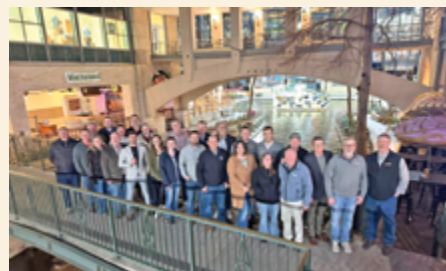
Wishing you a safe, smooth, and successful planting season. ■

David Struck

David Struck
Chairman of SDSRPC

2026 Commodity Classic

SD Soybean Checkoff and SDSRPC Directors headed south to San Antonio for the 2026 Commodity Classic. While there, they gained valuable insights, engaged in meaningful discussions, connected with partners from across the country, and advocated for policies that strengthen agriculture. Our farmers don't just attend - they lead, collaborate, and invest in the continued success of South Dakota agriculture.



Black Hills Stock Show



South Dakota Soybean traveled to Rapid City for the Black Hills Stock Show. With Soy Street set up on-site, the booth remained busy as attendees stopped by to learn more about soybeans and their many uses. The steady flow of visitors provided a great opportunity to share information and connect with consumers and producers alike.

There was also an opportunity to present to local FFA students about the South Dakota Soybean Checkoff and the benefits and versatility of soybeans. The session featured an interactive Jeopardy-style game that highlighted soybean facts, explored domestic and international markets, and showcased the many unexpected places soybeans are used.

Pork Congress

January 14-15 marked two full days of activity at the 57th Annual South Dakota Pork Congress. With more than 160 exhibitors, the trade show floor was filled with energy, meaningful conversations, and steady engagement from producers and industry partners across the tri-state area.



Throughout the event, time was spent reconnecting with producers, visiting with exhibitors, and strengthening relationships within the pork and broader agricultural community. A highlight of the congress was the opportunity to support fellow commodity groups and take part in their events, showcasing the strong collaboration within South Dakota agriculture.



AgFest

SDSA Board Directors gathered in Pierre for a full day of engagement, conversation, and collaboration. The day began with a luncheon, followed by time spent attending Capitol sessions, and concluded with an evening at Ag Fest. During the event, Brenda Forman, Ryan Brunner, and DANR Secretary Hunter Roberts shared updates and insights on how the legislative session is progressing and the key issues currently taking shape.

Clean Fuels Conference

During January 19–21, Derrick Scott and Tim Ostrem attended the annual Clean Fuels Conference in Orlando, Florida. The conference featured a wide range of breakout sessions and engaging main stage speakers, offering valuable insights from industry leaders and professionals working directly in the biofuels sector. Attendees noted that hearing from those “in the trenches” continues to be one of the most impactful aspects of the event.

A key topic of discussion centered on federal policy and the anticipated finalization of volume requirements by the U.S. Treasury, which industry leaders hope will be completed by March. While the process has involved a lengthy wait and slow-moving government action, there is optimism that once obligations are finalized, biodiesel and renewable diesel producers will have the clarity and certainty needed to significantly ramp up production—potentially reaching just under 6 billion gallons by 2026. Subsidy certainty remains critical to making biofuels economically feasible. Looking ahead, the outlook is positive, as approval of the proposed measures would extend through calendar year 2029.



Jordan Scott Elected to ASA Executive Committee

During its annual election meeting in St. Louis, the American Soybean Association Board of Directors voted in the executive committee members who will lead the organization through the coming year's top advocacy priorities, including the farm economy, biofuels, inputs, trade, markets and other critical policy issues for U.S. soybean farmers. The board elected Jordan Scott (SD) as ASA secretary.

Stockyard Soirée

Jeff Thompson, Kevin (Jannell) Scott, and Jerry (Sal) Schmitz joined fellow supporters at this year's Stockyard Soirée, an evening filled with energy, storytelling, and a shared appreciation for the region's deep agricultural roots. Hosted annually by the Stockyards Ag Experience, the event raises funds for Woster Plaza and the Stockyards Museum, an initiative dedicated to honoring the historic site that helped put Sioux Falls on the map.

At its peak, the Sioux Falls Stockyards was one of the largest livestock markets in the nation, serving generations of farmers and ranchers and playing a pivotal role in the area's growth and prosperity. The impact of the stockyards continues to be felt today, as agriculture remains a cornerstone of the region's economy and identity.





Soy100

The South Dakota Soybean Checkoff recently hosted Soy100 at McCrory Gardens in partnership with the SDSU Department of Agronomy, Horticulture, and Plant Science. The event drew a strong turnout of farmers, agronomists, and students for a day focused on markets, trends, and the future of soybean production.

Attendees received a market outlook from Naomi Blohm, explored current soybean trends with Cheryl Reese, and learned more about regenerative farming practices from Kurt Stiefvater. Jeff Thompson and Ross Tschetter also led a discussion on the roles of SDSRPC and SDSA, as well as the importance of leadership within agriculture.

The event provided valuable insights and meaningful conversations for all in attendance. A special thank you goes to Bruce Haines for serving as emcee and helping guide the day's program.



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**DRIVING DEMAND FOR U.S. SOY
IN 90+ COUNTRIES WITH EXPORTS
UP 13% YEAR-OVER-YEAR.
58% OF THE TOTAL CROP.**

Marketing Year 2024/25 U.S. Soy Exports

U.S. Soy Complex
(Whole Soybeans, Soybean Meal, Soy Oil)

**68.7
MMT**



**\$29.6
billion**



Source: USDA, Global Agricultural Trade System (GATS), January 2026





BUILT ON RESILIENCE, GROUNDED IN OPTIMISM

By Jerry Schmitz, Executive Director of South Dakota Soybean Research and Promotion Council & South Dakota Soybean Association

Please do not let the constant barrage of negative news we hear and see every day change your outlook on farming, agriculture, and your way of life. Challenge is and always has been an opportunity, wearing coveralls. There are many good things on the horizon for agriculture and particularly for the soybean industry.

Demand for soy is rising as the world population grows. There is no better source of protein, essential amino acids, fiber, and fat for feeding fish, poultry, pork, beef and dairy than that little bean you grow. The soybean checkoff is finding and creating new markets for the crop you have grown so well. That demand will drive price.

South Dakota farmers have always been the most optimistic people in the world because their family's livelihood depends on believing in a future they cannot control. Farmers work in partnership with forces far bigger than themselves. Weather shifts. Markets fluctuate. Equipment breaks. Policies change. Despite all these negative factors, you have, for many generations, risen before sunrise and completed the work late in the day again and again. Optimism by farm families is not naive hope. It is disciplined resilience.

Every season begins with uncertainty. For generations, your families have purchased inputs and planted seeds into soil without any guarantee of rain, ideal temperatures, stable markets, or freedom from pests and disease. Yet they, and you, planted anyway. Their commitment and yours is a tremendous example of optimism in action for the world to behold.

