

### 3.16.20 Amended 2020 NeFU Spring District Meeting Conference Calls Schedule

**\*All meetings will begin at 7:00 p.m., and will be one hour long**

**Cards will be mailed out to the Districts that have not yet met.**

**Free Conference Calling: Call in number: (480) 660-5310 Access Code: 737 708**

**For everyone wanting the meeting handouts email us at: [info@nebraskafarmersunion.org](mailto:info@nebraskafarmersunion.org)**

#### **District 4 Spring Meeting Conference Call: Tuesday, March 24, 2020. 7:00 p.m.**

- District 4 Director's Report: Vern Jantzen
- NFU Convention report: Vern Jantzen and John Hansen
- Federal & State issues updates: John Hansen
- "Train the Trainer" stress program report: Vern Jantzen
- GO Membership Program

For more information: Gayland Regier (402) 520-1094 Cell or Vern Jantzen (402) 230-0011 Cell

#### **District 7 Spring Meeting Conference Call: Thursday, March 26, 2020. 7:00 p.m.**

- District 7 Director Report: Paul Theobald
- NFU Convention report: Paul Theobald & John Hansen
- Federal & State issues updates: John Hansen
- GO Membership Program

For more information: Paul Theobald (402) 369-3817 Cell or Art Tanderup (402-) 278-4627 Cell

#### **District 3 & District 1 Spring Meeting Conference Call: Friday, March 27, 2020. 7:00 p.m.**

- District 3 Director's Report: Mary Alice Corman
- District 1 Director's Report: Al Davis
- NFU Convention report: John Hansen
- Federal & State issues updates: John Hansen
- GO Membership Program

For more information: Richard Corman (402) 364-3080 or Mary Alice Corman (402) 364-3079

#### **District 6 Spring Meeting Conference Call: Monday, March 30, 2020 7:00 p.m.**

- District 6 Director's Report: Graham Christensen
- NFU Convention report: Bill Armbrust & John Hansen
- Federal & State issues updates: John Hansen
- GO Membership Program

For more information: Paul Poppe (402) 380-4508 or Graham Christensen (402) 217-5217

#### **District 5 Spring Meeting Conference Call: Tuesday, March 31, 2020. 7:00 p.m.**

- District 5 Director's Report: Ben Gotschall
- NFU Convention report: Ben Gotschall & John Hansen
- Federal & State issues updates: John Hansen
- "Train the Trainer" stress program report: Ben Gotschall
- GO Membership Program

For more information: Justin Orem (402) 570-8512 Cell or Ben Gotschall (402) 705-8679 Cell

## 2020 Checklist for NeFU Spring District Meetings

NeFU Board of Directors 3-year terms that expire at the end of 2020:

- Al Davis                                 District 1
- Ben Gotschall                         District 5

Establish three working committees and elect or appoint Chairs for:

**Membership:** works with NeFU GO Membership workers to help counties organizations meet their membership goals.

**Education:** works with state office to help counties recruit for young producers, women, and other educational activities as well as organize educational outreach events.

**Legislation:** works with state office to help counties support legislative activities at the state and national levels.

Remind county officers of the need to have summer/fall county meetings, select delegates to state convention, select county policy delegate, and send policy resolutions to state office for state policy development day, and encourage people to attend state convention.

Stress need for each county to meet their membership goals and set up times for membership drives.

**September 13-15:** NFU Fall Fly-In Sunday—Wednesday, Washington D.C.

Every District should send at least one person to NFU's Fall Fly-In.

Who should that be? Who do you want to be more active, or a future leader?

Encourage members to support the Builders Club to support the work of NeFU!

Encourage members to support the NeFU PAC (NEBFARMPAC) to help elect and support candidates that support family farmer and ranch agriculture.

