

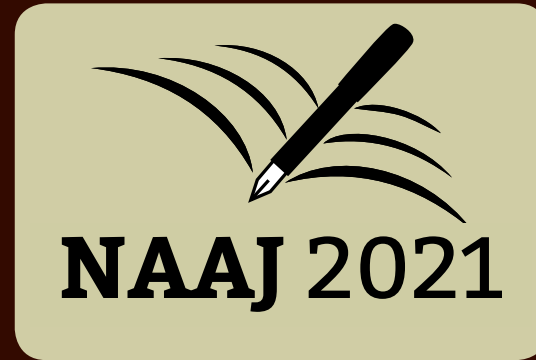


**2021 NAAJ WRITING AWARDS**  
for Agricultural Journalism

April 26, 2021

**285**

**ENTRIES**



**96**

**WRITERS**

North American Agricultural Journalists

# **2021 NAAJ WRITING CONTEST AWARDS**

**FOR STORIES PUBLISHED IN 2020**

**News**

**Spot News**

**Feature**

**Profile**

**Technical**

**Series**

**Column**

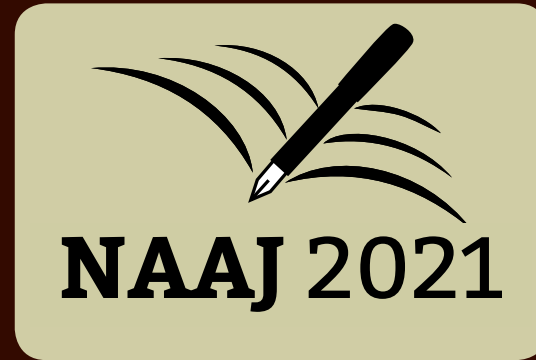
**Editorial**

**Blog**

**Special Projects**

**285**

**ENTRIES**



**96**

**WRITERS**

North American Agricultural Journalists

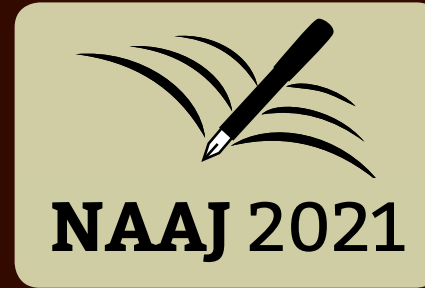
**2021 NAAJ WRITING CONTEST  
AWARDS**

**NOTE:**

All winning stories may be read online

**55**

**ENTRIES**



North American Agricultural Journalists

**NEWS  
AWARDS**

Stories that inform readers  
about a timely, important, interesting  
agricultural issue or event  
in an objective, thorough manner.

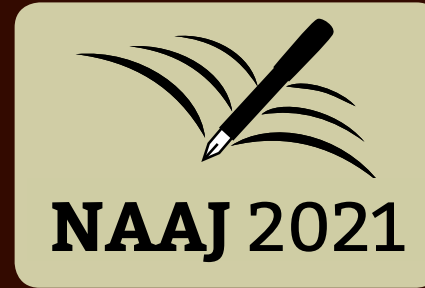
**JUDGE**  
.....

**Catherine Mitchell**

*30 years at Winnipeg Free Press as reporter, assistant city editor,  
editorial writer. Now manager of policy and communications  
at a trade association.*

**55**

**ENTRIES**



**NEWS**

**Judge's Comments**

“

*There were some very strong entries.*

*The winners and honourable mentions were obvious and stood shoulders above the others.*

*Category criteria is broad, and it shows in the spectrum of entries and the division in quality among them.*

**JUDGE**

.....

**Catherine Mitchell**


**30 years at *Winnipeg Free Press* as reporter, assistant city editor, editorial writer. Now manager of policy and communications at a trade association.**



# Wealthy Nations Are Eating Their Way Past the Paris Agreement's Climate Targets

As the U.S. develops new dietary advice, critics blast industry influence and two new reports show most countries breaking their greenhouse gas budgets for food.



By Georgina Gustin   
July 16, 2020

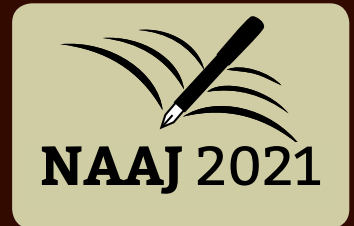


**Georgina Gustin**  
*Inside Climate News*

**H.M. NEWS**

“

*Really interesting illustration of the disparity between wealthy and developing nations. A novel take on the discussion of the carbon footprint of the agriculture and food industries.*



# Seed Treatment Confusion

Planting Blind: Why Some Farmers Don't Know What's on Their Seeds

3/27/2020 | 6:02 AM CDT



By [Emily Unglesbee](#), DTN Staff Reporter

Connect with Emily:

[@Emily\\_Unglesbee](#)



As seed treatment offerings become more common and complex, it has become harder for farmers to know exactly what pesticides are used on their crops. (DTN photo by Pamela Smith)

ROCKVILLE, Md. (DTN) -- With seed treatment use on the rise, farmers and regulators are becoming hard-pressed to keep track of the rising number of pesticide ingredients added to seeds before planting.

As companies bundle more active ingredients together and treat seeds farther upstream from the farm, growers' knowledge of their personal on-farm pesticide inputs is becoming less accurate, a new study found. And they're not alone -- U.S. regulators don't have good data on how many pesticides are used in seed treatments, either.

The result is that many farmers may be using more pesticides than they realized -- and perhaps more than they need -- at a time when profit margins are slim and uncertain.

## WHAT'S ON YOUR SEED?

Most seed treatments consist of a fungicide, insecticide,

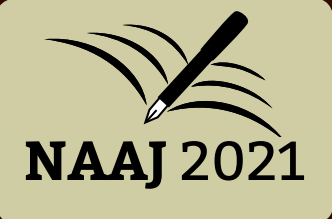


**Emily Unglesbee**  
*DTN/Progressive Farmer*

## H.M. NEWS

“

*Really important and well-told story. The environmental/health issues might have been explored more, but I liked the length. Really wish there was a farmer's voice in this piece — they are paying the price of both the cost of production and potential environmental/health impact.*





**‘Buy it or else’: Inside Monsanto and BASF’s moves to force dicamba on farmers**



**Johnathan Hettinger**  
*Midwest Center  
for Investigative Reporting*

**3 NEWS**

“

*Very important and well-told story,  
valuable investigative journalism.  
The product of hard work and  
dedication — it shows.*



## Nebraska towns pay millions to fight nitrates as water bills go up

By Jessica Fargen Walsh Special to The World-Herald May 1, 2020 Updated May 1, 2020 4



**Jessica Fargen Walsh**  
*The Omaha World-Herald*

Nebraska 3D printers step up to help medical community

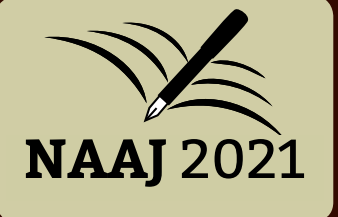


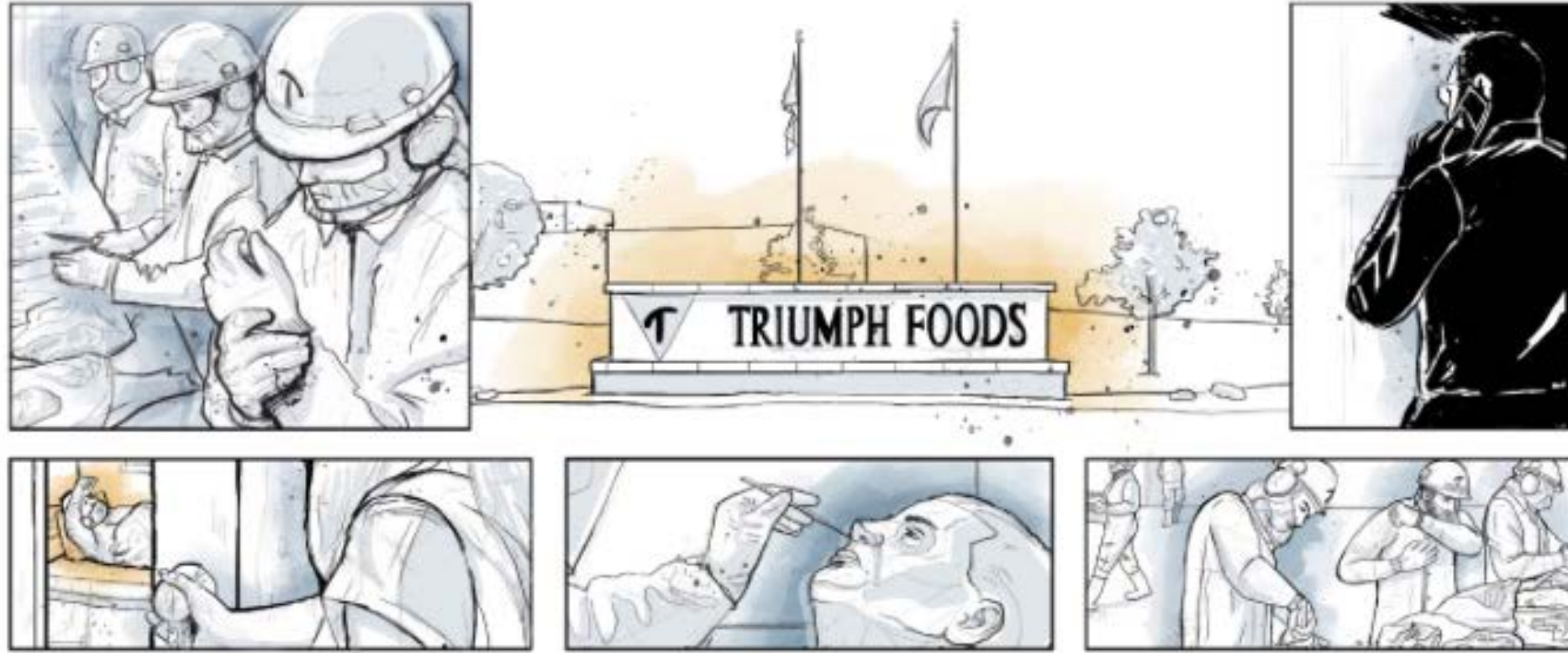
A group of Omaha area inventors are using their 3D printers to help make face shields for health care workers.

## 2 NEWS

“

*Remarkable, important and valuable project. Public service journalism starts and ends with a reporter who locks on to an issue and works it to the bone. Well done.*





**‘They think workers are like dogs.’ How pork plant execs sacrificed safety for profits.**



**Sky Chadde**  
*Midwest Center for  
Investigative Reporting*

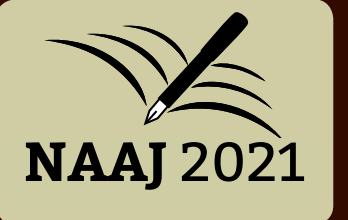


**Rachel Axon, Kevin Crowe  
Kyle Bagenstose | USA Today**

**1 NEWS**

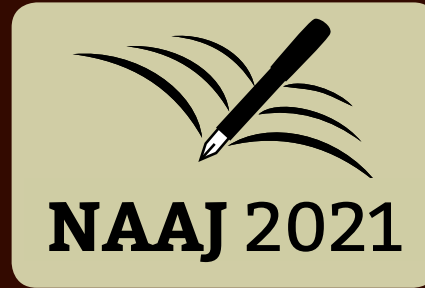
“

*This is why we need journalists.  
This is why we need strong, well-  
resourced and dedicated newsrooms.  
Powerful story, well told.  
Heart-breaking and  
informative. All around  
solid reporting.*



**17**

**ENTRIES**



North American Agricultural Journalists

**SPOT NEWS  
AWARDS**

Stories covering breaking news  
that are time-sensitive and  
written under tight deadline.

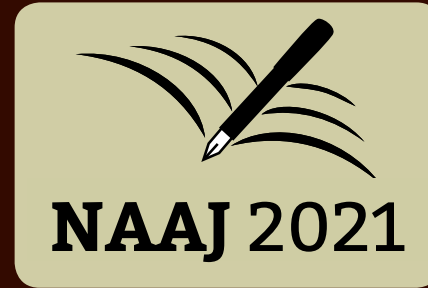
**JUDGE**

**Brenda Curtis-Heiken**

Reporter/producer for USDA radio and TV service, 1979-2008, specializing  
in international trade; reporter on agriculture from all parts of the globe.

**17**

**ENTRIES**



**SPOT NEWS**  
**Judge's Comments**

“

*The stories were from all perspectives  
of international, national, business, farmer and consumer.  
However, I chose what I felt was spot news!  
It took several days to decide the winners.*

**JUDGE**

.....

**Brenda Curtis-Heiken**

Reporter/producer for USDA radio and TV service, 1979-2008, specializing  
in international trade; reporter on agriculture from all parts of the globe.

## Kansans buying meat, dairy in large quantities

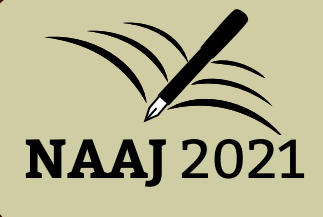


**Alice Mannette**  
*Hutchinson [Kansas] News*

**H.M. SPOT NEWS**

“

*Easy reading for consumers.  
Well written and informative by  
Mannette. Sometimes we need to  
think about talking more to  
consumers about impact of COVID  
on farm to grocery store.*



## US Attorney charges Minn. farmer with cheating elevator

By Mikkel Pates  
Agweek Staff Writer

HERMAN, Minn. — Federal prosecutors have charged a western Minnesota farmer with conspiring with grain elevator employees to get paid for more grain than he was delivering.

Bryan Dallas Crandall, 36, of Herman in Grant County is charged with one count of conspiracy — colluding with co-conspirators at the CHS Inc. elevator from 2013 through 2017.

The government is seeking up to \$355,517.46 in a money judgment and a right to other forfeitures. Crandall is awaiting a July trial in a separate state case where he is accused of cheating a vulnerable adult in a farmland deal in nearby Traverse County.

U.S. District Judge Ann Montgomery in Minneapolis had scheduled Crandall for an initial appearance, arraignment and change of plea hearing for Friday, June 18, but was delayed on Thursday, June 17. Crandall told Agweek he would decline comment on the cases and said the federal hearing had been delayed because of a family emergency.

Prosecutor Robert Lewis, in court documents filed May 27, said Crandall sold grain to a number of grain elevators, including the CHS elevator in Herman,



Mikkel Pates / Agweek

Herman, Minn., in Grant County has a population of about 437. It is home to a CHS Inc. elevator where federal prosecutors say a farmer, Bryan Dallas Crandall, 36, colluded with co-conspirators to pay him for more grain than he delivered.

for unusual circumstances such as a truck not being properly positioned on the scale," Lewis said. "Manual entries, however, were rare and would automatically create a notation in the CHS computer database."

Specifically, from about Aug. 5, 2013, to about April 25, 2017, Crandall "cooperated and conspired with two employees of the CHS elevator in Herman." The conspirators, identified in the report as co-conspirators A and B, "fraudulently inflated the records of his delivery of corn and soybean, by having the co-conspirators make manual entries in the elevator computer and cause Crandall to be paid as if he had delivered

A, to communicate the "amount of fraud proceeds being kicked back" to the co-conspirator "from a recent fraudulent trade."

### Improper land deal

Separately, Crandall is involved in a state case in Traverse County, Minn., where state prosecutors allege two counts of financial exploitation of a vulnerable adult. In that case, slated for trial on July 27 in Wheaton, Minn., the state says Crandall purchased farmland on a contract-for-deed and made three modifications.