Unlike many professions that see quick results and returns, farming requires tremendous patience and resilience. Crops take months to mature. Livestock breeding enterprises take years to refine. Soil health improvements can take many years to generate full results. Family farmers have always committed to the long haul because they believe, or better yet, they know, improvement is possible.

There is also generational optimism. Farmers work land that has been in their family for decades, even centuries. Farm families endure grueling seasons because they believe the next one will be better. They invest in conservation practices, technology, and infrastructure not just for themselves, but for the next generation that will follow them, and for a sustainable ecosystem to make the world a better place.

Even after a devastating drought, flood, hailstorm, or market crash, many farmers say, "Next year will be better." That mindset isn't accidental, it's survival. Without that optimism, producing food and agricultural products would be impossible.

You might say that farmers and farm families are professional believers. They believe in rain that hasn't fallen yet, in crops that haven't sprouted yet, in markets that haven't stabilized yet, and in a future harvest only they can imagine. And then, season after season, your families have proven that hope combined with hard work is successful and feeds a hungry world.

YOU, professional believers, are positive beyond the comprehension of people unrelated to agriculture. Please continue that optimism during this difficult time.

This is my final SDSL article as executive director. It is very difficult to convey in words the honor it has been serving on your behalf. Please welcome Kevin Scott, who will serve as executive director upon my retirement in July. Your future is in good hands. ■



JERRY SCHMITZ
Executive Director of
SDSRPC and SDISA



U.S. SOYBEANS HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY AT HOME

By Bree Baatz

The U.S. soybean market is facing export headwinds tied to Brazil's expanding acreage and China's slowing economy. The good news is that the USDA forecasts stronger domestic demand for 2025/26, with only 40% of demand tied to exports but 60% tied to domestic crush.

Paying attention to domestic biofuel policy headlines, as well as quickly rewarding price rallies tied to positive China trade, will serve growers in this environment.

STAY CAUTIOUS AS THE EXPORT ENVIRONMENT SLOWS

Ten years ago, Brazil and the U.S. were nearly tied in the domestic production and export of soybeans. Since then, U.S. production and exports have remained flat while Brazil has continued to expand, largely driven by China's super-cycle of demand, expanding population and economic growth. However, this cycle has now peaked, with China's fundamentals no longer key supports. This means the U.S. needs to be prepared for structural lower demand from China in the long term while Brazil continues on its course of record-breaking supplies.



BREE BAATZ
Grain and Oilseed
Analyst at Terrain

In late February, the USDA released its first estimate of the new-

crop 2026/27 supply and demand estimates, projecting soybean planted acres to increase nearly 5% year on year (YOY) to 85 million acres, versus 81.2 million planted acres in 2025. At the same time that production is expected to rise, new-crop demand is also forecast to increase.

The USDA estimates exports will increase 8% YOY to 1.7 billion bushels. Given Brazil's abundant supplies and reduced demand from China, I am skeptical that this export growth will be achieved.

Regardless of fundamentals, geopolitical events are driving the U.S. export market when it comes to Chinese soybean purchases. Farmers should be prepared to reward any price rallies tied to speculation of increased Chinese purchases, as they might be short-lived.

BIOFUELS = BETTER BASIS

In the past few years, several new crush plants have been built to

support rising demand for domestic biofuel, specifically renewable diesel, with soybean oil as a preferred feedstock.

South and North Dakota have both had new capacity come on line, which is great for minimizing volatility and the sole dependence on soybean exports via the Pacific Northwest. This should improve basis for farmers within the radius of these new crush plants.

For the 2025/26 marketing year, the USDA has forecast record crush demand at 2.57 billion bushels, or approximately 85% of 2025/26 crush capacity. The USDA made the goalpost even higher in 2026/27, with 3% growth expected at 2.66 billion bushels of soybeans for crush.

While the old-crop actual crush pace continues to exceed last year's, the pace has slowed from December to January. This raises doubt about the U.S. crush industry's ability to achieve the USDA's lofty forecast for the old- and new-crop marketing years. During the same time, soyoil stocks have also climbed, indicating questionable demand for the feedstock in biofuel use.

For the crush industry to meet the USDA's forecast and provide local farmers favorable basis, domestic biofuel clarity is needed.

KEY BIOFUEL POLICY UPDATES

In a big win for domestic feedstocks, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act this past summer indicated that the \$1-per-gallon 45Z clean fuel tax credit will apply only to North American feedstocks, which began in 2026. The act also removed the indirect land use penalty that increased the carbon intensity (CI) of soyoil and other row crops used as a feedstock (in favor of imported waste feedstocks like tallow from Brazil and used cooking oil from China).

Additionally, for farmers implementing climate-smart agricultural practices, these were unbundled, allowing more acres to qualify. However, more work is needed from the USDA on what carbon emission assumptions will be utilized so farmers interested in producing low-CI grain can participate.

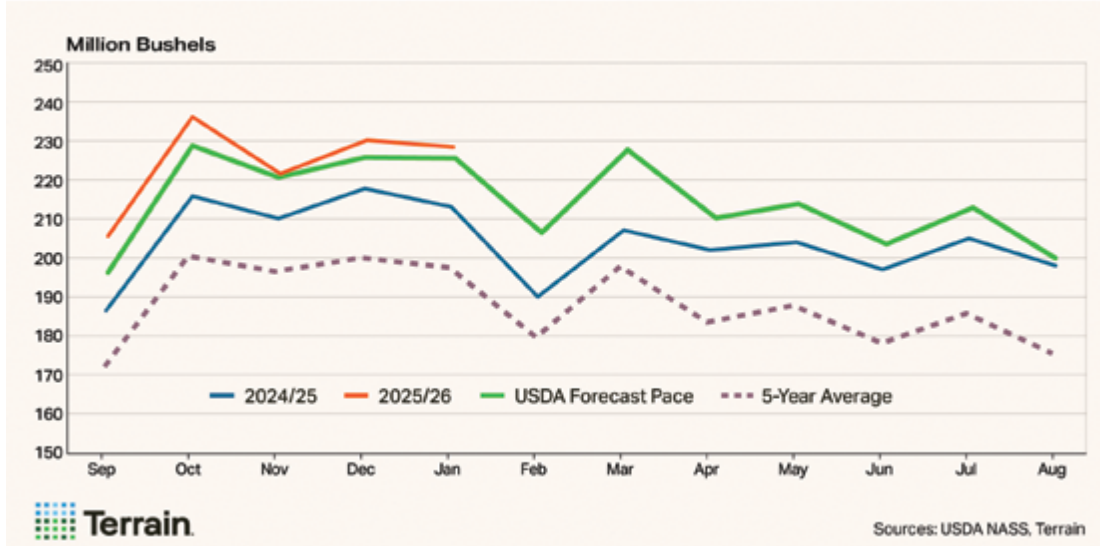
The main factor is that this tax credit goes to the biofuel producer and the sharing of the tax credit with the farmer is not mandatory.