**November 10-11, 2020 Nebraska Wind & Solar Conference—Lincoln Cornhusker Marriott Hotel**

**November 16: Deadline for County and District Reports to be sent to State Office**

**2020 Nebraska Farmers Union's 107th State Convention**

Ramada Kearney, 301 Second Avenue, Kearney, NE 68847

Room Rate: \$91 with hot buffet breakfast

December 2:                 NeFU Board of Directors Meeting-Wednesday—1:00 pm

**December 3:                 NeFU Policy Day—Thursday—10:00 am**

December 3:                 NeFU Foundation Board Meeting—Thursday—5:00 pm

**December 4:                 NeFU State Convention—Friday-8:30 am**

**December 5:                 NeFU State Convention—Saturday--9:00 am**

**February 28--March 2, 2021**

**NFU's 119th Convention—San Francisco, CA**



# Nebraska Farmers Union

Office: 402-476-8815  
Fax: 402-476-8815  
1305 Plum Street  
Lincoln, NE 68502

[www.nebraskafarmersunion.org](http://www.nebraskafarmersunion.org)

## Eight Nebraskans Attend NFU 118<sup>th</sup> Convention in Savannah, Georgia

For Immediate Release

Contact: John Hansen 402-476-8815 Office or 402-580-8815 Cell

[www.nebraskafarmersunion.org](http://www.nebraskafarmersunion.org)

**March 6, 2020 Lincoln, NE** – Eight Nebraska Farmers Union (NeFU) members attended the National Farmers Union (NFU) Convention March 1-3, 2020 in Savannah, Georgia. The five delegates representing Nebraska were: Ben Gotschall, Raymond; Shannon Graves, Bradshaw; Bill Armbrust, Elkhorn; Paul Theobald, Osmond; NeFU Vice President Vern Jantzen, Plymouth; and NeFU President John Hansen, Lincoln. NeFU Membership Associate Matt Gregory and Farmers Union Insurance General Manager Jeffrey Downing also attended.

Delegates to the convention adopted the NFU Policy Book and six special orders of business. Before the policy review began, they elected Rob Larew to succeed Roger Johnson as the organization's president and re-elected Patty Edelburg of Scandinavia, Wisconsin, to serve as NFU Vice President. Convention attendees heard remarks from U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue who did not stay to answer questions. NFU President Roger Johnson delivered his final State of the Farmers Union address, offering an overview of his 11-year-long tenure and an optimistic outlook for the organization's future. Additionally, the convention featured a panel on black land loss and voting rights and breakout sessions on precision agriculture, the history of grassroots organizing, regenerative farming, farm to table, and hemp production.

NeFU President John Hansen said, "We wish retiring NFU President Roger Johnson and his wife Anita the very best in their retirement. Roger left NFU in far better shape after his eleven years of outstanding leadership. We welcome incoming President Rob Larew and look forward to working with him for farm and ranch families in the years to come. The delegates very much enjoyed the Southern charm of Savannah and are looking forward to the convention in San Francisco next year. This year's convention gave our delegates the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of issues, broaden their perspectives, and meet people from different locations who share their values and commitment to family farm agriculture."

In addition to updating NFU's policy, the 199 delegates from 33 states approved 6 Special Orders of Business:

- [Family Farming and 2020: A Most Challenging Year](#)
- [Family Farming and the 2020 Election](#)
- [Family Farming and Cooperatives](#)
- [Family Farming and Climate Change](#)
- [Family Farming and Dairy Policy Reform](#)
- [Family Farming and Truth in Labeling and Promotion of Meat Products](#)

Full text of the adopted policy manual will be available soon at [www.nfu.org](http://www.nfu.org).

The 2021 National Farmers Union Convention will be held in San Francisco, California on February 28 – March 2.