The land seller, identified as "AJM," in 2010 took over management of the family's affairs after her husband's

an ATV accident, and remains paralyzed from the waist down, putting her in hospital or assisted living facility ever since. She passed cognitive tests, but a judge said she met the definition of "vulnerable" due to her infirmity and need for assistance, during two subsequent modifications.

Regardless of initial terms, the state says it was two final modifications that were illegal.

► On Nov. 20, 2014, Crandall's attorney drafted another contract modification, signed by AJM at an assisted living facility where she was recovering from a surgery the day before. This modification lowered the purchase price by 22% to \$867,380. It added a provision that if AJM died during the (30-year) contract, Crandall

would pay "\$250,000 or the remaining balance whichever was lower." AJM was "paralyzed and morbidly obese" and signed the documents while "heavily medicated." She signed the documents "without receiving any considerations" and with unexplained rationale.

► On April 23, 2015, AJM signed a deed granting fee title to the land — effectively paying a single lump sum of \$350,000 for land with a tax assessed value of \$1.5 million.

Both transactions resulted in AJM's four children not receiving any land. Six weeks later, on Aug. 12, 2015, a judge granted conservatorship over AJM because she was "not paying her medical expenses and had made several questionable business decisions."



**Mikkel Pates**  
Agweek

## 3 SPOT NEWS

“

*Loved this story. It tells about a bad dude that not only cheats at the grain elevator but takes advantage of the infirmed elderly . I could not stop reading every word written. Kudos to Mikkel Pates.*



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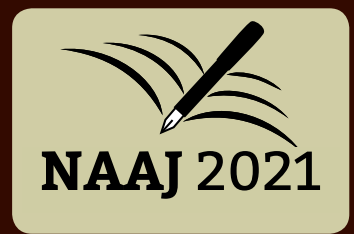
**FEATURING:**





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# BADER FARMS WINS \$265 MILLION JUDGMENT IN DICAMBA LAWSUIT AGAINST BAYER, BASF

**JURY AWARDS \$15 MILLION TO BADER FARMS FOR DICAMBA DAMAGES AND \$250 MILLION IN PUNITIVE DAMAGES.**

By [Gil Gullickson](#)  
2/14/2020

A federal jury in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, has ruled in favor of Bader Farms, a Campbell, Missouri, peach farm, in its dicamba lawsuit against Bayer and BASF. The jury awarded Bader Farms \$265 million in damages.

Of that amount, \$15 million is in the form of compensatory damages for what the jury ruled was the actual amount of damage caused to the peach trees grown by Bader Farms. The \$250 million remainder was in



**Gil Gullickson**  
*Successful Farmer*

## 2 SPOT NEWS

“

*Gullickson clearly shows the impact by the courts on a highly controversial herbicide that helps some crops but may kill others.*

# Coronavirus Hits Packing Plants

Two Iowa Plants Suspend Operations as Packing Industry Sees More Positive COVID-19 Cases

4/6/2020 | 5:02 PM CDT



By **Chris Clayton**, DTN Ag Policy Editor

Connect with Chris:

[@ChrisClaytonDTN](#)



A USDA inspector examines pork carcasses. More meatpacking plants are starting to see challenges tied to the COVID-19 pandemic. At least two Iowa

OMAHA (DTN) -- Coronavirus cases are increasingly affecting the meatpacking industry as both a beef and pork plant in Iowa were closed this week because of positive cases.

Tyson Foods announced a pork processing plant is suspending operations at an eastern Iowa plant after 24 positive cases were tied to its workforce. National Beef also announced it was moving up a major cleaning process at the Iowa Premium Beef plant in Tama, Iowa, after a worker tested positive.

The meatpacking industry is deemed as essential by the federal government as part of the need to keep food processing going, but that also places staff and workers in constant close quarters that go against the social-distancing standards now in place around the country.



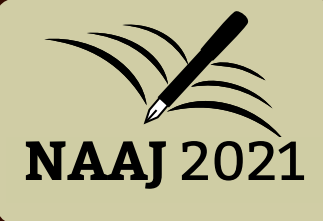
**Chris Clayton**

*DTN/Progressive Farmer*

## 1 SPOT NEWS

“

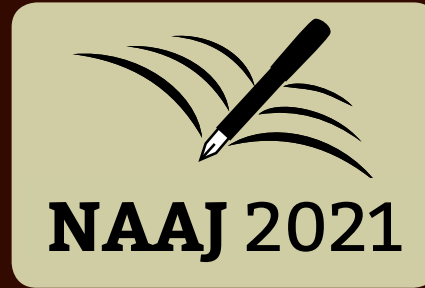
*Clayton saw the COVID impact on the meat packing industry and reported it. It was clearly written that this was a life or death situation for front line workers and the packing industry itself.*





**56**

**ENTRIES**



North American Agricultural Journalists

**FEATURE  
AWARDS**

Stories taking a broader and more human look  
at an important or interesting  
agricultural issue, event or experience.  
May be longer and more in-depth than a news story.

**JUDGE**  
.....

**Annemarie Pedersen**

20-year veteran of agriculture public relations  
and communications. Now owns a consulting firm  
working with not-for-profits, livestock sector  
and crop protection companies.

# Northwest mint farmers endure deadly fungi and foreign competition

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN Capital Press Mar 26, 2020



Oregon mint grower John Reerslev stands in his distillery beside a boiler, built in 1944, which he still uses.

Sierra Dawn McClain/Capital Press

[Buy Now](#)

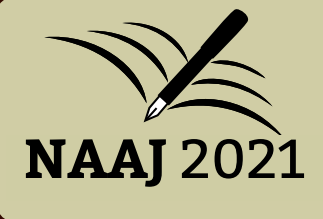


**Sierra Dawn McClaine**  
*Capital Press*

## H.M. FEATURE

“

*Very well done —  
A mix of personal story and industry  
experts, market facts and global  
competition. Also very well written.*



# Old grain elevator ready to rock

Sask. band turns prairie skyscraper into a rehearsal space and venue where local musicians can hold private concerts

BY WILLIAM DEKAY  
SASKATOON NEWSROOM

ASQUITH, Sask. — Nearly a century of grain dust and chaff has been loosened by the thumping rhythm of an electric bass guitar inside Asquith's last standing grain elevator.

Not since thousands of trucks and millions of tons of grain passed over its weigh scales has the old wooden sentinel resonated with such purpose.

Nicknamed The Vator, it has become a second home of sorts for the rock band Fusarium.

For Mike Vidal, 26, Owen Gerrard, 26, Brett Arnelien, 26, and Darian Dutchak, 24, it's a place to jam and a place to grow as musicians. The four friends have been playing together since high school.

"The first time we brought our big setup in with the giant bass amp that looks like a fridge, (the dust) started snowing down and it was even hard to breathe," said Vidal, who plays guitar and vocals.

Added Dutchak, the band's drummer: "It was just like a powder coming down on me. But it's gotten better because every time we have the big setups, it rattles more and more and less falls each time."

Vidal's father, Joe, chief executive officer of Bioriginal, the company that owns the elevator, created the opportunity for the young rockers to have a long-term space in which to make some noise.

The Saskatoon-based company supplies nutritional ingredients to the food and nutraceutical industries.

Bioriginal bought the elevator in 2001 from Viterra to store flax seed and borage but it's been sitting empty as a result of new food regulations imposed about eight years ago.



A Canadian National Railway train rumbles by Fusarium band members Owen Gerrard, left, Mike Vidal, Brett Arnelien and Darian Dutchak. The sights and sounds around the Asquith, Sask., grain elevator provide band members with inspiration for their music, song writing and recordings. | WILLIAM DEKAY PHOTOS

"There's some ambiance that comes from the sound reflecting off the wood and filling up this whole room, like a cathedral sort of sound. It almost acts like a giant speaker. And when you're in there listening to these bands with the big setups, it fills up this whole space and the sound is reflecting off all the wood. It's not a sterile studio where everything's sound treated and dampened to absorb all the sound. It reflects all the



Vator Sessions, a series of private concerts where local bands performed while being filmed and recorded for YouTube. Microphones and cameras were also brought outside to incorporate the audio and visual of trains passing by.

"It's a way to bring that to the live music scene that people might not otherwise get this year. People can now see and hear these bands playing on YouTube in a grain elevator



**William DeKay**  
*The Western Producer*

## H.M. FEATURE

“

*Unique story.  
Well-written,  
and keeps the reader  
interested throughout.*



## Labelle looks back on pulse sector career

**LEGACY** | A serendipitous summer job redirected his career path



Francois Labelle, seen here with his miniature donkeys, says the grain industry was the source of a long and interesting career for him. PHOTO: ALLAN DAWSON



**Allan Dawson**  
*Manitoba Co-operator*

## H.M. FEATURE

“

*Interesting look back at a long, successful career with nice details and anecdotes — entertaining and kept me interested throughout.*

**By Allan Dawson**  
CO-OPERATOR STAFF/NEAR CARMAN

**F**rancois Labelle thought he was going to be a horticulturist when he started a degree in agriculture in 1974, but his day job for the last 42 years has been in the grain business — mostly pulses crops.

As a student, Labelle, who retired as executive di-

rector, continued on his own time on his 60-acre farm, with U-pick strawberries, raspberries and saskatoons.

again, but a prof at the university (of Manitoba), Anna Storgaard, told me I should do something different. ‘I think I’ve got a job for you,’ she said.”

It was with the renowned U of M weed scientist, Ian Morrison who passed away in 2006.

“That changed my career path,” Labelle says.

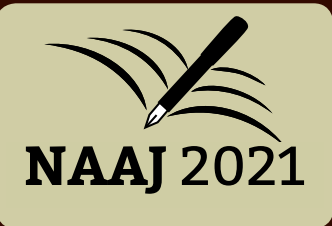
In his fourth and final year Labelle took a broader array of courses.

“Because of that summer research and the knowl-

continued on his own time on his 60-acre farm, with U-pick strawberries, raspberries and saskatoons.

Cargill, one of the world’s largest multinational grain companies, was a great place to learn.

“I did everything,” Labelle says. “I worked in the elevator the first year and in farm supplies... I spent some time cleaning grain... I got a broad look at what it was all about.”



# POLITICO

## USDA let millions of pounds of food rot while food-bank demand soared

State officials and growers say Trump's Agriculture Department has been woefully slow to respond to farm crisis caused by coronavirus.



A tractor pushes cabbage into the ground shown April 23 near Belle Glade, Fla. | M. Scott Mahaskey/POLITICO

By HELENA BOTTEMILLER EVICH  
04/26/2020 07:00 AM EDT

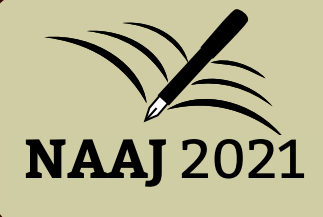


**Helena Bottemiller Evich**  
*Politico*

## H.M. FEATURE

“

*A comprehensive look at the issues with the food chain, red tape, and food shortages for consumers — well done.*



**The  
Guardian**

## 'We wanted to work the land with our kids': the Black US farmers reclaiming the soil

A fledgling movement towards Black-owned farms seeks to address the the lack of land ownership and fresh food in many communities of color

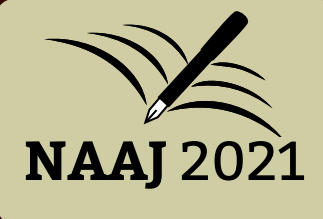


**Donnell Alexander**  
*The Guardian US  
and Economic Hardship  
Reporting Project*

**H.M. FEATURE**

“

*This was a well-told story that covered a lot of ground but kept it engaging and relevant to food security today. Interesting topic and perspective. Well written.*



# TIME TO MAKE HAY

*This Kansas farmer bales up a niche of his own.*



**Pamela Smith**  
*DTN/Progressive Farmer*

## 3 FEATURE

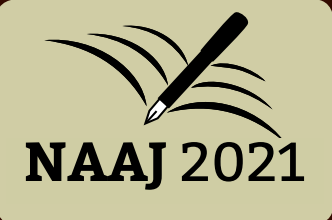
“

*Well written, keeps the reader interested throughout. Enjoyed the story and the farmer profile really shone through. Interesting and informative.*



“I wanted a cropping enterprise that I could put my own stamp on and something that would diversify the farm beyond wheat, soybean, corn and milo,” he says. “My experience in sales meant I wasn’t overly sensitive to hearing the word no, and that’s important in the custom hay business.”

His father, Kirby, grew up putting up small square bales and had moved to selling large rounds, mostly to the feedlots for grinding. “Dad had done a good job of maintaining and building that market, and we still do some round bales. But, by adding large square bales, I’ve





**FOOD & ENVIRONMENT  
REPORTING NETWORK**



## **At the nation's largest student farm organization, a reckoning on race**

**A racist incident involving a leader of the 700,000-member FFA organization spurred a backlash and revealed a long history of inequity**

By Leah Douglas, September 8, 2020



**Leah Douglas**  
*Food & Environment  
Reporting Network*

**2 FEATURE**

“

*Very interesting and timely topic, well-written with a lot of research and background information — but not dry and kept my interest throughout.*





COVID DIVIDE

Published — September 28, 2020

# TRUMP ATTACKS THEM. COVID-19 THREATENS THEM. BUT IMMIGRANTS KEEP THE U.S. FED.

↑ Workers harvest beans in May in Miami-Dade County, Florida. Public Integrity found that an estimated 69% of the county's front-line farm and food-production workers there are non-U.S. citizens, some of whom are undocumented. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky)

Public Integrity analysis found 43% of nearly 2 million front-line farm and processing workers nationwide are immigrants — mostly Latino and many noncitizens.



**Susan Ferriss**  
Senior Reporter



**Joe Yerardi**  
Data Reporter



**Susan Ferriss**

**Joe Yerardi**

*Center for Public Integrity*

## 1. FEATURE

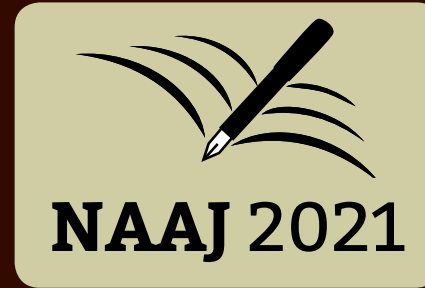
“

*This was an excellent article and combined the story of a worker who died and his family and then broadened the scope to see a larger pattern across the country and tied it to legislative decisions made by state and federal governments. Very well researched and written.*



**26**

**ENTRIES**



North American Agricultural Journalists

**ONGOING COVERAGE or SERIES  
AWARDS**

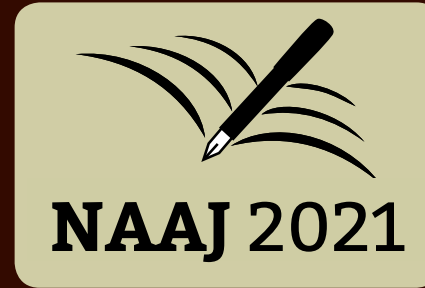
Entries contain three or more stories published on more than one day, focused on an agricultural issue, trend or event. Should objectively explore the subject in great depth from various points of view.

**JUDGE**

**Kim Guttormson**

Former newspaper reporter on the Canadian prairies. Communications specialist, including media relations and issues management.

**26**



**ENTRIES**

**ONGOING COVERAGE or SERIES**  
**Judge's Comments**

“

*This year, the COVID-19 pandemic was an obvious platform on which to base a series of stories. As with all good journalists, this year's winners worked to elevate and expand coverage on a number of issues important to their communities, including the pandemic, beyond a surface take*

JUDGE

.....