I encourage proactive dialogue with local processors and biofuel producers on how the tax credit might be shared prior to adopting new climate-smart practices.

At the same time, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is expected to finalize the renewable volume obligations (RVO) for 2026 and 2027 sometime in March, which could be positive or negative for prices.

Important issues include whether the EPA limits renewable identification number (RIN) credits to 50%, favoring domestic biofuel feedstocks like soyoil, which will receive 100% RIN credits; and the practice for small refinery exemptions. In the past, any exemptions reduced the overall RVO and, therefore, feedstock demand. Conversely, if the EPA requires the biofuel industry to offset these exemptions, this will increase feedstock demand to adequately meet the RVO mandates.

U.S. Soybean Crush



STAY INFORMED OF NEWS, ALERT TO RALLIES

In my discussions with Farm Credit soybean farmers, I emphasize the importance of paying attention to biofuel policy news, as well as quickly rewarding price rallies tied to positive China trade. These rallies might be short-lived given the expected increase in planted acres for the new-crop year. ■



Bree Baatz is a grain and oilseed analyst for Terrain, a team of economists who provide expert analysis to the customers of AgCountry Farm Credit Services, Farm Credit Services of America and Frontier Farm Credit. Terrainag.com.



SOYBEANS, STRIP TILLING, AND SALINITY: **ADDING ACRES INTO CONSERVATION**

Standing in his soybean field on a humid June afternoon, Kenroy Wipf shared his successes and challenges he has faced while implementing conservation practices while planting soybeans.

This year Wipf planted beans, and between those rows, interseeded a combination of oats, cereal rye, and flax. Only in the second year of using conservation practices in this field, Kenroy acknowledged that although he likely won't see the long-term benefits of the newly implemented conservation practices for a few years, he has been happy in the meantime with the residue cover, which has prevented soil erosion.

Both the soybeans and the cover crop mixture were planted simultaneously with an air seeder on May 3, 2025. Unfortunately, despite never having the issue before, Wipf had to replant the soybeans with a drill due to the unique ground-hardening conditions that occurred in the spring of 2025. This hard exterior affected the air seeder's ability to place the seed deep enough into the soil while planting.

After the soybeans were replanted and grew strong while nestled between corn stalk residue from the prior year and a cover crop mix, it was time to give the beans their chance to flourish solo. At this stage in the growing process, the existing cover crops will be terminated so the soybeans can soak up the newly established nutrients in the soil and can be harvested in the fall. This termination chemical treatment for the beans is to kill weeds, volunteer corn, and cover crops that are in between and around the cash crop rows. After a few days, the unwanted species will turn white, closely followed by beautiful rows of soybeans.

Kenroy shared that he feels leaving residue on his field is necessary, especially considering the sandy soil that exists in his area, the James River Valley. Another issue that he faces living in this area, which is also an issue in much of South Dakota, is soil salinity. "Do you have any salt issues on some of your acres?" asked an NRCS employee. Wipf replied, "We do, last year we planted a lot of certain grasses—we put those areas out (of production) and put the grasses in because you don't raise nothing there anyway."

Outside of the growing season, he typically strip-tills in the fall, but when given dry autumn conditions, he has also found success with spring strip-tilling. Once soybeans are harvested, Wipf said he typically follows up by drilling wheat into the ground, then grazing the cover crop. Even

when fields went ungrazed and perennials died, Kenroy planted directly into the residue and still found success.

When asked by Brookings Field Support Office Agronomist, Eric Barsness, what his primary reason for adopting these practices was, he simply answered, “to get carbon in the ground and the roots... something better for the soil,” – sensible stewardship being the overall echo of his statement. ■



Does this sound like a practice you would like to try? There is free one-on-one consultation for conservation planning available with your local NRCS experts.

To locate a service center closest to you, visit

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SDSU STUDENTS AT COMMODITY CLASSIC

By Lexi Gloege

This is the third year that students from the SDSU Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering and the Department of Agronomy, Horticulture and Plant Science have been able to attend Commodity Classic thanks to local commodity groups. The experience allows students to network with people from across the agriculture industry and make important, career-building connections.

Students from South Dakota State University are preparing to attend the annual Commodity Classic, the nation's largest farmer-led and farmer-focused agricultural trade show, thanks to the continued generosity of alumni and industry donors.

This year, 42 SDSU students from the Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering and the Department of Agronomy, Horticulture and Plant Science will travel to San Antonio to immerse themselves in one of agriculture's most influential events.

For sophomore agricultural engineering major Kole Hawkins, the experience is both professionally and personally transformative. A native of Cedaredge, Colorado, Hawkins is part of the student leadership team helping coordinate SDSU's presence, alongside fellow students Dawson Gulizia and Ryan VanPelt.

"Commodity Classic gives students direct access to the people and companies shaping agriculture," Hawkins said. "You're surrounded by equipment manufacturers, seed companies, agronomists and policymakers. It helps students understand the opportunities available and the challenges the industry is working to solve."

Commodity Classic draws more than 11,000 attendees over four days, offering educational sessions, policy discussions, product launches and unmatched networking opportunities. Students have the chance to interact with government leaders, industry representatives and producers from across the country, gaining valuable insights beyond the classroom.

In addition to career exploration, the trip fosters meaningful personal growth. For some SDSU students, the event marks their first time traveling by plane or visiting a new region of the country. For all attendees, it builds friendships and professional networks that last well beyond graduation.

"These 42 students leave as a group and come back with lifelong connections. You realize how interconnected agriculture is and how many opportunities there are to be involved," Hawkins said.

SDSU's strong student presence has not gone unnoticed. Hawkins recalled industry professionals commenting on the visibility of SDSU students at past events.

"Seeing all the blue shirts at the convention makes me proud," he said. "It shows that SDSU values experiential learning and is committed to preparing students for the future of agriculture."

This opportunity has been made possible for the last three years through the generous support of commodity groups and alumni donors, including South Dakota Soybean, Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council and the South Dakota Corn Utilization Council.

When asked what the biggest thing Hawkins wanted to emphasize was, he said, "The biggest thing is a huge thank you," he said, "not only for the funding, but for the time sponsors spend with us during Commodity Classic. It helps students understand where checkoff dollars go and shows that these organizations believe in us. There aren't many schools that have this level of support."

