



Cultivating Progress

A SEMI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER DEDICATED TO KEEPING OUR PARTNERS UPDATED ON OUR FARM'S GROWTH.

Quick Exit from a Nasty Growing Season

Features of the 2025 Crop Season

The 2025 crop year was marked with great bookends, but horrible books. The spring planting season was dry and moved along as planned. Crops were put in the ground in good conditions. But the summer proved to be the wettest we've ever experienced, at least as far back as our farm records go. With several rain events surpassing 4 inches, and frequent "re-wetting" rains that kept the soil saturated, we lost over 3% of our acres completely and saw damage and partial loss of crop stands on another 10-15%. This sounds like a "minority" of the acres, but when

you average in complete zeroes on over 200 acres and a 25% loss on another 700, our crop yields did not bring results near average. Luckily, the fall harvest season was a dry one. After over 35

Inches of rain (50% more than we're used to in a growing season), a couple more inches would have been a complete mess to harvest crops in.

Here's a summary of how our crops did this season:

Sugarbeets

We'll start off with the worst news. The beet crop was an absolute disaster. Right from the beginning, this crop was doomed to be average at best. Mysterious weather conditions with record heat during germination and emergence, along with some hot winds, seemed to "burn off" the beet seedlings as they came out of the ground. With stand reductions down to about half of normal, and some fields that required replanting a month later than normal, we knew it would be a challenge to have even average yields in 2025.

Then the rains came. Ponding occurred in every one of our beet fields and wiped out the lowest acres, which are typically the highest yielding in beets since they actually like a good amount of water. About 5% of our beet acres were lost in the rains. The remaining beets saw frequent rains (it seemed like we'd get a tenth of precipitation every night) and this high-moisture environment was the perfect breeding ground for disease. Despite spending high amounts of time and money applying fungicides, the



View from the top of the bins looking East over our home field

leaf disease *Cercospora* ravaged the beets. Leaf canopies were “burnt off” and the plants were forced to grow new leaves mid-summer. Anytime the beet puts on new foliage, it draws upon the stored energy in the root to survive. That means energy going out instead of into the root, which means less sugar getting stored. The 2025 crop ended up being our lowest average sugar ever at 13.87%. Normally we expect around 16.5%.

On top of the sugar loss due to poor plant health, the recessed leaf canopy allowed sunlight to reach the ground and weeds were able to keep sprouting and growing for the entire season. Normally the beet field is so covered in leaves that weeds cannot sprout and survive due to the low amount of sunlight reaching the ground. Our early-



Sugarbeets growing in the field

season herbicides were useless by July, and we were forced to hire hand labor to go through the fields pulling weeds as it was too late to run cultivators through the beets.

Harvest began in September and concluded on October 23rd. The harvest moved along fairly quickly for several reasons: 1. Temperatures were in a good range, 2. Precipitation was low 3. Our added harvest capabilities using two Ropa self-propelled machines, two carts piling the beets in the field, and a Ropa Maus reloader constantly loading 14 trucks and, 4. There weren't many beets to harvest!

In the end we averaged only 20 tons/acre. Our 5-year average is 29 tons/acre. Despite adequate crop insurance coverage, we will absorb large losses per acre on this crop. Not only will the yield reduce revenue, but low price conditions in the sugar market will suppress profits for months to come. Sugarbeets are our highest-cost crop to produce, and so when the yields are disastrous as they were in 2025, the losses cut the deepest of any crop.



Corn growing in the field this summer

Corn We raised 3,150 acres of corn in 2025. Where the crop didn't flood out, yields were close to normal. But again, similar to the beets, we lost about 2% of the corn acres completely to flooding. 1,800 acres were chopped for silage by CY Harvesting and piled at neighboring Meadow Star Dairy. 1,350 were combined for grain and were dried and stored at home binsite for staggered delivery to Meadow Star over the course of the marketing year.

Corn yields were highly variable. Corn harvest started on October 14th and concluded on October 30th. Field averages ranged from 118 bushels/acre to 202. This is by far the widest gap we have ever seen. The fields at the bottom end had the most extensive damage from summer storms, of course. Our 5-year average is 199 and the 2025 crop year brought us 185. Despite all the rain, the crop was moderately dry at an average of 18.5%. It still required mechanical drying but we were happy to see it made it below 20%. Much of this is thanks to hot weather in late September.