*Nebraska Farmers Union is a general farm organization with 4,000 farm and ranch family members dedicated to protecting and enhancing the economic well-being and quality of life for family farmers and ranchers, and their rural communities. Since 1913, Nebraska Farmers Union has helped organize over 445 cooperatives.*





National  
Farmers  
Union

**119TH ANNIVERSARY CONVENTION**

SAN FRANCISCO, CA • 2021

*Save the date!*

February 28–March 2, 2021



UNITED TO GROW  
**FAMILY**  
AGRICULTURE



National  
Farmers  
Union

Learn more at [NFU.org](http://NFU.org)



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[/FarmersUnions](https://www.youtube.com/FarmersUnions)



## **FAMILY FARMING AND 2019: A MOST CHALLENGING YEAR 2020 SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS**

Family farmers and ranchers endured a historically challenging year in 2019 and will feel the impact for years to come. Extreme weather, trade conflicts, inadequate farm policy, and the declining agricultural economy have compounded and intensified the financial and emotional stress that our nation's family farmers and ranchers continue to face.

Flooding, excessive moisture, and unseasonably cool early season temperatures prevented farmers from planting a record 20 million acres of cropland in 2019. In addition, drought continued to impact other parts of the country. Late season rains and early snow presented harvest challenges that have not yet been resolved.

Economic indicators continue to trend downward as evidenced by the 24 percent increase in farm bankruptcies since 2018. Ongoing trade disputes also jeopardize previously stable export markets. Meanwhile, dairy farms continue to be particularly hard hit, with an estimated 10 percent of dairies going out of business in Wisconsin alone. Late season moisture issues caused dramatic crop quality losses, which have resulted in significant price discounts at the point of sale. Additionally, lack of enforcement of existing anti-trust laws and a lack of competition in the crop input and meat processing sectors has further reduced opportunities for farmers and ranchers to be profitable.

Ad hoc disaster programs (including WHIP+ and prevent plant top-up payments) and administrative actions—such as the Market Facilitation Program (MFP)—helped to ease the burden but are not a stable or reliable safety net for producers. While MFP has been helpful for many farmers, significant questions remain, including inequities between county payment rates and the development of the formula utilized by USDA to determine those rates.

While the 2018 Farm Bill made modest adjustments to Price Loss Coverage (PLC) and Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC), these programs when combined with federal crop insurance are still unable to meet the needs of our nation's producers when they experience multiple disasters, as in 2019. In addition, improvements to dairy programs in the 2018 Farm Bill came too late to save many family dairy farms.

To address these issues, we call for reforms including:

- Adding quality adjustment factors as an option to crop insurance policies;
- Developing and adequately funding permanent disaster programs, rather than relying upon ad-hoc initiatives;
- Allowing lenders, including FSA, to be more flexible in addressing cash flow deficits for 2020 operating loan applications;
- Following a more transparent process for announcing and implementing one-time trade assistance and disaster programs;

- Developing a free, fair, and reliable trading system that allows access for U.S. agricultural goods and provides a fair and equitable marketplace for agricultural producers;
- Additional antitrust enforcement that addresses the consolidation in agriculture including, but not limited to, mandatory price reporting for livestock;
- Fully fund and staff all USDA agencies, service centers, and programs; and
- While farmers are eternal optimists, after consecutive down years, it is time we learn from past policy shortcomings. We call on Congress and the administration to address the needs of family farmers and ranchers across our county through long-term policy certainty. Farmers are optimistic, but hope is not enough.



## **FAMILY FARMING AND THE 2020 ELECTION 2020 SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS**

Family farmers, ranchers, and rural communities are facing substantial challenges. Low prices, volatile trade policies, weather pressure, and political gridlock have all combined to create a witch's brew that is poisoning rural America. It is imperative that candidates for political office at all levels of government—local, county, state, and federal—understand the crisis facing rural America and respond with positive policy proposals to strengthen agriculture, protect family farms and ranches, and support our rural communities. Farmers Union would ask all candidates for office in 2020 to consider and address the following issues:

