

# CULTIVATE

A MAGAZINE FOR CLIENTS AND FRIENDS OF COMPEER FINANCIAL®

FALL 2021

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### NAVIGATING THE NEXT NORMAL:

*Strategies for Operating in a Changing Environment*



**COMPEER**  
FINANCIAL



OUR MEMBER-OWNERS  
RECEIVED **\$197 MILLION**  
IN PATRONAGE THIS YEAR.

# CULTIVATE

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Fall 2021

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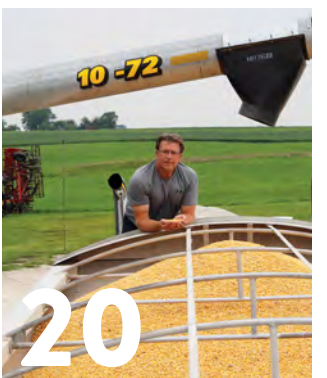
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Cover: Alsum Farms & Produce, a Wisconsin potato grower, shipper and packer, prepares for its late summer potato harvest. Learn more about them on page 12.

## PERSEVERANCE PAYS.

Our hardworking member-owners are key to Compeer Financial's success. Together, we overcome unique challenges and adjust approaches so our member-owners can achieve their goals. Because of this shared commitment to partnership, Compeer is honored to return **\$197 MILLION** through our cooperative's patronage program this year. When we work hard together, we succeed together.

See how being a Compeer member-owner pays.

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# TIME TO PLAN

*for the best and the worst*

**“It isn’t always easy or fun to keep an eye on the future and be ready for the unexpected. Yet, a plan can help smooth the way when even the rockiest times arise.”**

There’s always talk about how summer flies by and the kids are already back in school. The rate of time feels exponentially faster this year. Like we see in the movies to convey the passing of hours or days, it’s as if those hands on the clock really are moving at twice the regular rate.

Maybe this illusion is a result of how many of us felt about 2020 — wishing it to be over so we could (hopefully) put the pandemic behind us and return to normal. Or, perhaps when that did happen, we packed our schedules full of everything we didn’t get to do last year — causing the weeks to fly by in a blur.

Nonetheless, harvest season is suddenly here again and, overall, we’re looking at another good year for agriculture. Commodity prices are providing many an opportunity to move into improved financial positions or build on the success they had in 2020. At Compeer Financial, we’re seeing solid performance in nearly all aspects of our business, a sign of client fortitude.

The year hasn’t been without challenges. Extreme weather hit most of our territory, with drought in Minnesota, severe storms in Wisconsin and flooding in Illinois. The frustration was evident in our farm visits, phone calls and emails with clients; but we also heard relief. Many are withstanding the situation thanks to crop insurance and financial reserves. Through careful planning, clients are persevering and consequently keeping Compeer’s portfolio strong. This year, Compeer returned a total of \$197 million in patronage to member-owners based on results from 2020. Each year, we look forward to seeing the impact these payments can bring to our member-owners and are excited to see this performance holding.

The events of the past year remind us how, with a plan, we can protect our investments and our business. It isn’t always easy or fun to keep an eye on the future and be ready for the unexpected. Yet, a plan can help smooth the way when even the rockiest times arise. Take the pandemic, for instance. COVID-19 has left an indelible mark on the economy and our industry. The supply chain, buyer demands and more have seen change, and it’s important to think about how the evolving economic environment impacts your business model. Are you prepared for what you expect will happen — and even what you can’t predict? Taking time now to plan for potential opportunities and challenges will make a difference to your bottom line. On page 6, we dig into the after-effects of the pandemic and share how a plan can help you adjust your operation.

While you work on your own plans, Compeer will be working on ours. Within the cooperative, we’re looking at what we need to focus on in 2022 to continue to deliver reliable, dynamic service and expertise. It’s a time of year filled with energy as the team collaborates on our commitment to give member-owners and rural America our very best. Learn more about our culture of collaboration on page 22 as we share how we came to be named a Top Workplace.

As time sprints through another harvest and toward another new year, we continue to be grateful for your partnership. A vocation focused on feeding, clothing and fueling the world is one of the most valuable jobs there is, and the Compeer team is fortunate for the opportunity to support your good work. Thank you for your trust in us. We wish you a safe and plentiful harvest!



Rod Hebrink, President and CEO



## TURN WHAT IF INTO WHAT IS.



### WISHING FARMERS AND AGRIBUSINESSES A SAFE HARVEST SEASON.

Working relentlessly to feed, clothe and fuel our nation and world takes passion and dedication. We’re proud to work alongside producers, processors, manufacturers, marketers and distributors every day. From the field to the table, our financial and risk management solutions are designed to meet the diverse needs of the food and agricultural industry. **And our focus on exceptional client experience is at the heart of everything we do.**

See why our clients trust us to make their goals possible.

