



MOMENTUM

Rising to the Occasion

92nd Annual Delegate Meeting

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Standing out
FROM THE FLOCK

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Winter 2022

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On the Cover:

Green Dirt Farm produces award-winning cheeses in Weston, Mo., and is Missouri's only commercial grass-based sheep dairy. Photo by Jason Jenkins.

Why Cooperatives Still Matter

MFA OIL TEAMED UP WITH MFA INCORPORATED TO HOST THE

Emerging Leaders in Agriculture Conference in January. Both companies have held similar conferences in the past, but this was the first time we combined our efforts. The two-day event brought together enthusiastic young producers from across our trade areas and facilitated discussion on how they can better manage and grow their businesses.



Jon Ihler

The agenda covered a wide range of topics relevant to farming and ranching operations, including strategic planning, legislative and regulatory concerns, succession planning, how to run your farm or ranch like a business, and best practices for working with your banker. Additionally, participants talked about the value of cooperatives and the role co-op members play.

Agricultural cooperatives were formed out of necessity in the mid-19th and early 20th centuries in response to corporate trusts. Large trusts like Standard Oil Company and U.S. Steel used their size to regulate supply and fix prices on their products. Some trusts eliminated competition and monopolized industries.

Farmers and ranchers needed a solution and found it through collective action. By establishing cooperatives, producers could fully participate in and benefit from the cooperative value-generating activities.

One of the things we talked about with the young farmers attending the conference is co-ops' role in today's agricultural economy. What would the marketplace look like without cooperatives like MFA Oil or MFA Incorporated? Would producers still find comparable products, services and competitive pricing?

Would a private or publicly traded company provide the same level of local investment, charitable giving, employment opportunities and income to your community?

And what about representation? Is there value in working with suppliers led by a board of directors made up of farmers who share the same needs and values as you do?

These are questions producers of every age should consider. How we conduct business at MFA Oil is determined by many factors, but it always comes down to what will be best for our farmer-members, our employees and the communities we serve. Ownership and profit sharing through patronage are additional cooperative benefits but certainly not the only things to consider.

There are still many challenges agriculture and farmer-owned cooperatives face. Discussing the value cooperatives bring to the table with the next generation of agricultural leaders and showing them how they can get involved in cooperative governance is crucial to our future. When we work together cooperatively, there's no problem we can't overcome. Based on my conversations with the young men and women who attended our Emerging Leaders in Ag Conference, I believe the future of farming, ranching and our cooperatives will be in good hands.

Jon Ihler, President and CEO



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Blending Biodiesel is a “Win-Win” for Lafayette County Farmer

FIFTH-GENERATION FARMER

Garrett Riekhof isn't afraid to try new things on his family's century farm in Lafayette County, Mo. Whether it's testing new technology, researching production decisions in test plots, or re-evaluating inputs, Riekhof is looking for any edge he can find.

Together with his wife, Cara, who helps co-manage the farming operation, Riekhof raises soybeans and white corn. One area where the couple has found success as early adopters has been in embracing soy biodiesel.

“We decided to jump in headfirst with a 50/50 blend of biodiesel and conventional diesel on our farm,” Riekhof says. “I was curious if I would sink or swim with that approach, but we've had no issues whatsoever.”

The family fuels multiple pieces of farm machinery with biodiesel that they buy from MFA Oil.

“MFA Oil can deliver whatever blend I would like of soy biodiesel,” Riekhof says. “They bring it to the farm, and I'm ready to rock and roll.”

For Riekhof, the economic, performance and environmental benefits of biodiesel made it an easy decision to adopt the renewable fuel as part of his farm's energy strategy.

“Soybean biodiesel is cleaner burning, it has a much smaller carbon footprint, and it's saving me a little bit of cash every time I fuel up,” Riekhof says. “To me, it's just a win-win.”

MFA Oil has marketed and provided support for the biodiesel industry since 1993. James Greer, senior vice president of supply and transportation for MFA Oil, says it makes sense for the cooperative to support



Fifth-generation farmer Garrett Riekhof, right, talks with Brent Fette, a refined fuel driver for MFA Oil.

renewable fuels like biodiesel because it benefits the company's farmer-owners.

“It's no secret that agriculture is the No. 1 industry in the state of Missouri,” Greer says. “When you support biodiesel, you support Missouri's soybean farmers. Biodiesel production adds value to soybean prices and puts cash back in our farmers' pockets.”

Missouri is home to seven biodiesel production plants with more than 240 million gallons of annual production capacity. The Missouri biodiesel industry supports more than 3,000 jobs and provides \$1.7 billion in economic impact to the state and local economies.

Riekhof appreciates MFA Oil giving farmers like himself the ability to “burn what we grow.”

“When we take locally grown soybeans and turn their oil into Missouri-produced biodiesel, it not only benefits farmers, but it also keeps those economic benefits in our home communities,” Riekhof says. “I enjoy keeping as many dollars within my community as I can, and I give props to MFA Oil for helping me do it.”

All original engine manufacturers approve biodiesel for use in any diesel engine. Compared with a petroleum-based diesel fuel, B20—a 20-percent blend of biodiesel and conventional diesel fuel—provides similar fuel economy, horsepower and torque as well as increased lubricity and cetane value.

Farmers interested in incorporating biodiesel into their farm's energy mix should contact their local MFA Oil bulk plant. [M](#)

Standing out FROM THE FLOCK

As Missouri's only commercial grass-based sheep dairy and creamery, Green Dirt Farm creates award-winning artisanal cheeses

Photos and Story By Jason Jenkins



ABOVE: Green Dirt Farm manager Eliza Spertus leads a flock of dairy ewes back to the pasture after milking. Since 2008, the farm has commercially produced sheep's milk cheeses that are sold nationwide. AT RIGHT: Top: Wheels of Prairie Tomme—a rustic, hard sheep cheese reminiscent of Spanish manchego—age for at least four months at Green Dirt. Center: Freshly pressed sheep's cheese receives a pinch of salt. Bottom: One of Green Dirt's popular cheeses is Dirt Lover, a bloomy rind sheep cheese with a light coating of vegetable ash.

It's a little after 5:30 on a Thursday afternoon, and already the "girls" are a bit restless. There is comfort in routine for this mixed flock of Lacaune and East Friesian dairy ewes, and thanks to a talkative visitor, their routine has been delayed. They hardly need coaxed from their portable pasture enclosure; they know where they're headed.

With the gate open, the sheep make a beeline for the holding pen adjacent the milking parlor—no shepherd required. The ewes enjoy some alfalfa hay as they await their turn. Once inside, each munches contentedly on grain while being relieved of a quart or more of milk. In less than an hour, the flock is back grazing in the pasture.

