

BELGRADE CO-OP'S
96TH YEAR OF
SERVING PATRONS



SPRING 2024

Broadcaster

DIRECTORY

**BELGRADE
AGRONOMY**
320-254-8231 Ext 2

**MELROSE
AGRONOMY**
320-254-8231 Ext 3

**FUEL & OIL,
PROPANE**
BELGRADE
320-254-8231 Ext 1

**COOP'S
CORNER
C-STORE**
320-254-3108

RESTAURANT
320-254-3204

www.belgradecoop.com



LET'S GO PAPERLESS!

Receive a \$20 CREDIT on your account when you change your preferences to "Paperless!"

"Paperless" entails:

1. No invoices/delivery slips left on site or mailed to you.
2. No statements mailed.
3. Being signed up for Co-op Connect (online account portal).

Advantages of Co-op Connect:

- See real-time account info
- You can log in on your PC or download the app to have 24/7 on your smartphone
- Make payments via ACH
- Ability to see invoices, payments, statements and booking data
- Run reports for any products and/or timeframe you wish
- Get important information directly from Belgrade Co-op

For questions, to sign up, or change account preferences, contact morganl@belgradecoop.com

INVESTING IN OUR COMMUNITIES

BY LINDSEY BROWER



By the time this newsletter reaches you, we will have begun April, leaving March behind. However, at the time of writing, we are digging ourselves out of several inches of snow and are approaching the end of the month of March.

What comes to mind when you think of March?

March Madness?

"In like a lion, out like a lamb?" (Not March of 2024 😊)

Daylight Savings Time?

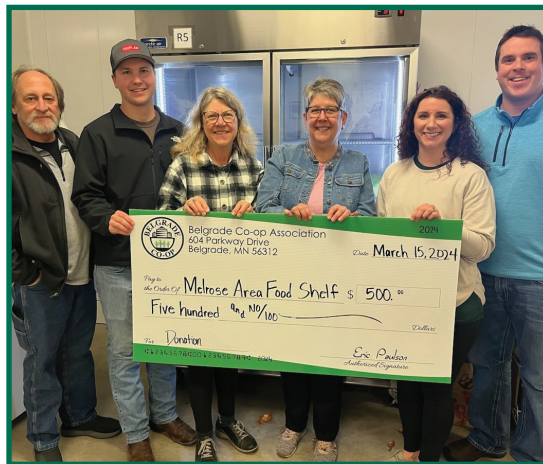
St. Patrick's Day?

The list goes on! I'd like to add to that list and to bring awareness to The Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign.

The Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign is a statewide movement to bring organizations and individuals together to help keep Minnesota food shelves stocked throughout the year. Minnesota FoodShare has distributed over \$18 million to the March Campaign since its inception in 1982.

Donations are needed and welcomed year-round. However, they are particularly beneficial during the month of March because the FoodShare initiative will proportionally match *ALL food and monetary* donations! In other words, the donations made during the FoodShare initiative for the month of March,* the dollars and products go twice as far.

*In 2024, the FoodShare campaign ran February 26-April 6.



Dan, Isaac, Candy, Lisa, Lindsey, and Eric



Carol and Lindsey



Ashley and Eric

Belgrade Co-op proudly donates funds annually in March to three of our local food shelves- Melrose Area Food Shelf (Melrose), BBE Area Food Shelf (Brooten), and The Link (New London).

Facts about food insecurity in Minnesota:

- 1 in 15 face hunger, 1 in 11 are children. ¹
- Minnesotans made 3.7 million visits to food shelves in 2021 and over 7.5 million visits in 2023, a record high for the third consecutive year. ²
- Annual visits to food shelves are now more than double the rates of pre-pandemic visits. ³
- One of the measures our state is taking to help decrease hunger for children is free meals (breakfast and lunch) for the current school year through the Free School Meals bill. ⁴

¹ <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/minnesota>

² https://gmcc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/MN-Hunger-Facts_updated-2024.docx-1.pdf

³ https://gmcc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/MN-Hunger-Facts_updated-2024.docx-1.pdf

⁴ <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/FNS/SNP/free/>

STRIVING FOR IMPROVEMENTS

BY ANDY BORGERDING



Last year I wrote about delivery efficiency and some adjustments we've made to the timing of propane deliveries. Continuing with the concept of increasing efficiency and improving the customer experience, we've recently had a study conducted on our propane deliveries to learn about any other areas that could be improved. In addition to our ongoing efforts to add monitors and continue implementing our routing system for deliveries, we've also decided to make a couple more changes.

