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**SPECIAL**

**Area agri-business profiles**

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*Young brand has long history*

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*Possins honored at awards luncheon*

**Spring is on the way?**

# Wensman is all about seed

## Wensman Seed is new company with a long history

By **KATHY PAULSEN**  
Staff Writer

Have you ever considered the value of a seed?

Farmers put their faith in that tiny seed – how it will germinate, grow and produce. So much depends on it there's no wonder they look for the best, in all categories. It starts and ends with the seed.

The Wensman Seed Company sells their corn and soybeans through a network of dealers across Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. Kory Kress, the Territory Sales Manager for the company, lives in Geneva.

The company has several other dealers in our area including Jim Beenken, also of Geneva, Matt Holland of Ellendale, and South Central Seed and Chemical in Janesville. They all started selling Wensman Seed because they planted the Wensman corn and soybean seed and were impressed with this high germ seed, which has the highest and best choices in traits. They realized Wensman delivered success with a high return and reliability.

When you put trust in a seed you

want to plant, you look for the best, and they felt that was proven in the Wensman products.

"I didn't plan on becoming a Wensman dealer when I first planted Wensman corn seed," Jim Beenken said. "But after I saw how almost every seed grew, that the seed was really clean and it yielded more than the other brands I was planting, it was a very easy decision to continue planting it and to start selling it."

Matt Holland reports, "I started selling and planting Wensman six years ago. I've always been impressed with how well it has yielded, stood, really good dry down and test weight."

They all agreed: Wensman is a proven leader in providing high germ seed with the best choices in genetics and traits. They put their trust in Wensman to deliver success and a high return on their investment on their farm.

The Wensman Seed Company, the largest independent seed brand in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota, was founded on the principle of bringing best genetics and traits. Wensman only sells seed.

Wensman Seed Company's sole



**JIM BEENKEN of Geneva became a Wensman seller after planting it himself.**  
Submitted photo

focus is to help their customers choose the best corn and soybean products for their farm and make them successful.

While the Wensman brand has only been available since 1997, the company has a long seventy-plus-year history in the upper Midwest. Based out of Wadena, MN, the Wensman brand has been around since the 1930's.

Wensman was originally a franchise for the Funks G brand seed in the northern United States. Eventually Funks G was purchased by Ciba Seeds. This relationship continued until 1997 when Ciba Seeds and Northrup King Seeds combined. Northrup King had its own production facilities, and the plant in Wadena was no longer needed. Jeff and Jon Wensman were left with a big decision – to go out of business



**THE WENSMAN PLANT in Wadena, MN is equipped with one of the very first RIB systems to be installed in the U.S**  
Submitted photo

Wensman continued on 3

## ■ Wensman

from Page 2

or to start their own seed brand. They decided to start the Wensman Seed Company.

Later in 2001, the Wensman Seed Company joined AgReliant Genetics, and they are currently the third largest corn seed company in the United States. Wensman raises most of the corn seed along Highway 10 between Big Lake and St. Cloud, MN, and they raise their soybean

seed in Western Minnesota.

What started out with less than 10 employees, including one territory sales manager in northern Minnesota, has grown to be the fastest growing independent seed company in Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota with over 50 employees and 28 territory sales managers.

Wensman Seed Company, which has research and breeding stations in Kenyon and Morris, has developed a reputation for providing farmers with corn and soybean genetics

which have been selected for its fast emergence and early season seedling vigor. With excellent disease and insect protection from planting to harvest the Wensman Seed company allows their customers to maximize the genetic potential of their corn and soybean products. Their goal is to provide the highest quality, highest germ seed in the best genetics and this trait continues.

Planting season will soon be here and Wensman delivers success and a high return on investment for the farm. If you would like to learn more

about the Wensman Seed company and the products they sell, contact Kory Kress, Territory Sales Manager, at 507-383-7967, or kory.kress@wensmansed.com; or one of the local salesmen, Jim Beenken, 507-402-9584, Matt Holland, 507-456-5601 or the South Central Seed and Chemical Company in Janesville, 507-231-6144, who would be glad to help provide you with the highest quality Wensman Seed and information.

Wensman Seed Company: It starts and ends with the seed!

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# Downside of spreading manure on frozen ground

By **RANDY PEPIN**  
Ag News Wire

Application of manure on frozen ground almost guarantees economic loss on the value of manure while also potentially harming the environment. Phosphorus and nitrogen in manure can have negative effects in the environment when in excess.