Such a scene happens twice daily for most of the year at Green Dirt Farm, located in the river hills just north of Weston, Mo. Dairy sheep have been part of the landscape of this 150-acre farm since 2002, when Sarah Hoffmann purchased her first dozen ewes and jumped headfirst into the art of cheesemaking.

"It's just beautiful milk," says Hoffmann, whose award-winning cheeses are sold across the country. "It has such a sweet, silky, creamy flavor with a wonderful texture. From a cheesemaker's perspective, it's a gorgeous milk for making cheese."

FOLLOWING A PASTORAL PREROGATIVE

Hoffmann's love of agriculture was instilled as a child. Though her father served in the U.S. Navy, he had an entrepreneurial spirit and a penchant for farming. Instead of living in naval base housing, the family would instead take up residence on small farms where they'd raise produce.

"My dad was kind of a forerunner to today's farm-to-table experience," Hoffman says. "When I was a teenager, we raised sweet corn and tomatoes that we sold to restaurants in Annapolis, Maryland. Of course, my brothers and sisters and I provided all the labor. From a young age, I was determined I was going to live on a farm when I grew up. I wanted my children to have that same experience because I loved it so much."

Hoffmann went to college and earned a degree in chemistry before joining the Peace Corps, which inspired an interest in infectious and tropical diseases. That led to medical school in San Francisco, where she met her future husband, John Spertus. The pair would spend time in Seattle before eventually finding their way to the Kansas City region in 1996.

"I told him we needed to move somewhere where we could find affordable farmland within 30 miles of an academic medical center," she recalls. "Being a Navy brat, I had never lived in the Midwest, but now I've lived here longer than anywhere. It really feels like my hometown."

Two years after moving, the couple's third child was born, and Hoffmann decided it was time to leave her career as an academic physician and begin her farming journey. She says that her initial idea was to raise organic vegetables.

"We learned pretty quick that our soil wasn't suited for cultivation, so we started looking at other opportunities that were environmentally and economically sustainable," Hoffmann explains. "That's when I got the idea of a grass-based dairy and eventually making cheese. It was perfect for someone with a background in chemistry and microbiology."

BECOMING A CHEESE WHIZ

Though most Americans probably don't realize it, there's a large appetite for sheep's milk cheeses in the United States. Traditional Old-World cheeses—such as feta from Greece, manchego from Spain, Pecorino Romano from Italy and Roquefort from France—are all produced using sheep's milk.

"I had an aunt who ran her own cheese shop in New Jersey, and when I was in college, I'd help her out during holiday breaks," Hoffmann says. "She taught me about fine cheese."

Although millions of pounds of sheep's milk products are imported every year to satiate U.S. demand, the domestic sheep dairy industry remains small. While the actual number of sheep dairies in the United States is unknown, estimates range from 75 to 100 producers, according to





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: When Sarah Hoffmann founded Green Dirt Farm, her goal was to raise her children on a farm. In the process, she created Missouri's only commercial grass-based sheep dairy and creamery. • Head cheese maker Oskar Arevalo, left, and John Garcia, sales and cheese making assistant, apply vegetable ash to a batch of Dirt Lover cheese. • Eliza Spertus oversees an afternoon milking at Green Dirt Farm. Ewes are milked twice daily, producing 5.5 to 7 pounds of milk per day on average. • Cheese kitchen manager Amelia Rodgers-Jones uses a probe to measure the pH of aging cheese. • Charcuterie and cheese boards are a popular menu item at the Green Dirt Café in Weston.

the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center based at Iowa State University.

“I would say there are fewer than 10 who make cheese with sheep’s milk that they produce themselves,” says Hoffmann, who currently serves on the board of the Dairy Sheep Association of North America. “From a business perspective, it seemed there was market opportunity there.”

After six years of building up the flock and learning how to make quality cheese, Green Dirt Farm launched commercial production in 2008. Today, Hoffmann and her team offer a variety of primarily French-style sheep’s milk cheeses. They include six flavors of soft spreadable cheese similar to chevre, a goat’s milk cheese. Other cheeses include Dirt Lover, a soft-ripened, bloomy rind cheese reminiscent of French Camembert; Bossa, a washed rind “stinky” cheese; and Prairie Tomme, a hard cheese that’s been aged at least four months.

“In 2015, we added several styles of blended milk cheeses that combine both sheep and cow’s milk,” Hoffmann says. “Sheep’s milk costs four times more to produce than cow’s milk, so the blended milk cheese really helps with the economics, and it gives us something interesting to offer our customers.”

REFINING THE FLOCK

Also in 2015, Sarah and John’s oldest child, Eliza Spertus, returned to Green Dirt to become farm manager. Her primary focus has been increasing the flock’s productivity through improved genetics.

“One of the big challenges with the U.S. dairy sheep industry overall is that there aren’t a lot of top-end genetics here,” Spertus says. “Those really only exist in Europe.”

The reason for the genetic dearth stems from U.S. bans on the import of live animals, meat and genetic material from Europe during the late 1980s and 1990s. The intent was to protect the U.S. livestock industry from foot-and-mouth disease and, later, mad cow disease. With no new genetics entering the country, producers were crossbreeding animals and slowly diluting their genetic potential.

Restrictions on genetic material were eventually lifted. So, after culling back the flock to the 70 best-performing individuals, Green Dirt artificially inseminated its first ewes with French Lacaune sheep semen in 2017.

“It’s been a slow process to build our flock up again, but we’re now starting to really see the benefits,” Spertus says. “Right now, my girls average 5.5 to 7 pounds of milk per day through the whole season.”

Another goal for the farm is to split the flock into two lambing groups so that fluid sheep’s milk is available for a greater portion of the year. Unlike a dairy cow, whose lactation cycle can last for 300 days, the average length of lactation for a sheep is only 180 to 200 days.

AFTER SIX YEARS OF BUILDING UP THE FLOCK AND LEARNING HOW TO MAKE QUALITY CHEESE, GREEN DIRT FARM LAUNCHED COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION IN 2008.

“In 2021, we milked 70 ewes. Half lambled in February, and the other half lambled in June,” Spertus explains. “My goal this year is to milk 100 ewes from April through December, with the ultimate goal of milking 150 ewes year-round.”

One of the unique challenges when making cheese in a grass-based dairy system is that the composition and flavor of the milk change depending on the stage of lactation and the sheep’s diet. Spertus says their pastures comprise a mixture of cool-season, warm-season and native grasses, along with legumes. While this variety offers more flavor, it affords the cheesemaker less control.

“We really encourage our customers to think of it as part of the adventure and a celebration of nature,” Hoffmann says. “We do tweak our recipes as the milk evolves with the season. As an artisan cheesemaker, that’s where the art comes in.”