The first is to upsize tanks at the end user. By doing this, we can reduce the number of deliveries needed for that customer. Upsizing tanks also adds storage to the end user, which also can reduce stress on our bulk plant during cold stretches in the winter. We still have certain thresholds we like to see for each size of tank, but we have lowered these depending on the location of the tank and how it fits into our routes.

The second is to try to combine tanks where possible at our customers' locations. By having one tank feed multiple buildings, we can utilize those tanks at other locations as well as cut delivery time. Combining tanks can also reduce the number of short fills which is where the delivered gallons fall short of our break-even.

By continuing to look for ways to increase efficiencies, we can help reduce costs for the customer and stay competitive with our local market. If you are interested in finding out if you fall into the new thresholds to upsize your tank or are interested in combining tanks at your property, please reach out to our office.

We appreciate your business and look forward to continuing to supply you with safe and dependable propane.

FROM THE MANAGER'S DESK

BY ERIC PAULSON



The Spring season is quickly approaching and soon our member-owners along with our team here at Belgrade Co-op will be busy putting the necessary inputs out to kick off the 2024 growing season. Hopefully by the time each of you read this,

Mother Nature will have graced us with some much-needed moisture ahead of the planting/fertilizer season. There is a lot to be excited about around Belgrade Cooperative and I want to start by going back a few months to give a recap of our annual meeting and financial highlights from this past February.

First off, thank you to all that attended our annual meeting in February. The weather was nice, and the food was good once again up at Padua Pub giving us the privilege of feeding 350+ people and celebrating a successful evening. Belgrade Co-op completed its 95th year in operation and the results proved yet another strong year for the Cooperative, thanks to our loyal support from our members as well as a team of employees with the same vision and goal in mind – to provide the utmost customer service and exceed expectations of our membership as a partner within the agriculture community! A few highlights include an overall bottom-line profitability of \$3,761,272 that was provided through both strong local earnings as well as our regional partnerships having strong financial years that passed through a significant amount of patronage to the local level. Along with Belgrade Cooperative receiving strong patronage from the organizations we are members of, we were able to pass back \$1,222,000 in earnings back to our customers in the form of cash patronage – a great reason to support your local Co-op as well as allow us to say thank you in the form of a financial return to your home or farm.

The winter season has been a tale of two stories. These past few months have brought the saying “I have never seen a winter like this in my lifetime” by many individuals of all ages. Mother Nature set records for an unseasonably warm winter season that has created challenges on moving gallons within

our propane department, but has also given us the ability to take advantage of the warm temps and get a head start on upcoming projects for the 2024 season as well as allotted more time for our sales team to be out in the country working on farm plans for agronomy or future needs and right sizing tanks within our refined fuels and propane departments.

As we look ahead further into the 2024 calendar year, a few major projects will start to take shape at Belgrade Cooperative. “Storage” has been a key word as we look to expand our facilities to ensure we are leveraging our ability to service our customers today while meeting the needs of our customers of tomorrow. We will be adding a new 30,000-gal propane storage tank to our bulk facility in Belgrade in June of 2024 along with expansion projects planned for our southern territory on the agronomy side of the business that’ll include 42,000 gal of additional Anhydrous Ammonia storage as well as a bulk water tank for custom application needs to service our southern territory more efficiently.

In closing, I would like to thank you all for your business that led us to another successful year as your partner and we look forward to earning your business this upcoming cropping season. We hope you have a safe spring and a smooth planting season!



