

Jim Falk Receives Achievement in Crop Improvement Award

Jim Falk, of Murdock, a long-time certified seed producer and strong advocate for the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association, has been recognized with the MCIA Achievement in Crop Improvement award. The award was presented at the MCIA Annual Meeting, held January 9 in Fergus Falls. It is MCIA's highest honor and is presented annually to recognize exemplary service to the seed industry as well as outstanding leadership in agriculture and the local community.



Jim and Karen Falk

A member of MCIA since 1983, Jim began farming with his father, Wendell, who grew certified seed for Vern Munson of Benson. Today, Jim and his family own and operate Falk's Seed Farm, Inc., a full-service seed supplier. In addition to producing certified wheat and oat seed, they also offer corn, soybeans, alfalfa, and native seed mixes. Whatever you need, they will find it.

After visiting with other MCIA members and touring various seed plants, Jim began construction of their seed conditioning plant in 1985. What began as a converted cattle barn is now a state-of-the-art facility with the latest technology. Their MCIA-approved facility consists of two fully automatic, computer-controlled seed conditioning lines with an optical color sorter and robotic bag palletizer. In recent years, he has added a wind turbine and solar panels, which supply 80 percent of the seed facility's electricity needs.

Innovation and diversity are an integral part of the family-owned operation. Through the years, they have added cleaning and packaging of high-quality oats for horse feed and have expanded into specialty crops. They currently contract, process, and export food-grade soybeans to Asian markets. They also

offer organic seed products and are a certified organic processor of seed and grain. Jim is also an original member of NorthStar Genetics, a company that got its start through MCIA.

Jim has been an active member of MCIA, serving on a number of committees. He presently chairs the Organic Certification Committee. His business has used many of MCIA's services, including seed certification, approved facilities, quality assurance, forage and mulch, and organic certification. Through all this involvement, Jim continues working to improve the

association's programs and services.

Jim is a leader in Bethesda Lutheran Church and is involved in local, township, and county organizations. Jim serves as a county officer and a state and national delegate for the Minnesota Farmers Union, as well. A visit to his farm in Swift County will make it apparent why he is also a member of Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, and is active in the Land Stewardship Project, Clean Water Action, and Clean Up the River.

Family is important to Jim and his wife, Karen. They raised their two children, Eva and Andrew, on the Falk farm, which has been in the family for over 100 years. Andrew is a key part of the operation and is now the fifth generation to farm the land.

The Achievement in Crop Improvement Award was presented by Paula Mohr of *The Farmer* magazine. Joined by his wife, Karen, during the presentation, Jim was surprised by the recognition, saying, "I greatly appreciate this award, and looking out at my many friends that I have made in the seed business, this truly is a special honor. Thank you!"

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Fawad Shah, MCIA CEO/President, and David Kee, Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council's Director of Research, in discussion at the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association's 116th Annual Meeting, January 9, 2019.

MCIA Presents Premier and Honorary Premier Seedsman Awards

Dan Nietfeld, of Melrose, has a passion for hybrid seed corn. Whether it is producing hybrids for the family seed business or developing new inbred lines, his enthusiasm for corn is remarkable. Dan has spent countless hours in the field, detasseling, crossing, and evaluating new lines.

As the third generation to own and operate Nietfeld Seed, you could say Dan grew up in a corn field. His grandfather Conrad started producing Minhybrid seed in the 1940s, followed by his father Bernard. The family has been producing seed corn on their Stearns county farm ever since.

The Nietfeld brand, concentrates on early-maturing varieties that are well suited to central and northern Minnesota. Their production area with natural isolation barriers enables them to produce conventional, organic, and some traited hybrids. They also work with private companies producing hybrids and inbred lines. In addition to seed corn, Dan produces soybeans and certified small grains.

Dan attended vocational school in Alexandria, for production ag, while continuing to work on the family farm. What he didn't learn about seed corn production from his family, he learned from Wilbert Koopman, former corn breeder at Golden Harvest. A true mentor, Wilbert saw that Dan had an interest in corn breeding and shared his knowledge and insights. He still relies upon that knowledge as he plans, plants, and completes his own breeding and seed increase program.

Serving as a mentor himself, Dan enjoys interacting with area youth. Each summer youngsters come to the farm to work on detasseling crews. In addition to earning spending money, they also learn the value of hard work, responsibility, and cooperation.