## Phosphorus

Excess phosphorus entering our Minnesota lakes, rivers and streams contributes to eutrophication, which is rapid growth of plant life. This excess plant life eventually dies, and the decaying material causes an oxygen shortage for desirable fish and plant life. We typically observe eutrophication as algae blooms.

A high percentage of the phosphorus in manure is soluble. There is a high environmental risk when this soluble phosphorus is allowed to remain on top of the soil. Phosphorus runoff risk increases with frozen ground, an ice layer on the soil or snow, deep hard-packed snow, and

manure applied closer to snowmelt. A snowmelt or rain event allows this soluble phosphorus to dissolve with the water and potentially run off into the environment.

However, when quickly incorporated into the soil after spreading the manure, the soluble phosphorus rapidly attaches to the soil. Once attached, it will essentially only leave the field by plant uptake or with the soil through erosion.

## Nitrogen

In general, faster and better manure incorporation means higher nitrogen availability for crops and better economic return from the manure nutrients. When manure is left on the soil surface, most of the nitrogen in ammonia form is lost through volatilization. Many of the organic manure nitrogen compounds are soluble in water and are subject to spring runoff or a rain event, which becomes a contributing factor in eutrophication.

Construction of a long-term stor-

age manure pit is a common method of facilitating spring application and incorporation of manure after the snowmelt and ground thaw on a farm. Pumping the pit in the spring and/or fall and incorporating it into the soil immediately or within 12 hours produces maximum economic return from the manure nutrients while also protecting the environment.

What if a farmer has no pit or has manure packs that can't be added to an existing manure pit? Temporary manure stockpiling is an option approved for most manure management plans.

According to Minnesota feedlot rules, a temporary stockpile must not be in a single location for more than one year and is not allowed on slopes greater than 6 percent. Stockpiling also requires following setback requirements and some common sense. A setback distance of 300 feet is required for most sensitive areas such as wetlands, road ditches and

tile-intakes; a 1,000-foot setback is required from most lakes, streams and community water supplies. Stockpiling setback requirements can vary between counties so contact your county feedlot officer or soil and water conservation district staff.

Manure properly stockpiled, later applied on unfrozen ground, and incorporated within 12 hours will typically have higher nutrient content than manure spread on frozen ground, on an ice layer on soil or snow, on deep hard-packed snow, or close to a snowmelt event.

Is a temporary stockpile the best solution to application of manure rather than applying the manure over frozen ground? No, but it is one option to consider.

Get the maximum economic return from the manure nutrients while also protecting the environment by waiting until the ground has thawed to apply manure.

*Randy Pepin is an educator with University of Minnesota Extension.*

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# Area farmers honored at awards luncheon

## Possins named Waseca County Farm Family of the Year

By **NICOLE BILLING**  
Contributing Writer

The Waseca Area Chamber of Commerce hosted the annual Farm and City Luncheon at the Waseca Legion on Thursday, March 20. The Chamber of Commerce is a program that recognizes various farmers around Waseca County who have done a lot for their community.

Keynote speakers for the event were Dave Frederickson and Sam Baidoo. Frederickson, commissioner for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, spoke about who he was and why agriculture is vital to our state. Baidoo, Associate Professor of Animal Science Swine Nutrition and Management at the University of Minnesota, talked about Frederickson's and his trip to Thailand and Taiwan, where they set up trades with both countries. He went on to explain that China is the United States' biggest buyer of crops.

"If it wasn't for China, the United States would be in huge trouble," he mentioned.

After they spoke, the awards were presented. The Waseca County Outstanding Young Farmer award went to Justin Below, 39. He was not the only person in his family to win this award, however; 32 years ago his father, Lynn Below, also received the award. The Outstanding Young Farmer award goes to someone who utilizes innovative farming methods, has made improvements in farming operations, and demonstrates service to community organization and conservation practices.

The Farm Family of the Year



**THE POSSIN FAMILY** of New Richland won the Waseca County Farm Family of the Year award for 2014. They were celebrated at the Farm and City luncheon awards ceremony on Thursday, March 20. Pictured are, from left, front: Bayli, Braxton, and Kyra Possin. Back, Brent and Lianne Possin.