For SDSU students, Commodity Classic represents more than a conference. It is a direct investment in their education, their careers and the future of agriculture. Through the continued generosity of alumni and industry partners, SDSU remains committed to providing students with life-changing experiences that prepare them to lead and serve the agricultural community. ■



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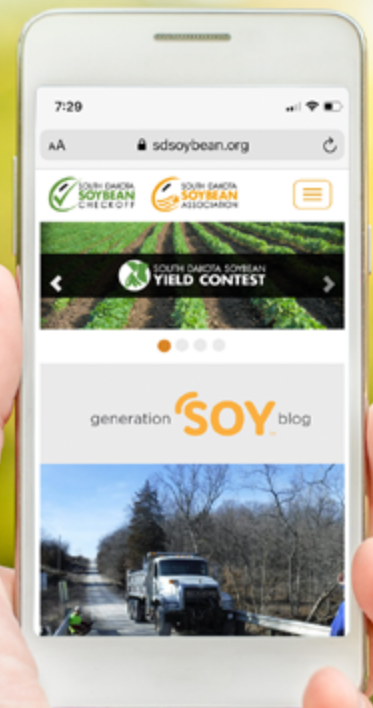
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Hungry for Truth



AT HOME WITH A FARMER: **TRI-TIP STEAK WITH CALLI & TATE WILLIAMS**

Having open conversations about food and farming with South Dakotans and the farmers who grow it is what we do. In fact, that's what Hungry for Truth is all about. In our At Home with a Farmer series, we're stepping into the kitchens of South Dakota farmers to share their favorite homemade recipes and stories that tie back to soy. By connecting farming to food and family tradition, these moments highlight the authenticity of farm life while building trust and awareness of the vital role farmers play in our communities.

A TASTE OF HOME IN MITCHELL, SOUTH DAKOTA

Outside Mitchell, SD Calli and Tate Williams are raising their family, and their cattle, with a focus on quality, hard work, and connection. When they're not busy caring for their herd or managing TW Angus, their family-owned beef business, you'll often find them gathered around their Big Green Egg, cooking one of their favorite meals: Tri-Tip Steak.

For Calli, this recipe isn't about elaborate ingredients, it's about simplicity and flavor. "We keep it simple, that's kind of the beauty of tri-tip," she says. "A little olive oil, salt, pepper, and garlic salt, and you're good to go."

FROM THE FARM TO THE GRILL

The tri-tip steak is a flavorful, triangle-shaped cut from the bottom sirloin, one that's often ground into burger but, when prepared right, becomes the centerpiece of a meal. The Williams family coats their tri-tip with olive oil, seasons it generously, and cooks it over indirect heat on their Big Green Egg until it's tender and smoky.

That Big Green Egg has become something of a family heirloom. "It was actually a wedding gift," Calli laughs. "All four of Tate's siblings got married within about 16 months, and all of us got Green Eggs from our aunts and uncles. It's something we all still use—some for wings, some for pizza, and us for brisket and tri-tip."

As the steak cooks, Calli prepares simple sides like rosemary butter rolls and a fresh salad, a nightly staple in their home. "We're an every-night-salad kind of family," she says with a smile. "It's how I grew up."

HOW SOY SUPPORTS SOUTH DAKOTA BEEF

Every great meal begins long before it reaches the table. On the Williams farm, that story starts in the feedlot—where soybeans play a key role in raising healthy, high-quality cattle.

Soybeans are a primary protein source in livestock feed, providing essential amino acids and nutrients that promote animal growth and health. Soy protein is also highly digestible, making it an efficient and cost-effective way to nourish cattle while supporting sustainable livestock production.

By feeding soybean meal, farmers like the Williams family not only ensure their animals are strong and well-nourished, but also contribute to a more sustainable food system. The soybeans grown right here in South Dakota help fuel local farms, support animal agriculture, and connect the entire cycle, from the soil to the steak.

CONNECTION THROUGH FOOD AND FARMING

The Williams family's meals reflect the same care and intention they bring to their farm. Every cut of beef tells a story, one that begins with South Dakota soil, continues through the hardworking hands that raise it, and ends around the family dinner table.

Whether they're preparing brisket for a crowd or a simple tri-tip for a weeknight dinner, Calli and Tate believe the best meals don't have to be complicated; they just need good ingredients and great company.

 Find more recipes at hungryfortruthsd.com



CALLI & TATE'S TRI-TIP STEAK

Bring a taste of farm life into your kitchen with this simple, flavorful recipe.



INGREDIENTS

- 1 Tri-Tip Steak (about 2 lbs)
- Olive oil
- Salt
- Pepper
- Garlic salt or garlic powder

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Brush the steak lightly with olive oil.
2. Season generously with salt, pepper, and garlic salt.
3. Grill on indirect heat using a charcoal grill or Big Green Egg until internal temperature reaches about 130°F.
4. Let rest for 10 minutes, then slice against the grain and serve.

DISCOVER MORE FROM CALLI'S FARM AND SOY-INSPIRED RECIPES



Want to learn more about Calli and her family's farm? Read *From the Ground Up with Calli Williams* for a closer look at their story.

Looking for more ways to bring soy into your kitchen? Explore our full collection of soy-inspired recipes for meals, baked goods, and family favorites.

EMBRACING THE FUTURE AS A FOURTH-GENERATION FARMER

In the heart of Ethan, South Dakota, Jake Storm is carrying on a legacy that spans for generations. As a fourth-generation farmer, Jake has always known that farming was his calling. From carpet farming as a child to riding alongside his dad in the tractor, his love for the land and his family's heritage runs deep.

A LEGACY ROOTED IN FAMILY

For Jake, farming isn't just a job—it's a way of life. He walks the same barns where his grandfather raised hogs and works the land that his great-grandfather once farmed. That deep sense of history brings a sense of pride and responsibility, knowing he is part of something much bigger than himself.

"There's a little bit of pressure to keep the legacy going," Jake admits, "but at the end of the day, I wouldn't change it for anything."

Farming has always been a family effort for the Storms. Some of Jake's favorite memories include working alongside his father, grandfather, and brother—especially during long days of fencing. While others may have dreaded the task, Jake cherishes those moments of hard work, laughter, and shared experiences that strengthened their bond.



BLENDING TRADITION WITH INNOVATION

While Jake has a deep respect for the generations before him, he also knows that agriculture is constantly evolving. After studying Precision Agriculture at Mitchell Technical College, he gained valuable insights into modern farming techniques, including variable rate technology and mapping.

“An older generation farm never did any of that,” he says. “But once you go to college and see the technology in action, you realize it works. Now, I don’t look back.”

In addition to his education, Jake gained real-world experience working at CHS, where he saw firsthand how different farming practices affected crops, livestock, and overall efficiency. From agronomy to feed production, he learned what worked—and what didn’t—giving him a well-rounded perspective on farm management.

One of the biggest challenges Jake has faced is finding the balance between time-tested traditions and new innovations. He values the wisdom passed down from his grandfather and father but also recognizes the importance of adapting to modern advancements.

LOOKING AHEAD

For Jake, being the fourth generation to work the family farm is more than just a title—it’s a responsibility and an honor. He takes pride in knowing that he is keeping the Storm name alive in agriculture, just as his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather did before him.

