Eric Hoefing (left), Key Cooperative’s Director of Technology and Development, received AgGateway’s 2019 Ron Storms Leadership Award. He is pictured here with last year’s winner, Joe Tevis, President of VIS Consulting.

Key Perspectives
Potential and promise in the season ahead
By Boyd Brodie, General Manager,
Boyd.Brodie@keycoop.com

Hopefully, as Punxsutawney Phil promised us last month, spring weather is just around the corner. I know our crews have been committed to getting our equipment ready to go these past few months, and

Supporting Agriculture’s Transition to Digital Technology
By Tiffanie Koch, Key Intern

IN AGRICULTURE, innovation is more critical than ever before. With the help of organizations like AgGateway, Key Cooperative and others in the industry can overcome challenges with innovative e-business solutions. Founded in 2005, AgGateway is a non-profit organization that promotes the transition to digital agriculture, increasing the use of information to maximize efficiency and productivity. Serving growers in North America, Latin America and Europe, AgGateway enables electronic information sharing within the industry and the food supply chain. In other words, it provides a forum where companies can come together and solve digital challenges. Today, AgGateway has more than 200 member companies—including Key—all working on projects that fall into eight primary segments:
Demand
It’s a little of this and a lot of that
By Greg Artz, Field Marketing Specialist, Greg.Artz@keycoop.com

SOMETIMEx last summer, we started hearing the little phrase “demand destruction.” Demand is the most important word I can think of in our grain markets. We are in need of demand.

The market is clearly betting on U.S. farmers to continue producing large, if not record, crops. Earlier this year, we heard predictions of how many corn acres could be planted in the spring of 2020. Today, we’re not hearing the large numbers that were once thrown out there, but clearly the corn planters will still roll this spring. (After delayed planting last year, if we’re given even a small window, it’s possible the crop will be planted in record time this year.)

But what about demand? Of late, we haven’t really had any good news to write home about, but here are some notes to keep in mind:

• Corn in the bin: Processors continue to have strong basis. The Board of Trade has not done the heavy lifting, but strong basis makes it somewhat attractive to move corn this time of year. Offers are a must on corn in the bin or in the elevator.

• Freight-on-Board/Direct Ship Program: Key Cooperative can pick your grain up at your bin site— with competitive freight and bids off the best local basis.

• Minimum price contracts and extended price contracts: The good news is no storage was paid. Time was on our side when the corn shrunk to 15 percent. For the most part, I would say we are within two to three cents of where we bought July futures. Five months storage would have cost 25 cents. The basis contracts and extended price contracts have done their job. However, they still have to be executed, meaning the futures have to be sold by expiration.
  • If you have a basis or extended price contract, contact a grain team member and have a plan ready.
  • If you have a minimum price contract, no storage was paid. On average, we paid a little less than 25 cents for premium, so storage at 25 cents would be a wash. Today, the option values are around a nickel less than when the option was purchased.

• New crop: Now is the time to have December 2020 (CZ20) futures orders in place—for if and when the rally comes. Corn sales last harvest, at good values, were likely made because of a futures order that turned into a hedge to arrive (HTA). New crop cash offers are very powerful as well. Whether it’s an offer for cash or on the board for an HTA, an offer is a good start. Are we any worse off if the offer doesn’t hit than if we did nothing at all?

At the end of the day, sell cash, make cash offers or plan to sell the bushels that have to come to town when the price is at levels that allow you to keep farming. We can accomplish all this through a number of contracts. Keep in touch with the Key Cooperative Grain Division, and we can help fit the pieces in the puzzle.

Celebrate National Ag Day on March 24!

NATIONAL AG DAY is a time when producers, agricultural associations, corporations, universities, government agencies and countless others across America gather to recognize and celebrate the abundance provided by American agriculture.

As the world’s population soars, there is even greater demand for the food, fiber and renewable resources produced in the United States. The National Ag Day program believes every American should:

• Understand how food, fiber and renewable resource products are produced.
• Value the essential role of agriculture in maintaining a strong economy.
• Appreciate the role agriculture plays in providing safe, abundant and affordable products.
• Acknowledge and consider career opportunities in the agriculture, food, fiber and renewable resource industries.

Visit www.agday.org to learn how to get involved or follow @agday on Twitter!
EXPERTS SAY we could see an early spring in 2020. This prediction has nothing to do with Punxsutawney Phil or his shadow, but the abnormal weather conditions over the last few months—what is being called an “open winter.”