THE IMPORTANCE OF SULFUR

BY ISAAC CEBULLA



In the agriculture world today, the role of sulfur in boosting the yield and overall health of crops, can't be overstated. Years ago, sulfur used to pretty much take care of itself, since it was deposited by rainfall, and supplied to plants by organic matter. Today, with all the emission regulations making our air cleaner, we get less sulfur from rainfall than we used to. Which has made it more important to monitor and manage the sulfur in your soil.

Although nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium usually take the spotlight, sulfur plays a crucial role influencing processes like protein synthesis, chlorophyll formation, nitrogen fixation, nitrogen use efficiency, root growth, and even increasing plant vigor and resistance to cold. If sulfur is deficient, plants can show reduced growth and development as well as the delaying of maturity. Plants deficient in sulfur will have an overall yellow appearance, very similar to a nitrogen deficiency. However, unlike nitrogen, sulfur is immobile in the plant, so symptoms will appear on the younger leaves first, while nitrogen deficiency symptoms will appear on older leaves first. In corn, sulfur deficiency symptoms could appear as interveinal striped leaves.

Understanding the direct source of a deficiency is crucial. For example, if a sulfur deficiency is misdiagnosed as a nitrogen deficiency, applying nitrogen fertilizer can make the sulfur deficiency worse. For this reason, the best method of identifying a sulfur deficiency is by tissue sampling from areas suspected of deficiency and comparing them to healthy areas of the field. Although tissue testing is the best way to determine if plants have a deficiency in the growing season, typically by the time there is visual symptoms there is already some yield loss. Therefore, including sulfur in a fertilizer program to avoid sulfur deficiency is less costly and more efficient than correcting a sulfur deficiency once it occurs.

The most common forms of sulfur used in fertilizers are sulfate sulfur (SO_4^{2-}), found in AMS,

and elemental sulfur (S^0). Plants can only absorb sulfur through their roots in the sulfate (SO_4^{2-}) form, which means all forms of sulfur in the soil must be converted to sulfate prior to being taken up. Elemental sulfur on the other hand, is totally unavailable to plants until it is oxidized into the sulfate form in the soil. This process can take time but is mostly dependent on moisture and temperature. Sulfate is mobile in the soil, so it is prone to leaching with excess rainfall. Whereas elemental sulfur is immobile, and doesn't leach, which is why it is commonly used in fall applications.

Knowing how much sulfur each crop needs is very important in creating a management plan. A 200-bushel corn crop harvested for grain removes about 16 lbs of sulfur per acre, silage corn removes about 25-30 lbs. Roughly 11 lbs of sulfur is removed from a 60-bushel soybean crop. Soil types also play a role in how much sulfur is needed depending on the likelihood of leaching. This makes it even more important to know what source of sulfur is the best fit for each of your fields. At Belgrade Co-op we understand the growing importance of sulfur for maximizing yield and profitability. Therefore, regardless of whether you want to apply sulfur with a dry fertilizer broadcast, in starter fertilizer, or through irrigation, we have products to fit every scenario.

If you have any questions about the importance of sulfur, reach out to your Belgrade Co-op agronomist and we will be happy to help!

PREMIUM FUEL

BY TODD TRUSTHEIM



Price comparison shopping can be a good thing as long as you're comparing apples to apples. When it comes to collecting quotes from various suppliers for fuel, you may be comparing more along the lines of apples to oranges, because Belgrade Co-op carries *only* premium fuel, specifically Cenex® Ruby Fieldmaster and Cenex® Roadmaster XL.

The Cenex® brand is known throughout the industry as having superior products to help you get your job done, both on the road and in the field. The first major difference is that Cenex® treats their fuel with additives injected at the terminals. As a result, the additives are evenly distributed throughout the fuel. It is a well-mixed, more consistent fuel and provides you with a better blend for your equipment. Any other brand of premium fuel will have the additives combined with the fuel, "splash blended," meaning typically jugs of it are dumped into the bulk fuel truck the morning of deliveries prior to deliveries.

Another major difference is the proprietary formula of the additives used in Cenex® fuels, which have been shown to help keep equipment running more efficiently than with other types of fuel.