Star Eagle photo by Nicole Billing

award went to the Possin Family of New Richland. Brent Possin has been farming since he was 15-years-old, when he rented 20 acres from his grandfather. He kept growing his land, and now he and his wife, Lianne, own 450 acres. Brent won the Outstanding Young Farmer award in 2006. Brent and Lianne have the help of their three children, Bayli, Kyra, and Braxtyn. The kids, besides helping out at the farm when they can, are all involved in sports at NRHEG. The recipient of the Farm Family of the Year award makes significant short-term progress and/or innovative contributions with their agricultural

endeavors and has demonstrated a commitment to enhancing and supporting the fields of agriculture and production.

The last award was given posthumously to two individuals. The first was Charles Ewald, who was active in the Waseca County agricultural community, as well as the director of Creamery Board, Cooperative Elevator Board and Waseca County air. He served as president of the Minnesota Shorthorn Breeders Association, and was named to the Minnesota Livestock Hall of Fame in 1965. Charles Ewald's legacy continues on today through Fair Acres stock Farm, operated by his grandson,

Lynn Ewald.

The next individual was Joseph Gaibou. Joe's role as a teacher, educator and mentor reached across all aspects of the rural and urban communities through conservation field days, land judging, aerial tours, teacher workshops, training sessions for bankers, contractors, and tax assessors, and Conservation/Environmental Days for Waseca area sixth graders. In addition, Joe and the District played a role in the training of 15 future Soil Conservationists and the formation of the Waseca County Park Board, of which Joe was a founding member.

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# Minnesota farm incomes drop dramatically in 2013

(University of MN Extension)

As corn prices declined in the fall of 2013, so did farm incomes for a majority of Minnesota farms, according to a joint analysis conducted by Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) and University of Minnesota Extension.

Overall, net farm income was \$41,899 for the median farm. That compares to \$189,679 in 2012, a 78 percent decrease. While crop farm incomes plummeted due to declining commodity prices, livestock farms did not fare much better as incomes for dairy, hog and beef farms also declined.

The analysis used data from 2,063 participants in MnSCU farm business management education programs, 111 members of the Southwest Minnesota Farm Business Management Association and 41 participants working with private consultants.

"A decline from 2012 levels should not come as a big surprise. We have to remember where we came from," said Dale Nordquist, Extension economist in the University of Minnesota Center for Farm Financial Management. "2012 was a very profitable year for Minnesota farms. Land rental rates have been catching up with the increased profitability of crop production. Most crop producers were in pretty good shape to handle a down year. The question is how long will these reduced profits last?"

## Dramatic drops in crop prices

Corn and soybean prices dropped dramatically. Net return per acre of corn dropped from \$377 in 2012 to minus \$24 in 2013. Soybeans went from \$216 net return per acre in 2012 to \$85 in 2013. The price of sugar beets dropped from \$65 a ton to \$35. Sugar beet producers lost an average of \$300 per acre in the



**TIGHTER MARGINS** in the coming year mean tighter belts.

Red River Valley and west central Minnesota.

Price was not the only factor that led to reduced profits for crop producers. Yields were down due to a cold, wet spring followed by developing drought conditions in parts of the state. The statewide average yield for corn was 160 bushels per acre compared to 171 in 2012, below the ten-year average of 167

bushels. Soybean yields were down from 46 to 42 bushels per acre. Meanwhile, the cost to grow an acre of corn increased by 10 percent. Land rental rates increased by 15 percent for corn production.

"The full extent of this has not been felt by crop producers yet," said Ron Dvergsten, Farm

**Incomes continued on 9**

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## ■ Incomes

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Business Management (FBM) instructor/FBM program coordinator at Northland Community & Technical College in Thief River Falls. "Cash flow was not a problem through much of the year as producers sold 2012 crop at high prices. Most of the decrease shows up in the reduced value of inventories at the end of the year. That means cash flows for 2014 are really tight. At current prices, many producers will lose money on cash rented land in the coming year."

### Feed factors

#### reduce livestock profits

Livestock farms faced high feed costs for much of the year; feed prices did not decline substantially until harvest. While the price of milk, pork and beef were all up from the previous year, the combination of high feed costs and lower values of feed inventories reduced livestock farm profits. Milk sold for \$20.34 per hundredweight com-

pared to \$19.63 in 2012. With a cost of production of \$19.92, dairy farmers made 42 cents on every hundred pounds produced or about 5 cents per gallon on average. Market hog prices increased from \$63 per hundred pounds in 2012 to \$66 in 2013. Market beef prices increased from \$122 per hundredweight in 2012 to \$125 in 2013.

Prospects for livestock producers are better for the coming year. After several years of high feed costs that benefited crop producers, the tables will likely be turned in 2014.