According to Mike Koenigs, Market Development Specialist with Corteva, an open winter is when warmer conditions lead to a lack of frost in the soil, which allows moisture to soak in. “So far, it’s been a warmer-than-average winter, and there is little to no frost in the soil,” said Koenigs. “In a normal, average winter, by early December we have frozen soil that can’t absorb any moisture. When there’s no frost, moisture can still soak in. Therefore, if we don’t get a lot of frost in the soil, the soil can dry out and warm up quicker—potentially leading to an early spring.”

While most rejoice at the thought of an early spring and the return of more temperate conditions, those conditions come with challenges. For one, frozen soil allows better nitrogen protection. Mild winters and early springs provide numerous opportunities for nitrate loss via leaching and denitrification.

“N-Serve® delays the conversion of nitrogen in the ammonium form to the nitrate form, defending it from nitrate loss and ensuring the nutrient is in the root zone when the corn needs it. Instinct® provides similar protection for UAN and urea,” explained Koenigs.

As farmers look to the upcoming growing season, they should follow these best practices:

- **Create a nutrient management plan.** Work out in advance how much nitrogen you’ll need and roughly when you’ll apply it. Stick with that plan, even if corn prices change.
- **Know your soil.** If you’re working with a wet piece of soil prone to loss, split up your applications. For example, it might be a good idea to apply some nitrogen in spring and the rest during sidedress.
- **Use a nitrogen stabilizer.** This is an important step to take no matter when you apply nitrogen. Nitrogen stabilizers like N-Serve and Instinct can prevent leaching from the root zone by 16 percent.

John Long, Agronomist with Mycogen Seeds, agrees that an early spring is likely and that spring applications are particularly important. “Corn really isn’t able to take up nitrogen in large amounts until the second or third week of June. If you’re applying nitrogen in early spring, you’re leaving it out there for a long time and risking losses from environmental factors,” he said. “Because of that risk, nitrogen stabilizers like N-Serve are a must.”

The projected early spring doesn’t have to be alarming if farmers and agronomists closely monitor conditions in their area and prepare to take appropriate actions in their nutrient management plan, including using nitrogen stabilizer like N-Serve and Instinct.

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Digital technology

• Ag retail
• Allied providers (including systems and software developers and service providers)
• Crop nutrition
• Crop protection
• Feed
• Grain
• Precision agriculture
• Seed

Every year, AgGateway hosts a conference to honor individuals who have made outstanding contributions to advancing the industry. We are excited to announce that at the 2019 annual conference, three Key employees were recognized for their great accomplishments.

The first award went to Eric Hoefinger, Director of Technology and Development. Eric received AgGateway’s Ron Storms Leadership Award. The highest honor at the ceremony, this award goes to someone who continuously works to advance digital agriculture. “Receiving this award was an unexpected surprise, and I’m honored to know my efforts are being recognized,” said Eric. “I now have confidence in my ability to start conversations with business partners.”

Eric has developed many ways to implement AgGateway resources and has served in numerous leadership roles. He has been active in different projects over the years that have assisted in the development of trading partners like Bayer and WinField® United. “AgGateway is the leader in transitioning to digital agriculture,” said Eric. “We are creating forums where retailers, suppliers and customers can collaborate to push the industry forward.”

Key Agronomy Administrator Ann Vande Lune received the President’s Award, which recognizes an outstanding individual committed to promoting AgGateway. Ann has been part of the Key Agronomy Division for 20 years, serving in many roles. She has undertaken continuous promotional efforts toward transitioning to digital agriculture. Over the years, Ann has advocated for AgGateway and even been a featured speaker at many of their events and conferences. “Just because I’ve received this award doesn’t mean I’ll stop promoting AgGateway,” reflected Ann. “I have already committed to further speaking engagements on their behalf.”

The final award of the conference was presented to Key Cooperative Controller Rich Adams. Rich was recognized for his innovative efforts in digital agriculture.

Ann and Eric believe AgGateway isn’t just benefitting Key Cooperative itself, but our members as well. “AgGateway benefits Key by helping us build good relationships with others in agriculture and become credible in the industry,” said Eric.