KEEP ENGINES RUNNING CLEANER, LONGER WITH AN AGGRESSIVE DETERGENCY PACKAGE

- 40%** More effective at breaking down harmful engine deposits!
- 2.5x** More effective at cleaning up injector deposits and preventing further buildup in dirty equipment!
- UP TO 4.5%** More power when it matters most!
- UP TO 5%** Better fuel economy when every dollar counts!

IMPROVE ENGINE PERFORMANCE WITH A TOTAL WATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

- Separates water to bottom of tank for easy removal
- Entrains excess water for safe passage
- Protects filters and injectors
- Prevents water-caused corrosion

PROTECT EQUIPMENT FROM CONTAMINANTS WITH MAXIMUM FILTERABILITY

- Protects fuel injectors and pumps
- Keeps exhaust aftertreatment system clear
- Maximizes fuel efficiency
- Extends fuel storage life
- Reduces fuel degradation
- 20% better biostability!

UP TO 75% Reduced Filter Blocking!

IMPROVE POWER AND FUEL EFFICIENCY WITH A MORE COMPLETE FUEL BURN

- More efficient combustion
- Less soot production
- Fewer regenerations
- Less wear and tear on exhaust system

25% Lower exhaust cylinder temperature fluctuations!

SPRING SAFETY CHECKLIST

BY MORGAN LEWIS



Spring can be a hectic time of year for everyone in the agricultural industry-stressed, rushed, and always needing another set of hands can lead to dangerous outcomes. This means we need to take extra precautions, be prepared, and have patience.

Here are a few things to keep in mind before the spring rush of planting begins:

- **Personal Health and Wellness**

- Make sure you are choosing healthy food options throughout the day.
- Get plenty of sleep. With early mornings and late nights this can be hard, but if you don't reenergize you can start to make bad decisions or cut corners because you're not thinking clearly. This is when accidents can happen!
- Take breaks throughout the day. Get out and stretch for a few minutes or walk around if you have been sitting in a cab for a long period of time.
- Stay hydrated!

- **Machinery/Equipment**

- Daily Inspections- make sure you are doing a walk around and checking your equipment.
- Road Safety-make sure you have the appropriate lights on along with flashers.
- Don't take short cuts.
 - Buckle Up.
 - Wear a headset-invest in a good quality hands free headset for your phone. We know good communication is key with all the moving parts happening in the spring and having a hands-free headset to allow keeping your eyes on the road or field and hands on the wheel are key for safety.
- Be aware of surroundings.
 - Scout fields and make notes of potential hazards that you may have forgotten about. Also, if you have other help or employees be sure that they are also aware!
 - Keep your eyes out for power lines and poles. If you make contact, stay in the cab and call for help.
- Keep a first aid kit and fire extinguisher handy with you. We know that farmers keep baling twine and duct tape handy, so pack along these other two items as well. 😊

Lastly, have an emergency plan in place and make sure everyone involved in your operation is aware of it.

Have a safe spring!!

CUSTOMER SPOTLIGHT: LEE TOLLEFSRUD OF TOLLEFSRUD FARMS

BY LINDSEY BROWER

Lee and his wife, Stephanie, along with their 3 children (Kylee, Kody, and Kayla) grow corn and soybeans in the Murdock and Sunburg areas. They are members of the of Salem Covenant Church in Pennock and in his “spare time” Lee is very involved in mission opportunities in Honduras, Haiti, and India.

1. What sparked your interest in becoming a crop farmer?

I grew up on a grain and livestock farm and I was always interested and helped out at a young age. I was going to NDSU majoring in Agricultural Economics when my dad suddenly was diagnosed with a brain tumor and died 10 days later. I started crop farming immediately at that point and finished college at the same time. I gradually bought the farm from my mom over a ten-year period.

2. In what ways do you utilize Belgrade Co-op’s products or services to assist you in your operation?

I purchase propane for home heating and grain drying, as well as Cenex fuels, fertilizer, seed, and chemicals from Belgrade Co-op. I also utilize services such as soil sampling, plant tissue analysis, NH3 application, and dry spreading applications.

