

# CUSTOMNews

Representing Custom Farming in Wisconsin | FALL 2021



Kevin Shinnars helps students look over a Ford 4000 tractor during a class at UW-Madison. Photo by Michael P. King/UW-Madison CALS.

## Shinnars reflects on career: “the students made it fun!” *By Maria Woldt*



*Kevin Shinnars*

In the world of agricultural equipment, most people know Kevin Shinnars. He's been a professor of biological systems engineering at UW-Madison since 1985.

During that time, he's done all the things that equal a successful career in academia, like mentor 53 graduate students, brought in \$7.2 million in research funding, publications, book chapters etc. But it's his passion for farmers and students that have always stood out.

WCO has been lucky enough to have

Kevin as an advisor and board member for the past 14 years, and when he retires in January, he will step down from the board. We caught up with Kevin to talk about his time with WCO and other career reflections.

### **Why did you get involved with WCO?**

When Ron Schuler retired from UW-Madison, I was asked to replace him. I had always left such tasks to the extension folks because this type of service was part of their job description. But with fewer and fewer faculty with the necessary expertise at UW-Madison, it was logical to those of us in the field that we needed to step up no matter what our appointment.

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## UPCOMING DATES:

**WCO Mini-grant program**  
Accepted on a rolling basis

**Forage Symposium**  
February 21-23, 2022  
Chula Vista, Wisconsin Dells

## CONTACT WCO:

[execdir@wiscustomoperators.org](mailto:execdir@wiscustomoperators.org)  
(608) 577-4345





From the President's Cab: Behind the scenes  
By Raymond Liska



What happens behind the scenes of a custom farming operation is something that often goes unseen to many who pass through the countryside.

As the season's end draws nearer, the charismatic rhythm of choppers and combines in the field, along with the steady flow of trucks and tractors on the road and the miles of hose laying in the ditch will be cleaned, repaired, rolled up, and stored away. While the keys on our machines may be turned off, our minds are not.

Harvest managers, employees, dealers, manufactures, and a vast network of support personnel will be busy behind the scenes until spring planting. No one knows what kind of challenges 2022 will have in store for us, but as my uncle and mentor once told me "If you farm every year like it's going to be a bad one, you might miss out on the good one." What will your behind-the-scenes operation look like this winter?

For starters, be sure to mark your calendars for February 21-23 at the Chula Vista resort, Wisconsin Dells for the annual Forage Symposium. After

cancelling the in person show last winter, the WCO board, staff, and committees have stepped up to ensure that 2022 can provide a forum for great discussions and networking. There will be something for everyone, and we hope our seminar choices will benefit your businesses and you come away having learned something. And by everyone, we mean EVERYONE! Bring your families for some water park fun, employees wear your company shirts proudly and all friends of WCO who attend should enjoy our trade show.

WCO is proud of our mission to provide the forum for networking, but we rely on the membership to have meaningful discussions with each other. COVID19 has lifted the curtain to the vast and intricate workings of the national and global economy, and there is little doubt that we will see a paradigm shift in the near future. We are already witnessing shortages and price increases in food, fuel, fiber, and fertilizer, along with availability of critical parts, tires, and replacement equipment.

The conversations and ideas we have amongst one another are what ultimately lead to the outcomes we have as a group. Talk to each other, stand up and let your voice be heard. There are many outlets

for your topics and ideas through joining committees, talking to directors, or filling out those little pieces of paper at the end of each symposium session.

Often after a long, hard season in the fields, someone unaware of the critical planning it takes to run a custom business will say, "you're done harvesting, now you have nothing to do." Often, I don't even know where to start with my answer because there are so many things to do. However, recently I've found the quick answer many of us already know all too well, "we spend as much time and more working behind the scenes, as we do out in the fields."

When doing you're 'behind the scenes' work for 2022, do so with careful and critical planning, and remember that WCO belongs to you and your business. Watch vigilantly and remember there is a time for waiting for things to happen and a time to run at them head first.

Wear your company colors proudly under the proud colors of this great free nation and lead the charge into 2022 as a crucial component of American agriculture. May God be with you on your journey and have a safe rest of the harvest season. 🇺🇸

-Ray

Shinnars  
(continued from p. 1)

**What have been your major contributions to WCO?**

My biggest direct contribution was starting the scholarship committee, developing the selection criteria, and running that committee since 2010. As WCO has grown both in members and dollars over the years, we have expanded the award dollar amounts and number of awards.

**Do you have a favorite research project?**

I guess I had the most "impact" with the early work we did on kernel processing. We led the first research project in the US and with Randy Shaver (also from UW-Madison) conducted the first feeding trial on this technology. We certainly did not develop this (it came out of Europe) but the work we did to understand and promote that technology made a big difference in dairy nutrition in the US.

