

At a Glance

- **Community Convening:** StartupBREW held 5 events with 614 total attendees.
- **USDA National Proving Grounds:** USDA formally announced the National Proving Grounds Network for AgTech with Undersecretary Hutchins, Steven Mirsky, and Senator Hoeven — generating 40+ national media placements.
- **NPG-Ag Challenges:** 15 land-grant institution weed scientists from across the country convened at Grand Farm for the first NPG-Ag challenge workshops on weed detection and weed control.
- **Field Operations:** Field operations transitioned into active season with planting of alleyways, soil sampling, fertilizer application, and spring tillage across trial plots.
- **UGA Grand Farm:** UGA Grand Farm installed a 250-tree pecan orchard across five varieties and began planting peaches, corn, and peanuts.
- **Higher Education:** Grand Farm joined the AI Agribench Consortium, led by UIUC, to evaluate AI agronomy tools.
- **External Speaking:** Greg and William spoke at MIT's Imagination in Action event; William spoke at the ASABE Member Hour on trade barriers in agriculture.

Experiences & Convenings

StartupBREW

April was a milestone month for StartupBREW, featuring 5 events including two university takeover days with NDSU and Concordia, and a celebration of StartupBREW's 5th birthday. The month demonstrated the program's sustained growth as a community convening platform.

Speakers:

- The BRDGE
- Local Littles
- RC Private Violin Studio
- Redwork
- YouBetcha
- KYD Consulting
- Chezy
- Xtra Apparel
- Gathered FM Play Cafe & Fine Arts Studio



APRIL 2026

IMPACT INSIGHTS

Attendance: 614 community members

Special Events: NDSU Takeover Day, Concordia Takeover Day, StartupBREW 5th Birthday Celebration

USDA National Proving Grounds Network for AgTech

Official Announcement

The USDA formally announced the National Proving Grounds Network for AgTech, with Grand Farm serving as the national program manager. The announcement featured Undersecretary Scott Hutchins, Steven Mirsky, and Senator John Hoeven, and generated over 40 media placements across national agriculture, technology, and policy outlets.



The announcement video featured remarks from Secretary Rollins, Secretary Burgum, and Senator Hoeven, further elevating Grand Farm's national profile.

Weed Science Challenge Workshops

Grand Farm hosted 15 land-grant institution weed scientists from across the country to develop challenge protocols for NPG-Ag's first two challenges: weed detection and weed control. The team also identified and reached out to 55 companies active in these spaces to invite enrollment in the program.



Grand Farm Partnerships

New Partnership

- University of Georgia

Corporate Engagement

- Titan Machinery provided two tractors to Grand Farm for the 2026 field season and was named a Sky Tier partner, deepening one of the organization's most significant equipment relationships.
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Field Operations

April marked the transition into the active 2026 field season. The field operations team began planting alleyways on April 1, with soil sampling, fertilizer application, and spring tillage underway across trial plots. Titan Machinery and Butler Machinery supported the team in preparing tractors for the planting season, with small grains and sugar beets next in line for planting.



Program Management Office (PMO)

- Hosted a USDA ARS training at Grand Farm on ModCam systems and BenchBot.
- Finalized Program scoping for the Transformational Agriculture Innovation Platform with USDA ARS, including facilitating a workshop and drafting all program documents for submission to USDA leadership.
- Scoped a program to create digital fingerprints of corn varieties near extinction, preserving a clear record of their attributes for future crop development in the event of physical loss.
- Completed the first drone flight of the season and advanced UAS partnerships across multiple states.
- Closed out a multi-year industry partnership and prepared for an IoT dashboard demo launch in May.
- Secured next-phase funding on the autonomous mowing project through the pooled fund.

Higher Education & Research Collaboration

- Grand Farm joined the AI Agribench Consortium, led by UIUC, to evaluate AI agronomy tools alongside leading land-grant research institutions.
 - Advanced the RAPP report and supported multiple federal and foundation grant submissions across partner institutions.
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UGA Grand Farm

Planting Season Underway

Spring has arrived in the South, bringing a busy season of planting and preparation as trials get underway. UGA Grand Farm is partnering with a strong group of companies in 2026 while continuing to build and enhance the site.

Pecan Orchard Installation

The team successfully installed a pecan orchard of 250 trees across five varieties — a significant milestone that will support valuable trials in the years ahead. In the coming weeks, planting of peaches, corn, and peanuts will follow, with soybeans and cotton soon after.



