

Scott Habstritt Receives Achievement in Crop Improvement Award

The Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA) at its 123rd Annual Meeting on January 28, 2026, presented its highest honor, the Achievement in Crop Improvement Award, to Scott Habstritt of Roseau, MN. The award, recognizes exemplary service to the seed industry as well as outstanding leadership in agriculture. Scott Habstritt and the Habstritt family name are synonymous with quality turf seed production throughout the country.

Presented annually since 1972, the Achievement in Crop Improvement Award is sponsored by The Farmer magazine.

Growing up in Roseau, MN, **Scott Habstritt** and his brothers were introduced at a young age to forage and turf seed conditioning at the families' seed conditioning facilities. Among the seed crops conditioned included timothy, clovers, and flax. Kentucky Bluegrass emerged as a crop in the area and in 1970 the family built a new seed conditioning facility northeast of Roseau next to the peat soil fields. Scott went from sweeping, cleaning, setting equipment, and bagging seed to out in the field "picking grubs," which was removing the brush and roots from the fields to make them suitable for crop production. Scott attended school in Roseau and was very active in many activities.

Scott along with his brothers, Jim and Chuck, were soon running the farm and seed business in its entirety. Scott and his wife, Tallie, were married in 1974 and began raising a family, farming, and operating the seed business. Certified bluegrass and timothy were the main crops conditioned and bagged with seed from both their fields and neighboring farms. Certified small grains were conditioned annually as needed before spring and continue to be an important part of the operation. The farm has grown many crops throughout the years with Kentucky bluegrass, wheat, barley, sunflowers, and canola being the primary crops. Scott states, "The peat soils on our farm are conducive to cool season grass



PHOTO BY CARL ANFINSON © MCIA

Kevin Schulz, Editor of *The Farmer* (left), presents Scott Habstritt (right) with the MCIA Achievement in Crop Improvement Award.

production. In the area, now Certified perennial ryegrass has become a staple in seed production and conditioning for us the past 20 years."

The Habstritt farm and seed business has always strongly supported and welcomed research by the University of Minnesota, especially in turf seed production. Scott said, "I consider the University of Minnesota researchers and graduate students to be an integral part of the success to us and the farms across the area." He also says they have worked with and conditioned many different types of crops to see if they could ever make it to market.

Scott has continued farm and seed operations through hard work and with good help. He said "I cannot thank all my wonderful employees over the years enough. I never could have made it this far without them. They are dedicated and especially with the seed they take pride and condition it like it is their own." The Habstritt's have made plans for the operation to continue with the next generation, and Scott says it is exciting to see it continue.

Scott has been active over the years and being a part of RL Growers, the Minnesota Turf Seed Council, and Northern Excellence Seed have been some of his favorites. He has also served on many other boards and committees in the area including the Roseau River Watershed Board and the Northern Minnesota Bluegrass Association. He also has been active in many Roseau City and School committees and events. In his free time, he enjoys hunting, softball, basketball, and bowling. Scott and Tallie have two daughters and six grandchildren and enjoy spending time together at all their activities.

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MCIA Presents Premier and Honorary Premier Seed Grower Awards

The Minnesota Crop Improvement Association presented its Premier Seed Grower awards at the MCIA Annual Meeting on January 28, 2026, at the Holiday Inn & Suites in St. Cloud. Sharon Bring and Milo Ravndalen received the Premier Seed Grower Award. Ken Graeve and Craig Tomera were recipients of the Honorary Premier Seed Grower Award.

The Premier Seed Grower 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.

SHARON BRING, STRANDQUIST

Sharon Bring grew up near Newfolden, MN in Marshall County on her family's farm. She was active in school and on the farm driving a John Deere Model D as soon as she was old enough to reach the hand clutch. She worked around the farm and two of her main jobs were raking hay and milking the families Hereford milk cow. "Yes, it was a Hereford," she says with a smile. Sharon was very active in 4-H and school activities. After graduation from Newfolden High School she attended college in Thief River Falls for Secretarial and soon started working at a local bank. She quickly learned about banking, finance, and bookkeeping skills that served her well throughout her career.