My research group also conducted early research on baleage that provided recommendations for applying the technology under typical US conditions. Baleage is now a common and widely used storage alternative in North America. We also applied the experience and tools we developed with hay and forage systems to research harvest and storage issues of biomass crops such as corn stover and perennial grasses.

The research projects I've enjoyed most were those that had great students working on them – no matter what the results. When you had great student research teams – student groups who had real passion for agricultural machines and technology – well it just was a lot of fun. I can recall sitting around the lab, playing Sheephead and just yakking for hours about equipment and farming



Kevin Shinnars conducting biomass harvesting research. Photo by Wolfgang Hoffman/UW-Madison CALS.

with these students. It was a real blessing to work with them. They have made a real impact on the equipment industry here in Wisconsin and around the Midwest – I couldn't be prouder of their accomplishments.

We will honor Kevin Shinnars at the WCO annual meeting on Wed. Feb 23 during the Forage Symposium at Chula Vista resort in Wisconsin Dells. 🇺🇸

**What are your parting thoughts for WCO members?**

Agriculture is under a lot of pressure and the changes we will experience will be dramatic. Participating in organizations like WCO will be critical to manage and react to these changes.

**What do you plan to do in retirement?**

I'll continue to work on a few research projects and finish mentoring a few graduate students. My wife and I hope to build a "getaway" property in Green County on some land we own – just wish those lumber and supply prices would come down!

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Issues to watch

Wisconsin Farm Support Program:

Under the direction of Governor Evers, DATCP and the Department of Revenue (DOR) will provide another round of Farm Support Program direct aid payments to Wisconsin farmers who have experienced economic losses due to COVID-19.

Beginning on November 1, DOR sent a letter to pre-qualified applicants. In the letter, farmers will find information about the program and a Letter ID, which is required to complete the application. These letters were sent to farmers with at least \$10,000 but less than \$5 million in gross income. Apply on the DOR website by 4:30 p.m. on Nov. 29.

Don't forget to renew your Commercial Pesticide Applicator License:

Individuals who need to complete their certification can take the exam either on paper or online, and must schedule the exam in advance. Those who pass the exam receive a five-year certification.

DATCP is expecting large demand for taking the commercial pesticide applicator certification exam as a result of license extensions due to the pandemic.

These extensions no longer stand and DATCP can only issue a pesticide applicator license if an individual's certification credential(s) are current. Go to [datcp.wi.gov](http://datcp.wi.gov) and search 'commercial pesticide applicator'

Pesticide Applicator Certification exam available online:

Commercial pesticide applicators can now take the exam online proctored through a personal computer that includes a web-enabled camera and broadband internet.

Those who take the exam online will receive their results immediately, along with their certification by email 1-3 business days after the exam.

**Remember, if you treat manure, apply inoculants or bale forage, you are required to have a 'field and vegetable crop' commercial pesticide applicator certification.**



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Mixed outcomes from the 2021 corn harvest for silage

By Dr. John Goeser, PAS, Dipl. ACAN, Rock River Laboratory, Inc., UW-Madison, animal and dairy sciences



Dr. John Goeser

There were two common themes to 2021 in growing corn for silage: continued variation in growing conditions and plenty of heat units. And over the last few years, variation seems to be the only consistent factor. In 2018 and 2019, wet spring or wet fall contributed toward more variation. Now with the 2021 growing season in the books for silage, the crop looks to be yielding variable outcomes, depending on your local growing conditions. Coming back to the heat this year, with more than adequate growing degree days throughout the year, our focus turned to much needed rainfall and moisture for many. Moisture eventually came while many corn fields were in the grain filling period, but after the crop had been stressed for water while in the vegetative stage. This recap becomes important because I'm of the opinion that the early season moisture stress coupled with adequate heat and moisture during grain fill yielded a unique corn silage crop that now sits fermenting in silos.

To paint a picture with this unique crop, we need to drill back into what defines corn silage quality. In the past, I've described that corn silage energy value can be largely explained by the digestible fiber and starch fractions, which combine to make up roughly 85% of corn silage's energy value. To drill into digestible fiber and starch, we need to pull the following four values from your feed analysis reports:

1. Fiber content, % of dry matter
2. Fiber digestibility, % of fiber
3. Starch content, % of dry matter
4. Starch digestibility, % of starch

With these four in hand, I review fiber and starch content first, and then the respective nutrient digestibilities next. Following this path to understand crop quality, the following figures summarize crop year results for thousands of corn silage analyses from Rock River Laboratory. These distribution reports detail the unique 2021 crop and compare to prior crop years.

