New Clean Water Rule
► The Navigable Waters Protection Rule replaces the 2015 Waters of the U.S. rule and defines federal water jurisdiction while continuing to protect water quality. The rule will make water and land protection management more efficient and effective by drawing clearer lines between areas subject to federal versus state jurisdiction and clarifying that usually dry areas should no longer be considered federally regulated waters. This new rule went into effect in June 2020 after strong leadership from Farm Bureau in writing a new rule following the repeal of the 2015 WOTUS rule. MFBF will continue to advocate for farmers as the new rule is implemented to ensure transparency and clarity.

Taxes
► MFBF worked with legislators to adopt full conformity of Section 179 to the federal tax law and will continue to advocate for the immediate need for this tax certainty.

USMCA
► The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) officially went into effect on July 1. MFBF strongly advocated for this trade agreement, especially as farmers continue to face financial challenges due to COVID-19 losses and a depressed agricultural economy. Not only does USMCA include, for the first time, measures that address cooperation, transparency, information sharing, agricultural biotechnology and gene editing, and science-based trading standards to prevent trade barriers, but it is also expected to provide a much needed $2 billion annual increase in U.S. agricultural exports and overall increase of $4.5 billion in gross domestic product.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Minnesota Farm Bureau (MFBF) is dedicated to representing our member’s interests at all levels of government. Even though 2020 looked different than normal, MFBF advocated on behalf of Farm Bureau member families to advance MFBF policy priorities, address immediate impacts to agriculture as a result of the global pandemic, and connect with federal officials during uncertain times.

LEGISLATIVE
Coronavirus Relief

MBRF worked closely with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to ensure that those in Minnesota’s food supply system were deemed essential. Thus, allowing anyone from farmers to truckers to processors to grocers to farm markets and greenhouses to continue the important work of keeping food available. We provided a template for essential workers traveling to and from work during the Stay at Home orders.

On the federal level, we pushed hard to make sure H2A workers were deemed critical, and the states expanded the pool of applicants eligible for interview waivers. This ensured employees could still get into the country. This work continues as we work to ensure that we have access to a stable workforce, and the ability to keep workers safe.

MBRF advocated for support for farmers and ranchers impacted by COVID-19 through the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program, with $16 billion in funding, inclusion of agriculture in the Small Business Administration’s (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EDIL) program; and a critical infrastructure designation for meat processing plants to ensure a market for livestock farmers and a stable meat supply for U.S. consumers.

MBRF worked with our livestock commodity organizations and with the MDA as farmers faced livestock market challenges and depopulation. These asked included logistical and financial support as farmers made difficult decisions to depopulate as well as proactive steps such as opening up CRP and DNR state lands for emergency herding and grazing.

MBRF worked at the state and federal level to ensure waivers for hours of service and weight limits for trucks delivering critical supplies, including food and groceries, were granted. This alignment with the existing agricultural hours of service exemption and weight limit variance relieved one less barrier to the already stressed food supply system.

Farm Safety

Safety on the farm is a top priority for all farm families. The Minnesota Legislature passed legislation to increase funding for farm safety grants and outreach efforts, as well as requiring the MDA and the Farm Safety Advisory group to develop recommendations regarding how to best provide financial and technical assistance to farmers.

MBRF worked closely with authors of the legislation and testified before the Legislature in support of safety efforts to reduce farm injuries and deaths through engineering, education and voluntary practices.

Rural Finance Authority (RFA)

The RFA received $50 million in critical funding from the state Legislature to ensure it maintains important resources to continue to offer eligible farmers affordable financing options through a wide variety of loan programs.

MBRF supported funding for this important entity.