INTRODUCING GREEN DIRT TO THE CROSSROADS

During its first full year of production in 2009, Green Dirt Farm made 3,000 pounds of cheese. By 2012, that number had increased to 18,000 pounds, and in 2016, the business opened a café and shop in Weston, serving up sandwiches, charcuterie and cheese boards, and other artisanal foods.

In 2021, the farm sold about 40,000 pounds of cheese. Hoffmann says growing the creamery has required her to become a businessperson, something she knew nothing about when she began.

“As we were figuring out how to get on more sound economic footing, a friend said to me, ‘You have to stop working in the business and start working on the business,’” she recalls. “And she was right. I needed to be out selling cheese, not making it. Now, I think in terms of how much cheese we sell instead of how much we make. It was tough to leave the kitchen behind, but I enjoy nurturing new people to become really good cheesemakers.”

The next era of growth for Green Dirt Farm is in the works. Later this year, cheese production will expand from the Weston farm to a second location in Kansas City’s East Crossroads neighborhood, affectionately known as “Brewer’s Alley” due to the burgeoning craft beer scene there.

In addition to a café and a new kitchen for hard cheeses, the facility also will feature yogurt production. Green Dirt previously produced a line of yogurt from 2012 to 2016; however, the need to maintain strict food safety protocol didn’t allow for both cheese and yogurt to be made in such close proximity on the farm.

“Sheep’s milk makes absolutely fabulous yogurt, like a thick Greek yogurt,” Hoffmann says. “This new location is the culmination of my dream to bring back our yogurt and take the next step for the business. The East Crossroads has lots of beer and spirits, but they need cheese.” **M**

To learn more about Green Dirt Farm, visit www.greendirtfarm.com or call 816-386-2156.

Rising to the Occasion

92nd Annual Delegate Meeting

**MFA Oil Declares \$6.5 Million in Cash
Distributions for Member-Owners**



By Adam Buckallew
Photos By Casey Buckman



The Polar Vortex of 2021 plunged nearly every state in the country into a deep freeze with snow, ice storms and record-cold temperatures. The historic, prolonged Arctic blast created energy supply disruptions, the largest surge in propane demand in 17 years, and circumstances that required every propane terminal in the Midwest to ration supply to retail suppliers like MFA Oil Company.

These challenging conditions were among the many hurdles MFA Oil faced in its 2021 fiscal year. The cooperative contended with multiyear highs in fuel costs, a resurgence of COVID-19, supply chain issues, ongoing labor shortages, and more. Yet, the cooperative not only survived the tide of adversity—it thrived.

“We outperformed our expectations for the year thanks to our dedicated employees

throughout the company,” said Jon Ihler, MFA Oil president and CEO. “Our employees care greatly for our customers and take pride in our services. I am incredibly proud of their efforts, which made 2021 another successful year for the cooperative.”

Ihler delivered the good news to the co-op’s delegates at the 92nd Annual MFA Oil Delegate Meeting on Dec. 13 in

Columbia, Mo. Nearly 350 delegates, guests and employees attended the meeting. The company reported a pre-tax net income of \$15.6 million for its 2021 fiscal year and announced it would pay \$6.5 million in cash to its members in exchange for doing business with the company.

The announced distribution of cash to MFA Oil members includes a 100-percent payout of the company's earnings for the 2020 fiscal year (\$3 million in patronage) and the retirement of 50 percent of member equities from 2008 (\$3.5 million). MFA Oil received an additional \$2.7 million in patronage from other cooperatives that will be passed on to its members in the form of equity. Over the last five years, MFA Oil has paid out \$36.3 million in cash to its members.

MFA Oil Chairman of the Board Glen Cope said the cooperative's Board of Directors and management team share a simple philosophy regarding the company's profits: "We keep what we must to sustain and grow our business and return the rest to you, our member-owners."

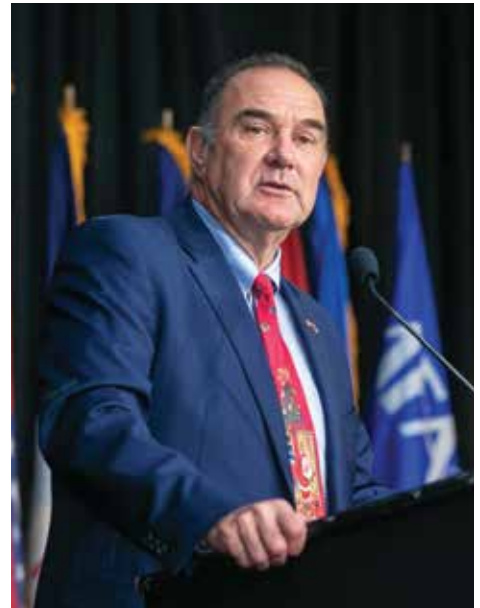
MFA Oil members are eligible to receive patronage based on a percentage of the total money they spend on gasoline, diesel, propane and lubricants purchased through the company's refined fuel and propane plants, as well as at Petro-Card 24 stations. Customers who are agricultural producers or owners of land used for farm production and purchase at least \$1,000 of product from MFA Oil during its fiscal year (Sept. 1 through Aug. 31) are eligible for membership in the cooperative.

"Doing business with MFA Oil means that you are investing in a company that will provide value to you and your communities," Cope said. "Your board and senior management are committed to striking a balance between updating our company assets while returning profits in the form of patronage to our member-owners."

BUSINESS UPDATES

Ihler told the delegates that the company is growing and well-positioned to maintain a positive trajectory, with organic growth outpacing acquisition growth in 2021.

"We have the infrastructure in place to handle more gallons and more customers," Ihler said. "Our state-of-the-art fleet and



OPPOSITE PAGE: MFA Oil Board Chairman Glen Cope welcomed delegates to the company's 92nd Annual Delegate meeting. TOP LEFT: Jon Ihler, MFA Oil president and CEO, provided updates on the cooperative's operations. TOP RIGHT: Missouri Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe was the meeting's guest speaker. BOTTOM: Nearly 350 delegates, guests and employees gathered for the meeting in Columbia, Mo., at the Holiday Inn Executive Center.

service equipment combined with our strong retail presence will last for years to come."

Contributions from the company's Big O Tires, Break Time and APM divisions continue to grow and provide significant financial support. Ihler said these non-member business units contribute to the overall success of the cooperative and return value to member-owners by increasing their equity.

The rollout of the Energy-Force customer management point-of-sale system was the company's highest priority project in 2021.

The software is operational at more than 70 percent of the company's bulk fuel and propane plants, with additional installations planned. Ihler said the new system would help simplify daily tasks for the company's field employees, which should, in turn, improve customer service. Ihler noted the ease-of-use of the Energy-Force platform could be a "game-changer" for the company's bulk fuel and propane division.

Safety and risk management remains a strong focus for the company. In the 2020 fiscal year, MFA Oil saw its insurance premiums rise by \$3 million.

