

# NEWS RELEASE



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## Minnesota Agri-Growth Council Holds 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting focusing on “Sustainability” trend in the Food and Agriculture Industry

*The affects of sustainability and carbon accounting on food production/retail raises concern, intrigue from notable presentations and food chain experts.*

ST. PAUL, Minn. (November 5, 2009) — The 42nd Minnesota Agri-Growth Council (Agri-Growth) Annual Meeting, held on Nov. 3 at the Minneapolis Convention Center, focused on one of the most contemporary issues facing the food and agriculture industry: carbon accounting, corporate social responsibility, and environmental impacts from “sustainable agriculture.” Speakers and panelists addressed the trends in sustainable agriculture and food production, equally affecting farmers, food processors, retailers, and consumers. The meeting drew 400 farm, agribusiness, and food industry leaders, congressional and legislative leaders, academics, and trade media. The theme of the event was “Sustaining a Strong Future for the Food and Agriculture Industry.”

Following a brief morning member’s meeting with officer reports and elections, **State Economist Dr. Thomas Stinson** spoke on the Global Economy Outlook. **Dr. Brian Buhr**, head of the Department of Applied Economics at the **University of Minnesota**, followed with a presentation on externalities affecting sustainability and agriculture/food production. These morning presentations focusing on macro economics set a baseline for the audience relative to the state of the economy and the forecast for food and farm production.

During the luncheon program, attendees applauded **Mr. Don Helgeson, Chairman, Gold’n Plump Poultry**, for his selection as the 2009 Agri-Growth Council Distinguished Service Award winner. A keynote presentation followed, given by **Gene Kahn, VP Sustainable Development, General Mills**. Kahn, a former organic farmer and founder of Cascadian Farm, spoke about the agriculture industry needing to own up to both the positive and negative environmental impacts of modern production. **Joel Makower, author and Editor, Greenbiz.com** – a new voice for many in attendance – presented business perspectives about “an economy going green.” An in depth assessment of sustainability trends facing the food/agriculture industry was led by **Kerri Miller, Minnesota Public Radio**. She moderated a panel comprised of **Rick Naczi, Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy**; **Gene Kahn, General Mills**; **Dr. Jon Johnson, University of Arkansas/Sustainability Consortium**; and **Tony Heredia, Target Corporation**. Facilitated by audience questions, the panel plunged into frank and provocative observations about how each sector of the industry could be affected by new labeling and marketing regimes for sustainability indexing of food products.

Finally, the **U.S. Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, Kathleen Merrigan** addressed audience questions about the Obama Administration’s Agriculture Department. Questions and comments ranged from biotechnology to trade topics and organic foods to H1N1 responsiveness.

*Note: Photos of the day can be found at the Agri-Growth website: [http://agrigrrowth.org/Annual\\_meeting.html](http://agrigrrowth.org/Annual_meeting.html) Double-click any photos in the slideshow to download for re-print purposes. Or, contact Krystal at [kwiesenberg@agrigrrowth.org](mailto:kwiesenberg@agrigrrowth.org) to obtain photos of the event.*

*The Minnesota Agri-Growth Council ([www.agrigrrowth.org](http://www.agrigrrowth.org)) is an advocate for the state’s food and agriculture industry. Founded in 1968, the Council is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that represents the shared interests of its 200-plus members, which include food and agriculture businesses, organizations and producers, as well as the service industries that support them.*

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