- Sound social and economic policies that create opportunities for rural communities to grow and thrive into the future to avoid cultural and economic stagnation;
- Extreme weather events impacting agriculture nationwide, and what policies and programs can be created and/or utilized to help family farmers and ranchers address these challenges;
- Significant, long-term solutions to strengthen the farm safety net that builds upon the 2018 Farm Bill;
- A free, fair, and reliable trading system that allows access for U.S. agricultural goods and provides a fair and equitable marketplace for agricultural producers worldwide;
- The stabilization of the current agricultural workforce and the future flow of agricultural workers through a flexible, efficient, and compassionate agricultural worker visa program that is easily accessible to family farms;
- Insufficient antitrust enforcement that has resulted in an unprecedented rate of consolidation in agriculture;
- The role of agriculture in addressing climate change through both adapting to and mitigating the root causes of climate change through existing USDA programs and other initiatives and new proposals to solve this global crisis; and
- Access to and the affordability of rural healthcare, addiction prevention and treatment, and mental health services.

We call upon all Farmers Union members to engage and educate candidates on these and other issues.



## **FAMILY FARMING AND COOPERATIVES 2020 SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS**

National Farmers Union's mission statement states that the organization seeks to advocate for "family farmers, ranchers, fishers, and their communities through education, cooperation, and legislation." The cooperation side of the triangle represents members working together to achieve common goals and Farmers Union's commitment to cooperative education and cooperative business development. Farmers Union and the cooperative movement go hand in hand as people come together for a common purpose of mutual benefits.

Support of and the continued success of cooperatives is essential to the mission of every Farmers Union chapter. When cooperatives are successful, not only do the members benefit, but rural America does as well. Cooperatives create employment opportunities and keep economic benefits in the community and surrounding area. It is essential that Farmers Union continues to foster the relationships that have been built and strengthens and develops them for the future of our organization.

NFU policy references cooperative support throughout. There are sections that direct the organization to vigorously defend the Capper-Volstead Act; support cooperatives as a value-added tool for farmers; guard against monopolization of cooperatives; support the Rochdale principles; support and provide education of cooperative issues; support Farmers Union affiliated and non-affiliated cooperatives to build rural communities, and support federal legislation that supports cooperatives that support rural infrastructure and renewable energy.

Cooperatives remain an excellent tool not only for family farms and family ranches but also to maintain robust rural economies.

NFU and its members must continue and expand efforts to help educate, develop, research, and support additional cooperatives for the benefit of agriculture and rural communities. Education on the importance of member engagement and involvement in cooperative management and oversight should be emphasized. Furthermore, NFU should consider how a cooperative model can be applied to new and non-traditional businesses and services that further promote member-owned and administered economic systems.





## **FAMILY FARMING AND CLIMATE CHANGE 2020 SPECIAL ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The extreme weather events of 2019 show once again that climate change jeopardizes the livelihoods of U.S. family farmers, ranchers, and rural residents, as well as our nation's food, fuel, and fiber supply.

With increasing frequency, family farmers and ranchers are being significantly impacted by the changing climate and the increasingly severe and frequent natural disasters that this phenomenon exacerbates. At the same time, family farms are uniquely positioned to mitigate climate change as healthy soils and vegetation remove existing greenhouse gases from the earth's atmosphere and reduce overall emissions. Agricultural producers must have a seat at the table as new political frameworks to address climate change are being developed.

In order to empower family farmers to lessen the negative impacts of climate change, and as a leader in promoting and highlighting the benefits of ecosystems services provided by agriculture, NFU supports policies, collaborations with consumers, and efforts throughout the agricultural value chain that:

- Support research, cost-share and other incentives to help family farmers install and manage practices and infrastructure that mitigate climate change and sequester carbon;
- Encourage USDA Climate Hubs to coordinate climate information, agronomic and risk management support, and programs that enhance options to allow family farmers to effectively utilize opportunities to enhance profits while mitigating climate change and highlight the positive impact all agricultural producers and all sectors of the agriculture industry including livestock producers are already providing to both adapt to climate change and mitigate climate change's root causes through farm bill conservation programs and other initiatives;
- Encourage energy efficiency, renewable energy production, and further development of the bioeconomy on family farms and in rural communities;
- Expand production and use of biofuels in the transportation system;
- Encourage cooperation and collaboration among family farmers to build and expand market infrastructure that will allow consumers to choose agricultural products that create climate benefits;
- Provide new opportunities for family farmers to articulate their climate mitigation efforts to consumers through food processors and retailers;
- Protect family farmland from carbon intensive suburban sprawl development;
- Protect competition in the markets that family farmers buy from and sell into, allowing for more opportunities to make decisions that benefit soil and the landscape rather than farming within the narrow prescriptive demands of excessively consolidated markets;
- Encourage USDA and other federal agencies to acknowledge existing science on climate change and prioritize research on this issue; and