Summer for Dan means time in the field, from dawn till dusk, and sometimes into the night. Whether he's crossing inbreds, detasseling, or evaluating new lines, his ultimate goal is a new hybrid that will yield and perform on his customer's farm.

Like all family-owned seed corn producers, Dan is involved in all aspects of the operation, from planting to harvest, and from seed conditioning to bagging. Dan has made numerous improvements over the years to their MCIA-approved seed conditioning facility, including designing and building a seed corn dryer.

Away from the corn field, Dan has been involved in a variety of activities. Most notably competitive plowing, where precision and proper technique result in the straightest of furrows. He has



Dan and Janice Nietfeld

competed at various local, state, and national contests and earned the right to compete at an international contest in Ireland. Dan has served in leadership roles for both state and local plowing associations. The 2019 World Ploughing Competition will be held near Baudette, Minnesota, in Lake of the Woods County.

Locally, Dan has been involved in the Jaycees and is an active member of his church. He is also a member of the American Seed Trade Association and the Corn Growers Organization.

Family is another of Dan's passions. His wife, Janice, is active in the family business and their three boys continue to be involved as well. The Nietfeld family have been seed producers and proud members of MCIA for generations. Dan now joins his father and his grandfather as an MCIA Premier Seedsman.

Grateful for the recognition, Dan expressed gratitude for the opportunity to be a part of the seed industry and to be able to work with his wife and his family at the same time. 

John Walkup, of Campbell, has been a certified seed producer in the southwest corner of Otter Tail County for over 35 years. His work as a seed producer is only a small part of his involvement in agriculture. Active in a number of organizations, John is described as an outstanding representative of crop and livestock production and a mentor to others, old and young.

A self-described town kid in the winter and farm kid in the summer, John got his start by working on the farm of his grandfather. This first earned him a pocket knife, followed by \$50 cash, and eventually a chance to rent some farm land from grandpa. By the time he graduated from North Dakota State University with a degree in ag engineering, John was able to rent the entire farm. His grandfather continued to guide and work with John, who eventually purchased the family farm.

He was encouraged to begin growing certified seed by MCIA member Robert Thiel and he continues to work with Robert's son Darius of Thiel Seed Service of Wendell. He appreciates the

relationship that has developed through their years of working together. In the past, John has produced certified seed of wheat, barley, oats, and soybeans. Today, in addition to a cow/calf operation, they grow certified wheat seed, as well as corn, soybeans, edible beans, and hay.

The Premier Seedsman Award has been presented annually since 1929 to recognize individuals or partners involved in quality seed production, active in the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association, and who provide excellent service to the seed industry.

A friend and supporter of the University of Minnesota Extension, the Walkup farm has served as a site for small grain and alfalfa research trials. Hosting field days allows neighboring farmers to see how varieties perform locally for yield, disease resistance and standability. He enjoys getting an early look at new varieties but also has a genuine interest in the research process and results.

John has found time to be involved in both agricultural and local organizations. He has dedicated years of service to the West Otter Tail Crop Improvement Association and to the local wheat, corn, and soybean grower groups. He serves on the board of the county soil and water conservation district and is a Minnesota Farm Bureau member. He serves on the board of his church, is a Gideon member, and is on the county jail chaplaincy board.

Family has always been important on the Walkup farm, where John and his wife, Jill, raised their two children, Chad and April. Jill and the kids all worked on the farm, cleaning the grain drill and combines, baling hay, or tending cattle. Son Chad and his family rejoined the farming operation several years ago, ensuring that this Century Farm will continue to be part of the family history.

Upon receiving the award John acknowledged the relationship he has with Thiel Seed and thanked his wife and family for their support and involvement in the farm operation. 🌱



John and Jill Walkup

The Honorary Premier Seedsman Award presented annually since 1930 recognizes individuals not directly involved in the seed industry but who have actively supported the seed industry, the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association, and their local community.

Bruce Abbe, of Burnsville, has dedicated much of his 35-year career to agriculture, working in public affairs, communications, and organizational management. Most recently, he has served as the president/CEO of the Midwest Shippers Association (MSA). During his 11-year tenure, he has worked closely with MCIA and its members to promote and enhance the production of specialty grains.