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# NAVIGATING

*the Next Normal*

## Strategies for farmers in an evolving world

If there's one thing the global COVID-19 pandemic has taught us, it's that there is no perfect forecast of the future. The pandemic and subsequent lockdowns around the globe took the concept of "not knowing what to expect" to a whole new level. Across the agriculture industry, it was a period of sleepless nights and borderline panic.

From packaging to shipping, logistics issues created an adjustment period for producers and processors as they tried to figure out who was buying what, how to package products and the best ways to deliver food to consumers. As a result, prices plummeted. Then, as consumers feared shortages of more than just toilet paper — including bacon, milk and grains — prices took off.

As the 2020 harvest hit, China ramped up its grain purchases, prompting potential concern about global shortages, which added fuel to rising commodity prices.

For those who were able to figure out their production and delivery, the year was pretty profitable overall. Spurred by government assistance programs for producers (as well as those for regular taxpayers), net farm income for 2020 was the highest in recent memory at \$121 billion.

### SO, WHAT'S NEXT?

The fact is, we're emerging from a crazy time, and there is no road map for what lies ahead. Navigating the next normal is front and center in Compeer Financial clients' minds.

According to Matt Ginder, Compeer's chief core markets officer, many of our clients are in a good position on paper, but they realize maintaining that position is not guaranteed. "Even with stronger net farm income and greater working capital, there's still a lot of uncertainty," Ginder said.

**"Commodity prices are higher than they've been in quite some time, but they're still very volatile."** — Matt Ginder

"Commodity prices are higher than they've been in quite some time, but they're still very volatile," he continued. "How will things play out in the second half of 2021 and into 2022 with less government money, fluctuating prices, unknown crop yields, inflation and potential tax law changes?"





Because we're fresh out of crystal balls, the short answer is, we don't know.

**CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM**

From what clients are saying, Ginder contends cautious optimism is in play. Farmers are envisioning a bright future but have learned from past cycles that it's probably not wise to go all in.

Between rising prices and government payments, looking at 2020, 96 percent of our grain benchmark clients made a profit with a median cash flow breakeven of \$3.62 on corn. Government payments were the difference between profits and losses for nearly a quarter of those clients.

Bill Moore, Compeer's chief risk officer, has additional guidance. "When things are challenging, many farmers really dig deep to improve their cost of production, manage debt load, consolidate loans and convert higher interest debt to lower rates," he explained. "By doing that during down times, you set yourself up for greater success when the markets turn."

Within Compeer's grain benchmark, the contrast between the top quartile and bottom quartile in cash flow breakeven on corn is

nearly 75 cents a bushel. "With a lower cost of production," Moore noted, "you'll be prepared to withstand fluctuating prices yet also well positioned for greater profits if markets stay strong."

We encourage clients to expand that way of thinking and continue it even in periods of stronger profits. This reinforces the advice to always understand your numbers.

**CASH ON HAND**

The solid year many farmers had in 2020 is carrying over into 2021, putting them in a fairly strong financial position from the perspective of working capital, owner equity and debt per acre.

But with these benefits come more questions. How do you know if you're at a point where it's wise to invest in increasing cash reserves? The obvious answer for most producers is to invest in improving long-term efficiencies, which prepares them to take advantage of favorable conditions and weather the storms that will undoubtedly come in the future.

"It's always good to have a working capital cushion. Get comfortable with that first," Ginder suggested. "According to our credit team, a good rule of thumb is accumulating \$250 per acre of working capital or 30 percent of total revenue."

**"According to our credit team, a good rule of thumb is accumulating \$250 per acre of working capital or 30 percent of total revenue." – Matt Ginder**

Next, take some time to make sure your financial house is in order. Dig into your numbers and become really familiar with your key ratios and metrics, as well as how they compare to management and benchmark targets. A few key metrics to evaluate:

- Working capital
- Owner equity
- Cost of production
- Breakeven

"This step is particularly important when things are good financially and you have the luxury of evaluating your long-term goals and looking at all the alternatives from a position of relative financial strength," Ginder said.

At times, he noted, you may wish to heed the old saying, "You'll never go broke selling at a profit."

In addition to understanding your numbers, it's also important to maintain your crop insurance plan and develop and follow a written marketing plan.





NEXT STEPS

Once you have a good handle on your numbers, it's time to work on your vision for long-term success. What's important to you, what are your operational goals? How will you achieve what you want to do?

One way to explore the financial ramifications for different options is through a what-if scenario analysis. That's the benefit of partnering with an agriculture lender that understands your business and the cycles of agriculture.

Some options to consider that will help position your operation for future success include:

1. Investing in transition/succession planning

Depending on your age and plans, you may be concerned about upcoming capital gains changes. Start planning for that now, think about generations two and three and ways they can gain some equity in the operation.

How do you move the assets from the older generation to the younger generation? It can take several years to get to the point where the younger generations can finance their equity. Taking the initiative to work with advisers when you're not cash-strapped or in a hurry can make a big difference.