“At the end of the day, seeing the last three generations do it and knowing that I can be the fourth—that’s what makes me happiest.”

As he looks to the future, Jake is committed to preserving the legacy of his family farm while embracing the opportunities that come with new technology and changing industry trends. With a strong foundation built on tradition, hard work, and innovation, the next chapter of Storm Farms is in good hands. ■





SOIL HEALTH RESEARCH PROMOTES SUSTAINABLE SUCCESS FOR SOUTH DAKOTA SOYBEAN FARMERS

It goes without saying that land is the single most important asset in agriculture. That's why taking good care of it through research-backed soil management practices — ensuring it is healthy and productive for years to come — is indispensable to a farmer's toolbox.

Equipped with this knowledge, the South Dakota Soybean Research and Promotion Council continues to prioritize supporting producers in their efforts to manage soil effectively. "As farmers, we always try to take care of the land in all that we do," says April Bowar, South Dakota Soybean District 9 Director. "We realize it's not just for our generation, but it's for the next generation and the generation after that."

Bowar farms just outside of Faulkton with her husband, James. They focus a lot of energy on nutrient management in their fields and have begun implementing strip tillage when planting corn on beans to retain moisture in the soil while minimizing disturbance.

"If you don't have soil health, your crops aren't going to perform," she explains. "And if you aren't getting the yields you need, that goes down the chain."

CHECKOFF FOCUS ON SOIL HEALTH RESEARCH

Several farmer-funded research projects approved by the South Dakota Soybean Research and Promotion Council have focused on regenerative practices aimed at improving soil health over the past several years. Currently, the soybean checkoff is sponsoring a study examining strip tillage versus conventional tillage as well as precision fertilizer applications.

Conducted by Dr. Peter Kovács, Associate Professor of Precision Agriculture Cropping Systems at South Dakota State University, the strip tillage research seeks to support producers interested in reducing tillage practices and boosting yields — while also improving margins. "We think there is an opportunity to decrease the fertilizer application rate and reduce fuel costs," explains Kovács. It stands to reason, therefore, that producers can maximize profitability so long as yields either remain constant or increase. Kovács's research is currently being conducted on university trial plots, but the next phase includes a plan to collect on-farm data from local producers.

South Dakota soybean farmers can also participate in ongoing research — including soil management practices — through the farmer-funded On-Farm Research Program. This online tool, available at onfarmresearch.sdsoybean.org, collects anonymized data from farmers and shares key findings and yield outcomes associated with a variety of practices.

SUPPORTING GLOBAL DEMAND FOR U.S. SOY

Soil management and conservation practices commonly used by soybean producers in the U.S. have gained traction on the global market as demand for sustainably grown products continues to increase. "We are very proud of how we utilize our land through soil management practices," says Bowar, discussing ways that U.S. Soy is differentiated from soy from other origins. "We're reducing tillage and growing cover crops. We're conserving energy and using less fuel. We try not to over apply fertilizer."

U.S. Soybean Export Council has leveraged this

sustainability narrative to support demand for U.S. Soy on the global market, particularly with buyers from the European Union. And, as other regions of the world respond to consumer needs and governmental regulations, U.S. Soy will continue to demonstrate a clear advantage through its commitment to sustainable farming practices.

SOIL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR SOYBEAN FARMERS

Farmers can visit sdsoybean.org/topics/soil-health to find out more about South Dakota Soybean's focus on soil health, including current research and other learning opportunities. Additionally, checkoff-sponsored events, such as Soy100 and Ag Outlook, give farmers a chance to stay current on best practices to improve yields while managing soil health and quality. ■





SDSU SURVEY AIMS TO STUDY ON-FARM DRONE USE

By Melisa Goss

Researchers at South Dakota State University are encouraging producers to take a closer look at drone technology, not as a flashy gadget, but as a practical tool that could sharpen profitability, improve environmental stewardship and help farms stay competitive in a tightening agricultural economy.

The push comes as part of an ongoing survey effort led by faculty in the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences at SDSU. The survey, conducted every five years since 2018, tracks eastern South Dakota producers' adoption of conservation practices and emerging technologies. This year, researchers added new questions focused on unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), commonly referred to as drones.

Dr. David Clay is a distinguished professor of agronomy at SDSU and the leader of the survey project.

"The goal," said Dr. Clay, "is not to sell producers on a single solution but to explore whether drones can help farmers better target inputs, reduce unnecessary costs and address long-term soil health goals."

The survey, now in its third cycle (2018, 2021 and 2025), focuses on sustainability practices such as no-till, cover crops, integrated crop-livestock systems and diversified crop rotations. Researchers use repeated responses from many of the same farmers to track changes in both behavior and attitudes over time.

One notable trend this year: while overall cover crop use remains steady, the number of new adopters has declined. Producers who

adopted cover crops in the early survey years are no longer "new users," and fewer first-time adopters have entered the practice in the most recent cycle.

Understanding why producers adopt, or hesitate to adopt, new practices is central to the survey's purpose. That includes evaluating whether technologies like drones could support soil health systems and improve returns.

"Much of the discussion around drones centers on their potential to move agriculture away from blanket applications and toward precision targeting," Dr. Clay said.

Instead of applying fungicide or fertilizer across an entire 160-acre field, for example, producers might use drone imagery or prior field data to identify five or 10 acres where disease pressure is concentrated. By treating only those areas, they could potentially see stronger returns on each dollar spent.

Researchers working with on-farm strip trials have already documented situations where small areas of a field generated significant yield gains from treatment, while the majority of acres saw little to no economic benefit. Superimposing yield maps over soil type and elevation data has helped pinpoint where applications pay, and equally as important, where they do not.

"If producers can identify where their real problems are," Dr. Clay said, "they can put their inputs where they matter most."

That approach may also help combat pesticide resistance and reduce environmental concerns by limiting unnecessary applications.

Despite the promise, drone adoption remains limited. According to survey data, roughly 21% of respondents using UAVs employ them for task-based applications such as spraying, while only about 15% use them for imagery and mapping.

Cost is a primary barrier. Large agricultural drones capable of spraying meaningful acreage carry a significant price tag, and battery life limits how many acres can be treated per flight. For large Midwestern fields, frequent landings and refills can make full-field spraying impractical.

In smaller fields, such as those common in parts of Asia, drones have proven more viable. In South Korea, for instance, small acreage and labor shortages have made contracting drone services a workable alternative to labor-intensive hose spraying systems, Dr. Clay said.

In South Dakota, researchers suggest that cooperative models or custom application services may help bridge that gap. Producers may not need to own the technology themselves to benefit from it.

Another hurdle is technological literacy. Drone imagery is not as simple as flying over a field and receiving a ready-made picture. Individual image “tiles” must be stitched together using specialized software, and data from different spectral bands must be interpreted to generate meaningful indices such as NDVI (Normalized Difference Vegetation Index).