EARNINGS

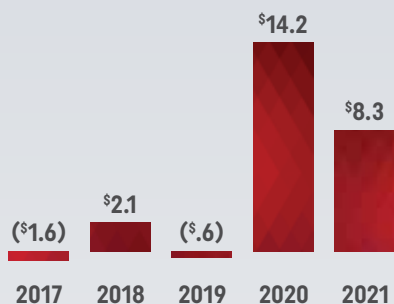
IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS

NET WORTH

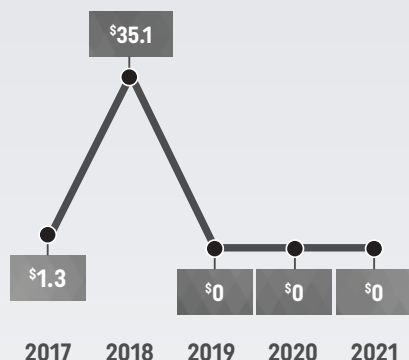


EARNINGS ON MFA OIL OPERATIONS

Excluding Patronage



TOTAL INDEBTEDNESS



PATRONAGE: RETIRED PAST EQUITIES AND CASH PAYMENTS



Chad Shields of Lineville, Iowa, won the meeting's grand prize drawing for a Knapheide PGTD Gooseneck truck bed. Eight delegates in attendance at the meeting were also randomly selected to win a \$500 MFA Oil gift card.

In September 2020, the company launched MFA Oil Captive, a wholly owned subsidiary, to combat rising insurance costs. The captive insurance company allows MFA Oil to self-insure a portion of its insurance needs and provides financial income and tax savings benefits. Ihler said enhanced safety vigilance and more robust risk management policies helped reduce insurance claims in 2021.

The 2021 fiscal year included MFA Oil's entry into the solar industry with the launch of Energized Solar, a wholly owned subsidiary of the farmer-owned cooperative. Energized Solar offers solar panel installations for farmers, homeowners and businesses.

The cooperative's solar debut builds on MFA Oil's reputation as a trusted energy provider and represents its latest commitment to diversifying its product offerings with renewable energy.

"We've met the energy needs of our members and customers for more than 90 years, and we see great opportunity in the fast-growing solar market," Ihler said. "We're excited to bring sustainable energy solutions to our farmers and the rural communities we serve."

While the company is evolving and introducing new business lines within the cooperative, Ihler promised not to

lose sight of the company's historical role and purpose.

"We fully understand the important role we play in supplying energy to our members and that customers count on us to run their business," Ihler said. "We're working to maintain a big-picture, long-term view which accounts for the future needs of our member-owners."

DISTRICT MEETINGS UNDERWAY

Last March, the MFA Oil Company Board of Directors voted to amend the cooperative's bylaws to allow delegate voting caucuses to move to the company's Annual District Meetings, which began on Feb. 1 and are scheduled throughout the month.

The caucuses, held during the cooperative's Annual Delegate Meeting in past years, are how delegates from each of the company's eight voting districts elect their respective board members.

"Driving to the annual meeting can be a long trip for our delegates who live on the outskirts of our territories," said Cope. "Moving the caucuses to the district meetings should allow more delegates to participate in the voting process since they won't have to travel as far. The more people we can get involved with our cooperative, the stronger it becomes." **M**



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MFA Oil Company 2021 Fiscal Year Audit Report

Our auditors, CliftonLarsonAllen LLP from Bloomington, Ill., recently completed our fiscal year audit for the period Sept. 1, 2020, through Aug. 31, 2021. Following is a summarized balance sheet and a consolidated statement of operations for our past fiscal year.

CliftonLarsonAllen LLP provided the following statement: "In our opinion, the consolidated financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Company as of August 31, 2021, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with U.S. generally accepted accounting principles."



Jeff Raetz, Chief Financial Officer



CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS AUGUST 31, 2021 AND 2020

	2021	2020
Sales	\$1,066,711,194	\$915,890,913
Cost of Sales	848,769,092	700,370,265
Gross Margin	\$217,942,102	\$215,520,648
Other Income	7,371,673	6,984,291
Operating Expenses	223,268,437	211,479,709
Income from Operations	2,045,338	11,025,230
Other Income/(Expense)		
Patronage Dividends	7,326,695	21,499,051
Interest Income	921,704	850,719
Interest Expense	(18,290)	(169,503)
Gain(Loss) on Sales of Assets	3,066,950	265,617
Other Income/(Expense)	2,297,950	2,271,037
Net Income Before Tax	\$15,640,347	\$35,742,151
Income Tax	1,454,351	3,318,382
Net Income	\$14,185,996	\$32,423,769

CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET AUGUST 31, 2021 AND 2020

	2021	2020
Assets		
Current Assets		
Cash	\$53,637,087	\$62,972,711
Investments in For-Sale Securities	4,980,433	372,571
Accounts Receivable	55,394,152	45,150,964
Inventory	69,609,141	42,050,766
Other Current Assets	14,365,014	19,821,688
Total Current Assets	\$197,985,827	\$170,368,430
Investments	91,371,673	85,066,844
Property, Plant & Equipment	143,566,549	155,730,639
Goodwill	17,888,349	21,322,942
Other Intangibles	1,948,739	2,560,241
Other Assets	697,287	496,436
Total Assets	\$453,458,424	\$435,545,532

Liabilities, Members' Equities and Retained Savings

Current Liabilities	\$97,678,652	\$85,026,608
Long-Term Debt	0	0
Other Long-Term Liabilities	1,222,201	1,012,229
Deferred Income Tax	11,670,506	12,768,144
Total Liabilities	\$110,571,359	\$98,806,981
Members' Equities	68,327,843	70,524,993
Retained Savings	274,559,222	266,213,558
Total Members' Equities	\$342,887,065	\$336,738,551
Total Liabilities and Equities	\$453,458,424	\$435,545,532

Q&A with Mike Moreland of the MFA Oil Board of Directors



Q How would you describe yourself and your farming operation?

A I always describe myself as a third-generation farmer from Cass County, Mo., but in reality, the Moreland family homesteaded and started farming in Maries County, Mo., in the 1840s. My wife, Heather, and I have been married 37 years and have four grown sons involved in agriculture. Moreland Farms LLC is a three-way partnership with my brother, Jay, and my oldest son, Matt. Our family had been in the dairy business for more than 70 years, but we sold our dairy cows in December 2018. Currently, we grow corn, soybeans and have a cow-calf herd of Angus cross cattle on 2,700 acres.

Q You have had the opportunity to serve on the board of directors for many farming organizations. How does serving on the MFA Oil Board of Directors compare to others?