At MSA, Bruce has worked with farmers, processors, exporters, and transportation officials. His efforts have helped bring recognition to the Upper Midwest region for the key role it plays in the production and export of high-value, identity-preserved, food-grade soybeans and grains.

Bruce grew up on a family farm in Freeborn County. He attended Albert Lea high school and is a graduate of St. Cloud State University. With a degree in mass communications and political science in hand,



Joan and Bruce Abbe

Bruce began his career with the Minnesota Farmers Union as their publications director. This led him next to Colorado and a position as director of communications for the National Farmers Union. He also served as vice president of public affairs for the rural group Communicating for Agriculture and worked in public relations for several ag businesses.

Bruce has worked on agriculture-related public policy at the state and national level with organizations such as the New Uses Council and the Beginning Farmers Program. He has particularly enjoyed working

with individuals seeking new and innovative ways to serve agriculture and utilize ag commodities. His work with the Midwest Shippers Association has continued to provide him with similar opportunities.

As he worked to raise awareness and improve marketing options for specialty ag products from this region, Bruce faced a variety of challenges and learning opportunities. He found transportation was a key issue, including access to containers, cooperation with railroads, port services, and ocean shipping. To serve MSA's members he had to learn about the transportation industry. So, he attended numerous conferences, met with political leaders, and traveled abroad. Bruce currently serves on the Minnesota Department of Transportation's Minnesota Freight Advisory Committee.

His time with the MSA has offered Bruce an array of rewarding experiences, including the opportunity to work with members who are entrepreneurs

at heart and who are passionate about their role in agriculture. He has also enjoyed working with various partners and organizations interested in better international markets. This includes MCIA, where Bruce has served on advisory committees and provided insight into the specialty grain and identity-preserved industry.

Bruce and his wife, Joan, have two children, Patrick and Claire, and three grandchildren. Bruce is an avid downhill skier; it's a passion shared by his family. Bruce continues to give time as a ski instructor.

In accepting MCIA's Honorary Premier Seedsman award, Bruce said, "I greatly appreciate this recognition and also the support the Midwest Shippers has received from the Minnesota Soybean Growers and the cooperation received from MCIA. The members of MSA have been great to work with, and that's what makes this business special." 🌱

MCIA Board of Directors Election Results

At the 116th MCIA Annual Meeting, convened in Fergus Falls on January 9, 2019, Brad Barth, seed grower of Thief River Falls, was newly elected to the MCIA Board. Barth represents District 1. Bob Ehlers, District 2, and Nancy Ehlke, UMN, were reelected.

The board directors subsequently re-elected all of the incumbent officers to serve another one-year term leading the board.

A complete list of current board members follows:

OFFICERS

Kurt Flegel, Benson, Chairman
Bob Ehlers, Barrett, Vice Chairman
Duane Dahlman, Cokato, Secretary
Darius Thiel, Wendell, Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Brad Barth, Goodridge; Matt Bohn, Breckenridge; Nancy Jo Ehlke, University of Minnesota, Saint Paul; Nat Forster, Hastings; Scott Habstritt, Roseau; Mory Rugg, Sabin; Denise Thiede, Saint Paul

Barth Joins Board

Brad Barth was elected to the MCIA Board of Directors at the MCIA Annual Meeting on January 9, 2019. Brad is a graduate of Moorhead State University with a BS degree in accounting. He and his wife, Joyce, live on their farm, which is located just east of Thief River Falls. Brad and Joyce have four grown children and seven grandchildren.

The Barths' farm has been in the family for over fifty years. In 2012, the family started raising seed wheat. In 2013, they built a seed conditioning plant. Currently, the farm raises and conditions wheat, non-GMO soybeans, and RR1 soybeans. Seedstock is obtained from the University of Minnesota and North Dakota State University. Brad feels strongly that these public institutions are the best options for the future of the family farm.

Why does he want to serve on the MCIA Board? Brad states that he is very interested in the organization and is willing to share his experiences to help in guiding the association. Secondly, he hopes that his service to MCIA will further his own knowledge and help him become a better seedsman.

Official Minutes of the 2019 Annual Business Meeting

Chairman Kurt Flegel called the 116th annual meeting of the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association to order at 11:20 a.m. on January 9, 2019 at Bigwood Event Center, Fergus Falls, MN.

Flegel confirmed that proper proof of notice of the meeting had been published in the Winter 2018 issue of the *Minnesota Seed Grower* and determined that a quorum was present. Flegel introduced the MCIA Board of Directors to the membership.