**Kim Guttormson**

Former newspaper reporter on the Canadian prairies. Communications specialist, including media relations and issues management.

# Coverage of dicamba EPA case and its impact

## Dicamba Registrations Vacated

The Ninth Circuit Vacates Three Dicamba Registrations

6/4/2020 | 11:26 AM CDT



By Emily Unglesbee, DTN Staff Reporter

Connect with Emily:

@Emily\_Unglesbee



The use of dicamba on Xtend crops in 2020 is suddenly in legal jeopardy, after the Ninth Circuit issued a ruling vacating the registration of three dicamba herbicides, effective immediately. (DTN photo by Pamela Smith)

This article was originally posted at 8:08 p.m. CDT on Wednesday, June 3. It was last updated at 11:26 a.m. CDT on Thursday, June 4.

\*\*

ROCKVILLE, Md. (DTN) -- The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit issued a decision Wednesday vacating the registrations of three dicamba herbicides, XtendiMax (Bayer), Engenia (BASF) and FeXapan (Corteva). The ruling does not appear to include Syngenta's Tavium dicamba herbicide.

The ruling has enormous implications for farmers this summer, given that roughly 60 million acres of dicamba-tolerant cotton and soybeans were slated for 2020 planting, with the expectation that farmers could use dicamba over the top for weed control.

Much legal wrangling likely remains ahead, but the consequences for weed control this summer could be

serious if the ruling stands, said University of Illinois weed scientist Aaron Hager.

"Given that there are many thousands, if not millions, of Xtend acres that have not been treated yet, if this label is fully vacated right now and there is no appeal and stay from the courts, farmers will have to scramble to come up with alternative solutions," he said.

When asked what this ruling means for legal use of dicamba in 2020, an EPA spokesperson could only tell DTN by email that "EPA is currently reviewing the court decision and will move promptly to address the Court's directive."

At least one dicamba registrant, Bayer, has vowed to fight the ruling and try to mute its effect on farmers this growing season.

"We strongly disagree with the ruling and are assessing our options," a company statement emailed to DTN said. "If the ruling stands, we will work quickly to minimize any impact on our customers this season. Our top priority is making sure our customers have the support they need to have a successful season."



**Emily Unglesbee**  
DTN/Progressive Farmer

## H.M. ONGOING/SERIES

“

*Unglesbee took a court decision and expanded coverage to outline the uncertainty for farmers and staying on top of evolving decisions and implications for multiple jurisdictions.*

### Recommended for You

EPA Dicamba Cancellation  
EPA Issues Cancellation  
Orders for Three  
Dicamba Herbicides



Dicamba Use to Continue  
Ninth Circuit Denies  
Petition to Halt Dicamba  
Use



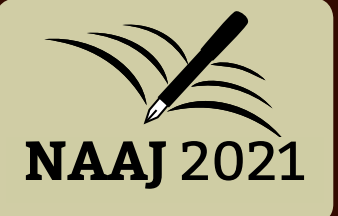
Dicamba Use Challenged  
Plaintiffs Ask Federal  
Court to Halt Dicamba  
Spraying, Hold EPA in  
Contempt



EPA Defends Dicamba Use  
EPA Defends Its Order  
Allowing Continued  
Dicamba Use



Dicamba Cutoffs Loom  
Keep Dicamba Cutoff  
Dates in Mind When  
Replanting Soybeans



Coverage of Southern Oregon wildfire aftermath



# RISING FROM RUBBLE

In the aftermath of fires, Southern Oregon faces a human, and economic, tragedy

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN Capital Press

Dec 31, 2020 Updated Dec 31, 2020

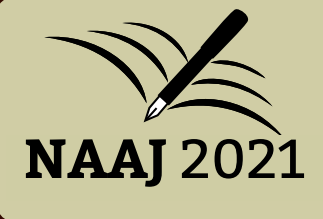


**Sierra Dawn McClain**  
*Capital Press*

**H.M. ONGOING/SERIES**

“

*McClain's reporting on the aftermath of the regional wildfires covered it from both personal and agriculture perspectives, giving readers a unique perspective.*



# Coverage of Farmers to Families Food Box Program

**“Someone’s profiting off this”:** New public records reveal Covid-19 hunger relief contractors get handsome payouts for mediocre food boxes

by Jessica Fu + H. Claire Brown

**The  
Counter**



**Jessica Fu**

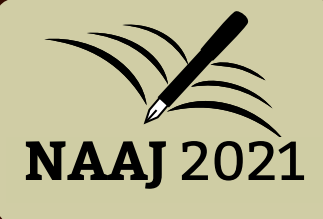
**H. Claire Brown**

*The Counter*

**3 ONGOING/SERIES**

“

*This series provides an in-depth look at the shortcomings and political implications of the federal food box program and took a closer look at who was actually helped and who was harmed.*



## Coverage of dicamba EPA court case



**MidWest Center**  
for INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

**In 2020, ag community has ‘to prove to society’ it can safely spray dicamba**

By Johnathan Hettinger/Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting March 11, 2020

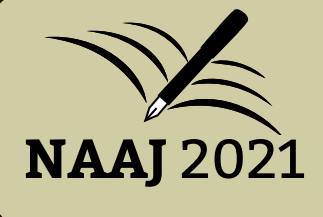


**Johnathan Hettinger**  
*Midwest Center  
for Investigative Reporting*

**2 ONGOING/SERIES**

“

*Hettinger went beyond the headline of the dicamba-EPA court case and illustrated the breadth of ongoing impacts of resistant weeds to neighbours and communities and the breadth of complaints registered by the EPA, providing greater context around the issue.*



Coverage of COVID-19 impacts on South Dakota ag industry



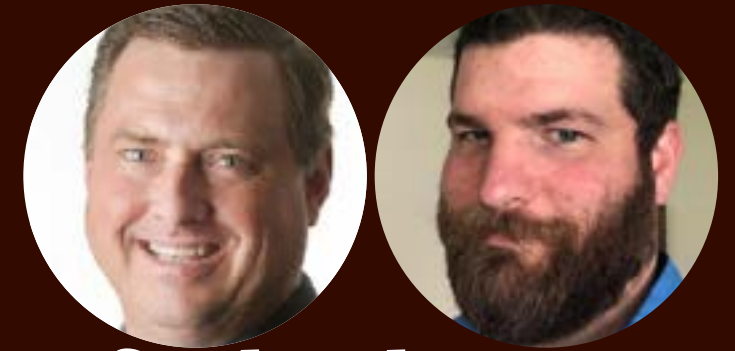
# SPECIAL REPORT: Regulatory gaps and missed opportunities allowed COVID-19 to spread freely in U.S. meatpacking plants

By: Bart Pfankuch and Nick Lowrey | April 29, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has overwhelmed the U.S. meatpacking industry, but public health experts say the risks posed to workers and the U.S. food supply chain by airborne viral infections were readily apparent and could have been addressed years ago.

Ongoing virus outbreaks could have been avoided, and future illnesses eliminated, if major meatpacking plants had implemented disease-control measures recommended by the U.S. Centers For Disease Control and Prevention long before COVID-19 was first identified. The plants only began implementing such measures after workers started to get sick and die from the disease.

Now, as workers at shuttered plants are likely to return to work soon under a presidential order, federal regulators continue to suggest rather than require companies to implement basic safety measures, such as separating workers by six feet or more, promoting hand washing,

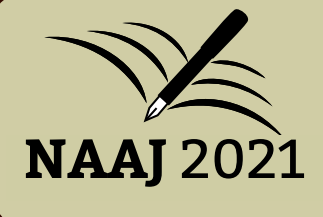


**Bart Pfankuch**  
**Nick Lowrey**  
*South Dakota News Watch*

**1 ONGOING/SERIES**

“

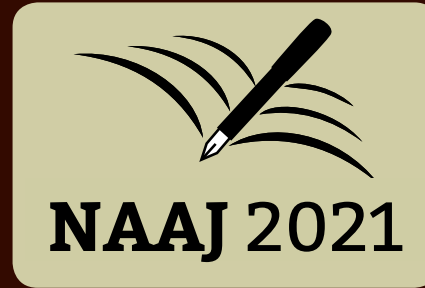
*Pfankuch and Lowrey took a story everyone was covering, the COVID-19 pandemic, and went deeper, demonstrating its impact across wide ranging sectors and also within communities. They focused on both people and the business perspective. The stories explore multiple angle to each issue.*





**32**

**ENTRIES**



North American Agricultural Journalists

**COLUMN  
AWARDS**

Work that allows the writer to express personal observations, humor or feelings on a topic in a conversation with readers.

**JUDGE**  
.....

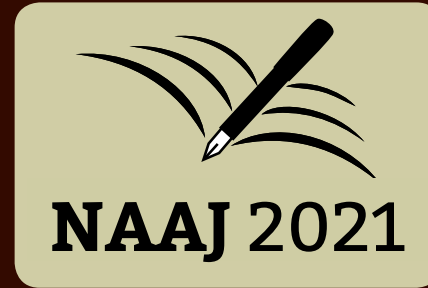
**John Vogel**

Retired editor, *American Agriculturist/Farm Progress*.

NAAJ president, 2013

**32**

**ENTRIES**



**COLUMN**  
**Judge's Comments**

“

*This judge was glad he wasn't trying to compete. Many excellent columns among the 32 submissions from exceptional ag journalists made it an extremely tough task. Top-placers injected personal insight and humor into their columns without overwhelming biases.*

**JUDGE**

.....

**John Vogel**

*Retired editor, American Agriculturist/Farm Progress.*

*NAAJ president, 2013*

## Report reveals rapid shift in food business



By: [Laura Rance](#)

Posted: 3:00 AM CST Saturday, Dec. 12, 2020

### OPINION

Jambalaya will be one of the more pleasant memories I'll associate with 2020.

Specifically, how I learned to make a spicy pasta version that closely replicates a dish we often ordered when we joined friends for Pasta Tuesdays at a local restaurant. That is, before COVID-19 changed our social life.

Hopefully, 2021 will mark a return to dining out once in a while. Although the home-cooked dish is a perfectly edible stand-in, I like my jambalaya best when it's cooked by someone else and served with a heaping dose of camaraderie.

Neither of those options was prudent this year and so, like many Canadians, I spent more time learning new culinary skills, tending a garden and stocking my pantry and freezers with local food.



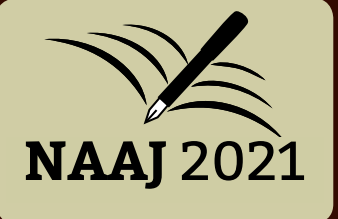
**Laura Rance**

*Winnipeg Free Press*

## H.M. COLUMN

“

*Perceptive in-depth look at how Covid-impacted Canadian food consumers and spurred food chain innovations. But the writer failed to reveal her Jambalaya recipe which she tantalized readers with to open the article.*



# Canadian agriculture deserves a true export policy

By **Ed White**

Reading Time: 3 minutes

Published: July 23, 2020  
Markets



It's high time Canada embraces an export competitiveness policy for agriculture.

In fact, in 2017 the Canadian government embraced the goal of increasing agrifood exports by almost 50 percent by 2025, to \$75 billion.

That's good because it provides farmers, the food industry and everybody involved in agriculture with the confidence that it is an officially supported sector of the economy.

But it's not enough and that goal has been getting undermined by apparently unthinking acts of federal and provincial governments operating without a plan.

For example, the federal government has provided significant and vocal support for the plant protein industry, with investment from the protein supercluster, Export Development Canada and other federal money supporting efforts to get Canada on top of the new and promising industry.

Yet it is simultaneously imposing profitability-squeezing costs like the carbon tax on some elements of agriculture, threatening the viability of canola by proposing the banning of some pesticides, and adding



**Ed White**  
*The Western Producer*

**3 COLUMN**

“

*This writer delivered an edgy “gotta fix it” analysis of Canada’s export policy. The column dealt into strengths and weaknesses of the system decision-making, plus glimpsed into how to fix it.*



# Editors' Notebook

The Answer, My Friend ...

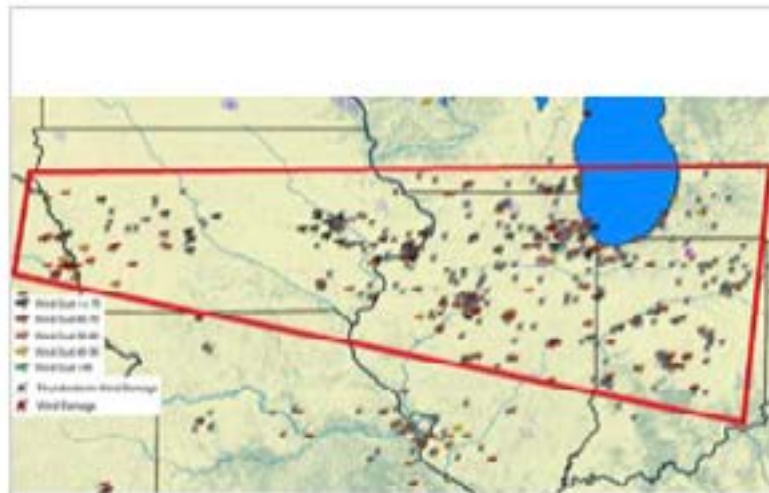
8/13/2020 | 11:42 AM CDT



By **Greg D Horstmeier**, DTN Editor-in-Chief

Connect with Greg:

@greghorstmeier



High winds affected a widening swath of farm country, according to this image created from DTN wind data. (DTN graphic)

As the DTN/Progressive Farmer Digital Yield Tour, powered by Gro Intelligence, expands each year, we're increasingly wowed by the power of modern yield modeling systems.

That power, and the partnership between DTN and Gro, was on full display early this week as we began to assess the path of the infamous derecho that struck corn country from Iowa to Ohio. That this horrible weather event hit right in the middle of our Digital Yield Tour gave us a lot to react to: First, we counted our blessings that this is a digital/virtual "tour" and we didn't have human yield scouts checking fields in the derecho's path; second, we were uniquely poised to focus on what this windstorm may mean to crop production at a very timely period.

DTN weather experts Nick Lesser and John Baranick jumped in within hours and created a wind path map, focusing on the areas of damaging winds shown by DTN weather data. That information was handed off to the Gro team of Kelly Goughary, Jacques Paye and Steve Bernardi,



**Greg Horstmeier**  
*DTN/Progressive Farm*

## 2 COLUMN

“

*This column was a unique and timely insider's detailed report of how state-of-tech tools assessed the derecho wind damage that swept across Iowa, Illinois and Indiana. It showed the technology potential previously not possible.*



## Editors' Notebook

Heartache and Hope

4/30/2020 | 5:12 PM CDT

By Pam Smith



This photo from Eric Briceno's Facebook page was shouting out where he wanted to go in life. DTN's Pamela Smith shares how she sure is going to miss this kid.

Editor's Note: The positive side of social distancing is spending time with those closest to us. But casual acquaintances can have a huge influence on us as well, and we often fail to say just how important they have become. Crops Technology Editor Pamela Smith shares a lesson in not letting the opportunity to say "thank you" slip away. (Greg Horstmeier)

\*\*

I didn't know his last name. I had a hard time remembering his given. He was the grandkid of some people who moved in down the road. The one with the big smile. The one who loved my dog. The one who made me smile.

He was the one who would always say at every greeting: "Hello, how are you? Everything OK? How's your husband? Are you traveling? Tell me what's new?" It came in such a gush of energy that we always went firing past all the need for names and niceties.

Past tense.

Was.