She married Wesley Bring and they raised 5 kids, farmed, and milked cows. During this time, they were very active in the community in many areas. Sharon was also a 4-H leader and trips to the MN State Fair showing cattle were an annual highlight. Sharon and Wesley grew seed as often as they could in their crop rotation. Barley, oats, and wheat were grown for certified seed with Lacey and Stander barley being the "prized" seed crop for many years. They sold seed and worked with local MCIA seed conditioners in the area. "The years were busy but flew by fast," says Sharon. Unfortunately, Wesley passed away in the year 2000. The family milked cows for 3 more months and the next chapter on the Bring Farm began.

Sharon and her son, Jeff, continued crop production and Jeff took over the livestock side raising beef cattle to this day. For the past 25 years Sharon and Jeff have continued farming together, but each maintains their separate operations. Sharon has continued producing small grains for seed and mostly U of MN wheat varieties that she says, "stand well, yield well, and have good disease packages and work well in this area." Sharon thanks her children for the help over the years and said she really must thank Jeff for, "all the mechanic work over the years, he can fix anything and that's the one thing on the farm I cannot do." Her favorite farm activities are tillage, harvest, and watching things grow. "I really love all aspects of farming

including the planning, office work, and marketing."

Sharon is equally well known in a wide area for her contributions away from the farm. She has been a Marshall County commissioner for 29 years, serves on the board for many organizations including MN Rural Counties board, Markit Landfill, Area Transportation Partnership, Marshall County Florian Park, along with serving as a 4-H leader and many other area groups. She also has operated "Sharon's Tax Service" for decades in the off season and winter months.

Sharon enjoys keeping up with her 5 children and 14 grandchildren at all their many activities. She also enjoys bike riding, snowmobiling, and the outdoors.

MILO RAVNDALEN, ROOSEVELT

Milo Ravndalen grew up north of Roosevelt, MN. He attended school in Roosevelt until the first grade and then attended Warroad School. Located on the south shores of Lake of the Woods, the area is well known for diverse crop farming, fishing, and hockey. Growing up farming with his parents and having close relatives farming in the area, there was no shortage of farm work. Milo laughs and says, "when we were done with our work, I went from uncle to uncle helping them on their farms." At a young age Milo said he loved the smell of the fresh soil being turned over and told the family and uncles he would rather farm than raise cattle.



Milo stayed active in school and loved playing hockey, football and baseball. After graduation from Warroad High School, he enrolled at the University of Minnesota-Crookston playing center in hockey and graduating with a degree in Agronomy. Milo then attended NDSU while keeping up with the farm back home and soon started his career back home farming in Lake of the Woods and Roseau counties. Milo bought his first 200 acres at the age of 18 and spent the next 46 years growing the farm.

The earliest seed production for Milo was Kentucky bluegrass, and he always looks for ways to add value to their crop production. Crops grown on the farm today include Kentucky bluegrass, perennial ryegrass, soybeans, wheat, barley, oats, canola, and corn. Crops for seed production include small grains, soybeans for private seed companies, food grade soybeans, and perennial turf seed. Seed from their farm has traveled locally and throughout the region; and turf seed even across the country and world. The climate and remote location can be seen as a challenge, but Milo and area growers use it

to their advantage to continue to innovate in crop and seed production. Turf and forage seed have always been important to this area and Milo was a founding board member of Northern Excellence Seed in Williams, MN, a farmer owned cooperative that conditions and markets turf seed, small grains, and food grade soybeans. Milo is proud of the value they add to their farm and for area growers.

Today the Ravndalen farm has grown many times over and Milo and his wife, Karleen, are excited that two of their sons, Bryce and Garrett, have joined the operation adding much needed help and growth for the future. Milo has been very active serving on the local Northern Excellence and Northern Farmers Cooperative board and coaching hockey for many years. Milo and Karleen have four sons and eight grandchildren that they love to spend time with. They also enjoy traveling in the off season and all outdoor activities, especially in the Lake of the Woods area.

The Honorary Premier Seed Grower 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.

KEN GRAEVE,
MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (MNDOT)



Ken Graeve grew up in Council Bluffs, Iowa and always enjoyed agriculture, fishing, and being outdoors at a young age. After High School, Ken graduated college from St. John's University in Minnesota with a degree in biology.

Ken started his career with two different Minnesota native seed companies working with Conservation Reserve Program lands, native species plantings, and all aspects of seed production and conditioning. He enjoyed and appreciated growing the different species in the summer

months, harvesting, and then conditioning in the winter. He viewed conditioning as trouble shooting until the machines were set just right and the clean seeds rolled of the seed mills. Every species is handled and conditioned differently and clean seeds free of noxious weeds and unwanted material were the goal. Ken gained great experience in ecological restoration and botany and then began his career with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT).