Each day, digital agriculture helps Key access accurate information within a matter of minutes, something that delivers immediate return on investment to our member-owners. A partnership with AgGateway is a recipe for success, providing exceptional, customer-focused solutions to our members. To learn more about AgGateway, visit [www.aggateway.org](http://www.aggateway.org).

Calling All High School Seniors

Don’t miss out on the Key Cooperative community scholarship!

Key Cooperative will award twelve $1,000 non-renewable scholarships this spring. To read the scholarship criteria or get the application, visit [www.keycoop.com](http://www.keycoop.com) or contact your local Key Cooperative office.

APPLIcATIONS DUE BY MARCH 30, 2020

Applicants’ major course of study should be in an agricultural or ag-business field. Other acceptable majors include animal science, communications, information systems, accounting, carpentry and masonry construction. Students must have a parent or guardian who is a Class A or Class B member of Key Cooperative in good standing.

Help Us Locate This Member!

JOHN WAKEFIELD has unclaimed patronage dividends from Key Cooperative. If you know John, please contact Vicki Gruhn at 641-260-2111 or Vicki.Gruhn@keycoop.com.

[Help Us Locate This Member!](#)
Welcome to the 2020 Board of Directors

FOR MORE THAN A CENTURY, Key Cooperative has been governed by a 12-member Board of Directors. The election takes place in December each year, and new Directors are announced at the Annual Meeting in January.

In 2020, we are pleased to welcome Bryce Arkema, Mike Engbers, Dave Hassebrock and Perry Ritland back to the Board for another term. We also welcome Ron Roseland as our newest Associate Director. He will serve a two-year term. Thank you for representing our members in 2020!

Directors must be a Class A member in good standing, serve a three-year term, serve on one to two additional subcommittees and attend monthly Board meetings.

2020 Board of Directors

Perry Ritland, President, Zearing
Rick Fopma, Vice President, Lynnville
Branon Osmundson, Secretary, Ames
Dave Hassebrock, Assistant Secretary, Ames
Bryce Arkema, Treasurer, Pella
Ron Roseland, Southeast Associate, Marshalltown
Brian Larsen, Northwest Associate, St. Anthony
Ryan Bell, Newton
Mike Engbers, Lynnville
Bob Finch, Ames
Chad Hafkey, Grinnell
Brian Sampson, Nevada

Land O’Lakes Matching Grants

Bethany Lutheran Church Daycare
In partnership with the Land O’ Lakes Foundation, Key Cooperative is pleased to present Bethany Lutheran Church Daycare with a $2,500 matching grant. The grant will be used to create and fully supply a space designed for students receiving before- and after-school care. The center will purchase age-appropriate STEM-A activities.

McCallsburg Wellness Center
This winter, Key Cooperative supported the McCallsburg Wellness Committee as they planned to open a new wellness center in their community. A $2,500 matching grant has already been put to good use, purchasing the center’s first exercise equipment.

Your project may be the perfect match for our program! The grant application can be found on our website, www.keycoop.com/community-involvement. You can also receive the application from Amy Van Weelden. She can be reached at 641-594-8129 or Amy.VanWeelden@keycoop.com.
SPRING MAY be right around the corner, but don’t get caught off guard—March can still deliver extreme winter weather. Key Cooperative’s priority is to keep you and your home safe year-round, but we need you to partner with us. Remember to keep these six propane safety tips in mind:

1. Maintain an adequate supply of propane in your tank and get in touch with us immediately if you run out of propane.

2. Use energy wisely.

3. Keep the path to your propane tank clear.

4. Make sure you and your family know what propane smells like. (Propane has a strong, unpleasant smell like rotten eggs, a skunk’s spray or a dead animal.)

5. Know how and where to shut off the outdoor propane supply and indoor propane appliances.

6. NEVER store or place a propane cylinder indoors or in an enclosed area, such as a basement, garage, shed or tent. NEVER use a stove or bring your gas grill indoors for space heating, even during a power outage.

CCA Years of Service Awards

AT THE 2020 Argibuisness Association of Iowa Showcase & Conference in Des Moines, three Key Cooperative team members were recognized for their years of being Certified Crop Advisers:

- Kelly Els – 20 years
- Boyd Brodie – 25 years
- Brent Metzger – 25 years

Congratulations, Kelly, Boyd and Brent! The Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) program offers professional certifications to agronomists across the country. A CCA is held to the highest standards and is dedicated to offering sound advice and advanced tools to the growers they serve.