Despite drought stress to start 2021, starch yields are trending at similar levels relative to the prior two growing seasons. Starch content is a result of the grain to stover ratio, and grain yield came forth

following rain as mentioned. Hence, similar starch levels detailed in Figure 1 for this year's crop aren't surprising. Along these lines, as visible in Figure 2, corn silage fiber levels are similar to prior crop years due to the fact that stronger than anticipated grain yields have diluted out the stover and fiber. These two observations aren't unique.

The uniqueness to the 2021 silage crop begins showing up in the fiber and starch digestibility measures at Rock River Laboratory. Fiber quality and digestibility for corn likely determined early in the growing season, while the plant is growing and in a vegetative state. Remembering that the crop was stressed for moisture through that phase this year, the higher quality fiber visible in Figure 3 may make some sense. In Figure 3, the University of Wisconsin's total tract NDF digestibility (TTNDFD) measure suggests more digestible fiber in 2021 silage. This TTNDFD value is determined from four different laboratory fiber digestibility measures on each sample, and has been useful in predicting feeding quality for various forages. The goal with this measure is 45 percent or more, and this year is trending in that direction. For each unit improvement in silage TTNDFD, milk production may increase roughly ¾ pound per cow, per day, according to a field survey and experience summarized by Geiser and Goeser (2018).

While fiber quality may be improved, the grain may be negatively offsetting the positive energy value rooted in fiber. Adequate moisture and above average heat units to wrap up the 2021 growing season appear to have yielded harder

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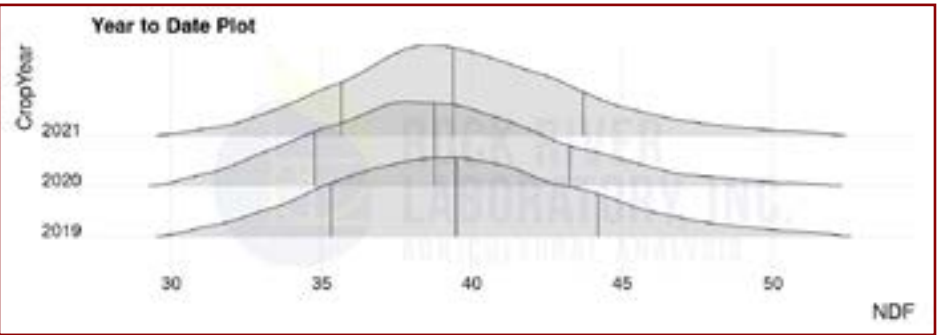


Figure 2: Corn silage fiber content, % of dry matter, for samples analyzed by Rock River Laboratory in the Midwestern US.

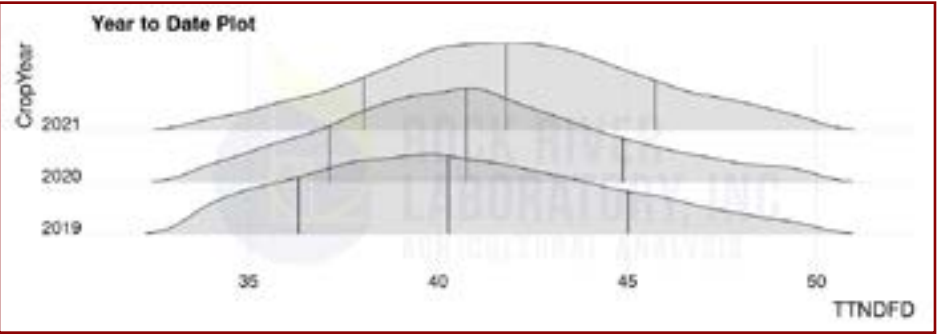


Figure 3: Corn silage fiber digestibility, % of fiber, for samples analyzed by Rock River Laboratory in the Midwestern US.

grain this year. Think of this like the corn plant having plenty of resources to produce strong offspring, the grain. Rumen grain and starch digestibility is known to correlate strongly with grain and kernel hardness, and the laboratory is clearly picking up on lesser rumen starch digestibility in 2021 silage, as shown in Figure 4. Understanding that rumen starch digestibility is down for 2021 silage relative to the prior two years, keep this in mind when opening up new crop silage. Watch for silage grain passing through undigested.

Combining the observations discussed above, fiber and starch levels are in line with prior crops. Fiber quality looks to be up, while starch quality appears to be down. The net outcome is likely a similar

energy value per ton relative to prior crop years, however the contributions to this average energy value are unique this year. The net outcome could be likened to buying a new self-propelled forage harvester, with more horsepower and potential, but filling the tank with

marginal diesel that doesn't burn as well. There's potential to this year's crop, however the silage will need to ferment longer to capture the full grain and starch potential assuming we did our job in kernel processing. Contact John at [JohnGoeser@rockriverlab.com](mailto:JohnGoeser@rockriverlab.com)