A I've had the honor and privilege to have served on several different agricultural organizations' boards throughout the years. Most of those boards have been grassroots, non-profit and commodity-based organizations. MFA Oil is the first farmer-owned



Photo by Keith Borgmeyer

cooperative board on which I have served. The responsibilities of the board of directors are the same in most organizations. Primarily, we help shape the cooperative's strategy and provide guidance to the CEO and management team to help them succeed in creating value for our member-owners. One of the most significant differences between MFA Oil versus previous boards on which I have served is the size and scope of the operations.

Q What would you tell other farmers about the importance of taking on leadership roles in their cooperative and the agricultural industry?

A I learned from my parents and grandparents the importance of

being involved in our industry. Those of us who make a living in agriculture account for less than 2 percent of the population of this country. If we are not involved in decision-making and policy development, somebody else will be, and we might not like the outcome. The same is true with our cooperatives. We need our delegates to be involved at the local and district level and share their input to help guide the board. Our cooperative was founded on these beliefs over 90 years ago, and those principles remain just as important today as they were then.

Q Since you were elected to the MFA Oil Board in 2019, what would you say have been the cooperative's most notable achievements?

A When I was elected in 2019, some issues had to be addressed. The board and executive team decided to implement a new set of core values: put the customer first, be tenacious and lead by example. As a company, I wouldn't say we were going down the wrong path, but we were getting close. The morale of our customers and employees was low, and we knew changes were needed. This new direction for MFA Oil is making a difference in how we do business, and we are starting to see the results.

A new computer system, Energy-Force, was launched last year to replace the previous program, which wasn't user-friendly and didn't work well in the field. We know there will be a few hiccups along the way, but the new system will be better for our employees and customers.

Q What have you learned about the cooperative since becoming a director that you didn't know before?

A I had been a delegate for seven years and had attended many local area meetings and a couple of annual meetings before being elected to the board in 2019. One thing that I didn't realize was how large of an area MFA Oil covered. We do business in eight states and have over 1,500 employees working for the company. My family has used MFA Oil fuel and lubricants for many years, but I was surprised by the cooperative's vast number of products and services. Most of us are aware of the MFA Oil and MFA Inc. scholarship programs, but I didn't realize the MFA Oil Foundation, which has been

around since 1998, has given out over \$2 million in grants to local causes in our rural communities. The foundation assists 4-H clubs, FFA chapters, local firefighters, small-town parks and homeless shelters, to name just a few examples. These organizations have benefitted thanks to the business our farmer-members do with their local MFA Oil locations. **M**

» Mike Moreland is a third-generation farmer from Harrisonville, Mo., where he raises corn, soybeans and cattle with his brother and sons. He was elected to the MFA Oil Board of Directors in 2019 to represent District 5 – West Central.

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» The Big Picture





Investing in Infrastructure

THE BIPARTISAN INFRASTRUCTURE

Investment and Jobs Act passed by federal legislators in November 2021 is set to deliver a \$1.2 trillion investment in the nation's infrastructure over the next five years. The bill represents a historic, once-in-a-generation reinvestment in America's roads, bridges, water and wastewater networks, ports, electric grid, dams, and more.

After decades of neglect and deferred maintenance, the nation's infrastructure had fallen into disrepair. America currently ranks 13th in the world when it comes to the overall quality of infrastructure, and the American Society of Civil Engineers rated that nation's infrastructure system at a C- grade. Investment in America's aging and deteriorating infrastructure system is badly needed, and the bipartisan coalition of Republican and Democratic lawmakers that passed the infrastructure bill have provided the funds needed to modernize U.S. infrastructure at nearly every level.

Infrastructure is the backbone of healthy economies. Reliable infrastructure connects supply chains, ensures the efficient movement of goods, strengthens international competitiveness and improves quality of life for the citizens who depend upon it.

Farmers understand the necessity of infrastructure perhaps better than anyone. Without reliable roads, bridges and waterways, the exchange of agricultural goods and services can grind to a halt.

More than 42 percent of the 617,000 bridges nationwide are at least 50 years old, and 46,154, or 7.5 percent, of U.S. bridges are considered structurally deficient or in poor condition. Missouri is home to 2,190 bridges in poor condition—the fifth most in the country—according to the 2020 National Bridge Inventory. Missouri is set to receive \$96.9 million in federal funding

over the next year to address dilapidated bridges that have fallen into disrepair, and an additional \$484 million will be released to the state over the next five years.

The locks, dams and navigation channels that allow barges to move agricultural exports and inputs up and down the nation's rivers are another area that will receive crucial federal funding. Lock and Dam 25, located 45 miles north of St. Louis near Winfield, Mo., is one of many waterway projects set to receive money from the bipartisan infrastructure bill.

Lock and dam modernization is a crucial priority for the farmers and agribusinesses that depend upon river transport to move soybeans, corn and other freight along the Mississippi River to export facilities near the Gulf of Mexico.

“Funding Lock and Dam 25 to completion is a huge deal to grain handlers, ag exporters and U.S. ag competitiveness as a whole,” said Bobby Frederick, senior vice president of legislative affairs and public policy at the National Grain and Feed Association.

The State of Missouri appears poised to make some infrastructure investments of its own. In his State of the State address, Missouri Gov. Mike Parson outlined infrastructure projects he submitted in his budget proposal to state lawmakers on Jan. 19. Parson called for \$75 million for the state's Transportation Cost-Share program, \$100 million for improvements to low-volume roads and \$400 million for broadband access. The Federal Communications Commission says more than 147,000 households or 400,000 Missourians lack access to broadband.

“Road and bridge repair and broadband expansion are not only important for every Missourian but are critical for our state's number one industry, agriculture,” Parson said. [M](#)



MFA Oil and MFA Incorporated Hold Conference for Emerging Leaders in Ag

By Adam Buckallew | Photo By Allison Jenkins

Young farmers from Missouri, Arkansas and Kansas gathered in Osage Beach, Mo., on Jan. 11-13, 2022, for the inaugural Emerging Leaders in Agriculture Conference cohosted by MFA Oil and MFA Incorporated. The two-day, all-expenses-paid event brought together farmers who will lead the next generation of agricultural production with industry experts to discuss important farm issues and offer peer networking opportunities.

“There’s a lot of value in bringing together up-and-coming producers so that they can bounce ideas off one another, share successes from their operations and build their network of contacts with farmers and ranchers who are in similar situations,” MFA Oil President and CEO Jon Ihler said.

The conference kicked off with a session led by Donnell Brown, a fifth-generation rancher from Throckmorton, Texas, who owns and manages the R.A. Brown Ranch. Brown discussed how participants could better run their farms like businesses. He encouraged diversification to manage risk and future challenges.

“We don’t know how markets will shift, but we do know it will happen,” Brown said. “There are many ways to diversify—through

new crops, breeds, production practices, etc. The key is to find ways to become a price maker rather than a price taker. I’ve found it’s easier to sell what customers want to buy rather than what I may want to sell them.”