Ken has worked closely with the MCIA Approved Seed Vendor program throughout his MnDOT career. This program was designed to ensure that roadside seeding and revegetation projects meet the specifications set forth by MnDOT with the goal of successful roadside revegetation establishment. This is important for the integrity of the roads, ditches, and surrounding environment for all motorists and the area. Ken states, "The program began with MnDOT employees Bob Jacobson and Dwayne Stenlund and MCIA staff developing and administering the program that has successfully improved

roadside seeding and species establishment for over 20 years. Warren Tuel and I, along with MCIA staff and Approved Seed Vendors, have continued this successful program." Today Ken supervises MnDOT Erosion and Stormwater management, roadside vegetation establishment, and tracking environmental commitments.

Ken and his wife, Catherine, have three children. They enjoy hiking, biking, camping, and many different outdoor activities. They enjoy trips around Minnesota and Iowa along with keeping up with all their children's activities.

CRAIG TOMERA,
GRAIN MILLERS SPECIALTY PRODUCTS DIVISION

Craig Tomera is an Illinois native, beginning his agricultural career in 1978 as a General Manager/Agronomist for a major Central Illinois fertilizer company and then as an Independent Crop Consultant. After receiving his M.S. degree in Agronomy/Weed Science from



the University of Illinois in 1993, Craig and his family moved to Minnesota where he began a career in soybean seed production for Pioneer Hybrids in Jackson, MN.

In 1998, Craig became General Manager and Agronomist for Precision Soya/Remington Seed in Olivia, MN and in 2005, Craig started working with Non-GMO and organic soybean seed production with Northland Organic Foods in St. Paul, MN. He has been employed by Grain Millers since 2011 as their Identity Preserved Crop Specialist and just recently has also become the General Manager of their St. Peter, MN Export Facility.

Craig holds a Certified Crop Advisor (CCA) and Sustainability Specialist (SSp) Certification with the American Society of Agronomy. Craig's wife LeAnne is employed by the State of Minnesota at Minnesota Housing Finance Agency. They have 3 grown children, Katherine, Christopher, and Randy who are all married and living in Central Illinois. Craig and LeAnne are also proud grandparents to 3 grandchildren, Wyatt, Jameson and Madison.

Thank You, Sponsors and Exhibitors!

MCIA thanks the following sponsors and exhibitors who helped make the 2026 MCIA Annual Meeting a success. **Premier Sponsor:** Minnesota Soybean Research & Promotion Council. **Foundation Sponsors:** Minnesota Corn, and Strategic Wealth Group. **Registered Sponsor:** Minnesota Department of Agriculture. **Certified Sponsors:** Albert Lea Seed, Forever Green Initiative, South Dakota State University Seed Testing Laboratory **Achievement in Crop Improvement Award Sponsor:** The Farmer magazine. **Door Prize Sponsor:** Cummings Ag Inc. **Exhibitors:** Bratney, Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Profile Industries

Chair Report

Brent Benike
BOARD CHAIR

As I pondered what to write for the annual meeting report, it was obvious that 2025 was a very interesting and pivotal year for our association. We have been in existence for 123 years, so I'm guessing over that span of time we have had numerous very interesting and pivotal years at MCIA. In the main conference room in St. Paul there are pictures of past leaders hanging on the wall and every time I look at those names and pictures, I can't help but think how we in the present owe a debt of gratitude to those who made agriculture in MN what it is today. I also can't help but think how we owe that same level of commitment to those coming after us in the ag industry of Minnesota. If those leaders of the past could have a conversation today with our current and future leaders, what would they tell us? I think they would tell us that when you are in these transitional moments you need to stay focused more than ever and stay with the principles that got MCIA to where it is at as an organization. Those core principles start with the mission statement of our organization which 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 MN, the USA and the World.

The key word in this mission statement is dedicated. When you think on past and current employees of this organization "dedicated" is a word that always rises to the top of the list to describe the people who have been involved with MCIA. The changes we made as a board this past year focus on the dedication aspect we have always experienced with MCIA employees. We recently went 9 months without a President/CEO position in place, but our dedicated staff held the organization together as they always have in the past. Kudos to the entire staff for all their efforts over the past year. Also, kudos to our search committee including Kelsey Henke, Tony Cortilet and Carl Anfinson for the many hours of texts, emails and zoom meetings to put the process in motion and to keep it moving forward.