2. Investing in efficiency improvements

These investments may help you maintain a competitive cost of production. Making appropriate equipment upgrades may add additional efficiencies to your operation. Just ensure you are maintaining an appropriate cost per acre.

3. Expanding and diversifying

Expanding can be tricky, and it's not for all operations. In the right circumstances, however, it could be worth considering. Thinking creatively and specifically will be key.

4. Deferring income and prepaying expenses to manage your tax bill

5. Paying down debt

Take advantage of the long-term interest rate environment. Rates are as low as they've ever been. Ten years from now, you don't want to be wishing you had taken advantage of 2021 interest rates. Rates go in cycles. Anyone who locked them in in 2021 will be patting themselves on the back for the term of their loan.

Paying down debt can also be a great way to position your operation for the next cycle. Is there an opportunity to term out some debt and lock in low rates for 20 to 30 years? Or perhaps consolidate some different debts and term that out. Most can be done with just a handful of months of payback. At Compeer Financial, we offer a conversion feature on our loans so it's hassle-free with no new appraisals, documents or hoops to jump through.

6. Saving for a rainy day

Sometimes the best action is no action. As Moore says, numbers don't lie. "The math has to work for you and your business in the long term. It's never a bad idea to put some cash aside for a rainy day."

UNIQUELY PREPARED

Farmers have always been good at identifying risks, but right now, discerning and mitigating risk are more important than ever. In uncertain times, it's important to feel confident about the business decisions you make.

"The next six months have the potential to be a wild ride," Ginder said. "Volatile weather, swings in markets, strong real estate sales in parts of our territory, ongoing impacts and uncertainty about COVID-19 or even potential shutdowns could be on the horizon. Nobody knows."

That's why you need a solid, long-term financial partner that understands your operation and is invested in agriculture for the long haul. At Compeer, it's our job to help you navigate to your desired outcome — whether it be expansion, preserving working capital, passing your farm to the next generation, investing in operational improvements, managing income tax liability or whatever success looks like to you.

**"The next six months have the potential to be a wild ride."**

— Matt Ginder

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# Partnerships & POTATOES



Watch the **2021 Food & Agribusiness of the Year** recipient video.

## *Alsum Farms & Produce named 2021 Food & Agribusiness of the Year*

GRAND MARSH, Wis. — On a humid August morning in the Central Sands of Wisconsin, the crew at Alsum Farms lines up harvesting equipment to begin digging fresh potatoes from mounds of sandy soil. After harvest, they send the potatoes to the company's processing facility in Friesland, Wis., where they are washed, graded and packaged for delivery to retail grocers and distribution centers for national chains. As a leading national grower, Alsum delivers approximately 200 million pounds of potatoes per year.

President and CEO Larry Alsum oversees the family-owned operation, alongside his daughters, Wendy Alsum-Dykstra and Heidi Alsum-Randall, who are preparing to eventually take over the operation as part of the company's succession plan. In addition to potatoes, they grow and distribute onions and pumpkins, and partner with family farms across the nation to deliver a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables to grocers year-round.

Alsum Farms & Produce Inc. got its start 48 years ago, buying 100-pound bags of potatoes from farmers and repackaging them into smaller bags for retail distribution. After considerable growth and innovation over the years, today, Alsum Farms & Produce is vertically integrated and involved the entire process — growing, packing and shipping many potato varieties. They grow about 50 percent of the potatoes they distribute and have a strong network of farming partners who produce the remaining supply.

"Our vision is to be a leader in the fresh produce industry," said Wendy Alsum-Dykstra, chief operating officer of logistics and maintenance. "To do that, our entire team has to be committed to innovation and looking for opportunities across the entire operation, whether in the fields, in our pack sheds or in transportation."

In addition to innovation and embracing technological advances, like precision agriculture or automation in the packing process, the leadership team at Alsum Farms & Produce says the relationships they've built are critical.

"It takes a lot of collaboration," said Alsum-Dykstra. "Between our growers, suppliers, other business partners and industry associations, we rely on our key partnerships to serve our customers. Part of the

*At left: With harvest in full swing, Alsum Farms & Produce is prepared to process and ship potatoes directly to retailers. The operation grows potatoes on 2,900 acres.*





success at Alsum is working with people we trust, especially our employees, as we meet the needs of our customers and feed families across the nation.”

“Our team is key,” mentioned Heidi Alsum-Randall, chief operating officer of production and sales. “From management to employees on the floor, it takes every single person to make it all happen. We are blessed to have an excellent team, many of whom are long-term employees, who have a strong dedication to our farming, trucking, packing, sales and marketing operations.”

A relatively new relationship for the Alsum team is their lending partnership with Compeer Financial.

“When looking to acquire more farmland through an auction, Compeer Financial worked with us to line up the right financing. They also helped us refinance our existing debt,” explained Larry Alsum. “A key reason we chose Compeer is their strong specialization in agriculture. Because our operations span from field to fork, we are unique. Having a lender that understands the intricate aspects of farming, agriculture and business is critical.”