Natasha Cox, regional vice president of ag lending for Farm Credit Mid-America, spoke about what lenders expect from farmers and what farmers should expect of their lenders. She asked the audience to consider their banker as a strategic partner and trusted adviser.

“The more your lender knows about your operation, the better a partner they can be to you,” Cox said. “All farmers need a detailed plan with a well-thought-out goal. Once you’ve put together your plan, you should share that information with your lender—it’s not a secret to keep.”

What should farmers expect of their lenders? Cox listed flexibility, explanations on loan decisions, good communication, financial analysis based on shared information and open dialogue about options when times get tough.

Dr. Keri Jacobs, an associate professor of agricultural and applied economics in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources at the University of Missouri, spoke about the cooperative business model and the upside of doing business with cooperatives. Jacobs, who holds the MFA Chair in Agribusiness and is a Graduate Institute of Cooperative Leadership Fellow, reviewed the historical significance of agricultural cooperatives and why they were formed.

Agricultural cooperatives provided access to unreachable goods and services, opened downstream markets, created necessary infrastructure and shared operations, addressed systemic risks, and maintained crucial market power through the collective action of the farmers who formed them.

Jacobs suggested the cooperative system is needed now more than ever.

“Without cooperatives, it’s questionable if enough competition would remain to maintain competitive pricing and services to farmers,” she said.

Jacobs said the mere existence of cooperatives benefits producers by providing options to the marketplace, maintaining the vitality of rural communities through local investments and local employment, and ensuring business decisions are made by member-owners who use the co-op and share in its successes and failures.

Sara Wyant, founder and president of Agri-Pulse Communications, Inc., examined hot topics in Washington, D.C., and gave attendees a look ahead to important legislative issues for 2022. Although the \$1.7 trillion Build Back Better (BBB) bill, which the House of Representatives passed, may appear dead after West Virginia Senator Joe Manchin’s opposition, it could make a comeback in a smaller form. Should BBB resurface, Wyant expects the agricultural components of the bill will shrink, though support for cover crops and carbon sequestration would likely remain a focus.

The current Farm Bill expires in 2023, and House and Senate Ag Committees will likely start hearings on the next Farm Bill later this year. Continued support for broadband is likely but not guaranteed, and there could be new opportunities for rural development programs. Wyant said there is a high likelihood that new members of the congressional ag committees will have little to no understanding of modern agriculture. The upcoming mid-term elections in 2022 could add more uncertainty. Wyant said projections indicate Republicans will likely recapture the majority in the House, but she is less certain if they will regain control of the Senate. One potential outcome of a GOP-led House could be a push for fiscal austerity and more conservative agricultural subsidy policies, she said.

Wyant encouraged young producers to get involved in the political discourse that affects their farms. Her advice to attendees was to educate themselves on the issues; talk to their local, state and federal government officials and invite them to their farms; stay active in their agricultural organizations; and engage with local consumers through their church, chamber of commerce and other opportunities.

Attorney Connie Haden, a partner at the law firm of Haden & Colbert LLC, capped off the first day of the conference with a conversation about farm succession planning.

“The primary purpose of estate planning is to preserve family relationships,” Haden said.

Taking the time to create an estate plan can prevent fights that break out in families when a loved one dies with no plan or an inadequate one in place. Haden said each plan should be unique and based on what will work best for the family.

Haden also discussed how farm businesses could be structured for simplicity, liability protection and tax advantages.



“We learned several things to work on in our operation and (it) definitely sparked some conversations here at home,” Abilene Gatson of Gatson Farms in Vandalia, Mo.


“Establishing an LLC or incorporating your farm can shield your personal assets from liability,” Haden said. “The most important thing is to remember how you’ve chosen to do business and follow the rules that go along with that structure.”

The second day of the conference featured strategic planning exercises led by David Parker, an agribusiness consultant. Parker urged conference participants to develop a vision of where they want their farm to be in the future business-wise and what they would need to do to make their dream a reality.

The meeting concluded with a roundtable discussion between attendees and leaders from the two hosting cooperatives. The roundtable featured MFA Oil President and CEO Jon Ihler, MFA Oil Board Chairman Glen Cope, MFA Incorporated President Ernie Verslues and MFA Incorporated Board Chairman Wayne Nichols. Cope talked about his experience serving on the board of directors for both cooperatives and encouraged young farmers and ranchers to get involved with their co-ops.

“We need more young people to take an interest in our cooperatives and let us know how we can best serve the next generation’s needs,” Cope said. “Attending local and district meetings is a great opportunity to share your voice, participate in the co-op’s governance and learn what’s happening in the company from an operational and financial perspective. The more young farmers and ranchers we can get involved, the better positioned our co-ops will be for the future.”

Abilene Gatson of Gatson Farms in Vandalia, Mo., was one of the 50 farmers and ranchers invited to attend the conference. She enjoyed the event and appreciated the opportunity to participate.

“We learned several things to work on in our operation and (it) definitely sparked some conversations here at home,” Gatson said. 



PARIS FFA NAMED TOP CHAPTER IN AMERICA

The Paris (Mo.) FFA chapter won the National Model of Excellence, the award for the top chapter in the country, at the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis in October 2021.

How do you become No. 1 among nearly 9,000 chapters? By going beyond teaching basic ag and science, bake and fruit sales, ham curing, metalworking, Christmas toy drives, and 5K runs.

How far beyond? Think coyote hunts, plastic flamingo farms, community meal sharing and smoke detectors.

COYOTES HUNTING COYOTES

The Paris High School mascot is a coyote, and the predators are a statewide problem. That gave graduate FFA member Ethan Chapman an idea. Why not host a coyote hunting tournament? The chapter organized competitive team hunts, and the students shot more than 20 of the critters.

Josh Bondy, Paris FFA co-advisor, says the coyote tournament is a prime example of not quashing students' wild ideas.

"If the kids are behind it and excited, we are going to go all out," says Bondy, who's been teaching for nearly 20 years, and not coincidentally has been named Outstanding Rural Teacher of the Year by the Missouri Association of Rural Education.

Audrey Nobis co-advises the Paris FFA chapter with Bondy. She is a Paris High School graduate who returned to teach seventh- to ninth-grade students.

"These kids bring so much energy, so much excitement," Nobis says. "It's something new every day. You never know what to expect."

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Chapter members pour that energy back into the community, donating student-raised chickens to the Paris Senior Center and Meals of Plenty, a meal box program assembled for food-insecure people in the local community. Paris FFA members also knocked on about 500 doors, offering homeowners new smoke detectors and replacement batteries.