Silage yields were also highly variable and disappointing, ranging from 15 to 25 tons/acre. Overall, we ended up averaging 21.55 ton/acre compared to our 5-year average of 23.6. This shortfall was shared across all of the partners we chop for at the dairy, and so this caused us to chop almost 300 more acres of our corn than we had planned to meet the dairy's feed tonnage goals.

Considering the poor yields, we were happy to get the corn off early and start good seedbed preparation for 2026.

Soybeans

Soybeans are always “the boring crop”—yields and returns typically hang in the middle. They never “WOW” you, and they don’t destroy you. 2025 was no different. In a year where crop yields were wrecking averages, guess what? Soybeans came in at 50 bushels/acre (our average is just over 51). It may have actually been a better bean year if not for a tornado-like storm that swept through our irrigated land near Belgrade in early July. The wind and hail damaged the beans and introduced disease that drastically reduced plant stature. These beans yielded around 40 bushels, so there was over a 10-bushel loss due to this one storm.

Despite some tough, green stems at harvest, soybean harvest moisture averaged a dry 11%. We have seen this more and more the last couple of years where the beans in the pod dry faster than the plant, making combining slower. It has gotten to be enough of an issue that some farmers are considering applying a desiccant to kill their soybeans and dry the stems out before harvesting. We have not done this in the interest of controlling costs.

We started harvesting the 875-acre soybean crop on October 1 and finished on October 11. About half of the beans are delivered to local elevators and half to storage at our home site. 25% of our soybeans are grown for seed and receive a modest premium for identity preservation and just-in-time delivery to the seed processor.

Kidney Beans

On the flip side of the “boring” soybeans, kidney beans are never boring. They either make you a great return, or they’re somewhat of a disaster. They are a high-risk crop but this challenge to perfect the process gives us some opportunities to make better profits when other less-challenging commodities have depressed prices.

Dry edible beans like kidneys prefer slightly dry summers. Their shallow root structure leaves them susceptible to root rot and drowning when heavy rains take place. Kidney bean farmers often joke that you need to be careful where you spit in a kidney bean field because you might drown out some plants.

Despite good planting conditions, the heavy and frequent rainfall left many black spots in our kidney bean fields. If one were to view an aerial image of the crop in August, it would look like a green piece of Swiss cheese. The dozens of drowned-out spots decimated the average yield, and since kidneys are harvested earlier than other crops (starting in early September), the soil was still muddy at the start of harvest. Unique to kidney beans is the harvest process that requires us to cut or “rod” the beans,



Cultivator working to remove weeds in kidney beans

cutting them off just under the soil surface.

This is done because the plant is viny and lays down on the ground at harvest time and if conventional bean-cutting methods were used, you would not recover all of the beans in the pods that are laying on the ground. The rodder places the beans in windrows, which are then picked up by a specialty combine. The windrows may have weeds, dirt, and rocks in them so the harvester has to be more robust than traditional crop combines. Kidney beans also do not evenly mature and are not determinate like soybeans, meaning they don’t all mature on about the same day. We often spray a desiccation aid on them to take the greenness away and help harvest move along more steadily. The rodding process also allows the cut plants to lay in the windrow for a day or two before harvesting to get rid of even more green and even out the moisture.

When muddy conditions persist in the field like they did this year, it makes cutting the kidneys very difficult. Not only does the rodder tractor go stuck, but you also run the risk of putting mud into the windrow which is then picked up by the combine and can cause plugging and poor sample quality.

The 2025 kidney bean harvest started in the mud, and several days were very difficult. But luckily, the weather turned very warm and dry and moved conditions to a place where we could efficiently get through it. However, the yields were very disappointing. Whereas we normally expect about 2,300 lbs/acre, with the flooding losses and the overly dry harvest moistures of the beans (which causes damage to the seed and is docked at the processor), we averaged only 1,573 lbs/acre on our 380 acres. This was the lowest since 2019.

The entire 2025 crop was delivered to Bonanza Bean in Morris.