Alsum Farms & Produce turned to Cathy Schommer, a senior focused lending specialist at Compeer Financial, who has expertise working with potato and vegetable clients.

“The Alsum family has a rich history in the potato industry,” remarked Schommer. “They’ve found their niche in the market and have helped to build a strong industry with their involvement in national potato organizations, collaboration with other farmers and their commitment to sustainability. We can learn a lot from each other.”

### ABOUT ALSUM FARMS & PRODUCE

- Employees:** 225 full-time; 100 seasonal
- Production and Warehouse Space:** 345,000 square feet
- Potato Acreage:** 2,900 acres
- Pumpkin Acreage:** 320 acres
- Shipping Division:** 27 trucks; 90 refrigerated trailers
- Potatoes Produced Annually:** 200 million pounds

### FOOD & AGRIBUSINESS OF THE YEAR AWARD

Compeer Financial provides lending services beyond traditional production agriculture, partnering with businesses across the entire agricultural supply chain, from input and equipment suppliers, to those in the processing, transportation, storage, logistics and service-related fields.

“The Compeer team brings a unique perspective thanks to our extensive experience in working with commercial producers and a wide variety of agribusinesses,” said Ty Rohloff, senior food and agribusiness lending specialist. “We understand the unique challenges and opportunities within this space and are able to meet the increasingly complex financial needs within the industry.”

This year, Compeer Financial introduced the Food & Agribusiness of the Year Award, recognizing businesses in the ag supply chain who have shown leadership in innovation, ag advocacy, community

outreach and client service. Alsum Farms & Produce was selected as the 2021 Food & Agribusiness of the Year.

“Compeer Financial understands the vital role agribusinesses like Alsum Farms & Produce play on a local, regional and national level,” explained Rohloff. “We are proud to recognize Alsum for their commitment to advocating for agriculture, their robust outreach in the communities they serve and their strong dedication to stewardship and sustainability.”

“We are thankful and pleased to be recognized,” said Alsum. “What an honor it is for us to have a team who farms to feed the world, while conserving and taking care of our resources. It’s a great privilege.”

*Above left: Compeer Financial brings expertise and specialization in agriculture to the partnership with Alsum Farms. Above middle: Wendy Alsum-Dykstra and Larry Alsum are leaders of the second-generation, family-owned operation that grows, packs and ships potatoes and other fresh produce. Above right: The Compeer Financial team presents the Food & Agribusiness of the Year Award to the Alsum family. L to R: Ty Rohloff (Compeer), Cathy Schommer (Compeer), Wendy Alsum-Dykstra, Larry Alsum, Heidi Alsum-Randall, Bryan Stanek (Compeer), and Jason Johnson (Compeer).*



### SPECIALIZED EXPERTISE TO SERVE THE FOOD & AGRIBUSINESS INDUSTRY.

We see potential in your plans. Our unique perspective is born from decades of working with commercial producers and agribusinesses. Our Food & Agribusiness team understands your unique challenges and opportunities, and is equipped with the **financial solutions and funding capacity** to meet your needs. As these industries become increasingly complex, our experienced financial team will guide you every step of the way.

Partner with us to make your goals possible.

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# Conserving a LEGACY

Celebrating 170 years of farming heritage with an eye toward the future

STOUGHTON, Wis. — Farm families have a tradition of passing their love of land and livestock from generation to generation. James Amers's farming story skips a generation, but his commitment to doing the right thing for the environment and dairy cattle is stronger than ever.

"My grandparents Merle and Ginny [Skjolaas] raised dairy cattle, tobacco and crops here in Stoughton," James explained. "The farm is more than 170 years old. It was started in 1851, so we have a deep family history in agriculture. I have fond memories of working on the farm with my grandpa."

James grew up close to the farm that his grandparents own, although his parents were not actively involved. His love of agriculture was so strong that it called him to pick up the lifestyle himself. James

bought his own herd of dairy cattle in 2015.

## CONSERVING FOR THE FUTURE

Six years in, it is evident that James and his wife Callie have put a lot of thought into the future of their farm.

"My grandpa started no-till on our cropland many years ago, and I have taken that a step further and started doing cover

**"For us, conservation is just about trying to do the right thing for the land and to keep farming for generations to come."** — James Amers

crops," James said. "For us, conservation is just about trying to do the right thing for the land and to keep farming for generations to come."

James runs about 620 acres of cropland where he grows alfalfa, corn, soybeans and wheat. Cover crops allow the Amers to manage soil and nutrient loss, which is especially important in the Yahara Watershed where they farm. The combination of no-till and cover crops also helps reduce the amount of fuel and weed and pest control needed, which helps reduce input costs.

The farm also has about 95 acres of pasture where the Amers practice rotational grazing, another strategy to reduce feed input costs with the cattle herd.