The flamingo farm was Bondy's idea to tackle student isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The idea came to him on an ag teacher group call discussing how to keep kids involved and engaged during the shutdown. The project asked each student to host a flock of plastic pink flamingos on their property and post a positive message on social media within three days. If a student didn't post a message, Bondy, Nobis or fellow students would stop by to show care and support.



Paris FFA with advisor Josh Bondy won the nation's top award, the Model of Excellence, in Indianapolis in late October 2021.

NATIONAL SUCCESS

The groundwork for the 2021 awards was laid in 2019 when teams of Paris students began working on their FFA presentations. The Paris FFA chapter received top 10 national FFA honors in 2020, but the students thought they could do better. So the chapter members honed their presentations at the Rotary Club, local businesses and elsewhere.

"I was confident in them," says Nobis, observing their poise. "I knew they'd do well."

Paris FFA won five national awards, including third in poultry and fifth in an ag issues forum. Ethan Chapman, who came up with the coyote hunt idea, placed in the top four for service learning.

All in all, Missouri FFA did exceptionally well. Centralia, Elsberry, Mexico, Aurora and Braymer FFA chapters placed in the top 10 in different categories. The state FFA chapter won the national Outstanding Innovation Award for a leadership summit, and two Missouri FFA members won Agricultural Proficiency Awards. Missouri FFA members received 539 American FFA degrees, the second-highest number from any state. The top award also came with \$500 for Paris.

But the real reward, Bondy says, is the support the Paris community has shown year in and year out. Within days of the announcement, signs and banners popped up all over town, including a sign greeting motorists entering Paris.

"The community is always there to support us," says Bondy. "So we try to give back. They know it all comes full circle."

But Bondy, Nobis and their students are not resting on their laurels. They're already prepping for the next contest season.

"We just keep plugging and chugging," Bondy says. "We have new goals."

And that's what it takes to be No. 1. 

— BY NEAL FANDEK

Tornado Relief

THE TREES WERE GONE. RUBBLE WAS STREWN

everywhere. A landscape of catastrophe was all that remained of a majority of Dawson Springs, Ky. A December tornado—one of many that tore through eight states—left many residents of the small town in the western portion of the Bluegrass State homeless.

Jeff Spurlin, who manages the MFA Oil office in Central City, Ky., drove the 37 miles west to Dawson Springs in the aftermath of the storm to provide assistance. Spurlin and his co-workers, Josh Cobb and Craig Whitney, searched the wreckage where neighborhoods once stood for propane tanks that had been tossed or damaged by the tornado. Any damage to the tanks or their connections could create potentially dangerous situations, and the MFA Oil crew worked to ensure residents who survived the storm remained safe.

After the initial safety checks were completed, Spurlin's team responded to an urgent request in the community. Two local retirement homes lost access to the natural gas pipeline and needed a temporary heating solution.

"They had been without heat since the night of the storm and needed to do something to keep their residents warm," Spurlin says. "We loaded up a couple of 1,000-gallon propane tanks on trailers and told them we were on our way."

When the MFA Oil crew showed up to install the propane tanks, they were greeted with jubilant celebration.

"There were people, a lot of people, out in the parking lot because of the circumstances, and they started jumping up and down, clapping and rejoicing when we arrived," Spurlin recalls. "We were a little surprised by the greeting. We're just glad we could help."

Seeing the tornado's destruction and the need of the Dawson Springs community firsthand, Spurlin wanted to do more. He and his staff set up a pop-up tent in the parking lot of the local grocery store to offer free propane bottle filling services.

"With so many people who had lost their homes or power to their homes, we knew there was a desperate need for propane for heat and cooking purposes," Spurlin says. "Many homes in town remain disconnected from the natural gas pipeline, and it may be a while before those connections can be restored."

MFA Oil filled bottles for two days at the pop-up location in Dawson Springs and donated more than 700 gallons of propane to residents and relief workers. Spurlin says he is thankful to work for a company that contributes to communities in good times and bad.

"The damage the tornado did to Dawson Springs is just devastating, and it's going to take some time for the community to rebuild," Spurlin says. "We're happy to have played a role in the recovery process." **M**



(Left to right) Craig Whitney, Josh Cobb and Jeff Spurlin traveled from the MFA Oil office in Central City, Ky., to Dawson Springs, Ky., to assist with relief efforts after a tornado hit the community in December.

Tobacco, Terraces & Tradition

ATOP A HILL JUST OFF A GRAVEL ROAD IN RURAL

Buchanan County, an old, weathered barn stands sentinel over the rolling farm landscape of northwest Missouri. Once a place that bustled with activity, the structure now sits empty, its doors locked—a vestige of a bygone era.

This was a tobacco barn, the place where for decades, the Spencer family would bring its harvest. The tobacco leaves would be hung from the highest rafters all the way to the floor. Once dried and cured, they'd be stripped from their stalks and readied for sale at one of the auction houses in nearby Weston, the westernmost outpost for tobacco in the United States.

"I lived a lot of years raising tobacco and hogs here," says Carlton Spencer, a third-generation farmer who was raised in a long-gone two-story farmhouse less than a mile from the barn. "Now, there's no tobacco, and there's no money in raising hogs."

Tobacco production in this area peaked in 1994 when 8.2 million pounds were grown. However, like many local farmers, the Faucett, Mo., native got out of tobacco after the U.S. Department of Agriculture implemented a buyout program in 2004.

"My wife, Ashley, and I got married in 2005, and we still had tobacco that year," says Casey Spencer, Carlton's son who lives in nearby DeKalb. "Twenty acres was the most we ever had. It was all manual labor."

Today, the father and son partner to farm about 2,200 acres of corn and soybeans in Platte and Buchanan counties. They also manage a 70-head cow-calf herd. In this region, one reality of farming is the prevalence of field terracing.

"We farm a lot of grass-backed terraces using no-till," Casey says. "They're a blessing and a curse. You can go from good black dirt to tough clay in 100 feet. Your equipment is always either too big or too small, and you're always dodging tile outlets."

Carlton says he and his wife, Becky, remember how farming was before terracing came into more widespread practice.

"When I was growing up, tobacco and wheat were really the only cash crops raised around here," Carlton says. "They were just starting to raise soybeans, and all the corn was walked off the farm as hogs and cattle. A lot of the good dirt was washed away on most of this ground."



In addition to terraces and tobacco, another tradition for the Spencer family is service to MFA Oil Company. Both father and son currently serve as delegates representing the bulk plant in St. Joseph, Mo. The Spencers consider the co-op as a partner in their farming operation.

"If we need something, all it takes is a phone call, and they'll be out here," Casey says, noting that the farm takes advantage of discounts on bulk fuel purchases and uses the Auto-Fill program to ensure their propane tanks stay full. "When you're chasing kids and things on the farm, it's one less worry."

