

Farmers urged to file claims with bankruptcy court if Hansen-Mueller owes them money

BY JENNY SCHLECHT
Agweek

More than 50 farmers and ag businesses from across the country have filed claims in the Hansen-Mueller Co. bankruptcy so far.

That includes more than \$400,000 in claims from Minnesota entities, more than \$300,000 from South Dakota entities, and more than \$22,000 from North Dakota entities so far. Claimants include farmers who delivered grain to the company but were not paid for it, other grain elevators and grain handling companies that delivered grain to the company but were not paid for it, and service providers, including trucking companies, that were not paid for services rendered. The deadline for filing claims in the case is Jan. 26.

According to a bankruptcy website, the next court hearing in the case is a Dec. 9 hearing on whether the company can continue to use cash collateral to operate the business. Also scheduled is a Dec. 22 meeting of creditors, which is not a court hearing but is a required step in the bankruptcy process. A meeting of creditors is

conducted by a representative of the United States Trustee Office, and Hansen-Mueller representatives will have to answer questions under oath about the company's paperwork and financial records. Creditors may join and ask questions, too.

Hansen-Mueller, based in Omaha, Nebraska, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy on Monday, Nov. 17, less than a month after the Nebraska Public Service Commission temporarily suspended the company's license. Chapter 11 is a form of bankruptcy that allows for reorganization of debts and operations under court supervision. During Chapter 11 proceedings, companies continue operating, rather than being forced to liquidate all assets immediately.

A statement from the company said it is "pursuing a strategic financial restructuring to address its current financial challenges, facilitate the sale of its assets, and maximize recoveries for its creditors and stakeholders."

The company said it is "pursuing a Court-supervised sale process for substantially all of its assets under Section 363 of the Bankruptcy Code. This

process is designed to attract one or more buyers who can continue the business operations, while providing the highest possible return to its creditors."

According to Nebraska PSC documents, the commission received a report on Oct. 23 that Hansen-Mueller had failed to pay for grain transactions. A subsequent investigation revealed nearly \$2 million in grain sales had not been paid to 38 Nebraska farmers from Aug. 30, 2024, to Oct. 21, 2025. The commission asked that civil penalties be assessed, that the company's license be temporarily suspended pending the outcome of the case, and that the company be ordered to cease and desist operations in Nebraska.

The Nebraska PSC on Nov. 4 dismissed the complaint against Hansen-Mueller after the company entered a stipulated agreement with the PSC's Grain Warehouse and Dealer Department "resolving the allegations contained in the Complaint."

State actions

Hansen-Mueller has done business in numerous states, including Minnesota, North Dakota and South Dakota. Claimants

in the state are urged to file claims at <https://dm.epiq11.com/case/hansenmueller/info>.

Hansen-Mueller has a grain facility known as Elevator A in Duluth at 200 Garfield Ave. Hansen-Mueller has a grain buyer license for the Duluth facility, but also has Minnesota licenses for commercial feed and fertilizer. On Nov. 19, the Minnesota Department of Agriculture advised farmers who have conducted business with Hansen-Mueller Co., based in Omaha, Nebraska, and operating in Duluth, who have not received payments for grain sold in Minnesota to submit a claim with MDA. Farmers with warehouse receipts for grain in storage will need to contact the United States Department of Agriculture at warehousing@usda.gov.

Anyone with questions about the process in Minnesota should contact Christine Mader at 651-201-6011 or christine.mader@state.mn.us, or Nick Milanowski at 651-201-6076 or nicholas.milanowski@state.mn.us.

In North Dakota, Hansen-Mueller has a grain warehouse license for a facility with a listed address at 4256 54th Ave. N in Grand Forks, as well

as a roving grain buyers' license. As of Oct. 31, Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring said Hansen-Mueller appeared to owe farmers about \$300,000 and had more than enough oats in storage to cover the amount owed to farmers.

Goehring on Tuesday, Dec. 2, encouraged farmers who have been affected by the Hansen-Mueller bankruptcy to file claims with the bankruptcy court.

"Every producer who is owed money by Hansen-Mueller should be receiving notification from the bankruptcy court that they are a claimant and need to file a claim," Goehring said in a statement. "We understand the producer's frustration and are here to provide clear information to help those affected."

Once Hansen-Mueller filed for bankruptcy, the North Dakota Department of Agriculture was prevented from beginning insolvency proceedings which include accessing the bond and credit sale indemnity fund, a statement from the department said.

"Our state indemnity fund only covers credit sale contracts, and to access the fund, we need to start insolvency

proceedings. Unfortunately, the bankruptcy prevents us from doing so," Shaun Quissell, director of the Grain and Livestock Licensing Division at the North Dakota Department of Agriculture, explained in an email.

Anyone in North Dakota needing further assistance can contact Quissell at squissell@nd.gov or 701-328-4761, or Les Gasal at lgasal@nd.gov or 701-328-4766.

Hansen-Mueller Co. holds a Class A grain buyer's license in South Dakota. Leah Mohr, executive director of the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission, said South Dakota PUC staff urge South Dakota producers who have not been paid for grain sold to Hansen-Mueller to review the information provided in the bankruptcy notice, seek legal guidance regarding their rights, and file a proof of claim with the bankruptcy court. South Dakota grain sellers that are affected by the Hansen-Mueller bankruptcy are encouraged to contact the SDPUC at 605-773-3201. South Dakota does not have an indemnity fund.

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"There was another neighbor to the west that had a tractor window shot out and then there was another guy south of us that had a road maintainer shot. So, it's not like it's the only incident," he said. "That same weekend, a deer hunter had four tires slashed on his pickup. It's kind of been a rash of stuff all of the sudden."

They don't know if all the incidents are related or not, but it has put some unrest in the small town.

"But it seems to me, in our small community where we've never locked doors here, we just have never had to feel like we were in an area where we have a threat of something being stolen," Jorgensen said. "Now, I mean, everything we do, we have to lock up because we're just concerned about people stealing or vandalizing."

There has been no suspect detained.

"We have some suspicions of who may have done it, but nothing to really prove who did it," Jorgensen said.

Jorgensen said thankfully they had already finished the fall harvest, but having the tractor down still caused disruption to their farming operations.

"We still had to jostle tractors around because in our main farm operation, now our feed yard is filling up, so we've got



Contributed / Bryan Jorgensen

Damage caused to the Jorgensen's tractor.

tractors tied up that would normally be in the fields in the summertime, are pulling feed wagons and whatnot," Jorgensen said.

Jorgensen said that if anyone has any information about the person who committed this crime, please report it to the Tripp County Sheriff's Office.