As we moved forward with the process of identifying what we wanted in our next leader, it became apparent that we have and always have had people on staff who can run the organization. Going forward we still need someone with whom the "buck" stops with, but a return to visionary leadership as well as membership and staff engagement was a high priority. With that as a backdrop and after long discussions, we decided to change the leadership title from one of President/CEO to that of Executive Director. The position description is formulated to allow for more empowerment of key staff at the business and operational level. This in turn will give the board of directors a better system of checks and balances to make decisions and provide greater accountability for the executive position. The further benefit of this will be that member and staff engagement will be front and center for the position and more time will be allotted for this critical function.



Newly elected Board Chair, Kelsey Henke, presents outgoing Chair, Brent Benike, with an MCIA Appreciation plaque for six years of dedicated service as a member of the Board of Directors

Shifting gears to the financial side for MCIA, we are experiencing the same downturn cycle in the crop production world as our membership is. If we were to do a hard historical study of the up and down cycles in agriculture, it would resemble a roller coaster ride on a graphed chart. Fortunately for MCIA we have diversified our services over the past decades so that we are a bit more insulated from these major downturns than we used to be decades prior. In addition, investment dollars have been managed well over the years in conjunction with our partners at Strategic Wealth Group and have given us a solid financial base to handle the down years when they inevitably come our way.

The final point I want to make leads back again to our mission statement and the phrase "by providing services that enable them to provide high quality products to MN, USA and the World". Our leaders from past generations would also remind us that another core principle would be to focus on quality if you want to survive and persevere to the other side of a down cycle. Whether you are talking about crops, livestock, seed, food or any other consumer related item, quality seems to find a home and provide the cash flow in down times. MCIA, by providing its services, truly does enable high quality products to be marketed and exported from our state of Minnesota. Whenever supply is out of balance with demand, the quality product is the product that typically finds a buyer first. Our job as stewards of this association is to continue to support it wherever and whenever we can. Our other spiritual job is to be mindful that every good thing we are given in life is a gift from God. Our faithful stewardship of this organization and by extension our farms and the ag industry in general should inspire future generations to look at pictures on the wall and be grateful for us as well.

Official Minutes of the 2026 Annual Business Meeting

Chair, Brent Benike, called the 123rd annual business meeting of the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association to order at 1:15 p.m. on January 28, 2026. The meeting was held at the Holiday Inn in Saint Cloud, Minnesota. The Chair confirmed that notice of the meeting was properly mailed ten days prior to the meeting and was published in the fall 2025 issue of the Minnesota Seed Grower. With more than 25 members in attendance, the Chair declared that quorum was met. The Chair took roll call of the Board members present.

Secretary's Report: Minutes of the 2025 MCIA Annual Meeting were published in the spring 2025 issue of the Minnesota Seed Grower and were included in the meeting documents. Mike Zabel moved to approve the minutes of the 2025 MCIA Annual Meeting. The motion was seconded by Jim Falk and passed.

Treasurer's Report: The Chair reported that the Statement of Activities and Financial Position for the fiscal year ending May 31, 2025, was included in the meeting documents. The financial report and an independent financial review were successfully completed, presented, and accepted at the November 2025 Board meeting. Copies can be obtained by contacting the MCIA office. The Chair stated that financial reports are reviewed by the Treasurer, Grant Mehring, and the Chair and presented at each meeting to the Board of Directors.

Chair Report: The Chair reported on leadership within the organization overtime, the process of the recruitment and hiring a new Executive Director, Duane Dahlman, and reminded members and attendees that the organization is dedicated in carrying out its mission statement. He reported on the financial position of the organization; while experiencing a downturn cycle, the organization is diverse in its services and investments are being managed well, to give the organization a financial base to withstand challenges in the industry.

Board of Directors' Election: The Chair explained the Board of Directors' election ballot: The nominees for open Category A director positions were Tony Brateng, District 1, of Roseau, Minnesota, and Ryan Anderson, District 3, of Jackson, Minnesota. Nancy Ehlke was nominated by the University of Minnesota to serve as Category B director. There were no other nominations. Brent Benike moved to cast a unanimous ballot for the election of the nominated slate of Category A directors and to ratify the nominated Category B director. The motion was seconded by Jim Kukowski and passed.