Carlton adds that the option of purchasing diesel exhaust fluid in bulk has eliminated one hassle on the farm. "We're not fighting all the jugs anymore," he says with a chuckle.

The cooperative principle of caring for community is also something the Spencers take to heart. Casey serves as a volunteer firefighter with the DeKalb Fire Protection District, which has been a recipient of past grants from the MFA Oil Foundation.

"They've helped us buy new turnout gear, a carbon monoxide detector, and this past fall, we received a grant for a washer-extractor to remove carcinogens from our PPE," Casey says. "It's been a great thing for our firehouse."

While tobacco's heyday in these hills may be gone, the Spencer family continues adding to its story. Carlton and Becky have seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild, including Casey and Ashley's children—Mack, Miles and Maggie.

"We've had black cattle forever, but the boys wanted to show something different for 4-H this year," Casey says. "So, we've got two Herefords on the farm now. There's always something new around here." **M**

—STORY & PHOTO BY JASON JENKINS

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What's Behind Rising Fuel Prices?

THE ENERGY MARKETS HAVE BEEN on a tear to the upside recently. Prices have recovered over 50 percent from the pandemic lows, and it seems nothing, not even the latest COVID-19 variant, can derail the momentum.

Energy analysts and companies are trying to figure out the current supply situation as we move forward in the first quarter of 2022. There is no shortage of opinions about where prices may go, which keeps the markets active. For every bullish trader looking to buy, there is a bearish one wanting to sell. Around and around the markets go.

Inventories Lower Than Average

As of Jan. 14, total crude stocks sit at 413.813 million barrels. Last January, there were 486.563 million barrels, a 72.750-million-barrel difference. Strong demand could create issues, so the market continues to look for more production.

Total gasoline stocks as of Jan. 14 sit at 246.621 million barrels. Last year, there were 245.217 million barrels or 1.404 million barrels fewer. For the same time frame, distillates sit at 127.952 million barrels, down 35.710 million barrels from the prior year. The lower-than-average gasoline and diesel inventories are a crucial driver of the recent price movement. The positive outlook for continued economic recovery and the tight supply situation could create challenges and further support prices.

OPEC+, a grouping of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and allies led by Russia, has been increasing production by 400,000 barrels per day for each of the last several months as the world recovers from the pandemic. OPEC+ said the market needs more barrels because demand will increase and outpace supplies.

U.S. Production Down

The pandemic has slowed oil output, and U.S.-based companies are unlikely to ramp up production. Domestic shale oil producers



were punished during the pandemic as their investors grew dissatisfied with the lack of returns and are now taking a disciplined approach. Oil companies cut back on capital expenditures when the pandemic hit, communities locked down and demand disappeared. Their thinking: Why spend money looking for more crude oil or drilling new wells when there is no demand and low prices? As economies recover and demand has risen, energy companies are behind in drilling. Production growth is forecast to be flat to slightly higher for 2022, but as West Texas Intermediate crude oil prices surge past \$80 per barrel, it will be harder for shale producers to sit on their hands.

Commodity Speculation

Speculators and funds that invest in energy for reasons that have nothing to do with supply and demand also influence pricing. With many big investment banks issuing rosy outlooks for 2022 and rising inflation, these funds have been getting into commodities to try to profit from higher prices and hedge against inflation. These types of traders can push the market to levels higher or lower than many think are reasonable. My guess is these institutional investors are a driving force behind the recent explosion in futures prices. The market cannot sustain price action like this

forever, but as mentioned above, it can do it longer than what we may think is reasonable.

Looking Ahead

Historically, prices can see a bit of a pullback in late February or early March that could offer some opportunities to buy fixed-price gallons for the late spring and fall. There are no guarantees, and this market could just keep going up and up as it continues to recover from the pandemic.

The Federal Reserve has indicated it will begin to scale back its asset purchases and raise interest rates. Rising interest rates will influence the markets and could lead to a price correction if one has not already taken place before that time. If the Fed is not pumping as much money into the economy, it would seem to make sense that the U.S. dollar should rally. A rallying dollar is bearish for energy prices.

The one constant is change, and the fact is that volatility will continue to be high as we move into 2022. The adage that the best cure for high prices is high prices may come true yet again. [M](#)



» **Tim Danze**
is the hedging manager
for MFA Oil.



MFA Oil Acquires Fuel and Propane Operations of Midwest Propane

MFA Oil Company acquired the propane and refined fuel operations of Midwest Propane, the energy business of Mid-West Fertilizer, LLC, on Nov. 30. The deal included customers, energy employees, trucks and storage tanks in eastern Kansas, western Missouri and northeast Oklahoma.

“The purchase of Mid-West Fertilizer’s energy assets will complement our existing operations in the surrounding region,” said Kenny Steeves, senior vice president of MFA Oil operations. “We welcome the Mid-West Fertilizer employees who are joining our staff and the new customers we will now be servicing. We expect this will help us grow our membership.”

Scott Barkley, vice president of energy for Mid-West Fertilizer, said the sale will allow both companies to specialize in what they do best.

“MFA Oil specializes in energy products and services, and their expertise will benefit our energy customers and employees,” Barkley said. “The sale gives us an opportunity to focus on growing our core businesses of fertilizer, feed and precision agriculture and updating our facilities.”

MFA Oil will continue to evaluate strategic acquisition opportunities in its existing market areas and other regions where it can expand its footprint.

MFA Petroleum Company Opens Third Big O Tires Store in Springfield, Mo.

MFA Petroleum Company, a wholly owned subsidiary of MFA Oil Company, opened its newest Big O Tires store at 3033 E. Sunshine St. in Springfield, Mo., on Nov. 29.

“This is a great location that’s near Highway 65, so we’re expecting to see strong traffic at the new store,” says Charlie Alexander, senior director of Big O Tires.

The new store has eight automotive service bays and will be open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays.

The opening of the newest Springfield store brings the company’s total number of Big O Tires locations in Missouri and Arkansas to 21. Work is underway on another new store in Ozark, Mo.


Amanda Cooper Joins MFA Oil as Vice President of Human Resources



In November, Amanda Cooper joined MFA Oil Company as vice president of human resources. Cooper is now responsible for leading the company’s human resources department and oversees employee relations, recruiting, employee development, leave management, training, compensation and benefits, and payroll.

Cooper brings more than 24 years of human resources knowledge to MFA Oil. She has experience working for agricultural cooperatives like MFA Incorporated and Farmland Industries and consulting for others.

Before joining MFA Oil, Cooper served as vice president of corporate services for MFA Inc. Previously, she directed human resource departments for Prairieland Partners, Inc.; ProValue Insurance; and KFSA Insurance.

Cooper grew up in Vandalia, Mo., and is a graduate of the University of Missouri, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in agricultural journalism. 



Have an idea for a story?

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