Green (Snap) Beans

This was our first time planting green beans, and we believe it would have been a success if not for the monster storm that blasted through the field in July. Hail and high winds flattened the vegetable crop and led to yields that were estimated to be half of the normal expectation at harvest time. The 240 acres of green beans yielded 9,531 pounds. They were harvested by the processor, Lakeside Foods in Brooten, MN and hauled direct to their plant to be frozen and canned.



New seeding alfalfa being harvested and dumping into a truck that will bring to Meadow Star Dairy

Alfalfa

One crop that likes it cool and damp is alfalfa. Despite the narrow windows in which to harvest the four cuttings, this was one of the few bright spots in the 2025 crop season. Our average across all acres was 5.5 ton/acre, our highest in 10 years. Our average is just over 5 tons/acre in any given year. (Note: The alfalfa historical average is a bit more difficult to track as it includes older stands that may be over 4 years of age, and includes new seedings that only produce half of the normal yield in the first year).

Although we do put up about 100 acres of dry (baled) hay near our cattle ranch by Belgrade, the majority of our alfalfa acres are chopped by CY Harvesting and delivered to Meadow Star Dairy.

The 2025 crop season will go down as one of our poorest, partially due to historic flooding and partially due to poor commodity prices. Dealing with weather is part of the game of farming, and we have to be resilient and efficient when we are given the opportunity to get field work done. We attach some form of multiperil and/or hail insurance to every crop acre (except alfalfa) in order to stave off a portion of the risk.

As far as dealing with depressed commodity prices, we believe that prices long-term will tend to settle on the production cost of the average producer, so we need to be better than that. Whether that's achieved by marketing at a premium, or by lowering cost through greater efficiency, Hultgren Farms needs to be able to perform well when margins become thin, as is typical in any sort of commodity production.

In the end, we are thankful to God that we completed the crop year safely and that everyone came home to their families at the end of the day. We continue to trust in the Lord that He will provide, even when the weather and crop conditions seem hopeless.

And as always, the beauty of farming is that every year we get a chance to wipe the slate clean and start over. We look forward to 2026 as we put the 2025 crop year in our rear-view mirror.

Champion Customer Service

Throughout the year we interact with a variety of companies and vendors. We believe in recognizing those who go above and beyond in their quality of work, surpass tight timelines and truly care about our farm and want to help us improve. Thank you for being champions in customer service!

Cortney Hegg, Service Manager, *Arnolds of Willmar*
 Justin Kidrowski, *Arcs & Sparks*
 Joe Leenstra, *Joe's Auto Repair*
 Jeremy Ruf, *Dooley's Petroleum*
 Troy Stevens, *Gallagher Insurance*
 Carlos Portillo, *Meadow Star Dairy*
 Mike Bakker, *Citizens Alliance Bank*
 Sheryl Johnson, *Farm Service Agency*
 Shane Steinbesser, *Steinbesser Auto Repair LLC*
 Jason Fussy, *Central Crop Consulting*
 Peter Johnson, *Johnson Seed & Ag Services*
 Linda Gravley, *Johnson, Moody, Schmidt & Kleinhuizen*

Kandiyohi County Fair Success

In sports, especially basketball and volleyball, the Hultgren girls are quite successful! This summer however, Hannah (Noah & Paula's youngest daughter) had overwhelming success at the Kandiyohi County Fair with her artwork. Hannah, who is 13 years old and in 8th grade at MACCRAY has always had artistic abilities far beyond the rest of the family, and has been drawing since she was young. This summer she entered 17 pieces of her artwork into the fair. Her amazing artwork received 13 1st place ribbons and three 2nd place ribbons. She also won the



Award of Merit with her Mylar "Mom" Balloons drawing. She definitely doesn't take after her dad, Noah!

Hannah proudly showing off her drawing and Merit Award

New Hire

We are always looking to add great people to our team; this summer we added Joe Heidecker to our farm. Here is a little bit more about him and a few of his favorite things, if you see him around the farm say hello!

Name: Joe Heidecker

Home: Willmar

Family: Aly & Richard Heidecker

Movie: Moneyball

Food: Homemade pickles

Hobbies: Ice fishing

Farm equipment: 620 Quad



Quite the crew!