"Prices are projected to be strong for all major livestock sectors this year," Nordquist said. "And feed costs will be much lower so livestock producers should have a very good year."

The one wildcard for pork producers is the spread of porcine epidemic diarrhea virus (PEDV). While the virus is not transferred to humans, it can be devastating to pig herds and cause severe financial consequences.

### 2014: Tighter margins ahead

Crop producers will see much tighter margins in 2014.

"The good thing is that most crop producers come in to the year with very strong working capital positions," Dvergsten said. "Another plus is that fertilizer prices are down. But other costs, including land rent, are projected to increase. It is likely that many crop producers will have to use some of their working capital to cover losses in the coming year."

The statewide results are compiled by the Center for Farm Financial Management into the FINBIN database which can be queried at [www.finbin.umn.edu](http://www.finbin.umn.edu). 2013 regional reports and reports from previous years can be found on the MnSCU Farm Business Management website at [www.fbm.mnscu.edu](http://www.fbm.mnscu.edu).

### About this report

In farm business management programs, producers learn how to maintain, interpret and use quality business records to develop business plans, make key decisions and

execute marketing plans throughout the year. The producer's personalized annual whole business and enterprise analyses, which become the "textbooks" used for making business decisions throughout the year, provided the source data for the analysis.

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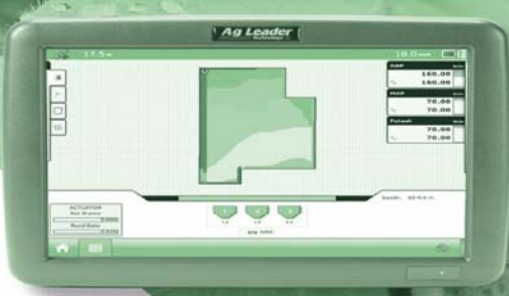
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# Property tax proposal introduced in House

(AgriNews) Property taxes were the centerpiece discussion of the Farmers Union's annual lobby day.

Granite Falls farmer Tim Velde came prepared. He compiled the data for his property taxes from 2009 to now. During that time, his property taxes increased by 398 percent, from \$9 per acre to \$35 per acre. At the same time, his property's market value increased 277 percent.

If his taxes had only went up 277 percent, it would have saved him \$10 per acre, he said.

With corn prices hovering at about half of their 2012 record high and closer to cost of production, farmers are more concerned about having the money to cover rising property taxes, said Minnesota Farmers Union vice president Gary Wertish.

Higher property taxes also drive up rental rates, said Joe Arnold, an aspiring farmer and president of

the Lac Qui Parle Valley FFA chapter. Arnold joined MFU members for their Capitol visit.

Velde talked property taxes with every legislator he visited, even House Speaker Paul Thissen. Thissen spoke at the Agri-Growth policy luncheon on March 25 and Velde approached him afterward to share his numbers.

Thissen said the first tax bill focused on repealing business-to-business taxes, including the farm equipment repair tax, while the second bill will focus on property taxes.

Rep. Paul Marquart, DFL-Dilworth, has legislation that will provide \$18.5 million in agricultural property tax relief in 2014 and \$15 million beginning in 2015.

"We think it's very important that we provide this property tax relief to farmers," Marquart said.

Thissen said the proposal will help 75,000 farmland owners

across the state.

The House proposal enhances the existing market value homestead credit, Marquart said. The way it works for 2014 is if a property qualifies for homestead credit, the property taxpayer will receive a homestead credit of \$230. This check will come from the state as it is too late to make adjustments on property tax statements that were received by taxpayers last week.

Going forward, the maximum credit increases to \$490 on agricultural homestead property valued at \$260,000 or more.

Both Marquart and Thissen are optimistic this property tax language will advance to conference committee with the Senate.

On a related tax issue, Thissen said the farm equipment repair tax will cease being collected on April 1. Taxes paid since it went into effect last year will not be reimbursed to those who paid the tax,

he said.

Thissen said other legislative priorities yet to accomplish this session include:

- Establishing a Greater Minnesota Rural Development Fund, a small business revolving loan fund ran on a regional basis. Funding would go to the initiative foundations throughout the state. The proposal is to send \$1 million to each foundation.

- Innovation vouchers. These vouchers would go to small businesses to help them hire a consultant for business planning services. These grants would be administered out of the Department of Employment and Economic Development.

- Expanding broadband. The House proposal is to target \$25 million into expanding broadband into unserved and underserved areas of the state.

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