3. You’ve been with the Co-op for several years; what is it about Belgrade Co-op that has earned your business for 3 decades?

I have purchased most of my crop inputs from Belgrade Cooperative for all the 30 years I have



been farming on my own. I would say Belgrade Co-op is more customer focused than most of their competitors.

4. You’re very involved in missions as well. How did you become aware of and interested in the particular area that you currently serve?

I became interested in mission opportunities through my wife’s job as a teacher at Community Christian School where I helped chaperone teenagers on some of their mission trips.

5. What types of projects have you worked on in the past or are currently working to get up and running?

I am very involved in opportunities in Honduras, Haiti, and India. While doing work with a mission team at an orphanage in Honduras, their site director found out I was a farmer and asked if I could help improve the productivity of their gardens. It was a tough situation because the topsoil had been removed 20 years earlier and they were trying to grow vegetables in the subsoil. I came up with a plan to install a fish farm on the upper portion of the property and use gravity to flow the flush water daily to the garden to not only irrigate but spoon feed nutrients to the plants from the fish. The fish are eaten at the orphanage once a week and the excess are sold to people in the local community. This system did very well and they asked me to serve on their board of Trustees to be in charge of the gardens and fish farm that currently holds 19,000 tilapia.

Another issue we have worked through is that their electricity costs are over 3 times what we pay. We added a solar farm to supply all the electrical needs for the property during the daytime and we are still contemplating the best option for battery storage to use during the nighttime.

I now travel about 4 times a year, mainly in the winter and sometimes late summer. The other board members at Sandy Bay Lighthouse Ministries tease me that I need my farming fix during the winter months in Minnesota and head to Honduras to work in the gardens. My family joins me in the summer when school isn’t in session.

Thank you, Lee, for the peek into what you do on your farm operation in Minnesota as well as your farming passion across the globe!

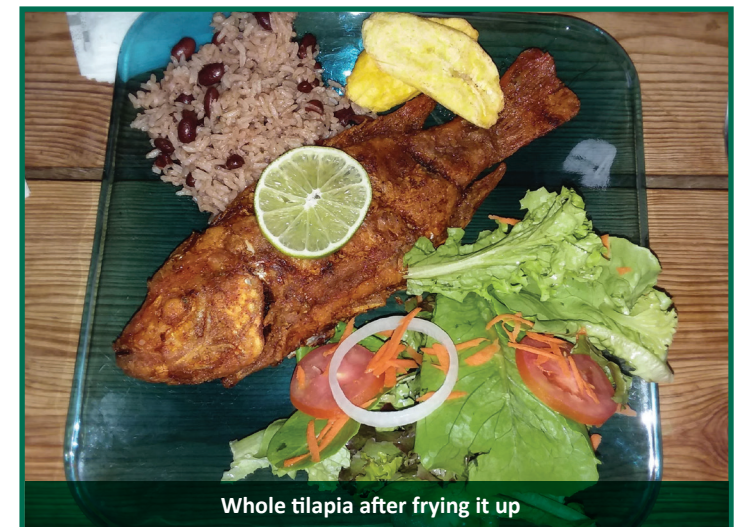
To learn more about Sandy Bay Lighthouse Ministries, please visit <https://www.sblmroatan.net/>



Carlos, Cairo and Angel cleaning fish



Lee and Yui, thinning out some lettuce. Yui has moved on from the orphanage and is currently working as a gardener, so he is utilizing some of the skills he has learned



Whole tilapia after frying it up



Danny, Yui, and Carlos weeding during the pandemic



Fish in a tank

PROPANE BUDGET CONTACTS FOR CUSTOMERS – OUR FASTEST GROWING CONTRACT OPTION

BY LINDSEY BROWER



I know, it's difficult to start thinking about propane for NEXT heating season as we haven't yet wrapped up the current one! Before we know it, it'll be May and we'll be starting the early bird contracting session, which is May 20-31st.