The following agenda items were addressed:

- Secretary's Report and Minutes of the 2018 Annual Meeting—James Kukowski moved, Mac Ehrhardt seconded that

the minutes, as published in the Spring 2018 issue of the *Minnesota Seed Grower*, be approved. Motion passed.

- Treasurer's Report—Flegel indicated a Statement of Activities and Financial Position for the fiscal year ended May 31, 2018 was included in the meeting registration packet. The board accepted the report at its November 2018 meeting.
- Chairman's Report—Chairman Flegel presented his report.
- Nominating Committee Report—Flegel presented the following slate of candidates submitted by the Nominating Committee: District 1—Brad Barth, Goodridge; and District 2—Bob Ehlers, Barrett. Dr. Brian Buhr, Director of the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station, nominated Dr. Nancy Ehlke for the Category B position. Flegel then called for nominations from the floor. There being no further nominations, Duane Dahlman moved, Mac Ehrhardt seconded to cast a unanimous ballot and accept the nominees presented. Motion passed.
- President's Report—Dr. Fawad Shah began his presentation with a brief history and overview of MCIA. Field Services had a slight increase in acres from the previous year, and the Organic Services continues to see growth. Succession planning continues to focus on building internal competencies. Staff departures that occurred over the past year included Lucas Wertish, Juan Aguilera, and the retirement of Jennifer Pernsteiner. Shah also announced the upcoming retirement of Cindy Wippler in the summer of 2019. Sam Banks, Seed Technologist and Eli Gindele, Field Supervisor were hired. Chase Mowry was promoted to Manager, Seed Lab and Jody Prudhomme was promoted to Administrative and Certification Manager. MCIA staff were invited to speak and participate in a number of regional and national events. Other projects completed included revisions to the *Seed Certification Handbook* and the *Employee Handbook*.

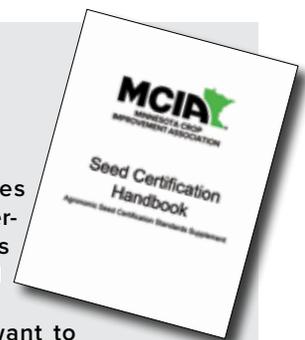
Flegel then called for other business. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Seed Certification Handbook Updated

This handbook describes procedures required for participation in the seed certification program. It covers all aspects of seed certification: seed sources, field inspection, seed conditioning, labeling, and everything in between. If you want to know how to sample your seed lot, label your tote bags, issue a bulk certificate, or test carryover seed, the *MCIA Seed Certification Handbook* has the answer.

The *Handbook* is an excellent resource for anyone new to seed certification and a useful tool for anyone producing or handling certified seed. The *Handbook* was developed to supplement the requirements specified in the *MCIA Agronomic Seed Certification Standards*.

You can find the *Handbook* on the MCIA website, www.mcia.org. Download a digital copy for easy reference. A printed version will be mailed to members in May, along with the field inspection applications. To request a copy before then, please contact your MCIA field supervisor.



2019 MCIA Annual Meeting in Pictures

TOP ROW: 1. Fawad Shah with Ray and Barbara Swenson, socializing at the pre-meeting reception. 2. Tom Slunecka, CEO, Minnesota Soybean Research and Promotion Council, addresses the MCIA Annual Meeting. 3. Jim Kukowski receives an award of Great Appreciation for his six years of service to the MCIA Board of Directors. 4. Mark Abrahamson, Director, Plant Protection Division, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, addresses the MCIA Annual Meeting. 5. Paula Mohr, editor of *The Farmer* magazine, presents MCIA's Achievement in Crop Improvement award.



BOTTOM ROW: 1. Board members Darius Thiel, Kurt Flegel, Mory Rugg, and Denise Thiede at the pre-meeting reception. 2. MCIA Field Supervisor Kris Folland, 3. B.J. Haun, UMN Technology Commercialization Officer, and 4. Mac Ehrhardt, Owner/Operator of Albert Lea Seed House, address the MCIA Annual Meeting.

MASCMA Organization Votes to Dissolve

After nearly 60 years of existence, members of the Minnesota Approved Seed Conditioners and Marketing Association (MASCMA) voted to dissolve their organization at a meeting January 9, 2019 in Fergus Falls.