Eric Briceno, 20, died April 29, 2020, of brain injuries as a result of an accident. I was told he fell from the end gate of a truck and hit his head. That kid was always on the run -- fueled by enthusiasm.



**Pamela Smith**  
*DTN/Progressive Farmer*

# 1 COLUMN

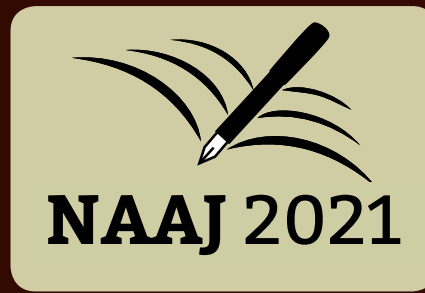
“

*This column stood apart from the competition. The writer “personalized” a tragedy with word imagery to make it a great read. Her reflections and affirmations inspired readers needing heart-warming rejuvenation.*



**15**

**ENTRIES**



North American Agricultural Journalists

**EDITORIAL  
AWARDS**

Work that requires the writer to build arguments on fact and logic to address a certain issue. Should state a position and convince the reader of the need for action.

**JUDGE**  
.....

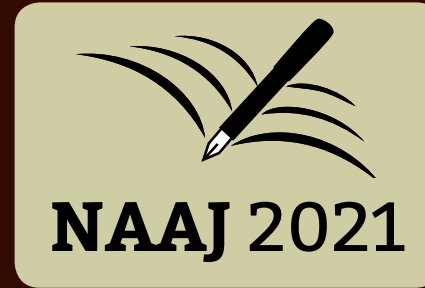
**David Hendee**

Retired reporter and editor, *Omaha World-Herald*.

NAAJ president, 2002

**15**

**ENTRIES**



**EDITORIAL**  
**Judge's Comments**

“

*The COVID-19 pandemic's impact in all facets of North American life provided countless, fresh opportunities for editorial writers. Although there were only 15 entries, thinning them wasn't easy. It often came down to which best fit the criteria to address an issue and provide a convincing call for action. Some were more analysis or column than editorial. The entries were variously informative, entertaining and thought-provoking.*

**JUDGE**

.....

**David Hendee**

Retired reporter and editor, *Omaha World-Herald*.  
NAAJ president, 2002.



## Value role of every link in food supply chain



By: [Laura Rance](#)

Posted: 4:00 AM CDT Saturday, Jun. 6, 2020

### OPINION

Amidst all the disruption, the suffering and the fear, the one good thing you could say about our ongoing experience with COVID-19 is that it has peeled back the layers of our society to expose the raw — and sometimes unpleasant — truths about what we truly value.

When childcare workers can earn more income through the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) than they do at their jobs, we have a problem. When our elders are housed in facilities that cannot adequately provide for their care, we have a problem.

When the people who produce our food can't find enough workers to help them get that job done, we have a problem.

Each of these issues is layered in complexities, but at their core, it comes



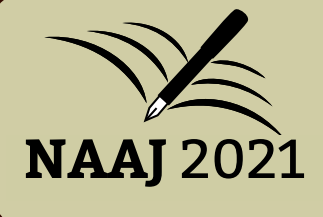
**Laura Rance**

*Winnipeg Free Press*

**H.M. EDITORIAL**

“

*Good, clear commentary on the uncomfortable truth the pandemic exposed regarding the unmet supply and demand between Canadian agriculture and student labor.*



## Farmer-owned AAFC?

**I**n 2019 Canadian farmers grossed almost \$37 billion from crop sales. Each started with a seed.

That's why getting farmers to pay more for plant breeding – often referred to as "value creation" – is important. It's also contentious.

Nobody wants to pay more and a lot of farmers worry royalties will enrich seed companies more than farmers.

Around \$180 million a year – \$100 million from the private sector and \$80 million from governments and farmers – is invested in Canadian crop variety development annually, according to the 2018 JRG Consulting Group study. It says Canadian certified annual seed sales are around \$2.6 billion. That's seven per cent of variety development funding.

By some estimates, Canada needs to double cereal- and pulse-breeding spending to stay competitive with other major grain exporters.

The seed trade contends that its Variety Use Agreement, which charges the farmer a fee to plant saved seed, and which is being tested as a pilot project, will benefit both private and public breeders, and ultimately farmers through better varieties.

Most farmers acknowledge they benefit from new crop varieties. Some even concede they should contribute more, but remain wary.

Farmers are almost always price-takers on the inputs they buy and crops they sell, and seed is a major input. For canola seed, which all comes from private firms, it represents almost 25 per cent of total estimated 2020 operating costs, according to Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development (MARD).

By comparison, wheat seed – mainly developed by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) with public and farmer money – represents about 11 per cent of operating costs.

MARD estimates farmers will earn a 5.4 per cent return on canola and 4.7 per cent return on wheat this year.

While canola is usually more profitable than wheat, farmers commonly complain canola seed is too expensive.

Farmers also have long memories.

"I cannot stress enough that amendments to the plant breeders' rights act allows for farmers to retain the right to save, clean, and store seed for their own operations," they were told in February 2015 by Gerry Ritz, the federal minister of agriculture at the time. "There seems to be some confusion around that."

Five years later the seed industry wants a royalty on farm-saved seed.

Farmers would still be allowed to save seed from varieties not covered by UPOV '91, but for how long? Seed officials say unprotected varieties will be available so long as farmers buy them, but the record shows some seed firms have discontinued varieties, arguing the replacements are better.

Some varieties get deregistered. Farmers can still grow them but buyers are obliged to apply the lowest grade for the intended class.

In 2012, Canadian farmers were permitted to start saving seed from Roundup Ready 1 soybeans after the patent expired, but finding them wasn't easy. One retailer confided he wouldn't sell them because he'd be cutting his own throat.

Monsanto also said its new soybeans were so much better that farmers



**Allan Dawson**  
*Manitoba Co-operator*

## H.M. EDITORIAL

“

*Although more technical than the four other award-winning entries ... the editorial addresses a specific problem and provides a specific solution. It also has a great lede: 'In 2019 Canadian farmers grossed almost \$37 billion from crop sales. Each started with a seed.'*



# Opinion EDITORIALS

## Lack of child care makes the rural house of cards wobbly



Opinion  
Jennifer M.  
Latzke

It's something that not many people acknowledge out loud, but rural economies are houses of cards built on agriculture and natural resources, manufacturing and small Main Street businesses.

Rural economic development types in sparsely populated counties know their communities are one crisis away from falling apart. A natural disaster, a market downturn or a trade imbalance, or a black swan event like COVID-19 and it doesn't take an expert to see the house of cards start to get a little wobbly. That's why communities have long figured out that creating opportunities for better standards of living for families in their small towns is actually good for agriculture and businesses as well. Ensuring that

there is available, quality child care for working families is now at or near the top of the list.

But still, there are those in community leadership positions who scoff that this is a threat to the business economy. They say this is a private family issue and local and state governments and businessmen shouldn't intrude.

Frankly, they're wrong.

In researching this week's cover story, I spoke with dozens of mothers, rural economic development folks and others who are raising the alarm over rural child care. Time and space on the page didn't allow me to put them all in, but the experiences they shared deserve a voice.

For various reasons, some parents didn't want to go on the record with their stories. The competition for child care openings in rural areas is so fierce, among the licensed and unlicensed providers alike, they were concerned that they'd lose their children's placements by speaking on the record.

I heard from young professionals—the very ones we actively recruit to our rural commu-

nities to work in our hospitals, schools and businesses. But with crushing student loan debt, some of these two-income families are having to choose between having another child and that childcare price tag, and being able to pay their current bills. Let alone being able to save for their children's college funds and their own retirements. One mother told me her child care bill was about as much as a house payment for her and her husband.

With many blue-collar families, and single parent families, the price of child care can overwhelm a family budget. As so many in the field explained, shift work jobs don't have a lot of leeway for absences and tardiness because the drop off line at daycare was running slow. These families routinely use their vacation and sick leave to take care of children if their providers have to close. And during COVID-19, many of these providers had to close for quarantining, leaving these families in a sudden lurch.

Time and again, I heard from mothers who said they had to choose between a rock and a hard

place. Do I go back to work and leave my child with this unlicensed provider so we can continue to pay our bills? Do I risk leaving my child in this licensed facility, with its precious opening that we finally got after two years on a waiting list, even though my gut tells me my child is not thriving there? Is my child forgoing precious enrichment at the critical stages of their development because our only option doesn't offer it?

Do we have children at all?

In the last instance, I heard from one young married couple that has chosen to not have children due to cost and distance to the nearest available facility. Others in the same position told me that the decision to have children or not have children because of the price of child care has strained their marriages to the point of divorce.

The issue is more complex than this meager space allows me to fully explore. We still haven't touched on the families who have children with special needs and their limited options. We haven't mentioned the plight of

our homeless and working poor families. Or how many licensed providers are quickly approaching retirement age with no replacements in sight. Or how financial and regulatory hurdles prevent some child development professionals from relocating and starting businesses in rural counties.

And while some are finding creative solutions, the progress is slow and it's filled with pitfalls. Some are working with large businesses in their communities to share the cost of childcare with their employees or to subsidize childcare facilities. There's been a push in some counties to build community childcare centers to fill the gaps for families. There are even recruitment initiatives to bring qualified childcare professionals to rural counties.

It's still not enough to address the crisis. To be quite blunt, it's past time to get this rural economic house of cards in order.

Our neighbors are counting on us.

*Jennifer M. Latzke can be reached at 620-227-1807 or jlatzke@hpj.com.*



**Jennifer Latzke**  
*High Plains Journal*

# 3 EDITORIAL

“

*Vividly makes a strong case for promoting child care in rural America, a service for which the need has long been evident but exacerbated by the pandemic.*

# An Urban's Rural View

An Industrial Policy Lincoln Would Like

7/20/2020 | 2:25 PM CDT



By **Urban C. Lehner**, Editor Emeritus

Connect with Urban:

@urbanize



In 2012, the United States marked the 150th anniversary of the Homestead Act of 1862 by temporarily loaning for public display the original document signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln. The rare complete document was shown at

In the days before Donald Trump, when Republicans stood for laissez faire economics and small government, "Industrial policy" -- specifically, whether the United States should have an industrial policy -- was a controversial question.

Today, both presidential candidates believe in industrial policy. Both want to use the power of government to try to restore America's supremacy in manufacturing. Joe Biden's industrial policy differs from Trump's in important ways, but no matter who wins the U.S. will have an industrial policy.

As the Incumbent president, Trump has already enacted his policy, which is centered on tariffs. (Trump has also pushed tax cuts and deregulation, but that's economic policy more than industrial policy.) Biden's plan would have the government spend \$400 billion on a "buy American" campaign and \$300 billion on research and development and "breakthrough technologies." ([https://joebiden.com/...](https://joebiden.com/))



**Urban Lehner**  
*DTN/Progressive Farmer*

## 2 EDITORIAL

“

*Harkens back to Lincoln's landmark 1862 initiatives (Homestead Act, creation of USDA, establishing land-grant colleges, and linking East and West by rail) that could be a template for a national industrial policy in 21st-century America. Clearly written. Lays out the shortcomings by 2020 presidential candidates Biden and Trump.*



# Lessons From a Pandemic



**Gregg Hillyer**  
Editor In Chief

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2204 Lakeshore Dr.,  
Suite 415,  
Birmingham, AL  
35209, or email  
[gregg.hillyer@  
dtm.com](mailto:gregg.hillyer@dtm.com).

**Americans are anxious to return to** normalcy after the coronavirus shut down the economy and our way of life. What the new normal looks like is still being determined.

There are no clear answers to our many questions as we weigh our personal health with our fiscal health. For agriculture, the pandemic has exposed several vulnerabilities. Solutions will require thoughtful dialogue not only within the industry but with all levels of government. Putting financial aid packages aside, here is a sample of challenges the coronavirus has brought to the forefront:

**1 Fix kinks in the food supply chain.** Last month's column praised the resiliency of the ag industry and its partners for keeping food on grocery shelves. Since then, we've seen numerous meat/poultry processing plants idled or operating at reduced capacity as thousands of workers tested positive for COVID-19. The disruption has left producers without anywhere to sell their livestock and likely will lead to temporary meat shortages in grocery stores. Meanwhile, dairy farmers and fruit/vegetable producers have seen demand from institutions plummet with the closing of restaurants, hotels and schools. As a result, some producers have had little choice but to euthanize animals, smash eggs, dump milk or plow crops under, leading to devastating revenue losses.

Supply isn't the issue. But, the nation's food

equipment, coronavirus testing and the slowing of processing lines so proper social-distancing measures can be implemented.

On the retail side, the president and CEO of Albertsons food stores put it best when describing the challenges created by the coronavirus: "When you operate in a just-in-time [environment] and have a tight supply chain, it doesn't allow you to accommodate for situations like this [a pandemic]," Vivek Sankaran stressed in a recent podcast hosted by Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue. "We should all reflect as an industry and think about how to build redundancy as we go forward."

**2 Close the digital divide.** The coronavirus has reemphasized how essential reliable broadband is to our everyday lives and well-being. According to a 2019 report from the Federal Communications Commission, 39% of rural areas lack broadband access (25 megabits per second) compared to only 4% of urban areas. The president and Congress have raised the prospect of an infrastructure bill to create thousands of jobs but have so far failed to reach an agreement. Any legislation should include enough funding to connect all of rural America to the rest of the world.

**3 Boost medical resources.** The struggles of the rural health-care system are well-known: the lack of access to doctors and other medical professionals, longer travel times to



**Greg Hillyer**  
*DTN/Progressive Farmer*

## 1 EDITORIAL

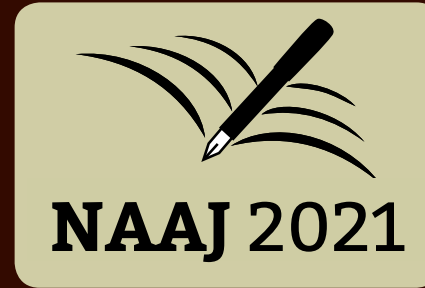
“

*Identifies three problems in agriculture the pandemic exposed or emphasized — kinks in the food supply chain, the digital divide and rural medical resources. Calls for specific remedies for each, even if it's a simple call for collaboration. Clearly written and gets to the point.*



**14**

**ENTRIES**



North American Agricultural Journalists

**BLOG  
AWARDS**

Can be on any agricultural topic posted by one writer and updated regularly. Can include various writing styles but is clearly aimed at educating readers with the writer's insight and expertise.

(Three blog posts per entry)

**JUDGE**

.....

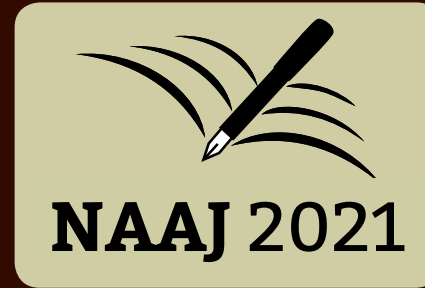
**Nancy Edmonds Hanson**

Freelance writer • Journalism teacher, Minnesota State University

Former reporter, *The Forum* (Fargo, N.D.)

14

ENTRIES



**BLOG**  
**Judge's Comments**

“

*Seasoned print writers need to make some adjustments to make their blogging stand out. It's a different breed of animal from hard news and even feature writing – more akin, sometimes, to a personal journal or even a diary. Readers expect more than straight news and information, valuable though that may be.*

JUDGE

.....

**Nancy Edmonds Hanson**

Freelance writer • Journalism teacher, Minnesota State University  
Former reporter, *The Forum* (Fargo, N.D.)