"All our young stock and dry cows are on pasture with about 80 beef cow-calf pairs," James explained. "We've been milking with a robot for almost two years. All the milk cows stay in the freestall right now, but we're in the process of transitioning to grazing the milking herd while still using the robot."

## GROWTH FROM STRONG ROOTS

As with James, agriculture is in Callie's blood. She hauled milk for her family business, Arneson Trucking, before their now 1-year-old daughter, Ellie, was born. Callie's grandpa and his brother established the business after returning home from the Korean War.

Arneson actually picked up milk at James' farm when he was starting out, which is how he met Callie. Four years later, they

got married on the Amers farm, with two of Callie's favorite cows standing by.

## PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

While working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) on a cost-share program to start their rotational grazing practice, James was encouraged to reach out to Paul Dietmann, senior lending officer at Compeer Financial, as a resource to guide the transition and talk through key financial considerations.

"Paul was an excellent resource for us because he really knows his numbers," James said. "He has so much experience working with grazing and more of the niche side of agriculture that he helped us make some estimates that we otherwise might have hesitated with."

While James and Callie are young and have more goals set for the years to come, they have shown a commitment to continuing the family farming legacy. They have already taken a deep dive into conservation and will continue to work on setting up their farm to succeed for generations to come.

*Above left: Callie and James Amers with their daughter Ellie in one of the family's pastures. Top right: The Amers use mobile shades in pastures without adequate tree cover. Bottom left: A Lely robot is used to milk the Amers' cows, giving them flexibility to focus on other aspects of the farm. Bottom right: James and Callie are excited to watch Ellie grow up on the farm and have the opportunity to show dairy cattle and livestock.*





# Take Me to THE FAIR

Celebrating fair traditions amid a changing world

Youth across rural America faced disappointment last year when fairs were canceled or went virtual due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The projects kids worked on all year in preparation for the fair faced an uncertain future.

Knowing the importance of county and state fairs to young people across our territory, Compeer Financial stepped in to recognize the hard work youth put into their fair projects. In June 2020, Compeer unveiled the Blue Ribbon Project, a contest for youth to submit their fair projects for a chance to win prizes. This summer, while most fairs were able to shift back to normal, the tradition continued as kids like Lewis Anderson and Halie Kohl were chosen among the winners of the Blue Ribbon Project Contest.

"Fair projects are family projects throughout the whole year," said 11-year-old Lewis, who lives in Leland, Ill. "I enjoy explaining to the judge and sharing what I have learned."

In total, 36 youth across Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin received special recognition this year for their fair projects through the Blue Ribbon Project Contest. Winners received \$100, plus a \$100 donation to the charity of their choice.

## PROJECTS WITH A PURPOSE

Lewis and Halie recognized a need in their communities and sought to remedy it with the resources they had in their own backyards.



Halie Kohl is a 2021 Blue Ribbon Project Contest winner.

Food insecurity is a major issue in some rural communities, and many lack access to fresh produce.

Halie created a roadside produce stand last spring called Halie's Farmstand. In the 17-year-old's hometown of Herscher, Ill., with a population of 1,500, the nearest access to fresh produce is about a half hour away. Halie sold fresh produce she grew herself at prices under market value.

Lewis saw a similar need in his community, which has an 11 percent food insecurity rate. This is the sixth year his family has

planted, maintained and harvested a garden. Then they host a weekly farmstand where they give away their harvest for free.

## LASTING LESSONS

Halie has been showing pigs since she was 21 months old. She says the fair has taught her a lot about life and the importance of community.

"The Kankakee County Fair is where I learned some of my greatest life lessons," Halie said. "Through showing livestock, I learned respect for others. No matter how placings turn out in the ring, I shake the judge's hand and congratulate the winner."

## 2021 BLUE RIBBON PROJECT CONTEST WINNERS

Congratulations to the following winners of this year's Blue Ribbon Project Contest.

### ILLINOIS

Charles Anderson – Leland  
Lewis Anderson – Leland  
Avery Barnard – Wayne City  
Tate Behrends – Sheffield  
Toby Behrends – Sheffield  
Megan Busker – Ridott  
Maddie East – Coatsburg  
Ella Gunderson – Shannon  
Halie Kohl – Herscher  
Samantha Lind – Maple Park  
Payton McGrew – Good Hope  
Claire Nelson – Colchester  
Ashlynn Schultz – Dakota  
Weston Solomonson – Gridley  
Abby Yoder – Port Byron

### MINNESOTA

Joseph Achen – Little Falls  
Natalie Clemenson – Zumbrota  
Katrina Deplazes – Farmington  
Cody Gilbertson – Fairfax  
Cayden Goslee – Glenville  
Aidan Moeller – Lake Crystal  
Joseph Mohr – Jackson  
Levi Nelson – Glencoe  
Renee Reith – Avoca  
Anna Ridenour – Dodge Center

### WISCONSIN

Chloe Breunig – Sheboygan Falls  
Luke Collins – Arlington  
Meggan Daniels – River Falls  
Eli Freund – Durand  
Lillian Hansen – Fort Atkinson  
Madison Mertz – Hilbert  
Grant Miller – Wonewoc  
Brock Stello – Mindoro  
Danica Stello – Mindoro  
Rachael Steward – Eau Claire  
Maycee Wells – Rio



Above: Lewis Anderson, Blue Ribbon Project Contest winner, poses with his project display about vegetable gardening.