Each year when we complete the harvest season and approach the holiday of Thanksgiving, I give thanks for everyone who helped us throughout the year. We could not achieve our goals if it wasn't for our team members. Whether it's just for a couple of weeks during harvest, short-term contractors, or a full-time year-round employee, all contribute to a successful season! Thank you for all you do!—Nate

Junior Aviles

Nick Schneider

Oliver Hultgren

Dan Youngkrantz

Lily Hultgren

Valente Trevino Sr.

Reno Williams

Kent Rusten

Jake Lindquist

Josh Larson

Don Hauptli

Paul Meyer

Elias Hultgren

Leon Jacobs

Flores Trucking

Noah Hultgren

Butch Fest

Gunderson Trucking

Ben Lundebrek

Blake Klaphake

JNS Trucking

Joe Heidecker

Nancy Hultgren

D&H Field Services

Hugo Muller

Duane Hultgren

B&A Ag

Flo Miclea

Nora Hultgren

Ken Hanson

Hannah Hultgren

Beef Bonanza

While this was the first year we were absent from farmers markets in local communities, we were able to leverage those great relationships we made to sell out of beef shares for the entire year by July! It has been amazing to connect with local families and help to feed them with the high-quality beef we take great pride in raising. The reason behind exiting markets was to control excess costs in order to keep prices down for everyone. It worked! We were able to fill our butcher appointments and fill your freezers with the best beef, a win-win for everyone.

We expect 2026 to go quickly as well, we've already started adding families to our list. Our appointments are set for the year, and you can pick your spot by calling or visiting our website.

Beef shares are available for the following months in 2026:

April
June
September
November
December

As a quick refresher this is approximately what you can expect from a ¼ beef for a rough price of \$950 in total.

40-50 lbs burger
3 Sirloins steaks
4 Ribeye Steaks
4- T Bone (or split into NYS/Filets)
4-6 Roasts
1 Brisket
2 Stew meat
2 Short ribs
3 Soup Bones
Suet for the birds or tallow
Liver/Heart/Tongue as requested

If you were to buy all these cuts individually in the store it would be closer to \$1300 and a combination of many different animals, qualities, and availability.



Ribeye cooked and ready for supper

Cover Crop Expanding

This summer the Minnesota Department of Agriculture opened applications for a grant called AGRI Value Added Grant, to be used to create, expand, and promote value added items to support the agriculture economy. We have been working to create a new source of cover crop seed in our area as the current options are sparse.

After many months of writing and preparing the grant, we were notified we had been awarded a portion of the funds!

Our project consists of growing rye, oats, and potentially other cover crops for seed, running them through a seed cleaner to remove weed seeds and debris, and then bagging or loading tenders for local farmers to be used on their land. We are eager to provide new avenues for farmers to access cover crops as a further goal of increasing nutrient and soil retention on the windy plains we all call home!



Rye growing in the field – we planted acres this fall for harvest in 2026

Swedish Almond Cake

Cake

- 1 ¼ cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 ½ tsp almond extract
- ⅔ cup milk
- 1 ¼ cup flour
- ½ tsp baking powder
- ½ cup melted butter

Glaze

- ¾ cup powdered sugar
- 1 ½-2 Tbsp milk
- ½ tsp vanilla extract
- ¼ cup sliced almonds

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Prepare pan with baking spray. In a small bowl, whisk together flour and baking powder. In another bowl, mix sugar, egg, almond extract and milk. Add flour mixture and blend thoroughly. Finally, add melted butter and stir until fully combined. Pour into prepared pan and bake for 40-50 minutes. Cool cake completely before turning out.

In a small bowl, blend powdered sugar, milk and vanilla to desired consistency. Pour on top of cooled cake and sprinkle with almonds.



Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

The holidays are upon us and we are always so grateful to have such wonderful family, friends, neighbors, and customers. We appreciate all our relationships and hope you have enjoyed reading this newsletter about our family farm. We want to wish you and your family a wonderful Christmas season and all the best in 2026!



Hannah's drawing of a Christmas Cupcake

Contact Us!

Our offices are 5 miles west of Willmar on MN 40.
11804 15th Ave SW
Raymond, MN 56282

Order our farm-fresh, pasture-raised beef online:
www.hultgrenfarms.com or stop by anytime for the
best ground beef in the state of Minnesota!

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