That processing requires computing power and agronomic expertise—resources not every operation currently has.

Rather than focusing on licensing or technical flight training, SDSU faculty hope to host a workshop later this summer aimed at helping producers understand where drones fit economically within their operations.

The proposed workshop would walk through cost-benefit analyses, case studies from soybean and corn strip trials, and examples of how imagery and application tools can be integrated into existing systems. Producers would see where drones make sense—and where they do not.

The emphasis, Dr. Clay said, is on individualized decision-making.

“Every farm is different. This isn’t about telling everyone to go buy a drone. It’s about helping them decide whether it fits their operation,” he noted.

In addition to the workshop, SDSU faculty are finalizing a new textbook on precision agriculture fundamentals, written for farmers, crop advisors and students. The book includes chapters on remote sensing and disease detection, authored by specialists across the United States and internationally. The goal is to translate complex science into accessible, practical knowledge.

Beyond economics, drone technology intersects with a larger conversation about agriculture’s environmental footprint.

Dr. Clay says precision tools can help demonstrate that producers are not indiscriminately applying inputs but are making data-driven decisions to protect soil and water resources while maintaining productivity.

As global competition intensifies and public scrutiny grows, tools that improve efficiency and sustainability may become increasingly important.

For now, SDSU’s message to soybean producers is measured but optimistic: drones are not a silver bullet, but they are another tool in the toolbox. With proper education, analysis and support, they may offer opportunities to boost profitability, sharpen efficiency and reinforce South Dakota agriculture’s long-term resilience. ■





THE SOYBEAN POD



with host. Tom Steever



Keeping the Family on the Farm

It is increasingly difficult to successfully pass a farm to the next generation. South Dakota State University Extension is addressing what it takes to navigate this succession with a series of Sustaining the Legacy conferences on what it takes to plan for passing the farm down. From estate planning to retirement to long-term care, on this edition of The Soybean Pod, we talk to Heather Gessner, South Dakota State University Extension's interim Agriculture and Natural Resources program director and SDSU's Livestock Business Management Field Specialist. Gessner discusses farmers' need to plan for when they're no longer in charge of that next crop. Planning on that passage can seem daunting, and it often requires help from professionals.



The Next Chapter: Kevin Scott Joins SD Soybean Leadership

The guard is changing in more ways than one. Kevin Scott is the new assistant executive director for the South Dakota Soybean Association and the South Dakota Soybean Research and Promotion Council. Scott, a farmer from Valley Springs, South Dakota, was brought aboard in anticipation of the retirement later this year of current executive director Jerry Schmitz. Kevin Scott's leadership experience runs deep. In this edition of The Soybean Pod, he talks about preparing for the position during the last quarter-century without even knowing it. He also brings up life-change opportunities presented by having accepted this position.

Houdek Serves Feed Ingredient Demand While Growing Soy Demand

A fermentation process in Volga, South Dakota, is amping up the nutritional specs on soybean meal. Years ago, Dr. William Gibbons and Dr. Mike Brown, both professors at South Dakota State University, developed a method of bio-transformation resulting in a high-protein feed for aquaculture. Expansion into feeds for swine, poultry and pets led to a name change. Dustin Gibbons, the son of the company's co-founder, is general manager of what is now Houdek. In this edition of The Soybean Pod, the younger Gibbons explains how this feed improves aquaculture, livestock and pet diets while building demand for soybean meal.



Hento Among National Outstanding Young Farmer Winners

Tanner Hento's name is becoming more familiar, especially among soybean farmers in South Dakota. But now that familiarity is growing on a wider scope. The 36-year-old Avon, South Dakota producer was one of four winners of the National Outstanding Young Farmer award for 2026. Hento accepted the award during a ceremony in Hershey, Pennsylvania, 11 days after being elected president of the South Dakota Soybean Association. I happened to be master of ceremonies of the NOYF awards program on a cold February 7th in Hershey. I interviewed Tanner right after the evening's festivities concluded. That conversation is this edition of The Soybean Pod.



listen here!





MEXICO: A VITAL NEIGHBOR AND U.S. SOY SUCCESS STORY

Mexico is one of the United States' most important agricultural and economic partners. With 132 million people, a young and increasingly urban population, Mexico is a dynamic and growing market with deep ties to the U.S. economy. For U.S. Soy, it represents decades of trust, consistency, and collaboration.

USSEC's collaboration with Mexico goes back to the 1980s, when we began partnering with importers, feed manufacturers, processors, and livestock producers to strengthen a competitive and reliable soy supply chain. Those efforts have helped Mexico become the second-largest destination for U.S. Soy. It's a remarkable achievement, and a testament to the commitment of our farmers, exporters, and partners.

A HISTORY OF STRONG TIES

Trade between the United States and Mexico has always been significant. The two countries share more than just a border; we share deeply integrated supply chains in automobiles, energy, textiles, electronics, and, of course, agriculture. In 2024, Mexico was the second-largest destination for U.S. exports and the largest source of U.S. imports.

More than 80% of Mexico's exports go to the U.S., while over 40% of its imports come from the U.S. Agriculture plays a key role in this relationship. The U.S. exported more than \$30 billion in agricultural products to Mexico in 2024, including corn, soybeans and soy products, pork, dairy, and poultry. Mexico, in turn, exported about \$48 billion in agricultural goods to the U.S., led by fresh produce like avocados, tomatoes, and berries, along with beverages, spirits, and live cattle. This reflects a long-standing, mutually beneficial exchange that supports

consumers on both sides of the border.

The chart above shows the top 10 U.S. agricultural exports to Mexico in Calendar Year 2024, based on USDA Foreign Agricultural Service's General Agricultural Trade System (GATS) data. U.S. soybean exports to Mexico rank fourth, totaling \$2.3 billion. The chart has been updated to include U.S. exports of soybean meal (\$908 million) and soybean oil (\$106 million). With these adjustments, total U.S. soybean and related product exports now rank second at \$3,316 billion among the top ten commodity exports to Mexico.

U.S. SOY SHINES IN MEXICO

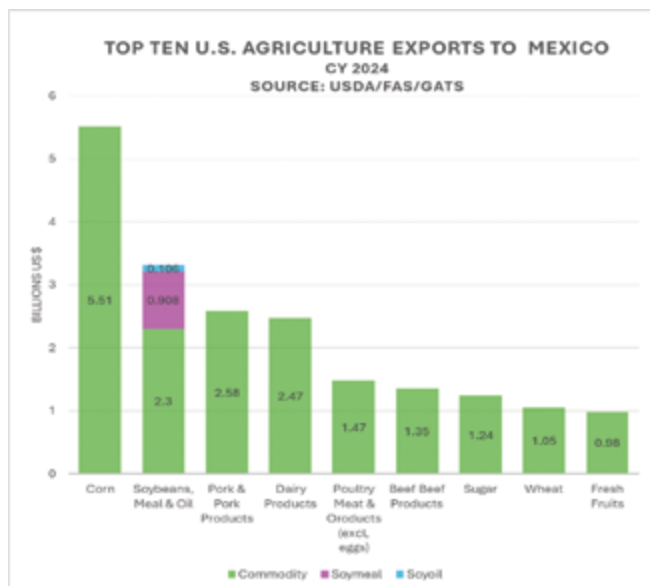
While many crops and proteins play an important role in this trade, U.S. Soy has become a true success story. Mexican buyers value U.S. Soy's consistent quality, reliable logistics, and ability to meet their growing needs.