## An Urban's Rural View

Thoughts on Rat Restaurants, Wet Markets and Repressive Governments

2/20/2020 | 1:35 PM CST



By [Urban C. Lehner](#), Editor Emeritus

Connect with Urban:

[@urb](#)

Foreign correspondent  
Street Journal's man in  
"Walter, There's a Rat i

The subject was a resta  
Among the 30 rat dishes  
Nest of Snake and Rat.

As context, the story off  
moves -- and some things  
here features cats, raccoo  
decomposed monkey skel

## An Urban's Rural View

If Ever There Was a Time to Borrow Big, It's Now

5/12/2020 | 10:19 AM CDT



By [Urban C. Lehner](#), Editor Emeritus

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## An Urban's Rural View

Beware of Chinese Bearing Seeds

8/10/2020 | 10:18 AM CDT



By [Urban C. Lehner](#), Editor Emeritus

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In my previous post, I referred to the "seeds of distrust" that have been sown over the years between the U.S. and China, poisoning the bilateral relationship and raising the threat of a new Cold War. ([https://www.dtnpl.com/...](https://www.dtnpl.com/)) Those were metaphorical seeds. Today let's talk about the mistrusted actual seeds that many Americans have been receiving from China.

As DTN Crops Technology Editor Pamela Smith has reported, many Americans have received unexpected envelopes that appear to have been mailed from China. The envelopes are often marked as holding jewelry. They actually hold seeds. USDA and state ag departments are warning people not to plant these seeds. What brings what

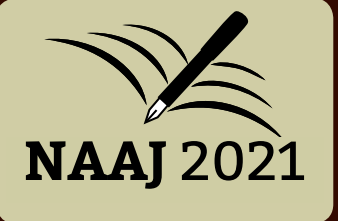


**Urban Lehner**  
*DTN/Progressive Farmer*

## H.M. BLOG

“

*Besides having a cool title for his blog, Urban Lehner's urbane (sorry) views of the economy and China's incursions into our headlines draw the reader into larger issues surrounded by some degree of mystery. His choice of topics and supportive research are intriguing and fresh.*







## Production Blog

Life Automatically Moves Forward

5/15/2020 | 4:49 PM CDT



By **Matt Wilde**, Progressiv



A driverless tractor and plant Sabanto, a robotic farming co soybeans near Sac City, Iowa. (DTN/Progressive Farmer ph Wilde)

Over the years, I've interview

## MachineryLink

Time to Trade?

3/31/2020 | 11:15 AM CDT



By **Matt Wilde**, Progn



A CLAAS representative talks to the capabilities of its new Lexion Commodity Classic in San Antonio (DTN photo by Matthew Wilde)

## Production Blog

Don't Sacrifice Safety for Speed During Weather Delays

11/3/2020 | 10:21 AM CST



By **Matt Wilde**, Progressive Farmer Crops Editor



Tractors with rollover protection structures and shields/protective collars on power takeoff shafts help protect farmers during harvest. (DTN/Progressive Farmer photo by Matthew Wilde)

ANKNEY, Iowa (DTN) -- I was nearly killed in a tractor accident as a child. My 7-year-old brother died in a tractor rollover incident before I was born. My father had several close calls working on our farm near Grafton, Iowa.

Please don't sacrifice safety for speed as the weather slows harvest. The welfare of your family and employees is always more important than crops in the field.

I understand the clock is ticking to get crops out. The revenue supports you and your family. However, I implore you not to be in such a hurry that farm and tractor safety -- a topic near and dear to my heart -- becomes an afterthought.

My close call occurred when I was 7 years old helping the family put hay in the barn. We had eight or so 100-bale racks to unload in an afternoon so time was of the essence, especially with cows to milk in the evening and other chores to do.

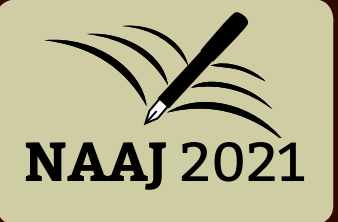
I hopped on the back of the Massey-Harris 44, standing on

**Matthew Wilde**  
*DTN/Progressive Farmer*

# 3 BLOG

“

*Matthew Wilde brings very personal experiences into subjects that have much broader appeal to his readers. His account of how his father resisted change — yet change is inevitable — is instructive and yet forgiving. His account of nearly losing his life gives extra vigor to the cautionary tale of how speed can kill. Well done.*



## Reach Out, but Don't Touch

Time to Take Care of Your Personal Condition

3/30/2020 | 1:26 PM CDT



### Crop Production Blog

A Sort of Serious Love Story

4/13/2020 | 1:48 PM CDT



### Best Blog of the Week

Production Blog: To the Field With Food and Love

10/16/2020 | 4:45 PM CDT



Feeding her farming family is just one of the many jobs Amy Brown juggles every day. This time of the year many of those meals are served in the field near the family's Blue Mound, Illinois, farm. (DTN photo by Pamela Smith)

BLUE MOUND, Ill. (DTN) -- There's nothing quite like eating by tractor headlights to make you realize where food really comes from.

Amy Brown and her mother-in-law, Roberta Brown, waited for their dinner guests Wednesday night as the sun set over the Illinois prairie. Dusk doesn't last long this time of year and the farm crews are late. A text informing Amy of a new estimated arrival time extracts a slight sigh -- hot food doesn't stay hot forever, but then, she's been here before.

Hardly a harvest night goes by that Amy and Roberta don't carry a meal to the field to their family of workers. Amy typically brings the main dish and Roberta is the dessert lady. They both bring an attitude of loving commitment to this life -- a fuel even more important than the food that keeps Brown Farms moving forward.

In the middle of an Illinois cornfield, darkness comes like a slamming door on a no-stars cloudy night. Cooking for field hands isn't only about bringing hearty fare and lots of it. It

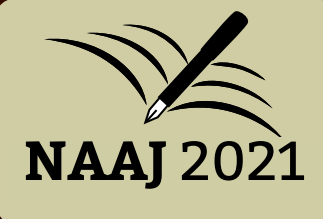


**Pamela Smith**  
*DTN/Progressive Farmer*

## 2 BLOG

“

*Smith's distinctive posts – humorous and humane – provide an excellent example of what a successful blog can provide. She has an eye and ear for the moments that make everyday life special, from pandemic paranoia and an earworm that sums up the moment to her warm account of bringing lunch out to the field. Strong writing, big heart.*



## Percy and me

By Ed White

Reading Time: 3 minutes

Published: October 2020  
News, Opinion



## Resiliency is a great idea, until you have to pay for it

By Ed White

Reading Time: 4 minutes

Published: November 26, 2020



## 2020: The year food mattered

By Ed White

Reading Time: 3 minutes

Published: December 22, 2020

Crops, Opinion



Percy is the Hollywood telling of the Percy Schmeiser story: a farmer who was found guilty of patent infringement in the Roundup Ready canola. | Photos via Mongrel Media (left)

This isn't a post about Percy Schmeiser, the real-life Bruno, a Western Producer reporter.

This is about Percy the Myth, now of Hollywood movie fame (Walken) and me, the Western Producer reporter.

I've never much engaged with the mythology of Percy, who for environmentalists is a symbol of genetic modification (GMO) activists.

Empty store shelves early on in the pandemic were one example of resiliency in the supply chain. The problem was eventually solved, but the examples that would be more expensive to fix. | File photo

Other than "unprecedented," the term "resiliency" has been the biggest word of the pandemic — at least in agriculture.

I doubt I've taken part in a webinar, Zoom call or online press conference without the term being used prominently repeatedly.



Why worry about food when the grocery stores are always loaded with an abundance of the world's nutritional riches? There's no scarcity, so there's no widespread concern. That all changed in 2020. | File photo

Farmers often complain about the way people living in cities seem to take our high-quality, high-safety food system for granted.

Nobody in Canada worries about starving. Malnourishment is generally the result of bad diet choices, poverty, or social dysfunction, not an inability to find or obtain



**Ed White**  
*The Western Producer*

## 1 BLOG

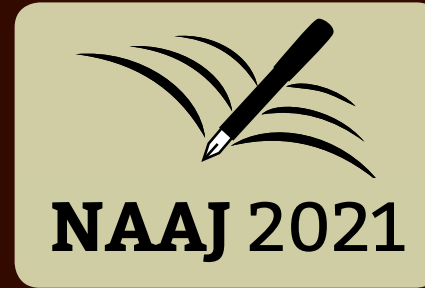
“

*Ed White's authoritative, yet personal posts are informative, well-grounded and interesting. His observations on a reliable food supply in times of unanticipated challenge are among the best I've seen. His firsthand account of the background of 'Percy' adds deeper context to easy assumptions about the film.*



**16**

**ENTRIES**



North American Agricultural Journalists

**PROFILE  
AWARDS**

Entries profile a family, person or animal in agriculture and are relevant to a target audience. The profile can convey their contributions on a local, regional or national level. Entries must include the use of more than one source.

JUDGE

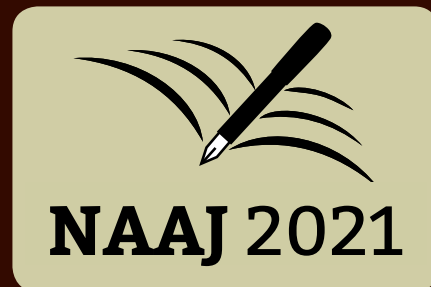
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**Kathleen Phillips**

Retired news manager, Texas A&M AgriLife Communications.  
Retired NAAJ executive secretary-treasurer. NAAJ president, 1989

**16**

**ENTRIES**



**PROFILE**  
**Judge's Comments**

“

*Family, person or animal are mentioned first in the criteria for this category, so that is what I wanted to see and get to know first in a story.*

*Top stories in this category had these as the focus. Some entries featured more about a farm or ranch operation with secondary mentions of the family, person or animal. Seven stories buoyed to the top, and it was extremely hard to place these stories in a descending order.*

**JUDGE**

.....

**Kathleen Phillips**

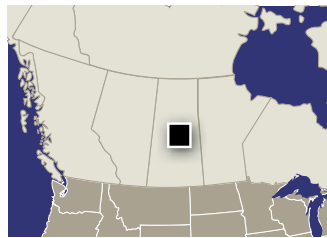
Retired news manager, Texas A&M AgriLife Communications.

Retired NAAJ executive secretary-treasurer. NAAJ president, 1989

## Wild rice business takes family for wild ride

**On the Farm:** Harvesting the crop from northern Saskatchewan lakes relies on the weather and comes with highs and lows

### ON THE FARM



**MUIRHEAD FAMILY**  
Meeyomoot Lake, Sask.

**BY SEAN PRATT**  
SASKATOON NEWSROOM

Larissa Muirhead has witnessed the wild side of the wild rice business.

The venture started off with a bang in 2015 and 2016 when her family agreed to a share-cropping arrangement with the previous owner of the operation on Meeyomoot Lake in northern Saskatchewan.

“They were the highest producing years in wild rice history,” she said.

“They were huge years, like massive yields off of that lake.”

Forest fires were burning out of control in northern Saskatchewan. The tinder dry conditions were ideal for producing wild rice.

The family harvested a whopping 180,000 pounds of wild rice their first year in the industry.

“We just saw exactly what we could do with a business like this,” she said.

The excitement wasn’t all about



The end result is in the bag for the Muirhead family and their crew at Against the Grain Organic Wild Rice. | SUPPLIED PHOTOS

the potential to make money. Larissa recalls gazing at a full moon during her first night at the camp.

She and her husband, Chase, watched the moon “peel off” the

tops of the trees on the far side of the lake as it ascended into the night sky.

“I was sitting on the harvester and I said to him, ‘yep, I want to be here.

This is what I want to do. I love this,” said Larissa.

“There is just something about that place that is so magical. It’s untouched and it’s just so beauti-

winds combined to wreak havoc on the operation.

They harvested less than 100 bags of product that fall, which is the equivalent of one morning’s bounty during the two previous years.

To make matters worse, they had to contend with the damage caused by some industrious beavers.

“They dropped two massive poplars onto the harvesters. They’re made out of aluminum so they just snapped in half,” said Larissa.

This year was another wretched year due to high water levels. They harvested a paltry 5,500 lb. of wild rice in 2020.

The shareholders of the business are Larissa and Chase, Chase’s parents Garth and Cosette and his sister, Katy, and her husband Derek Charles.

They all live in La Ronge and have jobs outside of the wild rice business. Larissa is a lab assistant with the University of Saskatchewan’s College of Nursing program.

Garth agreed that the family venture has been a roller-coaster ride so far. They are familiar with both extremes of the business.

The year after they assumed sole ownership a plow wind toppled a boat and felled more trees, damaging some of the cabins.

Another boat sunk during harvest. And there have been plenty of other challenges, such as transporting supplies over a slush-covered lake during the winter.

“It’s an adventure,” said Garth.

“We could have a reality show I’m sure. A person needs to wear one of

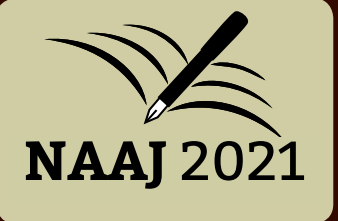


**Sean Pratt**  
*The Western Producer*

## H.M. PROFILE

“

*The entire Muirhead family, rather inexperienced in the way of agriculture, is going to attempt to gather wild rice. They experience devastating crop losses in the third year, and find itchy jobs and sucky jobs and spiders as big as one’s hand. The family discovers ways to stay afloat. ... I will appreciate my next bowl of wild rice.*



# One man's mission is to save the turkey by opening a school for fowl

Alice Mannette The Hutchinson News

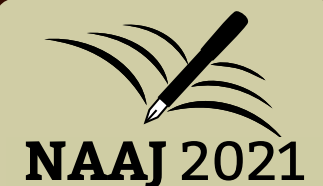


**Alice Mannette**  
*Hutchinson [Kansas] News*

## H.M. PROFILE

“

*Good description of both a man and an animal – the turkey. Reading to the end we find the crux of the profile: as a little boy Frank Reese led turkeys to the field and then back home, and as a first grader he wrote “Me and My Turkeys.” An interesting story of his present operations — his early inspiration led him to this point.*



Frank Reese holds one of his Bronze Tom heritage turkeys at his 160-acre farm, Good Shepherd Turkey Ranch, near Lindsborg. "My whole mission is genetic preservation and biodiversity, I am trying really hard to save these birds from extinction," Reese said. *Sandra J. Milburn/HutchNews*



Rhonda Larson farms with her family near East Grand Forks, Minn. She's also a substitute teacher and a national leader of U.S. Wheat Associates. Here, she does late-fall cultivation on the farm. **Cover:** Rhonda Larson is active in all aspects of the farm, particularly marketing and management. Photos by Jaryn Hemiston / Agweek

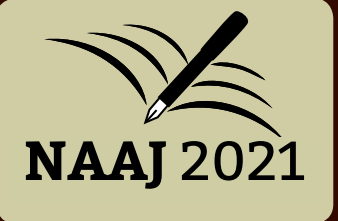


### Jonathan Knutson Agweek

## H.M. PROFILE

“

*This could have simply been a brief about the next head of the US Wheat Associates but instead we learn about the woman. We learn that she born into farming, came to substitute teaching late and landed her new role unexpectedly and how each of those experiences lend themselves to her mission in life.*



## MINNESOTA WOMAN FARMS, TEACHES, PROMOTES US WHEAT WORLDWIDE

By Jonathan Knutson  
Agweek Staff Writer

**East Grand Forks, Minn.** Rhonda Larson — farmer, substitute teacher and national commodity group leader — tells this story of a classroom experience that gives a taste of her diverse life.