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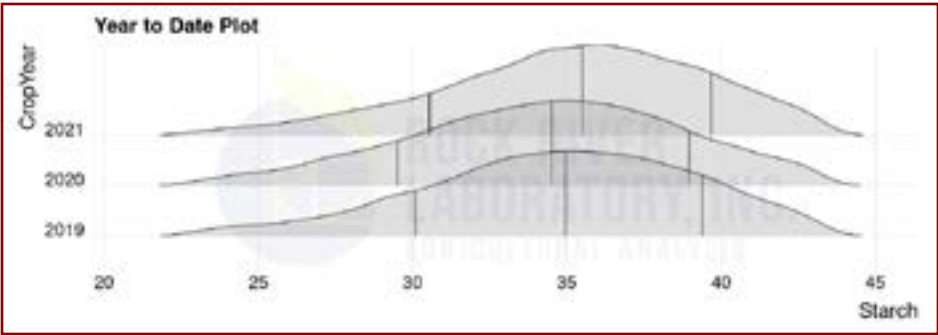


Figure 1: Corn silage starch content, % of dry matter, for samples analyzed by Rock River Laboratory in the Midwestern US.

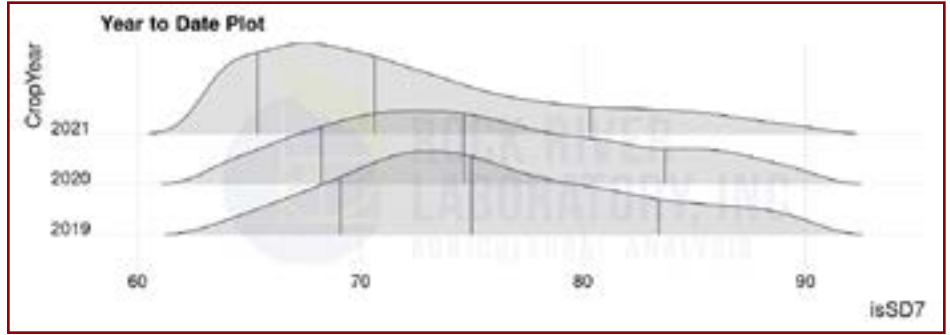


Figure 4: Corn silage starch digestibility, % of starch, for samples analyzed by Rock River Laboratory in the Midwestern US.









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## 2021 Directors

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(corp. rep)

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**South East region** – Pat Johnson

**Honorary Representatives:**

Dr. Kevin Shinnars, UW-Madison

Dr. Matt Digman, UW-Madison

Dr. Brian Luck, UW-Madison

Dr. Joe Sanford, UW-Platteville

## Board nominations & annual meeting

WCO is looking for board of director nominations. Elections will take place at the annual meeting at 8 a.m. on Feb. 23, 2022 held in person at the Chula Vista resort in Wisconsin Dells. Directors must be members of WCO and serve three-year terms with no more than two consecutive terms.

The board meets four times per year:

**February** - At Forage Symposium

**March** - At WCO Safety event or conference call

**July** - At WI Farm Tech Days

**December** - Stand alone meeting

If you are interested in running or know someone who is, contact Maria Woldt, executive director at [execdir@wiscustomoperators.org](mailto:execdir@wiscustomoperators.org) or (608) 577-4345. 🇺🇸

## Please send your photos to WCO

Photos featured in the *Custom News* are taken by staff or submitted by members and sponsors. We are always looking for high quality images of custom farmers in action. We do our best to feature multiple brands of equipment and diverse custom farming practices.

Please e-mail your high-resolution images (1MB or larger) to [execdir@wiscustomoperators.org](mailto:execdir@wiscustomoperators.org) and we will be sure to feature you on our social media channels and in our publications. Thank you in advance!



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**In 2022, WCO will elect one at-large operator director and one corporate director**

## Join a committee

If you are looking for a small but important way to get involved, consider joining a committee:

- » Education/Conference
- » Media
- » Scholarship & Awards
- » Safety/Regulations 🇺🇸

## Renew your membership or sponsorship

Membership renewals mail at the beginning of December and will contain information to register for Forage Symposium. You can renew your membership when you register or you can renew directly with WCO. Either option is acceptable, but we always appreciate direct renewals by check or online payment. Sponsorship renewals will mail the week of Thanksgiving and must be paid direct to WCO. 🇺🇸

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***“I can recall sitting around the lab, playing Sheephead and just yakking for hours about equipment and farming with [my] students. It was a real blessing to work with them. ”***

*-Kevin Shinnars, Feature article on p. 1*

To complete your no fee IoH/Ag CMV permit applications  
(Required as of January 1, 2015), go to  
**[wisconsin.gov](http://wisconsin.gov) and search “no fee ag permits”**

Questions about IoH definitions and rules? Go to  
**[wiscustomoperators.org/resources](http://wiscustomoperators.org/resources)**