## COUNTY FAIR GRANTS

This year, Compeer Financial awarded 59 grants to help county fairs repair livestock buildings, 4-H buildings and judging arenas. County fairs enhance rural communities by bringing people of all ages together to learn and experience agriculture.

This grant program, through the Compeer Financial Fund for Rural America, is designed to help fund upgrades and repairs of fairgrounds and facilities so fairs can continue to offer the best possible experience year after year.

Since the program was established, the fund has awarded 240 County Fair Facility Upgrade Grants for a total of \$175,000, touching the lives of 6.9 million people.

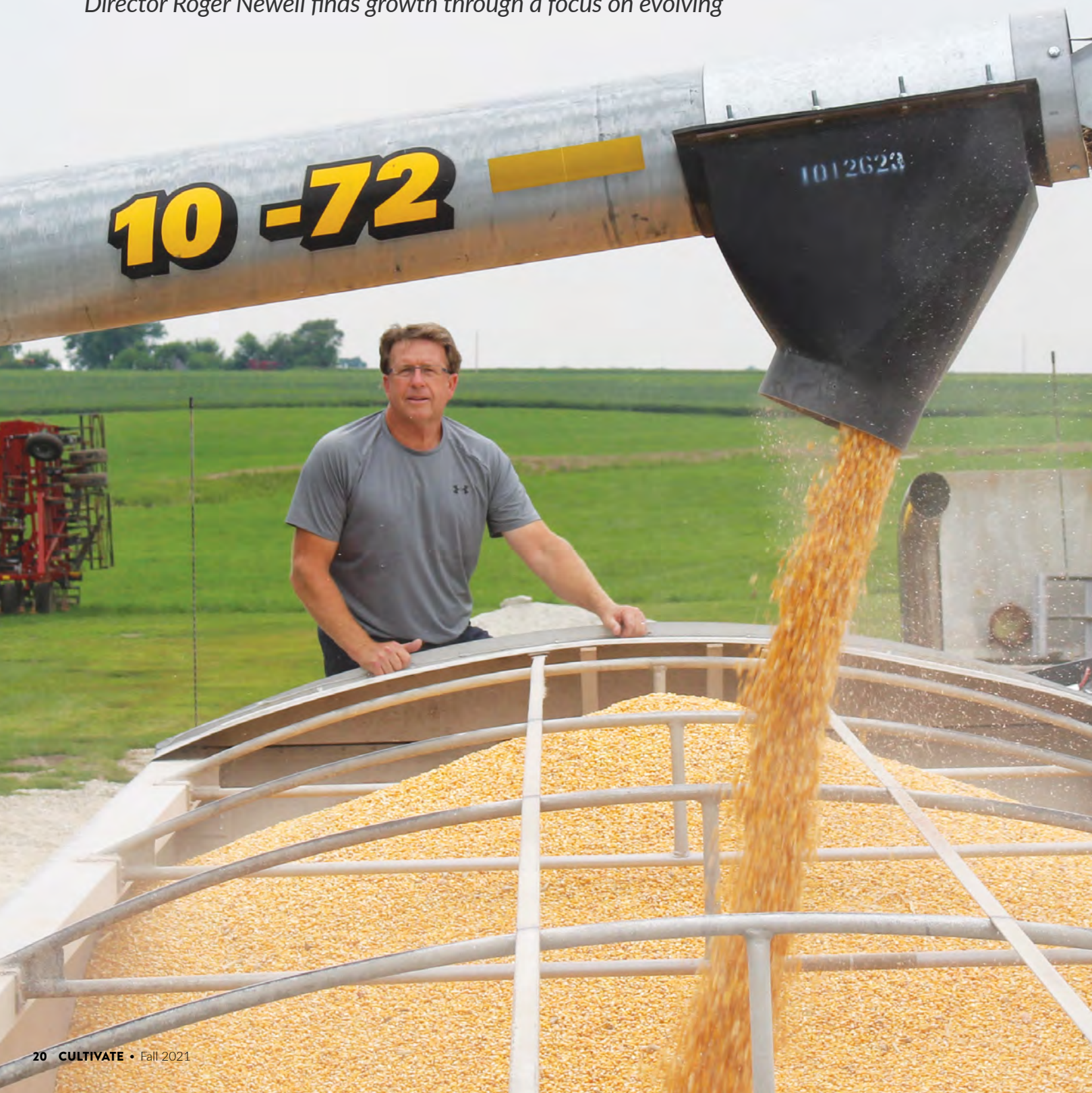
The County Fair Facility Upgrade Grant will be available again in March 2022. For more information, go to [compeer.com/giving-back](https://compeer.com/giving-back).