Marketing, Communications & Storytelling

Photography

- USDA National Proving Grounds Network for AgTech Announcement 2026 - [Album](#)
- Grand Farm Innovation Campus Phase II Legislative Update 2026 - [Album](#)
- USDA National Proving Grounds Network™ for AgTech 2026 - [Album](#)
- StartupBREW Fargo x4 - [Album](#)

Video

- USDA Announces National Proving Grounds Network™ for AgTech - [Link](#)
 - Featuring testimonials from growers, partners, students, USDA ARS, and Dr. Aderholdt
- USDA, US Senator Hoeven, and Grand Farm Announce the National Proving Grounds Network for AgTech - [Link](#)

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- USDA National Proving Grounds Network™ for AgTech Remarks from USDA Livestream - April 28, 2026 - [Link](#)
 - Featuring remarks about Grand Farm and NPG-Ag from Secretary Rollins, Secretary Burgum, and Senator Hoeven

Written Content

- [Prospect Growth 2025 Field Trial case study](#)
 - [New West Genetics 2025 Field Trial case study](#)
 - [Future Farmer: Grand Farm Innovation Campus Enters Phase II](#)
 - [Future Farmer: Last-Acre Connectivity: The Infrastructure Behind the Next Era of Farming by Dr. William Aderholdt](#)
 - [Future Farmer: AgTech Week 2026](#)
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Public Relations & Media Coverage

The USDA National Proving Grounds announcement drove an extraordinary volume of national coverage in April. Selected highlights are listed below; a full media log is available separately.

Grand Farm / USDA National Proving Grounds

- **Forbes**
[USDA Pioneers NPG-Ag AI Agriculture Research Program](#)
- **Successful Farming**
[North Dakota to Lead Nation in Federal Ag Tech Research Initiative](#)
- **AgWeek**
[Grand Farm to Lead USDA's National Proving Grounds Network for Ag Tech](#)
- **InForum**
[Grand Farm Chosen as Hub for New Ag-Tech Initiative](#)
- **AGDAILY**
[USDA Launches National Proving Grounds Network for AgTech](#)
- **American Ag Network**
[Hoeven: Grand Farm to Manage Nationwide USDA AgTech Network](#)
- **North Dakota Monitor**
[North Dakota to Lead Nation in Federal Ag Tech Research Initiative](#)
- **Red River Farm Network**
[USDA-ARS Partnership Puts Grand Farm on National Stage](#)
- **KFGO**
[USDA Launches National Proving Grounds Network for AgTech with Grand Farm](#)

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- **KVRR**
[Grand Farm to Become National Program Manager for New USDA Agriculture Tech Program](#)
- **Aberdeen News**
[North Dakota's Grand Farm to Lead National Farm Tech Research](#)
- **Heartland Forward**
[AI, Data and the Infrastructure Shaping the Future of Farming](#)
- **Ethanol Producer**
[USDA Announces the Creation of the USDA National Proving Grounds Network](#)
- **Southeast Ag Net**
[USDA National Proving Grounds AgTech Network Launch](#)
- **Michigan Farm News**
[AgTech to the Future: USDA Announces National Proving Grounds Network](#)
- **Progressive Farmer**
[USDA Launches AgTech Network](#)
- **Power Progress**
[USDA Launches Network of Ag Tech Proving Grounds](#)
- **National Hog Farmer**
[USDA Launches National Proving Grounds Network for AgTech](#)
- **The Fence Post**
[USDA Launches Initiative to Evaluate Technology](#)
- **Farmers Hotline**
[USDA Launches National AgTech Proving Grounds Network](#)
- **Yahoo News**
[North Dakota to Lead Nation in Federal Ag Tech Research Initiative](#)
- **AgFunder News**
[AgriFood Signals — USDA National Proving Grounds Coverage](#)
- **Bismarck Tribune**
[North Dakota to Lead Nation in Federal Ag Tech Research Initiative](#)
- **Northern Ag Network**
[USDA Announces the Creation of the USDA National Proving Grounds Network](#)
- **MeriTalk**
[USDA Creates Ag Tech Research Network](#)
- **Future Farmer**
[Last-Acre Connectivity](#)

TEDxFargo

- **InForum**
[Celebrity Photographer Josh Madson to Bring His Community Collage Project to Fargo](#)



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IMPACT INSIGHTS



External Speaking Engagements

- Greg and William spoke at Imagination in Action at MIT, sharing the work underway at Grand Farm with approximately 25 attendees from across the innovation and research community.
 - Greg and Matt spoke at STAR-TIDES at George Mason University.
 - William spoke at the ASABE Member Hour on Trade Barriers: Potential Impacts and Opportunities for agricultural technology.
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In Summary

April 2026 was a landmark month for Grand Farm and Emerging Prairie. The formal announcement of the USDA National Proving Grounds Network for AgTech — with Grand Farm as national program manager — generated over 40 media placements and positioned the organization on a national stage alongside USDA leadership and U.S. Senator Hoeven. StartupBREW reached its 5th birthday with record monthly attendance, field operations launched into an active growing season, and UGA Grand Farm broke ground on orchard infrastructure. Across policy, research, community, and field programs, April marked the beginning of what promises to be the organization's most impactful year to date.