“We were in school, and they had Career Day and one little girl was dressed up and she said, ‘What am I?’” Larson answered, “A cowgirl!” No, the girl responded, “I’m going to be a farmer!” Larson thought,

substitute teacher, also serves as national vice chairwoman of the U.S. Wheat Associates, often known as USW, which promotes U.S. wheat around the world. She’s now slated to take over as chair in the summer of 2022; initially she was scheduled to take the top spot this summer, but the coronavirus pandemic pushed back her ascension.

“These are crazy times for everyone,” she said, stressing that she enjoys her varied roles.

As Larson tells it, she was born into farming, came late

Ralph Larson Farms of East Grand Forks. Her father, Ralph, 92, is retired, but her brothers, Dan and Dean, remain active in the family farm. Her son, Bryce, is part of the operation, too.

Her father’s twin brother, Ray, also farmed, and his children — Rhonda’s cousins — farm, too. The cousins still help each other with farm work when needed.

Rhonda Larson graduated from the University of Minnesota with a bachelor’s degree in public administration and a juris



Rhonda Larson’s diverse career includes serving as a substitute teacher, primarily at South Point Elementary in East Grand Forks, Minn. Larson, right, stands in front of the school and talks about



## In Family We Trust

*A history of supporting one another and seeking outside experts helps keep this farm business moving forward.*

### The ability of longtime farm

owners to let go of control of a family operation and transition it to a new generation can be a “learned behavior,” if southwest Ohio’s Bryant Agricultural Enterprise is any indication. The 19,000-acre corn/soybean/wheat farm near Washington Court House is moving solidly into its third generation, with an experienced eye toward the fourth and beyond.

On a late-June morning, the third-generation’s Heath Bryant, 37, is in the machine shed with nearly a dozen employees trying to gauge what work can be accomplished. Rains that have delayed and prevented planting on thousands of acres all spring have finally dissipated, and there is wheat to be harvested and soybeans that need to go into the ground.

They decide to go ahead with wheat harvest and soybean planting in certain locations where the soil seems solid enough to permit machinery.

Nearby is Kasey Bamberger, 27, Heath’s cousin and day-to-day comanager of the operation. Their fathers, Mark Bryant, 54, and Mike Bryant, 60, had run the farm for years in partnership but have gradually yielded the operation’s management to their children.



but not to dwell on them, and to support each other, learn from the mistakes and move on.”

### EYE ON EXPERTS

The transition of the farm to their children is part of a plan on the part of Mark and Mike, and their wives, Kim and Christy, respectively. The transitions have been easier because the Bryants have a long history of seeking expertise wherever they can find it to help make decisions about the business.

Here are the primary examples:

- Kasey and Heath’s grandparents, John and Patsy Bryant, joined an input-buying group in the late 1970s, and the farm is still a member today. The member-owned organization has also spun off grain marketing and crop insurance companies.

- Not only did the two younger cousins get work experience off the farm before coming back, so did Kasey’s father. All three say the experience was key to how they approach the business.

- Brothers Mark and Mike hired a non-family operations manager 15 years ago when they realized neither of them was particularly suited to the job.

- The family’s planning for succession and the transfer of the business were conducted with the help of an outside mediator. The discussions for the farm



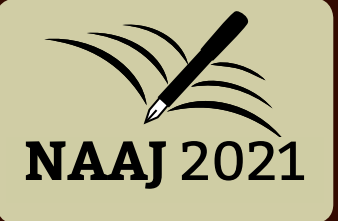
**Des Keller**

*DTN/Progressive Farmer*

## H.M. PROFILE

“

*As a family operation moves into its third generation, we meet two cousins who use their differing talents to make it work. ... We get to know these two young managers, including what they’ve learned about themselves, as well as practical information that might help other families plan.*





Seth Watkins, Clarinda, Iowa, shifted his breeding schedule to start calving in April when weather temperatures and green grass would give newborn calves better than snow and mud.

# MOTHER NATURE RULES

So why not follow her lead? That's how Seth Watkins revamped his farm's system.

By Gil Gullickson • Executive Editor, Crops Technology

Seth Watkins used to be the type of farmer who prompted agricultural industry executives to salivate, akin to a German Shepherd eyeing a juicy steak. “I went to agronomy meetings,” says the Clarinda, Iowa, farmer. “I went to Farm Bureau meetings. I did everything the universities told me to do. I focused entirely on production, raising more and more.”

After all, Watkins figured it was his duty to help feed the world's 7.8 billion people, no matter what happened.

Well, something happened.

Watkins had just finished shepherding his cowherd through a “humdinger of a blizzard” during the heart of calving season in March 1998. After several days of scraping with snowdrifts and stinging winds, he asked a pivotal question:

**“Why was I working against Mother Nature instead of with her?”**

## REFLECTION

Watkins wondered why he began calving in February.

“The thinking was that you'd then have time to plant your corn and do other things in April,” he says. “It just never seemed right to me. I didn't like seeing mud

get into the creeks. I didn't like seeing cattle uncomfortable, or a baby calf nursing a cold, muddy udder.

“I'd go to meetings and they (industry representatives) would say, ‘We have an antibiotic for this, or you can build a bigger calving shed,’” he says. “I mean, who was I to question them?”

But Watkins did question them.

He questioned why, in his all-out quest to produce more beef and more grain, he was losing money.

“I was spending \$5 to make \$3,” he says.

He questioned why the fragile soils in his area of southwestern Iowa were annually losing 15 to 20 tons per acre – far above the allowable NRCS annual loss rate of 5 tons per acre.

He questioned how his farming methods may have contributed to his region's health and economic woes.

“We're at the bottom of five watersheds where I live in Page County,” he says. “It consistently has one of the highest per capita cancer rates in Iowa. No one asks why.

“The other one that breaks my heart is our poverty rate,” he adds. From 2014 to 2018, for example, the Iowa Data Center pegged Page County's poverty rate 40th out of 99 counties. He says this filters down to the region's school children.

“We've seen 46% to 68% of the kids in our schools on free and reduced school lunches,” he says.

## ON-FARM STEPS

There's an old Chinese proverb that states, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” Like this saying, Watkins figured that starting to solve these problems began with his own farm.

“It sounds kind of corny, but I said to myself, ‘I just want a system that gives me happy cows, clean water, and healthy soil,’” he says. “If I go broke doing that, so be it. At least I can sleep at night because I did right by the cows.”

Watkins grew up on 240 acres that's now part of a 3,300-acre mix of owned and rented pasture and cropland. He and his wife, Christy, outright own 150 of the 600 cows in a herd, with the rest owned on shares ▶

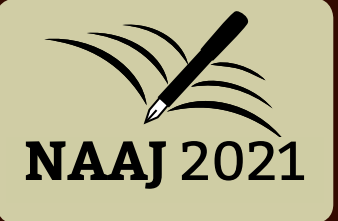


Gil Gullickson  
Successful Farming

## 3 PROFILE

“

*Common are the stories of farmers who've had all the success and praise to land on a pedestal surrounded by those who want their business. But by the third paragraph, we're told something happened. ... That's when we go on the journey to learn how to have 'happy cows, clean water and healthy soil.'*



## Grappling With a New Farm

Young, Black, First-Generation American Determined to Succeed as a Farm Owner

8/24/2020 | 3:26 PM CDT



By [Chris Clayton](#), DTN Ag Policy Editor

Connect with Chris:

[@ChrisClaytonDTN](#)



Zemua Baptista, 22, stands in front of his eight broiler barns outside of Seward, Nebraska. A first-generation Black American, Baptista is a new young face in Nebraska production agriculture. (DTN photo by Chris Clayton)

FRIEND, Neb. (DTN) -- Like a lot of children growing up in a small Nebraska town, Zemua Baptista remembers playing with tractors in the living room as a boy -- "carpet farming," as he describes it.

"My mom would always get mad at me over it," he said. "I just always knew I wanted to be a farmer. It's always been what I grew up around and spent all my time doing."

Baptista's dream of becoming an owner of a farm came true last winter when he got his first delivery of broiler chicks from Lincoln Premium Poultry for the eight barns Baptista was able to get built near Seward, Nebraska. Lincoln Premium started contracting with roughly 80 farmers, mainly in eastern Nebraska, to raise broilers for a processing plant that opened in September last year in Fremont, Nebraska.

Zemua (Zem-wah) Baptista was among the first prospective farmers to approach Lincoln Premium Poultry

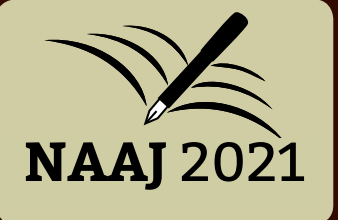


**Chris Clayton**  
*DTN/Progressive Farmer*

## 2 PROFILE

“

*A little boy 'carpet farming' with toy tractors sets this one up and readers want to see this kid mature and find a way to fulfill his dreams, and that we do. ... We learn quickly that he accomplished his dream, but are pulled into the story to find out how, as the writer weaves facts about how the boy grew up as a first-generation American.*





# Flying farmer: One man's journey to reach new heights on the farm and in the clouds

By SIERRA DAWN McCLAIN Capital Press

Jul 9, 2020 Updated Jul 9, 2020

JUNCTION CITY, Ore. — Bryan Harper climbed across the wing of his 1943 T-6 warbird and slipped into the cockpit.

The engine went *pttt pttt pttttt* and started. The plane rested on a grassy airstrip on Harper's farmland. Harper was preparing to do a surprise "fly-over" for a friend's

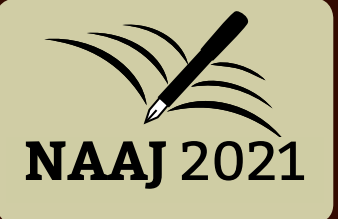


**Sierra Dawn McClain**  
*Capital Press*

## 1 PROFILE

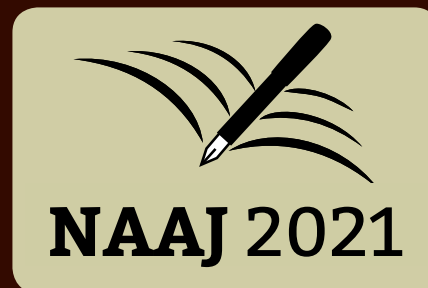
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*The stage is set with a vision of a grassy field and the sound of an airplane about to take off. The story gives the real tale of a fifth-generation farmer whose journey is laced with various personal struggles and how overcoming obstacles and challenges led him to 'reach new heights.'*



**32**

**ENTRIES**



North American Agricultural Journalists

**TECHNICAL  
AWARDS**

Entries in this category focus on machinery, new technology, a process, regulations or scientific methods in agriculture. Entries can apply to crops or livestock.

**JUDGE**

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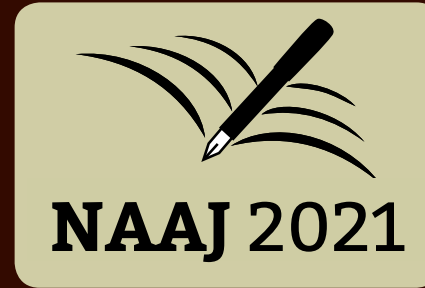
**Susan Chace**

Former special projects editor.

Current freelance technical writer and editor. Farm owner.

**32**

**ENTRIES**



# **TECHNICAL** **Judge's Comments**

“

*Technical stories must grab and hold attention while avoiding the traps set by statistics, jargon, acronyms and unwieldy titles held by expert sources. Winners here exemplify the hallmarks of excellent technical journalism: Careful, balanced reporting; clear, concise writing that simplifies the complex; and storytelling that entertains as it informs. The winners paid attention to how the information should be organized to best serve the reader.*

**JUDGE**

.....

**Susan Chace**

Former special projects editor.

Current freelance technical writer and editor. Farm owner.

## Operation Evolution

*The tractor cab may be in for a makeover, realigning for a future as a rolling office when driving is an afterthought.*



**Engineers consider the view and the ability to** swivel, head clearance and shock absorption, and who could forget lumbar support? There's no detail too small when it comes to designing the seat and the cab on a piece of ag equipment.

"The appearance of the seat leads to comfort," says Tilo Kefer, with one of the industry's leading seat-design companies, Grammer. "Even the color is comfort. If you like the seat, you feel more comfortable sitting in it."

Tractor and combine cabs have come a long way since "comfort" was defined by how a rear settled into a molded steal seat. But, even after Bluetooth-capable sound systems and information-packed LCD monitors have become common, the cab, a farmer's throne,

### A VISION OF THE FUTURE

Deere proposes the Command Cab. "It's our vision that, as we go toward more automation and ultimately autonomy, the role of the operator goes away from direct control and more toward supervision both in the field you're in and management of your entire fleet," says Josh Hoffman, Deere's lead for user experience and industrial design.

The Command Cab is an LCD-laden cocoon of productivity.

One wide LCD spans across the user's chest packed mostly with on-sight information such as the machine's progress in the field, application rates and speed. Problem with the planter? There's an alert for that and so much more.

There's another wide, narrow LCD above the forehead, this one featuring information on everything from GPS coordinates to weather reports to the actions of a farm's drone fleet or the progress of another tractor working on a different task in a different field.

*John Deere built its Command Cab concept to manage not just the tractor in the field but the whole farm.*

A video call may pop up from home checking to see when dinner should be ready or from the employee asking what to tackle next. There could be alerts and suggestions, as well, perhaps from a camera drone



**Joel Reichenberger**  
*DTN/Progressive Farmer*

# H.M. TECHNICAL

“

*Excellent example of how to elevate typically routine coverage of innovations displayed at a machinery trade show. Through vivid description, good use of details and quotes and excellent organization, the reporter helped me visualize, as well as understand, the new technology and its potential.*



CROPS



Part of the burgeoning CBD industry, hemp growers (from left) William 'Ick' McCraw, Kelton 'Pepper' McCraw, and Brian Lyda are the force behind Hendersonville, North Carolina's HempOtye. The McCraws are co-owners and Lyda is the master grower for their 25 acres of hemp in 2019.

# HEMP TAKES HOLD

Farmers and industry hustle to ramp up production to keep up with demand.

By Des Keller

**B**road-shouldered and barefoot, Brian Lyda trots into a rain-softened 6-acre hemp field near Hendersonville, in mountainous western North Carolina. Mud is splattered up his calves as he turns back a fourth of the way into the rows. "This plant loves attention but not too much attention, if that makes sense," says Lyda, gesturing to the 2-foot-high hemp plants growing under plastic in rows 6 feet apart. After all, hemp – and its cousin, marijuana – can grow and thrive on their own in road ditches. "Growing hemp is like raising kids," says Lyda, chuckling. "You don't want to be in their business too much, but you do step in

according to a recent Gallup poll. While the positive anecdotes about CBD keep rolling in by the thousands, they aren't yet backed up by scientific studies. Numerous food and drink companies are reportedly awaiting an assumed Food and Drug Administration approval of CBD in products for human consumption. As it is, CBD product makers can't technically make any health or wellness claims. Market research firm Brightfield Group estimates CBD sales in the U.S. were \$600 million in 2018 and will increase by more than 700%, to \$5 billion this year. The market could grow to more than \$23 billion within four years, according to Brightfield. The demand growth has jolted prices.

off the entire 4- to 5-foot plant at the stalk near the ground. The boom in the hemp-CBD business is national. There were an estimated 80,000 acres of hemp grown in 2018 in the U.S., and that number has at least quadrupled this year to 320,000 acres, according to the National Hemp Association. Growers, processors, and retailers – experienced or otherwise – are joining the rush. The North Carolina Industrial Hemp Association has about 400 members made up of processors, extractors, and retailers, along with 250 of the state's 1,100 approved hemp growers.