Executive Director's Report: Executive Director, Duane Dahlman introduced the MCIA staff and reported on staffing changes within the organization. The MCIA Board of Directors approved replacing the President/CEO position with an Executive Director position and hired Duane Dahlman. Organic Services hired Mariann Holm, Kris Olson, and Selena Nelson moved into the department.

MCIA's Field Services inspected roughly 132,000 acres in over 2,500 fields in crop year 2025. Field services also carried out around 80 organic inspections. The department inspects

nearly 165 facilities each year under the Approved Facility Program. Field Services continues to work on the development of a new certified compost program and maintains a long-term contract and Approved Seed Vendor Program with Mn/DOT.

Foundation seed sales for 2025 were down 6 percent from 2024. Sales from 2026 are likely to decrease as well. The Foundation Seed department continues to collaborate with the University of MN breeder programs for conditioning and color sorting needs. The department also continues to work with U of MN Technology Commercialization and the U of MN Extension on licensing and marketing activities. A new variety of wheat (MN21809-4) is being increased in the winter of 2026. The U of MN released MN-Amber oats.

Organic Services is currently serving around 490 clients and will be adding a limited number of new clients. In August of 2025, Kris Olson was hired as Organic Services Manager. Certification Team Lead staff titles were revised, and their job descriptions were updated. MCIA purchased a FileMaker software program that will be utilized by organic services as their main certification database.

In 2024-25, the MCIA Seed Laboratory tested a total of 3,222 samples and so far tested 1,612 samples for 2025-26. Annual sample numbers lag previous year and perennial samples remain on par to last year. The seed lab performs testing on native samples, and those can vary in difficulty and time consumption. The lab has tested just over 27,000 samples since reopening in 2016. The seed lab was audited in July of 2025 with no findings of nonconformances.

The Executive Director reported that the roof and skylights were replaced on the MCIA building. Next, he reported on the financials for fiscal year 2024-2025. Income from programs and services was \$3,331,039.89, which was down for the year. Investment income was \$529,087.92, which did well, ending the fiscal year in the positive. The organization continues to publish the Directory, the Minnesota Seed Grower, and collaborates with the MN Ag Experiment Station for content for the Minnesota Certified Seed Guide.

In conclusion, the Executive Director will look for pathways to diversify MCIA's programs and services, strengthening operations, provide quality service to MCIA's clients and members, building partnerships, and positioning MCIA for long-term success.

Proposed Bylaws Amendment: Executive Director, Duane Dahlman, presented a proposed amendment of MCIA's By-laws, to change President/CEO to Executive Director and Chairman and Vice Chairman to Chair and Vice Chair. Proposed changes were recommended by the Board of Directors and MCIA staff. Jim Falk moved to accept the amendment as presented. The motion was seconded by Mike Zabel and passed.

The Chair then called for other business. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Election Results

Board Directors Elected, Ratified

At the 123rd MCIA Annual Meeting, held in St. Cloud on January 28, 2026, the association conducted a board of directors' election. Members elected Tony Brateng, of Roseau, to an open director position for District 1. Members reelected one incumbent director, Ryan Anderson, for District 2. Members also ratified Nancy Ehlke's nomination to the board, by the Minnesota Agricultural Experiment Station, as a Category B director. Subsequently, the board directors elected officers and Executive Committee members. A full list of the current members of the MCIA Board of Directors follows:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Kelsey Henke, St. Peter, Chair
Ryan Anderson, Jackson, Vice Chair
Brent Benike, Baudette, Secretary
Michael Backman, Herman, Treasurer

DIRECTORS

Tony Brateng, Roseau
Anthony B. Cortilet, St. Paul
Nancy Jo Ehlke, UMN Twin Cities
Gabel Hoseth, Ulen
Brian Jensen, Stephen

Tony Brateng Joins Board

Minnesota Crop Improvement Association welcomes Tony Brateng (District 1) to MCIA's Board of Directors.

Tony Brateng is a graduate of the University of Minnesota Crookston, with 20 years of experience in production farming. He and his wife Amy operate and own South 89 Seed, a Pioneer seed agency, offering certified wheat seed and crop protection as well as agronomy services in Roseau County and beyond. They also operate South 89 Farms, a 5,000-acre farm in Roseau, Minnesota, producing certified Kentucky bluegrass, certified perennial ryegrass, foundation, registered and certified wheat, certified soybeans, corn, and canola. Tony has served 12 years on the Minnesota Canola Council and 12 years on the Minnesota Wheat Research & Promotion Council, bringing extensive experience in commodity leadership, research collaboration, and industry advocacy. Tony and Amy are raising their three children in the Roseau community, and their family enjoys snowmobiling, hunting, and chasing Roseau youth hockey. As a board candidate, Tony is committed to transparent decision-making, responsible stewardship, and representing the interests of growers and community members with integrity and practical insight.