Propane contracting can be very advantageous for customers as it allows you to lock in your price per gallon prior to the upcoming heating season – you know what your heating costs will be rather than taking your chances with whatever pricing is doing during the heating season. In a typical winter season, the price will rise until spring.

If you use propane for any type of commercial, business or church use, or corn drying the contact options are slightly different than residential. At this time, I'd like to focus on just contracts for home heating (shop, garage and barns included), which have 3 payment options to choose from:

1. The first is a **prepaid** contract, where a person pays for the winter gallons in full when the contract is written.
2. The second is a **deposit** contract. This one requires 20¢ per gallon down for the winter gallons when the contract is written. The remainder is billed as you get your winter-time deliveries.
3. Lastly, the **budget** contract option. This option is becoming more and more popular every year! With this option, we calculate the total of that household's heating costs for the entire season (summer fill delivery included) and divide that to create equal monthly payments, making heating costs very affordable. Those who've chosen this plan prefer the small monthly payment throughout the year to getting that dreaded envelope on their door with a total upwards of \$400. Could you imagine the situation reversed with other bills? How high would your cell phone or electric bills be if you paid those balances only one or two times a year instead of monthly? Yikes!

If you are curious about what any of these options look like for you based on your heating needs, any of our office staff would be happy to walk through specifics with you.

The first session for contracting session will take place May 20-31st and the later session of contracting will be held August 19-30th. Mark your calendars!

MAY 2024						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	Propane Contracting					
26	27	28	29	30	31	
	Propane Contracting					

AUGUST 2024						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
	Propane Contracting					
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
	Propane Contracting					

FERTILIZER UPDATE

BY JACKSON GREGORY



The world of fertilizer never seems to have a dull moment since I took over. I'm told that it used to be a lot easier to manage a book of fertilizer business, but with the volatile times we seem to always find ourselves in lately, that is not the case today.

We are nearly full of product in our warehouse which is a bit of an exhale as DAP was on allocation all winter meaning we were only being given a few load numbers a week despite having the product purchased long in advance. This inventory tightness was caused by a huge fall application season across the country which drained the supply chain. It did not help that many manufacturers were still exporting record amounts of DAP as well. After the

fall, of course the Mississippi river shuts down and the only way to refill suppliers' warehouses is via rail, which is not always very efficient over the winter months.

The product shortness doesn't only apply to DAP however. The early spring made it look like the river was going to open sooner rather than later, which would help refill the supply chain ahead of spring for all fertilizer products. While the river is going to open early, it will not matter for a few weeks because the south is planting so heavily that all product has been diverted to get unloaded down there for now. It may be a little bit of a blessing to see winter keep a little hold until early April.

Despite the tightness in supply, I believe I have positioned us well to supply products throughout the spring for our patrons. The main problem with the supply tightness is that the price is a bit out of control for in-season type purchases. If you have prepaid for spring fertilizer, you should be thankful as most products have climbed well over \$100/ton more expensive now. If you have not prepaid for fertilizer yet, you may want to talk with an Agronomist to get your farm plan set so we make sure to purchase enough product for all our patrons.

If you are a patron who uses fertilizer at sidedress/topdress timing, look to take advantage of a sharp price reset I'm expecting after spring preplant season. The prices of all products must reset down drastically to get more in-line with where crop prices are, they just won't reset until after spring because of supply and demand logistics.

As always, thank you for your business over the years, and have a safe planting season!





**604 Parkway Drive
Belgrade, MN 56312**



FUEL DEPARTMENT NEWS AND REMINDERS

BY TODD TRUSTHEIM



- The minimum quantity for deliveries off the fuel truck is 150 gallons. If you need to take less than 150 gallons, there will be a delivery charge of \$50 billed at the time of delivery.

Reach out if you are interested in resizing for more storage. Tanks of various sizes and pumps are available.

- As our fuel customer base continues to grow, our fuel staff has as well!

If you haven't already met him, you may this spring – Dale Thompson is also hauling fuel.

- We offer fuel contracting with several payment options available.

As of now, the supply looks good going into spring; however, increased demand during the planting season, as well as it being an election year, can affect pricing.