**A Fun Business**  
**T**his business has exploded in one year with the passage of the new farm bill," says Jeanine Davis, Extension specialist for herbs, organics, and specialty crops with North Carolina State

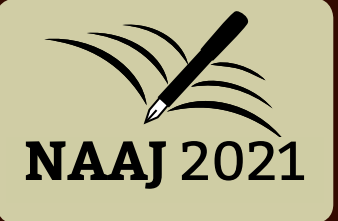


Des Keller  
*Successful Farming*

# H.M. TECHNICAL

“

*A vividly written exploration of the hemp growing trend. Clear, active voice, vivid descriptions, excellent use of quotes drives the story and helps explain the complexities of farming hemp. An informative sidebar reminds readers of the history behind the legal cultivation of hemp.*





# What does a vertical farm taste like?

by Jessica McKenzie  
09.22.2020, 10:15am

Tech

Share    Save for later  

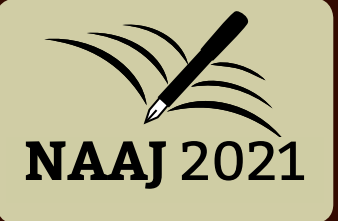


**Jessica McKenzie**  
*The Counter*

**H.M. TECHNICAL**

“

*Thoroughly intriguing examination of the technology that makes indoor, vertical farming possible, as well as an exploration of whether marketing claims regarding flavor and taste could be true. The well-organized narrative explores the topic through multiple sources. ... Clear writing and excellent story arc from opening to a fitting conclusion.*





# **Is carbon farming a climate boon, or boondoggie?**

**Programs that pay farmers to sequester carbon in their soil are ramping up. But a growing chorus of skeptics cautions that the results may not live up to the hype.**

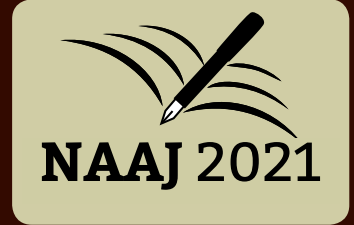


**Gabriel Popkin**  
*Food & Environment  
Reporting Network*

## **H.M. TECHNICAL**

“

*The reporter examines the facts and hype that surround carbon farming. ... Clear, concise writing and excellent use of quotes and examples help pull the reader along through some fairly complex concepts.*



# HOPE FOR HEMP

**MINNESOTA GROWER SHARES 10 LESSONS  
LEARNED AFTER YEAR ONE OF GROWING  
HEMP FOR CBD EXTRACTION.**

**LAURIE BEDORD, EXECUTIVE EDITOR, AG TECHNOLOGY  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID EKSTROM**



**Laurie Bedford**  
*Successful Farming*

**3 TECHNICAL**

“

*Informative. Clearly written. Relatable. This story about what to consider before growing hemp is a text-book example of effective technical reporting: Humanize the subject. Organize dense information into easy-to-digest chunks. Provide clear examples. Use quotes to emphasize and further the narrative.*








# Scientists are trying to make crops love salt

by Jessica Fu  
02.26.2020, 12:56pm

Environment



iStock / GomezDavid

Share    Save for later  

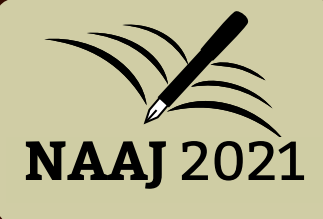


**Jessica Fu**  
*The Counter*

## 2 TECHNICAL

“

*This well-told story weaves history, humanity, and clear explanations of plant science and technology into a highly readable narrative about research into crops that can thrive in salty soils. Multiple sources help balance the story. Clear writing, excellent organization, effective use of quotes, examples move the story to a satisfying conclusion.*





# SPECIAL REPORT: Regulatory gaps and missed opportunities allowed COVID-19 to spread freely in U.S. meatpacking plants

By: Bart Pfankuch and Nick Lowrey | April 29, 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic has overwhelmed the U.S. meatpacking industry, but public health experts say the risks posed to workers and the U.S. food supply chain by airborne viral infections were readily apparent and could have been addressed years ago.

Ongoing virus outbreaks could have been avoided, and future illnesses eliminated, if major meatpacking plants had implemented disease-control measures recommended by the U.S. Centers For Disease Control and Prevention long before COVID-19 was first identified. The plants only began implementing such measures after workers started to get sick and die from the disease.



**Bart Pfankuch**

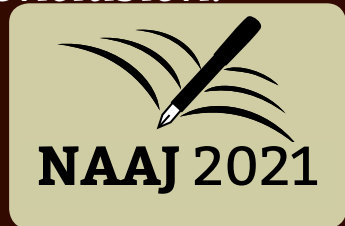
**Nick Lowrey**

*South Dakota News Watch*

## 1 TECHNICAL

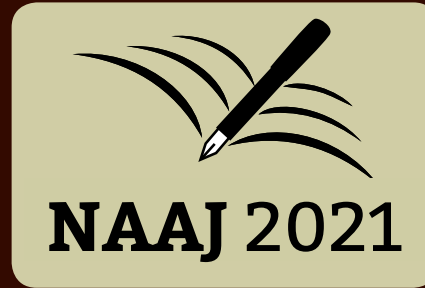
“

*Clearly exploring a regulatory topic is difficult under the best of circumstances. Doing that while the news continues to break is impressive. Well-organized, well-sourced, well-researched and well-written, this story rolls like a freight train from beginning to conclusion. Bonus points for incorporating breaking news near publication.*



**18**

**ENTRIES**



North American Agricultural Journalists

**SPECIAL PROJECT  
AWARDS**

Entries take reporting to a higher level, and show careful planning and enterprise. Time, talent, and in some cases, monetary commitments made to produce the project.

May be a team effort.

JUDGE

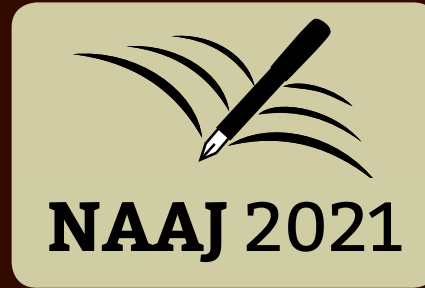
.....

**James Tinney**

Communications adviser to senior leadership,  
university spokesperson, writer and editor

**18**

**ENTRIES**



**SPECIAL PROJECT**  
**Judge's Comments**

“

*The strength of so many of these entries made the judging process extremely difficult.  
You have to be impressed with the scope of the work being done,  
and the range of news outlets that are doing that rigorous reporting.*

JUDGE

.....  
**James Tinney**

Communications adviser to senior leadership,  
university spokesperson, writer and editor



*The spotted lanternfly has landed. This adult was seen in Pennsylvania, hard hit by the alien species.*

# CAN SCIENTISTS STOP THE PLAGUE OF THE SPOTTED LANTERNFLY?

*The voracious, shape-shifting insect native to Asia is attacking crops, vineyards and trees*

BY JEFF MACGREGOR; PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARC MCANDREWS



**Jeff MacGregor**  
*Smithsonian Magazine*

**H.M. SPECIAL PROJECT**

“

*This article tells a compelling human story while explaining a little-known threat to our nation's growers. It is an outstanding example of how to combine scientific content with its practical impact on people's lives*





# DICAMBA ON TRIAL

Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting

## Dicamba on Trial

German agribusiness companies Bayer and BASF face allegations in a civil lawsuit that they created circumstances that damaged millions of acres of crops by the weed killer dicamba in order to increase profits from a set of new dicamba-related products offered for sale beginning in 2015.

A trial of the lawsuit, originally filed in November 2016 by southeastern Missouri peach farmer Bill Bader, began Jan. 27, 2020, and is expected to last two to three weeks. The lawsuit initially named Monsanto, which was acquired by Bayer in 2018.

The Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting is one of the few media outlets covering each day of the groundbreaking trial as part of an in-depth project on dicamba, its makers and its impact.

This project is supported with a grant from the Fund for Investigative Journalism ([www.fij.org](http://www.fij.org)).

**Related Topics:** [dicamba](#), [Bayer](#), [BASF](#), [Monsanto](#), [EPA](#)



**Johnathan Hettinger**  
*Midwest Center  
for Investigative Reporting*

**H.M. SPECIAL PROJECT**

“

*‘Dicamba on Trial’ takes the reader inside the legal battle over a new system of genetically engineered seeds and weedkillers and the resulting damage to nearby crops.*





**FOOD & ENVIRONMENT  
REPORTING NETWORK**



**Leah Douglas**  
*Food & Environment  
Reporting Network*

**3 SPECIAL PROJECT**

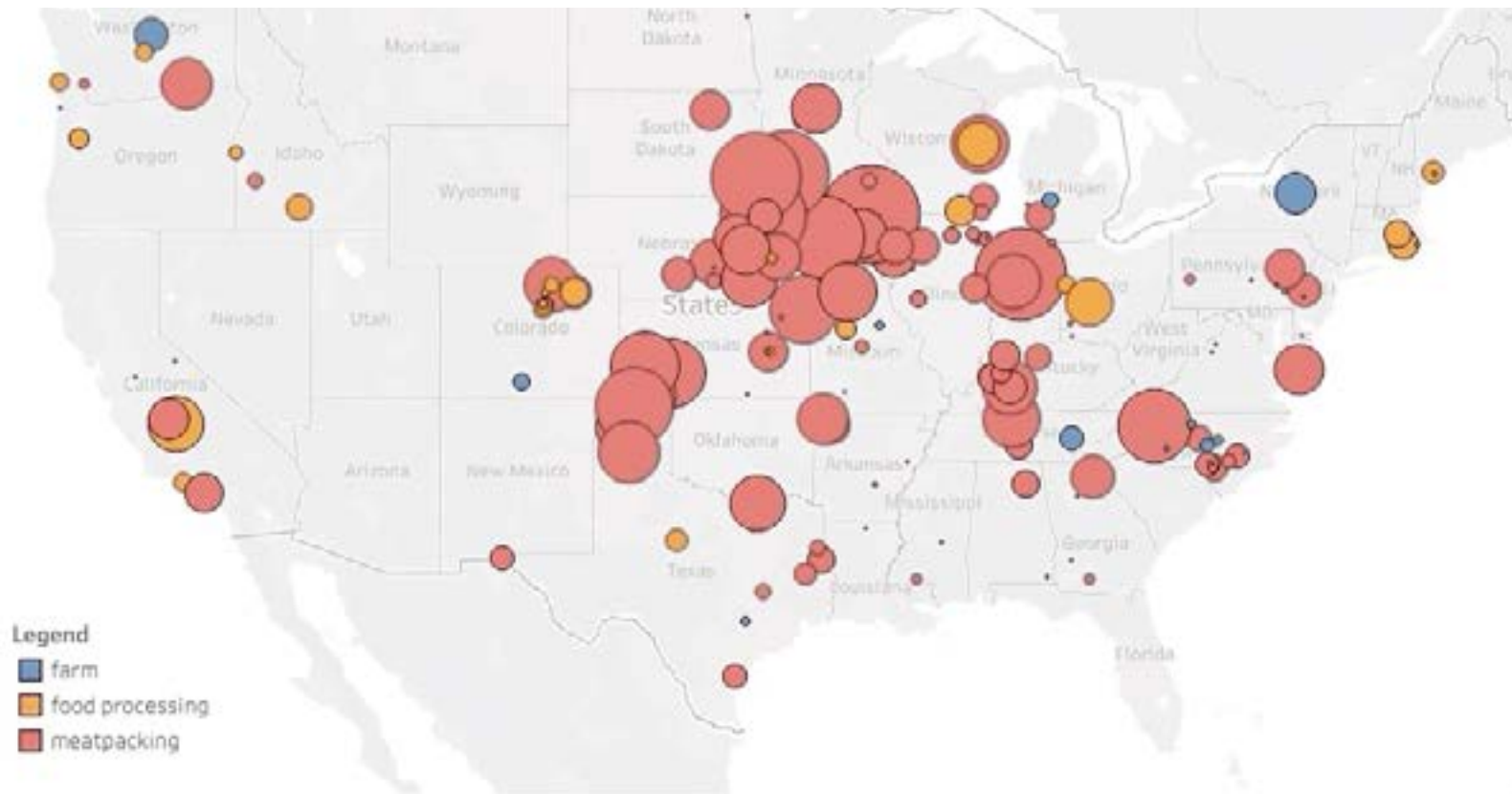
“

*A remarkable compilation of statistics on the toll that coronavirus took on workers at all levels of the food system. Its widely cited statistics help drive public awareness of the problem.*

*And the interactive graphic display was outstanding.*



**NAAJ 2021**



## Mapping Covid-19 outbreaks in the food system

By Leah Douglas, April 22, 2020

Since April 2020, FERN has been closely tracking the spread of Covid-19 at meatpacking plants, food processing facilities, and farms. This dashboard is home to our latest reporting on Covid-19 cases and food system workers, and is updated each weekday.



**Tracking Covid-19's impact on meatpacking workers and industry**

By Sky Chadde, Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting April 16, 2020

### **Cheap chicken, beef came at a cost. How American meat plants bred coronavirus hot spots.**

[investigatamidwest.org/2020/05/22/cheap-chicken-beef-came-at-a-cost-how-american-meat-plants-bred-coronavirus-hot-spots/](https://investigatamidwest.org/2020/05/22/cheap-chicken-beef-came-at-a-cost-how-american-meat-plants-bred-coronavirus-hot-spots/)

Sky Chadde, Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting, and Kyle Bagenstose, Veronica Martinez Jacobo and Rachel Axon, USA TODAY

### **'All smoke and mirrors': How Trump's meatpacking order has failed to keep workers safe**

[investigatamidwest.org/2020/06/18/all-smoke-and-mirrors-how-trumps-meatpacking-order-has-failed-to-keep-workers-safe/](https://investigatamidwest.org/2020/06/18/all-smoke-and-mirrors-how-trumps-meatpacking-order-has-failed-to-keep-workers-safe/)

Rachel Axon USA TODAY, Sky Chadde, Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting

June 18, 2020

### **'They think workers are like dogs.' How pork plant execs sacrificed safety for profits.**

[investigatamidwest.org/2020/11/11/they-think-workers-are-like-dogs-how-pork-plant-execs-sacrificed-safety-for-profits/](https://investigatamidwest.org/2020/11/11/they-think-workers-are-like-dogs-how-pork-plant-execs-sacrificed-safety-for-profits/)

Rachel Axon, Kyle Bagenstose and Kevin Crowe, USA TODAY; Sky Chadde, Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting  
November 11, 2020



**Sky Chadde**  
*Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting*

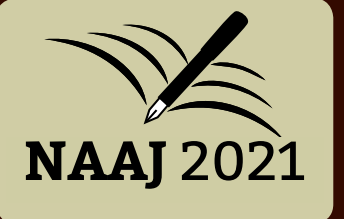


**Rachel Axon, Kevin Crowe  
Kyle Bagenstose | USA Today**

## **2 SPECIAL PROJECT**

“

*Shows the failure to foresee the threat to workers in meatpacking plants, and to take effective action once the threat was clear. It also gives voice to the workers who risked their lives while working at essential tasks in the face of the pandemic.*



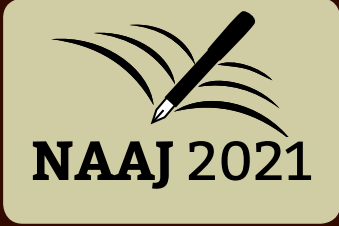


**Joe Wertz**  
**Jamie Smith Hopkins**  
*Center for Public Integrity*  
**Nathanael Johnson**  
*Grist/The World*

# 1 SPECIAL PROJECT

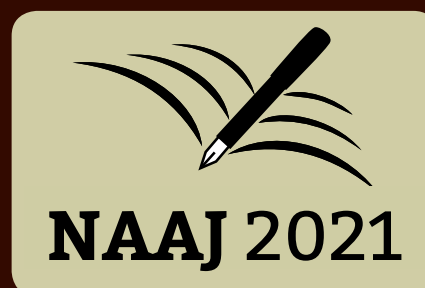
“

*In clear and understandable prose, explains a major threat to our water supply and contributing factor to climate change. Highlighting widespread failure to confront the problem, the series also shows an effective strategy being employed by one community.*





The Glenn Cunningham  
**Agricultural Journalist**  
**of the Year**  
**A W A R D**



The Glenn Cunningham  
**Agricultural Journalist of the Year**  
**A W A R D**

Honors the best overall writer or writers of the year and remembers **Glenn Cunningham**, farm editor of *The Des Moines Register*, the first Ag Journalist of the Year winner, and NAAJ executive secretary-treasurer for many years.

