

U.S. and international trade leaders discuss agriculture's role in growing partnerships

2026 Midwest Agricultural Export Summit brings together businesses, lawmakers, consuls general, commodity groups

SIOUX FALLS, SD (August 13, 2026) - A diverse mix of experts in business, agriculture and international trade met in Sioux Falls Wednesday for the 2026 Midwest Agricultural Export Summit. Attendees included foreign representatives, U.S. commodity organizations and agribusinesses, along with Senate Majority Leader John Thune (SD), Congressman Dusty Johnson (SD) and the U.S. Undersecretary for Trade & Foreign Agricultural Affairs, Luke Lindberg.



Panels addressed issues including collaboration across agriculture for global growth, trade priorities in Washington, building new markets and value-added agriculture. There was also a producer panel representing a cross-section of commodities produced in the U.S. The conference included participants from 14 U.S. states and 6 international countries.

“The U.S. has a number of new trade agreements in place in 2026, with new possibilities for ag producers and agribusinesses here to find partners around the world,” said Joe Fiala, [South Dakota Trade](#) Interim CEO. “This conference was not only a place to hear about issues surrounding agricultural trade, it was an opportunity to form or reinforce relationships with trade partners.”

Senate Majority Leader John Thune said agricultural trade provides benefits to the U.S. at a number of levels, supporting U.S. producers while at the same time strengthening our relationships with allies overseas who rely on food imports.

“In our smaller communities and our larger communities, we depend upon agriculture in this country,” he said. “So we've got to do everything that we can to produce in a way that not only feeds the world and fuels the world, but obviously takes care of our interest here in the United States.”

Jim Sutter, CEO of the U.S. Soybean Export Council, said his industry has been working to diversify its trading partners. That's particularly important this year, as domestic growth in biodiesel and renewable diesel has created additional volumes of soybean meal for export.

"Roughly two-thirds of the additional meal that is being produced from the increased crush is getting exported," he said. "We're seeing that go to traditional markets in Southeast Asia and the Americas, but also we've been growing our share into the European market, a big importer of meal, and also some other North Asian countries."

This is the sixth year for the annual conference. Event photos are available for press download [online](#).

About South Dakota Trade

South Dakota Trade navigates international trade for South Dakota. The association — a 501c(6) public-private partnership — administers South Dakota's STEP Grant program, conducts export education, facilitates trade missions, and offers free and confidential consulting services to South Dakota companies.

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