The association was organized to promote the marketing of quality seed through approved facilities. To aid in marketing an annual survey of the MASCMA members across the state was made to determine seed supplies of the various crop and varieties. The group also participated in the distribution of new varieties from the Minnesota Foundation seed program.

In 1970 there were 175 facilities that chose to become MASCMA members. Today many of those seed conditioning plants no longer exist or have gone through many changes. Retirements, consolidations, fewer acres of small grains, and switching

from handling public varieties to entirely private genetics have reduced the membership to 31 today.

During the meeting MASCMA Executive Director, Ken Schuster noted that the association has been relatively inactive over the last 10 plus years. After comments, questions, and discussion, the following motion was made and passed by MASCMA members in attendance:

"The Minnesota Approved Seed Conditioners and Marketing Association will be dissolved by July 30, 2019 and all remaining cash funds left in the Association accounts will be donated and applied to the Association sponsored Scholarship at the University of Minnesota Crookston Campus."

To be clear, the MASCMA organization, although made up of MCIA members, was not an official part of MCIA and its dissolution will not impact the Approved Facility program.



Ken Schuster, Executive Director of MASCMA, addressing the organization's final membership meeting on January 9, 2019 in Fergus Falls.



With spring finally in full speed, agriculture is in a frenzy getting ready for spring planting. A time of a new start with a lot of energy and excitement. First, we all need to get through this spring. As the folks in Nebraska are seeing now, this spring is looking to be a tough one. I hope that everyone gets through it safely and with minimal disruption to your business and family.

With everyone looking forward to planting and spring, MCIA is also getting ready to close out another year, get budgets ready for the next fiscal year along with onboarding new personnel, and working through

the organization's operational status for the coming year. For MCIA, 2019 will be a very business-critical year, as transitions in its business and agriculture continue to evolve.

The other frenzy going on is that our state and federal legislatures are in full swing, making decisions that will impact the business and the future of agriculture. Everyone in agriculture needs to make sure their voice is heard, whether it be through organizations or directly with your representatives, as ag is one of the biggest industries in the U.S. and it is woefully underrepresented. We all need to sound our horns and beat our drums to be sure that they know we are out here and that we rightfully need to be represented.

Have a safe spring and planting season and here's hoping for another bountiful harvest!

Staff News

Minnesota Crop Improvement Association welcomes **Bob Huffman** as Certification Specialist, Special Programs. As the latest member of MCIA's Seed Laboratory staff, Bob will be involved in supporting many of the lab's functions. However, Bob's particular focus will be administering MCIA's special certification programs, including MnDOT, Native Seed Certification, Sod Certification, and Noxious Weed Seed-free Forage and Mulch. Bob holds a bachelor of science degree in biology with a minor in environmental studies from Saint Cloud State University. Bob was

most recently employed as the manager of Prairie Restorations' Princeton, Minnesota, warehouse.

We also welcome back **Janet Daninger**, who returns to MCIA after a 3-year hiatus to assume the position of Certification Specialist. Janet will be supporting the work of the Field Services and the Foundation Seed Services departments. Janet will also provide assistance to MCIA's Administration department, focusing on employee benefits and accounts receivable and payable. Janet holds an associate of applied science degree from Century College. Janet was previously employed by MCIA as our communications specialist.

MCIA is also pleased to announce two promotions. **Chase Mowry** has accepted the position of Seed Laboratory Manager, following the retirement of Jennifer Pernsteiner in 2018. Chase, a Registered Seed Technologist (RST), has been a staff member of the MCIA Seed Laboratory since 2016.

Jody Prudhomme is also stepping up to new responsibilities. She has accepted the position of Administrative and Certification Manager. Jody has worked in MCIA's Seed Certification department since 1998. Jody is in training on her new duties with General Manager **Cindy Wippler**, who, after a 30+ year tenure, will be retiring from MCIA this summer. Cindy will continue to perform her multifaceted duties and support all departments until retirement.

One more change to report: **Rose-Marie Odell** has recently moved from the position of Administrative Assistant for Administration/Program Services to a new position as Organic Administrative Assistant. Rose-Marie has been performing several administrative duties in Organic Services, and this move will allow her to continue to provide that department with much needed administrative support.