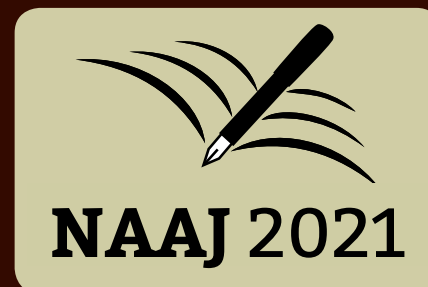


JUDGE

.....

**Rebecca Jones**

Veteran features writer, *Rocky Mountain News*  
Pastor of St. James Church, Wheat Ridge, Colo.



# Agricultural Journalist of the Year Glenn Cunningham Award Finalists

## 1 TECHNICAL

### 1 ONGOING COVERAGE or SERIES



**Bart  
Pfankuch**

*South Dakota News Watch*



**Nick  
Lowrey**

### 1 FEATURE



**Susan  
Ferriss**

*The Center for Public Integrity*



**Joe  
Yerardi**

## 1 NEWS



**Sky  
Chadde**



**Rachel  
Axon**

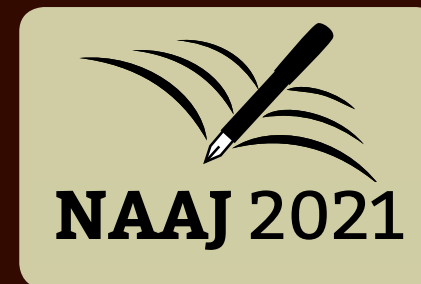


**Kyle  
Bagenstose**



**Kevin  
Crowe**

*Midwest Center for Investigative Reporting | USA Today*



## 1 COLUMN

**Pamela Smith**  
*DTN/Progressive  
Farmer*



## 1 SPOT NEWS

**Chris Clayton**  
*DTN/Progressive  
Farmer*



## 1 PROFILE

**Sierra McClain**  
*Capital Press*



## 1 EDITORIAL

**Greg Hillyer**  
*DTN/Progressive  
Farmer*



## 1 BLOG

**Ed White**  
*The Western  
Producer*



The Glenn Cunningham  
**2021 Agricultural Journalists of the Year**

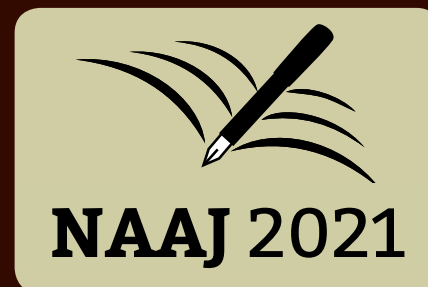


**Bart  
Pfankuch**



**Nick  
Lowrey**

*South Dakota News Watch*







**Bart  
Pfankuch**

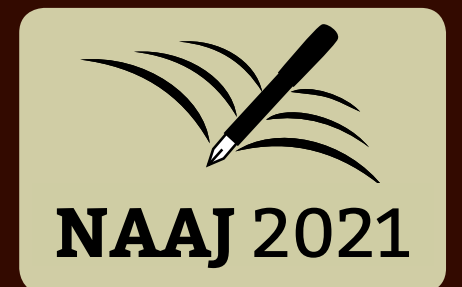


**Nick  
Lowrey**

*South Dakota News Watch*

“

*All the entries were well done, and at times I felt like I was comparing apples to oranges, given that all the entries were such good examples of what their given genres of writing should be. But in the end, I feel like I was most impressed with the work of Bart Pfankuch and Nick Lowrey of South Dakota News Watch.*





**Bart  
Pfankuch**



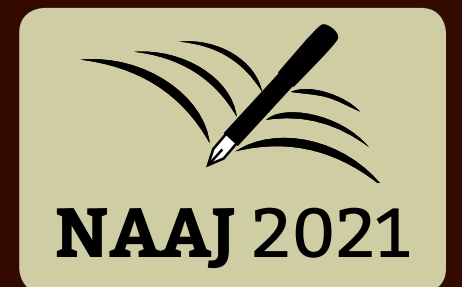
**Nick  
Lowrey**

*South Dakota News Watch*

“

*They approached the topic of COVID's impact on their state's agricultural industry from so many angles that might not have been readily apparent at first.*

*They got on top of the story from the beginning.*





**Bart  
Pfankuch**

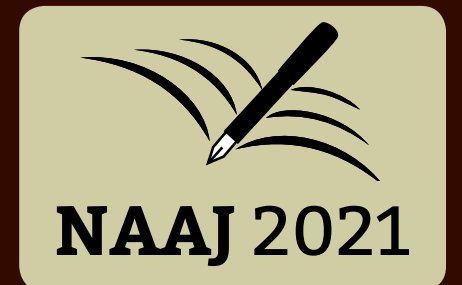


**Nick  
Lowrey**

*South Dakota News Watch*

“

*I feel like they did their readers  
a huge public service, looking at everything  
from how beef producers, sheep farmers,  
and corn growers were being effected  
to the impact on small towns  
and health care systems.*





**Bart  
Pfankuch**

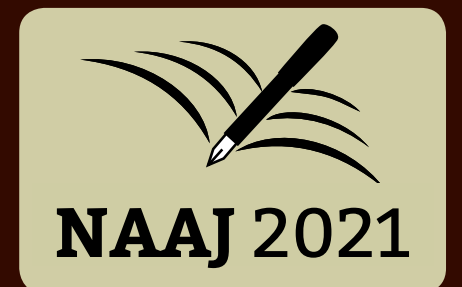


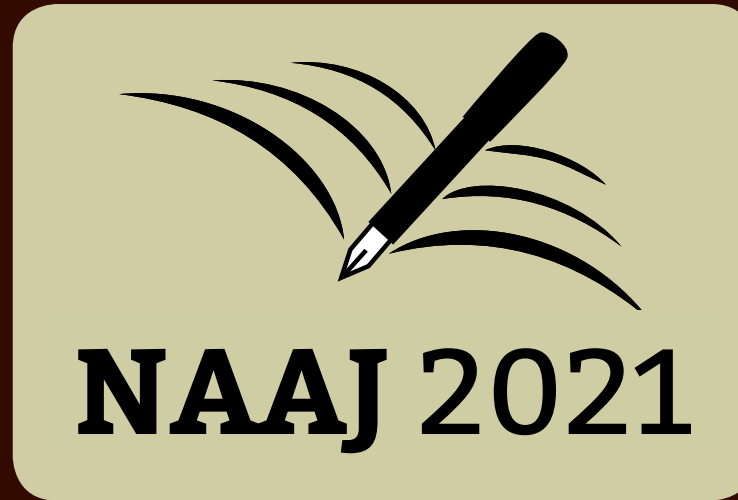
**Nick  
Lowrey**

*South Dakota News Watch*

“

*If anyone in South Dakota was tempted to think that this was an urban problem that would not profoundly impact rural lives, reading Pfankuch's and Lowrey's stories would quickly disabuse them of that notion.*





North American Agricultural Journalists  
**2020 NAAJ WRITING CONTEST**

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL!**

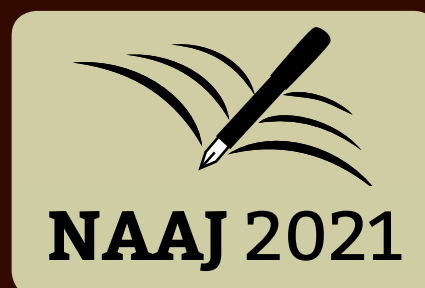
Read all the winners online



The North American Agricultural Journalists

**AUDREY MACKIEWICZ**

**S P E C I A L A W A R D**

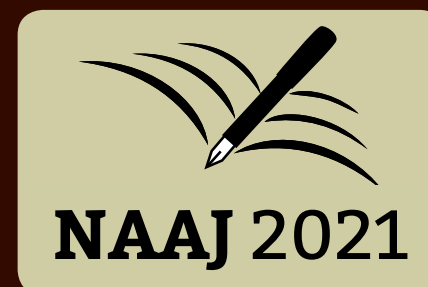


The NAAJ  
**AUDREY MACKIEWICZ**  
**S P E C I A L A W A R D**



Presented to a publication which has expanded its coverage of agriculture.

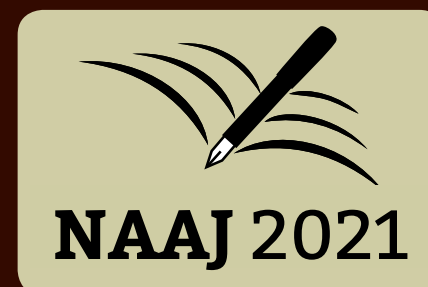
Honors **Audrey Mackiewicz**, 1924-2009, of the *Sandusky (Ohio) Register* and *Firelands Farmer*, who was the first female president of the North American Agricultural Journalists and the longtime executive secretary-treasurer of the group.



The NAAJ  
**AUDREY MACKIEWICZ**  
**S P E C I A L A W A R D**



**FOR EXPANSION OF AGRICULTURAL COVERAGE IN 2020**





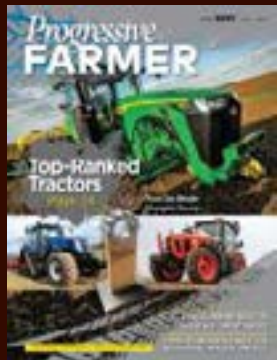


FOR EXPANSION OF AGRICULTURAL COVERAGE IN 2020

The NAAJ

**AUDREY MACKIEWICZ**

**S P E C I A L A W A R D**



**Digital access:**  
Magazine content  
made available online

**EXPANDED CONTENT,  
NEW PRODUCTS**

**Digital newsletters:**  
Daily Forecast • CattleLink  
Renewable Fuels  
Morning Snapshot  
The Best of DTN/PF



**Field Posts podcast:**

Discussions on farming, ag policy,  
business, weather, market issues

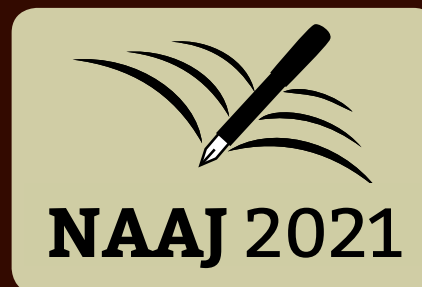


**Facebook Live Cattle Reports:**  
Weekly prices and trends wrapup



**Reader Insights**

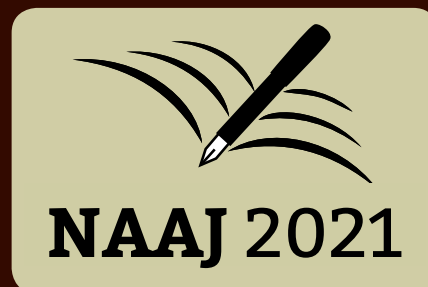
Farmers surveyed on tractors,  
combines, planters and drills





The North American Agricultural Journalists

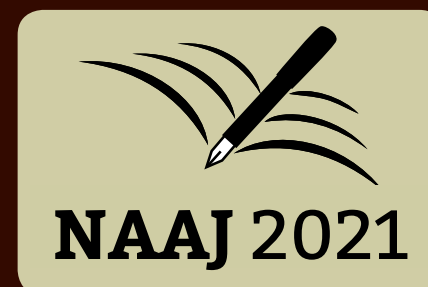
**J.S. RUSSELL**  
**A W A R D**



The NAAJ  
**J.S. RUSSELL**  
**A W A R D**

Presented to a member who  
has given outstanding service to NAAJ.

Honors **J.S. Russell**, the longtime  
farm editor of *The Des Moines Register  
& Tribune*, who was a founder and first  
president of the Newspaper Farm Editors  
of America, the precursor to NAAJ.

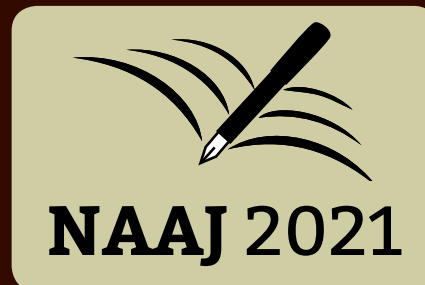


The NAAJ  
**J.S. RUSSELL**  
**A W A R D**



**ALICE MANNETTE**  
*The Hutchinson News*

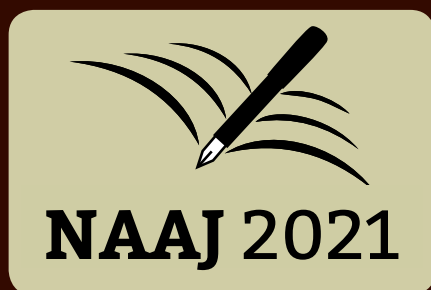
**OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO NAAJ**





The North American Agricultural Journalists

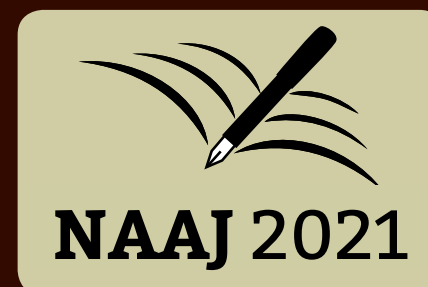
**BILL ZIPF**  
**A W A R D**



The NAAJ  
**BILL ZIPF**  
**A W A R D**

The award recognizes each NAAJ president in turn for the year's worth of extra work and chores for the good of the organization.

Honors **Bill Zipf**, 1914-1981, of *The Columbus Dispatch*, who served as NAAJ president in 1972.

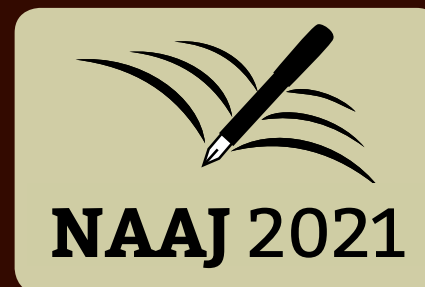


The NAAJ  
**BILL ZIPF**  
**A W A R D**



**TODD NEELY**  
*DTN/Progressive Farmer*  
*President, North American*  
*Agricultural Journalists*

**NAAJ PRESIDENT — 2019-2020**





[www.naaj.net](http://www.naaj.net)

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