# Seeking OPPORTUNITIES

Director Roger Newell finds growth through a focus on evolving



WILLIAMSFIELD, Ill. — Throughout his life, Roger Newell has rarely shied away from a new experience or opportunity. He bought his first piece of land in 1983 and has been expanding ever since – all while finding time to travel, learn and serve as township supervisor and a member of the Compeer Financial Board of Directors. His mindset has always been to look for chances to learn something new beyond farm work.

“From my first Board meeting, I realized I had made the right choice,” Newell said. “The quality of people I’ve been around has just been phenomenal. We all bring unique perspectives on the business and the agriculture industry.”

Newell was first elected to the Board of legacy organization Farm Credit Services of West Central Illinois in 1995 and served until 2016. He was elected to the Compeer Financial Board in 2018. One of his favorite parts of serving is hearing from other Compeer clients.

“We have a wide range of clients, and their needs vary from farm to farm,” Newell said. “But the constant that remains is that they’re all looking to do better for themselves. They’re looking for a cooperative that supports them and continues to give them opportunities to make their dreams come true. Compeer clients are positive individuals who want to do better for themselves and their community.”

## GROWTH MINDSET

When it came to farming, Newell and his two brothers forged their own paths. To start out, they rented land and exchanged equipment from their parents for labor.

In 1983, they began buying farmland and focused on growth.

“So many farmers are waiting for the older generation to retire or make room,” Newell said. “If you go out and take care of your business well, people will recognize that and opportunities will come. With our Newell Brothers operation, we were fortunate to have people see the effort our family put into farming, and grateful when they approached us with offers to buy and rent farmland. It has been the constant of our growth.”

Today, Newell and his brothers farm almost 5,000 acres, growing non-GMO grain, corn and soybeans. They also have a cow-calf beef operation and two grain facilities, and formerly owned a seed dealership. Newell credits his experience with the dealership for his ability to look at the broader picture of the agriculture industry. “It really opened my eyes to seeing the vast difference of farmer experiences,” he pointed out. “Meeting farmers from all walks of life who faced a variety of challenges showed me that consistent hard work and an open mind can take you places.”

## HOME ON THE FARM

When Newell married his wife, Julie, after meeting at junior college, she went from city girl to member of the farm team. He credits his parents with instilling in him a strong sense of work ethic and collaborative approach. “You can’t underestimate the power of a strong husband-and-wife team,” he said. “We focused on passing that sense down to our three children and 10 grandchildren.”



**ROGER NEWELL**  
Williamsfield, Ill.

- Elected to the Board in 2018
- Current term expires in 2022
- Serves on Compeer Financial's Audit, Fund for Rural America, and Young, Beginning, Small Farmer committees

Now, the Newells' two daughters are on their own farms after marrying farmers who happened to be neighbors. The Newells' son, an attorney, lives nearby and helps on the farm. The grandchildren have begun showing pigs from a line of purebred Yorkshires and crossbreds, which Newell has developed over the years. They've even had their share of champions.

To breed winning show pigs, Newell had to change his thinking. “I thought, if you want to be better, why use the same genetics as everyone else? So we looked at our stock and bred our own boars,” he explained. “If you want to stand out, you have to look for opportunities to make a change.”



Opposite page: Director Roger Newell loads up corn on his farm in Williamsfield, Ill. Above: Newell and his brothers farm almost 5,000 acres, growing non-GMO grain, corn and soybeans along with a cow-calf beef operation and two grain facilities.



## HOLIDAY HOURS

Compeer Financial will be **CLOSED** for business in observance of these upcoming holidays:

**Thanksgiving Holiday** Nov. 25 & 26  
**Christmas Holiday** Dec. 24

### New Year's Holiday:

Compeer offices **are open** December 31. (This was noted incorrectly on the 2021 Compeer Photo Calendar.)

Offices will be closed January 3, 2022, in observance of New Year's Day.

For your convenience, our **CONTACT CENTER** will be open for calls:

**Day after Thanksgiving** (Nov. 26):  
8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**Christmas Eve** (Dec. 24):  
7:30 a.m. to noon

To reach the Contact Center, please call (844) 426-6733.

## ELECTION RESULTS COMING SOON

Results for Compeer Financial's Board of Directors election will be announced soon — stay tuned to find who member-owners are elected to serve the cooperative going forward.

Our Board of Directors sets business direction, and monitors and evaluates operations, all while taking into consideration client needs, the changing marketplace and Compeer's commitment to serving agriculture and rural America.