Director's Corner

Duane Dahlman

Executive Director

On January 1, 2026, I was honored to begin serving as Executive Director of the Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA). It is a privilege to lead an organization with a long history of service to Minnesota's agricultural community.

I have more than 50 years of experience in the seed and food industries. For over four decades, I was one of the owners of Dahlman Farms/Dahlco Seeds in Cokato, Minnesota, producing hybrid seed corn, certified soybeans, oats, and barley. After the business was sold to an out of state seed corn production company, I continued to manage its northern division. I later served as an Agricultural Production Supervisor with Seneca Foods in Glencoe, Minnesota.

My 16 years on the MCIA Board, including two years as chair and five years as Category C Secretary, were invaluable. These experiences deepened my understanding of MCIA's mission and strengthened my commitment to serving our members. I look forward to applying my leadership background and industry knowledge in this new role.

As Executive Director, I would like to provide a brief overview of MCIA and outline the expectations associated with this position.

Company Overview

The Minnesota Crop Improvement Association (MCIA) is a 501(c)(5) not for profit organization dedicated to improving the productivity, profitability, and competitiveness of agricultural producers, processors, and distributors. MCIA delivers certification and quality assurance services for field crop seed, turf seed, sod, native plant seed, noxious weed seed-free forage and mulch, identity preserved grains, organic crops, livestock, and food products. The organization also provides field inspections, seed and grain facility evaluations, third party audits, and on site evaluations. Additionally, MCIA produces and distributes foundation seed for publicly developed varieties and serves as the marketing agent for University of Minnesota-developed varieties.

Mission Statement

To improve the productivity, profitability, and competitive position of agricultural producers, processors, and distributors by enabling them to deliver high quality products to Minnesota, the United States, and global markets.

Key Responsibilities

- Advise the Board of Directors on MCIA's direction, priorities, and performance.
- Lead the development of long and short term strategic objectives and communicate them to staff, the board, and members.
- Identify opportunities and implement programs aligned with MCIA's mission.
- Oversee staffing, recruitment, hiring, and training.
- Manage finances in partnership with the controller, including budgeting, reporting, and regulatory compliance.
- Monitor the investment portfolio and provide regular updates to the board.
- Ensure compliance with federal and state regulations and AOSCA standards.
- Direct and manage MCIA's general meetings.

- Oversee maintenance and improvement of MCIA facilities and equipment.
- Maintain active collaboration with the University of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.
- Build and strengthen relationships across the seed, feed, food, and related industries.

Strategic Goal

Guide the organization with a realistic, optimistic understanding of agriculture's cyclical nature.

I am excited to represent MCIA and connect with members across the state. Visiting seed plants and meeting members onsite has long been a passion of mine, and I look forward to continuing that work. Thank you again for this opportunity.

Call to Action

I invite you to connect with me, share your ideas, and let me know how MCIA can better support your operation. Whether you would like to schedule a visit, discuss challenges in your sector, or explore new opportunities, please reach out—I look forward to working alongside you to strengthen Minnesota agriculture.

Organic Corner

Kris Olson
Organic Manager

Spring is here, and the Organic Services Team is working diligently on your files as we move into the 2026 certification cycle. As a reminder, our handler renewal deadline was January 15th, and our producer deadline was April 1st. If you have not submitted your renewal application, be sure to contact the MCIA Organic Services Team. Failure to renew or surrender your certification may result in potential compliance action if we do not hear from you about your certification plans. In 2026, MCIA will be working on several improvements to improve our customer service and timing, including the implementation of a new database. None of these items will require anything additional from MCIA operations, but if something does arise we will send out a communication.

If you have indicated new crops or products in your renewal application, we may provide an updated certificate when your application is reviewed. As a reminder, new land, facilities, and/or production types may require inspection before they can be certified, so please be sure these items are communicated with MCIA to ensure they can be added in a timely fashion.