Key Cooperative Offers a Full Line of CENEX® Brand Lubricants with Wear Saver Technology™

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515-290-0009

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641-780-1624

ASK ABOUT OUR 10 YEAR - 10,000 HOUR WARRANTY ON AGRICULTURAL EQUIPMENT
CLEAN ROWS are key to uniform plant germination and higher yields. With Yetter Floating Row Cleaners and Precision Planting CleanSweep® Mounting Kits, it’s easy for growers to make adjustments and prepare the perfect seedbed.

Yetter Floating Row Cleaners put you in the driver’s seat to control tillage and residue management. Quick and easy to install around factory coulters, their floating design provides a smooth ride for the row unit and handles changing field conditions.

Precision Planting CleanSweeps employ air cylinders on each row cleaner. You can add or remove pressure with a lever in the cab, applying lift pressure or down pressure to the cylinders so they clean the way you want them to. Be more aggressive or run lighter—the choice is yours. The result is saved time, correctly adjusted row cleaners, and an end to the frustration of not having the planter set correctly.

Pair a Yetter Floating Row Cleaner with a Precision Planting CleanSweep and you have the power to adjust row cleaners right from the cab—it’s that easy. You can make adjustments to prevent late emergence caused by heat and moisture loss, seedling diseases and nutrients tied up by residue.

Visit with one of the members of the CENTROL team listed below to get your planter ready for #plant20!

Jared Tokle: 641-990-4554
Nick Lacaeyse: 641-990-1348
Connor Hardison: 515-320-6822

The season ahead

they are eager to get started. Thankfully, the backlog of fall work is less than it was a year ago, but we never know how many field days we will have before the planters are rolling.

This month’s feature article highlights the dedication and commitment of another group of Key employees—individuals who are determined to improve processes throughout the supply chain, which will ultimately benefit our members and reduce real costs through substantial gains in efficiency. First, kudos to Eric Hoefing for his contributions in establishing digital connectivity as a substantially better way to manage inventory and information through our communication channels. Eric has been part of the Key Cooperative team as a contract employee for years, and we’re excited that he officially joined us as a full-time employee at the first of the year. We look forward to the innovation, productivity and leadership he will bring to our employees and our members.

I’m also proud of the efforts of several other Key employees and their involvement with AgGateway. As highlighted in our feature article, we have an extremely dedicated team of individuals who have been diligent about moving AgGateway initiatives forward. Brian Gates, who oversees the Information Resources team, has been involved with AgGateway since 2010. Brian served on and chaired several committees during the initial development of the organization. Key Agronomy Administrator Ann Vande Lune has also been a significant contributor to AgGateway since 2012. Ann has been Chair of the Seed Council and Ag Retail Council and served on the Board of Directors. Rich Adams, Key’s Controller, has also been an active participant. He served as Chair of the Grain/Feed Council and on the Board of Directors. Please read the full feature article for more information—one of our industrious interns, Tiffanie Koch, wrote it to share even more detail about Key’s relationship with AgGateway.

We’ve also utilized the past few months to conduct numerous employee and customer workshops, marketing meetings and technical updates in preparation for the year ahead. We’ve had a very good start to the year and are motivated by the potential and promise of the season ahead. Undoubtedly, we will face numerous challenges and opportunities in 2020—locally, regionally and globally. The path to success—for our member-owners, our communities and your Cooperative and essential business partner—is focusing on sustaining prosperity at the farm gate. Let’s have a safe and productive planting season!
Explanation of photo contest and entry instructions here.

Would you like to see one of your photos featured on this page? Enter the Connections photo contest, which is open to any member or customer who receives our newsletter. One winning photo will be selected and placed in the newsletter. Winning photographers will receive a $20 gas gift card!

Photos must feature agriculture or rural settings; Iowa-based scenes are preferred. Photos must be submitted by the 10th of each month in order to qualify for the following month's newsletter. Please include your name, address, phone number and email address with your submitted photo(s).

Submissions may be emailed to Sara.Clausen@keycoop.com.

PHOTO CONTEST WINNER: FROM DAWN ’TIL DUSK
By Heather Cupples (submitted by Cindy Wormley) – Newton, IA

This fiery Iowa sunset was captured by Heather Cupples as her father, Don Wormley, finished up a day in the field.