- Five director positions are up for election: two in Minnesota, two in Wisconsin and one in Illinois.
- Eligible voting members received their ballots in the mail in early September, with a submission deadline of October 1.
- Visit [compeer.com/elections](https://compeer.com/elections) in early October to view results.

## UPCOMING GRANT PROGRAM DEADLINES

For more information on grants available through the Compeer Financial Fund for Rural America, or to apply for a grant, visit [compeer.com/giving-back](https://compeer.com/giving-back).



### Farmers Market Grant Program: Organization & Vendor

**Application Period:** October 1–November 15

Our **Farmers Market Organization Grant** helps organizations enhance services to consumers and vendors, benefiting all those utilizing the market. The **Farmers Market Vendor Grant** supports farmers with marketing or technology advancements, including branding development, website creation or mobile payment technology products or fees. Applicants must be a client of Compeer Financial.



### General Use Grant

**Application Period:** November 1–December 4

The General Use Grant underscores our commitment to champion the hopes and dreams of rural America. The purpose of the General Use Grant is to fund programs and organizations whose work aligns with our mission of enriching agriculture and rural America.

## BEST PLACES TO WORK

Several publications recently recognized Compeer Financial as a Top Workplace and Best Place to Work. We are proud of these achievements and are grateful for the dedicated team that makes Compeer a great place to be. Our team is the cornerstone of our success, and it's their contributions day-in and day-out that help us to live out our mission of serving our clients, agriculture and rural America.

Learn more about joining #TeamCompeer at [compeer.com/careers](https://compeer.com/careers).



## MYLEARNING

Updating your balance sheet and need a refresher course? Curious about starting a transition plan? MyLearning can help with this and more through videos, interactive modules and worksheets, and opportunities for peer discussions.



Access personalized educational programs 24/7 by logging into your MyCompeer account and clicking on MyLearning.

## Save the Dates FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS & WEBINARS

Mark your calendars for exciting upcoming opportunities from Compeer Financial to expand your knowledge, network and connect with experts. Our client education programs take a forward-thinking approach to provide the innovative, customized insights and expertise you need to succeed.

Cut out this page and hang it up as a reminder of all upcoming opportunities. Scan the QR code at right with your smartphone or go to [compeer.com/events](https://compeer.com/events) to register for the following events.



### GrainVantage

*December 7, 2021 (Virtual)*

Your one-stop shop for all the latest in grain news. This annual program shares insights from experts on how to create a grain marketing plan, understand market forces and trends, and plan for the year ahead.

### Strengthening Your Roots

*January 19, 2022 (Virtual)*

Get a head start in the new year with this multi-session program designed to give you a brush-up on the basics of farm financials, risk management and taxes. Plus, a deep dive on determining your cost of production.

### GroundBreakers

*February 18-19, 2022 & February 25-26, 2022 (In-Person)*

GroundBreakers is a conference developed just for young and beginning farmers; by invite only.

#### Wisconsin: February 18-19

Grand Geneva Resort  
Lake Geneva, Wis.

#### Minnesota: February 25-26

Mystic Lake Center  
Prior Lake, Minn.

### Women's Seminar

*March 9, 2022 (Virtual)*

A half-day session for women who work on the farm, live on a farm, own a farm or support the agriculture industry. Join us virtually for a chance to connect, learn, share stories and hear from other women in agriculture.

### Women's Retreat

*March 11-12, 2022 & March 18-19, 2022 (In-Person)*

The Compeer Financial Women's Retreat provides an opportunity to develop strong connections with other female farmers and take a deep dive into current topics and trends in agriculture. The overnight program focuses on building networks for women in ag to last long beyond the event.

#### Wisconsin: March 11-12

The Abbey Resort  
Fontana, Wis.

#### Minnesota: March 18-19

St. James Hotel  
Red Wing, Minn.

### Webinars

Join us for our upcoming webinars or catch up on all of the on-demand sessions covering topics ranging from grain marketing to labor issues and more whenever you'd like at [compeer.com/webinars](https://compeer.com/webinars).



#### Online Security

*1st Wednesday of the month through December 2021*

#### Transition Planning

*2nd Tuesday of the month through November 2021*

#### World Markets with Arlan Suderman, StoneX

*October 19, 2021*

#### Home Construction Workshop

*On-demand; watch for updates in 2022!*







2600 Jenny Wren Trail  
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# BEGINNING OR YOUNG FARMER?

*We have a program for you!*



## GROUNDBREAKERS YOUNG, BEGINNING & SMALL FARMER PROGRAM

Starting a career in farming comes with its own unique challenges. Compeer Financial can help you get started to make your dreams of building a legacy a reality. **From special financing and long-term fixed rates to a grant program and educational resources including a tailored conference**, we're here to help you succeed. And our experienced financial team will guide you every step of the way.

See how we're supporting the next generation of agriculture:

[COMPEER.COM/BEGINNINGFARMERS](https://COMPEER.COM/BEGINNINGFARMERS)



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