

Director Candidates: Region 2 - Wis. (4-year term), Candidate 1 of 2



Ashley Ahl (Incumbent)
42 years old
Merrillan, Wis.
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Farm Credit Member Since: 2010

Family: I am the oldest of three children and manage our farm with my brother, Derek. My husband, Brad, grew up on a dairy farm in Bosstown, Wis. and is a business instructor for UW-La Crosse. Together, we have two young sons, Sven and Lars.

Brief Description of Agricultural Operation and Employment/Business experience for past five years: I am the Managing Partner of Northern Family Farms, a 7,600-acre wholesale nursery and Christmas tree growing operation. Our farm serves over 1,000 retail locations across 17 states. At the farm, I am responsible for directing farming operations, sales forecasting, accounting, and production planning. Prior to coming back to the farm, I worked in the financial markets in Chicago. My professional background offers the Board financial, technical, and operational expertise in both the financial markets and the horticulture industry. Representing a specialized market within agriculture, I provide a different vantage point, one that is responsible for directly marketing their products to both retailers and consumers. My family farm has successfully navigated another generational change in ownership, with my brother and I representing the third generation of our farm. I enjoy the rigors and responsibilities of being a Director and am eager to continue my work on the Board.

Boards or Committees in the past five years (and principal business): I was appointed to the Compeer Board of Directors in January 2021 and currently serve on the Compeer Audit and Finance Committee. I also serve our industry as a member of the USDA Christmas Tree Promotion Board's Social Media and Promotion Committees. In my local community, I serve as the Co-Treasurer for the Black River Falls Area Foundation, an organization that provides grants and scholarships to residents in Jackson County.

Community Involvement/Government Service: I am a member of several industry organizations including WCTPA, NCTA, and AmericanHort. I am a member of the National Council of Agricultural Employers (NCAE), an organization that focuses on agricultural labor issues. I enjoy fundraising for various community causes, most recently raising funds for a new facility for the Jackson County Humane Society.

Education: Black River Falls High School graduate and BA in Economics, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

What is your vision for the future of agriculture? I am excited to see all the avenues that farmers have available to harness the latest technology to help their farms grow. Whether it be using electronic financing and record keeping or better automation practices to reduce labor costs, I hope to see agriculture continue to utilize technology to use their resources more efficiently. As an industry, we must continue to embrace technology as it becomes a more integral necessity for future farming operations.

What do you believe are the primary issues facing agriculture and Compeer Financial? In my opinion, farming operations both large and small are facing two major headwinds. The first, is a two-headed beast; rising costs and scarcity of supplies. Rising inflation and interest rates are going to be tough on our industry but no one can quite put a number on what it means if farmers cannot get glyphosate or replacement parts for tractors. We have to keep the lines of communication open with our clients while they are navigating these uncertainties.

The second issue is transitioning farming operations to the next generation. This takes many years of multi-faceted, strategic planning. To maintain the health of Compeer's balance sheet, we should continue to engage clients in periodic reviews of their long-term transition strategies. If we can retrain our industry to make transition planning a part of quarterly or yearly discussions, our industry will be better prepared to mitigate risk factors as they arise.

Why I want to serve on the Board of Directors of Compeer Financial? I have experienced first-hand how Compeer's mission to enrich agriculture and rural America can impact an organization. In 2012, my family farm was struggling coming out of The Great Recession. Working with Compeer (Badgerland at the time), through open and honest conversations, it was evident we were with a lending institution that valued long-lasting relationships. In addition to robust lending relationships, Compeer's strong patronage program helped our family farm and I fully support its continued strength in future years. Compeer's team truly wanted to see our farm through those hard times. In turn, I would like to continue to offer my expertise to improve the state of agriculture as a Compeer Financial Board Member.