Bob Huffman



Janet Daninger



It is often said that the most important asset of any business is its people. This is particularly true with respect to the quality staff at Minnesota Crop Improvement Association. Given that truth, MCIA is focused on recruitment, retention, and employee development, as several longtime MCIA employees have retired within the past two years.

When we're recruiting, every effort is made to identify candidates who have the needed qualifications, experience, and potential to provide the high level of service our customers have come to expect. Replacing staff is not always easy: After the best candidate is hired, there is even more work to be done—onboarding and training. Consider accomplishing all of that without missing a beat!

Additionally, MCIA continues employee development by sending staff to pertinent trainings, workshops, and conferences to gain needed skills, acquire knowledge, and stay current on new or revised developments. Staff members attend many agricultural meetings and events during the winter, taking time to network and exchange ideas.

Speaking of winter conferences, it is worth mentioning the 2019 MCIA Annual Meeting, which was held in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, in early January. Speakers there covered a variety

of topics, ranging from how to license University of Minnesota varieties to an update from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture on their efforts to control *Palmer amaranth* in Minnesota. The event was attended by growers, state officials, researchers, and professionals from the seed industry. We would appreciate receiving your input: What topics would you like to learn more about at our next annual meeting? Send me your suggestions at fawad.shah@mncia.org. Let's make this annual event both fun and educational for you, our members!

An important development I'd like to report is the revision of the *MCIA Seed Certification Handbook*. Several of our staff members put countless hours into its review and revision, updating it to document procedures and processes that have changed or that simply needed clarification.

The latest version of the *MCIA Seed Certification Handbook* includes instructions about how to submit seed samples to the MCIA lab. The revised handbook also points out helpful information. For example, each tote container must be properly labeled with new certification tags to ensure compliance with state seed law. Also, please note that Registered Class seed shall not be sold to approved bulk handlers unless it has been downgraded to Certified Class seed.

During their annual facility inspections and visits, MCIA field supervisors have been taking the opportunity to provide members with guidance about the revisions to the handbook. We encourage you to become familiar with the updated handbook and to contact the field staff or the office with any questions you may have.



Organic Corner

Michelle Menken, Organic Services Manager

We are all back from the winter conferences. It was nice to see all of you who stopped by our table to visit.

In the office, we are working hard on finishing up the last files from 2018. We continue to work on revising and updating

our forms. Processors and handlers can expect to see a new processor-handler Organic System Plan (OSP) sometime this year.

We just received the results of our USDA NOP (National Organic Program) audit, which was performed in June 2017. We were given some corrective actions to complete: We needed to make some changes to our certificate; we needed

to devise a way to track that we are completing 5 percent unannounced inspections each year; and we had to show that we are sending clients the test results of the 5 percent random samples that we collect each year.

The NOP accepted our corrective actions and extended our accreditation through April 29, 2022, when our next audit is due. MCIA is audited by the NOP every two and a half years; a reaccreditation audit is performed every five years.

Client crop and livestock renewal applications are due back April 1, 2019. We have been getting a steady stream in already, which we appreciate. If you have any questions about the renewal application, please contact the office at 1-855-213-4461. It looks like we will have quite a few new clients again this year.



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Tel: 612-625-7766 Fax: 612-625-3748

- Fawad ShahPresident and CEO
- Kurt FlegelChairman
- Bob EhlersVice Chairman
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- Darius ThielTreasurer
- Brad Barth.....Director
- Matt BohnDirector
- Nancy Jo EhlkeDirector
- Nat Forster.....Director
- Scott Habstritt.....Director
- Mory RuggDirector
- Denise Thiede.....Director

Mission Statement

Minnesota Crop Improvement Association is an organization dedicated to improving the productivity, profitability and competitive position of producers, processors, and distributors of agricultural products by providing services to enable them to provide high-quality products to Minnesota, the United States, and the world.

Improving your process • Enhancing your products • Increasing your profits

CALENDAR

APRIL

23–24 AOSCA Northern Region Meeting,
East Lansing, MI

MAY–AUGUST

Iowa State University—
Seed Conditioning Workshops
Register by phone: 515-294-4011
or online: <http://register.extension.iastate.edu/seedsience>

JUNE

15–19 ASTA Policy & Leadership Development
Conference, Denver, CO
23–26 AOSCA Annual Meeting,
Chicago, IL

**For more information on these and
other events visit www.mncia.org.**