Here's how U.S. Soy performed in Mexico in Marketing Year 2024/25:

- **Whole soybeans:** Mexico ranked 3rd worldwide in volume for U.S. exports, totaling \$2.2 billion with 81% market share.
- **Soybean meal:** Mexico was 2nd worldwide in volume, importing \$844 million export value, capturing an incredible 99% share of the market.

- **Soybean oil:** Mexico ranked 2nd behind India, with \$197 million in exports, and 99% market share.

These results reflect decades of partnership. Mexican livestock and poultry producers depend on U.S. Soy to deliver high-quality feed ingredients that support the pork, poultry, dairy, and egg supply for a growing and increasingly protein-conscious consumer base.



NAVIGATING TRADE CHALLENGES

The broader U.S.–Mexico trade relationship has faced turbulence. In July 2025, a 30% tariff* on Mexican imports was announced, and while Mexico negotiated a 90-day extension, several significant tariffs, such as the 50% tariffs on Mexican steel, aluminum, and copper remain in effect.

Soy trade has remained resilient through these challenges. The strength of long-standing commercial relationships and the stability provided by the U.S.–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) have been critical. With USMCA’s first joint review approaching in July 2026, U.S. Soy will remain actively engaged to ensure soy remains a priority of these conversations.

MEXICO’S MARKET POTENTIAL

Mexico’s story is one of growth. Its rapid urbanization and demographic profile make it one of the most promising markets for U.S. agricultural products. More than 80% of its population lives in urban areas where access to imported goods is highest and demand for protein is strong.

Mexico also has a relatively young consumer base that’s becoming wealthier, more health-conscious, and eager for high-quality, diverse food options. That shift in consumer behavior creates opportunities for U.S. Soy. From feed ingredients that help meet the demand for pork, poultry, and dairy to high-protein products that support a growing middle class, soy plays a crucial role.

Mexico’s geographic proximity to the United States further strengthens this opportunity by offering shorter delivery times, lower transportation costs, and ground and maritime alternatives allowing for an exceptional supply-chain reliability. Few other export destinations offer that combination of logistical efficiency and sustained demand.

A BALANCED PARTNERSHIP IN AGRICULTURE

It’s worth noting that while the overall goods trade balance has favored Mexico for years, agricultural trade between our two nations has been historically well-balanced. U.S. Soy has long supported Mexico’s food and feed sectors, while Mexican farmers supply U.S. consumers with fresh produce and specialty products year-round.

Growth in Mexico’s agricultural exports reflects the evolving strengths of a healthy and mutually beneficial relationship that ensures year-round access to the diverse foods consumers in both countries enjoy.

LOOKING AHEAD

Since 2015, U.S. agricultural exports to Mexico have grown at a steady rate of 5.4% annually. Today, Mexico is the top export market for 12 major U.S. agricultural products and the second-largest for 19 more. These trends reaffirm Mexico’s importance to American farmers, ranchers, processors and exporters.

For soy, the future looks bright. Demand will continue to rise as Mexico’s population grows, urbanizes, and seeks greater access to high-quality protein. U.S. Soy is well positioned to meet that demand and USSEC will continue investing in strong relationships to ensure that U.S. Soy remains the preferred choice.

Our long-standing collaboration has proven that when U.S. Soy succeeds in Mexico, both countries benefit. Mexican producers gain access to reliable, top-quality feed ingredients, and U.S. farmers gain a dependable partner that values their hard work.

At USSEC, we’re proud of this partnership and committed to keeping U.S. Soy at the top of Mexico’s agenda. The opportunities ahead are real, and we’re ready to keep building on this foundation of trust, reliability, and mutual growth.

Efforts will continue to strengthen through close collaboration with USDA FAS representatives, with continued communication and mutual participation in multiple activities across sectors.

ADVANCING SUSTAINABILITY AND KNOWLEDGE

Mexico is making strides in sustainability and professional development — areas where U.S. Soy is leading the way:

- Four Mexican companies now use the Sustainable U.S. Soy label, and adoption continues to expand
- Mexico ranks 3rd in Soy Excellence Center (SEC) Americas participants thanks to partnerships with over 100 industry associations and firms across poultry, swine, aquaculture, feed, dairy, and more.
- In the first quarter of 2025, Mexico hosted the first in-person SEC Americas Dairy Production Course alongside the Dairy Industry Executive Session in collaboration with U.S. Livestock Genetics Export and the American Feed Industry Association.
- SEC Americas signed a MOU with the Jalisco State Agricultural and Livestock Council, which will allow more young Mexicans to take advantage of the educational opportunities available through the SEC. Jalisco represents the core of agricultural and livestock production in Mexico.

These milestones highlight Mexico’s commitment to sustainability, innovation, and education and demonstrate how U.S. Soy is helping drive that progress. ■

* The legality of the administration’s tariff policy is currently under review by the Supreme Court.

EMBRACING CHANGE: JON NELSON 2026 REGIONAL CONSERVATION LEGACY AWARD WINNER

Jon Nelson knows as a farmer, he's tasked with a huge responsibility. The veteran South Dakota soybean grower realizes soil conservation and improving water quality must be top of mind for farmers like him.

But for Nelson, he first had to overcome challenges in his own mind to accept the role with which he'd been charged.

"To change from what we know and have done for decades is not easy," Nelson explains. "I continue to learn how to use and implement cover crops. Maintaining a living root in the soil for as long as you can is very important."

Today, Nelson accepts the challenge by pledging to conserve farmland to help create a sustainable and resilient operation for future generations. In partnership with his wife, Cathy, son, Tyler, and daughter-in-law, Kaleigh, Nelson farms some 2,800 acres of owned and rented land near Lake Preston, South Dakota.

"I never knew my grandfather," Nelson says. "I can only imagine his amazement that a poor farm boy from Norway has a great grandson and potentially great-great grandchildren running what he began. I know it meant a lot to my father and mother as it does to my wife, Cathy, and I."

FROM TRADITION TO EXPANSION

Founded by Nelson's grandfather who emigrated from Norway in the early 1900s, the operation has been a traditional farm for most of its years. Small grains, corn, milk cows and chickens formed the foundation of the original farm. Over the years, fed cattle and hogs also found their place in the operation. As the family took on more land, soybeans were added in 1980.

