Director Candidates: Region 2 – Wis. (4-year term), Candidate 1 of 2

Ashley Ahl
46 years old
W10757 Jeffrey Road, Merrillan, Wis.
Farm Credit Member since: 2010

Family: I am the oldest of three siblings and help manage our family farm alongside my brother, Derek. My husband, Brad, grew up on a dairy farm in Bosstown, Wis. and is a business instructor for UW-La Crosse. Together, we are raising our two sons, Sven and Lars, in Black River Falls.

Brief description of agricultural operation and employment/business experience for the past five years: I am the Managing Partner of Northern Family Farms, a 7,600-acre wholesale nursery and Christmas tree growing operation. Our farm serves over 1,000 retail locations across 17 states. At the farm, I oversee farming operations, sales forecasting, accounting, strategic planning, and production management.

Prior to returning to our family operation, I worked in the financial markets in Chicago. My professional background brings the Board financial, strategic, and operational expertise in both the financial markets and horticulture industries.

As a representative of a specialized market within agriculture, I bring a unique perspective on consumer-driven markets, supply chain management, labor challenges, and long-term business planning. Our family farm has successfully completed another generational change in ownership, with my brother and I representing the third generation of leadership.

Serving on Compeer's Board of Directors has been both rewarding and meaningful, and I remain committed to collaborative leadership that supports clients, team members, and advances rural communities.

Boards or committees you currently serve on and boards or committees you have served on in the past 5 years (please include the principal business of any board listed, e.g., "local school board" or "agricultural supply co-op" etc.): For Compeer Financial's Board of Directors, I currently serve as the vice chair and as a member of the Enterprise Risk and YBSE committees. I previously served as vice chair of the Audit and Finance committee. Beyond Compeer, I support our industry as a member of the USDA Christmas Tree Promotion Board's Social Media and Promotion committees. In my local community, I serve as the treasurer for the Black River Falls Area Foundation, an organization that provides grants and scholarships to residents in Jackson County, Wis.

Community involvement/government service: I was appointed to a 2nd term to the Wisconsin Governor's Council on Migrant Labor. I remain involved in several industry organizations including WCTPA, NCTA, and AmericanHort. I am a member of the National Council of Agricultural Employers (NCAE), an organization that focuses on agricultural labor issues.

Education: Graduate of Black River Falls High School; BA in Economics from University of Michigan; and EAGL Certificate in Applied Horticultural Business Management from Texas A&M University.

What is your vision for the future of agriculture? I am optimistic about the future of agriculture and the opportunities producers have to harness technology, innovation, and data-driven decision-making. From precision agriculture and automation to electronic financing and advanced recordkeeping, today's tools are helping farmers improve efficiency, manage risk, and address ongoing challenges. As an industry, we must continue to embrace innovation to support the long-term sustainability of farming operations.

What do you believe are the primary issues facing agriculture and Compeer Financial? In my opinion, farming operations of all sizes are facing significant challenges. The first is navigating an increasingly complex business environment, including changing trade policies, labor regulations, technology demands, and cybersecurity risks. As agriculture and financial services become more digitally connected, protecting our data while maintaining efficiency will continue to grow in importance.

The second challenge is transitioning farming operations to the next generation. To support both our clients and the long-term strength of Compeer's balance sheet, we should continue encouraging regular conversations around transition planning as part of annual business reviews. By making succession planning a more consistent part of the financial discussion, our industry will be better positioned to manage risk and support long-term stability for future generations.

Why do you want to serve on the Board of Directors at Compeer Financial? I have experienced firsthand the impact Compeer can have during a downturn. Following the Great Recession, my family farm faced significant challenges, and through open, honest conversations, it became clear we were working with a lending institution that valued long-term relationships and the success of its clients.

In addition to strong financial support, Compeer's patronage program played an important role in helping our operation navigate difficult times. That experience reinforced my belief in Compeer's mission and cooperative model. In turn, I remain committed to helping ensure agriculture and rural communities remain strong for future generations.