As we move into the 2026 cropping season, crop operations unfortunately also move into drift season. While organic operations are required to implement practices to prevent contamination from neighboring conventional operations, such as buffers or other physical barriers, drift may still occur. When an operation observes or suspects that drift may have occurred, the NOP Regulations require that the operation report the incident immediately to their certifier. We will ask about the date of the potential drift event, the suspected material, and if any testing has been performed, the results of the test. MCIA will then work with your operation on the next steps.

With spring also comes organic operations' chance to participate in the organic regulatory process. The National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) meets twice a year, once in the spring and once in the fall. This year's spring meeting will take place in Omaha, Nebraska from May 12, 2026, through May 14, 2026. Complete meeting information is available online through the NOSB website, but options are available for both written and oral comments. The NOSB meeting is a chance for organic operations, consumers, and

interested parties to provide comments on new or existing inputs, regulatory changes, and priorities within the organic industry. If you would like more details, information about upcoming NOSB meetings can be found at www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/nosb or by contacting the MCIA Organic Services Team.

Lastly, MCIA has decided to take on a limited number of new operations in 2026. If you know someone who has been looking to be certified by MCIA, please let them know. As we are limiting the number of operations we will take on, acceptance will be based on when they apply, location, and timing needs.

Staff News

Mariann Holm joined MCIA on January 1, 2026, as an Organic Certification Specialist/Inspector.



She is no stranger to MCIA having spent several years working with us as a contracted organic inspector with a special emphasis in dairy. Her own

farm has continued organic certification since 2005. Mariann has a passion for farming, food and community. She served for many years on the Wisconsin Organic Advisory Council and as a board member of her local food co-op, Menomonie Market. You often can find her hosting pasture walks or building rural community through potlucks or mentorship. Mariann works from her home office in West Central Wisconsin.

Duane Dahlman joined MCIA on January 1 2026, as the New Executive Director.



Duane has a lifetime of experience working in both the seed and food industries. He was one of 3 owners of Dahlman Farms/Dahlco Seeds of Cokato, MN and held that position for over 40 years. Most recently in his career, he was working as an Ag Production Supervisor with Seneca Foods in Glencoe, MN.

Duane holds a B.S. in Agronomy from the University of Minnesota. While at the University, he was a member of the National Champion, University of Minnesota crops judging team. He has served various agricultural organizations, including MCIA, the Wright County Soil and Water Conservation District, and U of MN Extension in Wright County. He has also demonstrated a commitment to area youth by dedicating time to 4H, FFA, and athletic organizations. In addition, he is involved in community events and church-based activities. Duane has also served MCIA as member of the board of directors for 16 years.

**Remember to save your
proof of seed source
for field inspection
applications**

PERIODICAL

Field Notes

FIELD SERVICES STAFF

Seed quality from the 2025 crop year has generally good and most germination results are good to excellent. As always, we encourage all our members to check germination on all seed lots as soon as possible. Other spring planting reminders:

- The four seed classes are Breeder, Foundation, Registered, and Certified
- Make sure seed sources have met all requirements needed and save proof of seed source-ask MCIA if you have any questions
- Verify your intended seed fields meet crop history requirements
- Apply for field inspection after planting
- Contact MCIA with any questions or field inspection needs

State Fair Seed Samples

Hello and Happy Spring,

I'm reaching out to remind you to save some Certified seed samples for the Minnesota State Fair. The Certified Seed Show is open to all MCIA members who certify seed. It is easy to do and I can help you get registered or answer any of your questions. We can always use more entries.

As you finish up conditioning or begin to load out seed maybe you could set aside some samples for the State Fair. Just fill a couple of seed sample bags, or a gallon zip lock from any of your certified seed lots. Label them with variety and lot #, set them aside in a good spot and you will have samples ready to go.

Remember you can also enter samples in the general Farm Crops Open class, which could be corn, soybeans, small grains, canola, sunflowers, etc. We are always looking for more entries in this category.

If you want to send the samples off right away, just label them with your name, variety and lot number. Then ship them to MCIA, be sure to note on the box, State Fair samples, Attention Roger Wippler.

The rules and classes are getting updated now. I will share them with you when they are ready.

Let me know if you have questions.

Have a good and safe Spring.

Roger Wippler

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Michael Merriman,
Seed and Biotechnology Supervisor
at the Minnesota
Department of
Agriculture,
presents a Seed
Regulatory Program
Update at the
2026 MCIA Annual
Meeting