After Jon graduated from South Dakota State University and came back to the farm in 1985, he and Cathy were married. The couple grew the farm's farrowing operation and worked alongside Jon's dad, continuing to farm by traditional means. By 1990 Jon and Cathy took the reins of the operation, focusing on mostly a corn/soybean rotation and a small amount of wheat planted annually. More than a decade later, the farm couple had expanded its feedlot to its current 2,000 head capacity and hogs were phased out of the operation.

Focusing on tradition, the Nelson farm relied on conventional tillage until giving no-till a try in the latter 1980s.

"We really didn't understand what we were doing," Nelson says. "The equipment we had wasn't right for no-till, and we were going through a wet weather cycle. We became frustrated with it and stayed with conventional tillage."

After son, Tyler, graduated from SDSU in 2012 and returned to the farm, Nelson says he began to talk about the need to reduce tillage in the operation.

"It took some time for me to change, but by 2018 we were working at being a reduced tiller; in 2019 a larger part of our farm was prevented from being planted because of very excessive moisture," Nelson says.

The next winter, Nelson sat in on a meeting that discussed adding diverse biology, like fungi, to the soil.

That meeting would be the beginning of the Nelson's journey learning about soil health.

"Within the next two years we were no-till and have not added any dry NPK (fertilizer) to our soils in six years," Nelson says. "The transformation of our land from dirt to soil in those few years has been simply amazing."

BEYOND HEALTHY SOIL

The gently rolling terrain of Nelson's farm doesn't require the use of contours or terraces, yet implementing no-till has resulted in a significant reduction in commercial fertility rates, altering soil structure and allowing it to aggregate and increase water holding capacity.

"By keeping residue covering the soil, we have also reduced erosion from runoff," Nelson explains. "It is our belief that a diverse, healthy soil supports

and influences the plant's health and in turn provides a more nutrient dense food system."

The veteran farmer doesn't want to do away with fertilizers, but he does believe he's beginning to understand how his management practices interact.

"When we begin to find that balance, we will produce the same or more with less inputs and be better off for it," he says.

Nelson's goal is to work toward having cover crops on 100% of his acreage. He says the covers along with the continued use of a diverse biological product in the spring help the soil biome get off to a great start while fall application helps breakdown and recycle nutrients left by the previous crop.

For example, Nelson has planted 30-inch strips of winter wheat after soybean harvest. In the spring, he plants corn in between the wheat strips and terminates the wheat before it reaches the boot stage.

"This has worked well and as the wheat dies off and lays down, it provides nice ground cover that helps with weeds and keeps the soil cooler in the summer heat," Nelson says. "I also like planting soybeans into a thin winter wheat stand. Keeping a growing root in the ground and cycling the nutrients and creating more soil carbon is going to have a positive effect on future crops."

BY MEANS OF STEWARDSHIP

From no-till farming to reduced use of commercial fertilizers to planting cover crops, the Nelson Farm has built a conservation legacy by caring for the land in a way that ensures it will thrive for generations to come.

"We are committed to building healthy soils, conserving water and building biodiversity in our soils while maintaining a profitable and resilient business," Nelson explains.

But the buck doesn't stop there with the veteran farmer.

The ringneck pheasant is king in South Dakota, and Nelson is diligent in providing cover for the wildlife. The family works to delay haying and preserves grass areas to promote habitat from year to year.

Nelson works in other areas to promote farm aesthetics and conserve energy. He also values the farm's role in supporting family, church and community while providing safe working conditions and passing on knowledge and opportunity to future generations all while contributing to create strong, local food systems.

"By embracing diversity and regenerative practices, we are building a farm that can adapt to change, remain productive and continue to serve both people and the environment well into the future," Nelson says.

Rooted in a small community for more than 60 years has cultivated countless relationships with neighbors and landlords over time. The Nelsons continue to foster the network, often serving as a gathering hub anytime the need arises.

For Jon and Cathy Nelson, a conservation legacy means simply caring for the land in a way that ensures it will thrive for generations to come.

"It's an incredible honor and very humbling to be this year's regional winner," Nelson says. "There are so many deserving farmers working to make their soils better and conserving resources. Thank you to ASA." ■



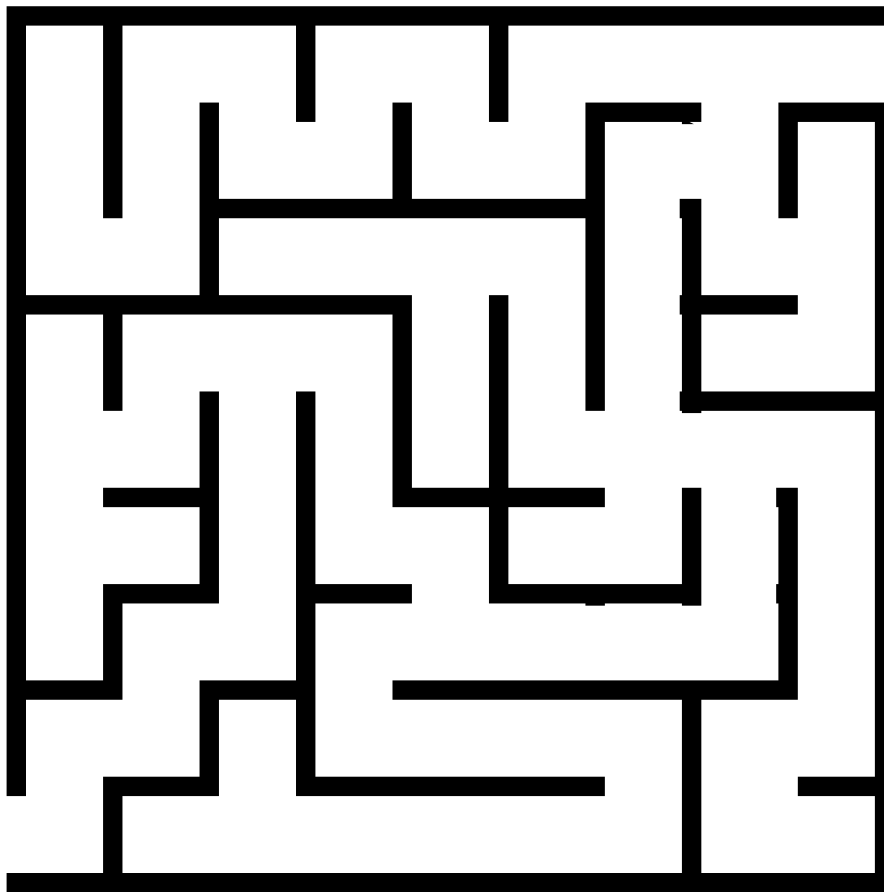
Jon & Cathy Nelson Commodity Classic San Antonio

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