- Encourage USDA and other federal agencies to explore connections between existing programs that provide agriculture and rural communities opportunities to both adapt to and mitigate the root causes of climate change and coordinate efforts to enhance the effectiveness of these programs.
- Encourage USDA and private industry to explore opportunities for family farmers and ranchers to realize financial benefit from the ecosystems services generated through improved management practices including voluntary marketplace initiatives and voluntary federal support programs.
- Encourage USDA, the Department of the Interior, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and other state and federal agencies to redouble their efforts to install, maintain, and strengthen new and existing infrastructure and new and existing initiatives to help rural America adapt to our changing climate and the extreme weather events it exacerbates.



## **FAMILY FARMING AND DAIRY POLICY REFORM**

U.S dairy farms are an important segment of our nation's economy. As one of the world's largest dairy-producing nations, the industry provides roughly \$140 billion in economic output, \$29 billion in household earnings, and more than 900,000 jobs.

Despite dairy's economic contribution to our nation, federal programs are failing producers who face difficult economic conditions. Between 2014 and 2018, roughly 7,500 U.S dairy farms went out of business as low milk prices failed to cover the average cost of production. Meanwhile, total cow numbers increased slightly and milk production remained relatively stable. The overproduction of milk and the inability for the market to stabilize following an economic downturn accelerated the loss of dairy farms throughout the U.S.

National Farmers Union recognizes efforts made by Congress to improve federal dairy programs, but the Dairy Margin Coverage program does not address the fundamental problem of oversupply. Federal dairy policy must provide both a safety net for family dairy farms in all regions and of all herd sizes, and a mechanism to manage milk supply to meet profitable demand.

A 2019 economic analysis of programs to improve dairy farm profitability showed that a system of managed growth in dairy production would have had a positive impact on the dairy economy. The results show increased milk prices, reduced price volatility, fewer dairy farm exits, and reduced government expenditures.

There is growing support among U.S dairy farmers, farm organizations, and members of congress for managing dairy production growth without issuing a strict quota, prohibiting expansion, or halting trade.

Therefore, NFU calls on Congress to establish a mandatory program for managed growth based on market demand and price stability. Such a program should increase farmer profitability by:

1. Elevating milk prices
2. Preventing overproduction
3. Reducing milk price volatility

Such a program should also:

1. Allow for beginning farmer entry
2. Reduce government expenditures
3. Respond to global market conditions
4. Be national and mandatory so that all dairy producers participate
5. Allow for on-farm processing, value-added, and direct-to-consumer sales
6. Allow for planned growth in response to profitable market demand.
7. Be designed in such a way that any production base does not acquire value
8. Have meaningful farmer input in development, implementation, and governance



## **FAMILY FARMING AND TRUTH IN LABELING AND PROMOTION OF MEAT PRODUCTS**

National Farmers Union supports the use of the terms beef, pork, poultry, lamb, and seafood in a food label to be used exclusively for meat harvest from live animals, in a traditional manner. NFU supports the current use of USDA inspections stamps on meat products. If a USDA stamp is to be used on cell culture, NFU asks USDA to create a stamp that is visibly different from that of traditional meat. Neither Federal nor State meat inspections stamps shall appear on cell cultured or plant-based protein products. We believe these products should be inspected for food safety but do not qualify to be in the same category of food as meat. All alternative proteins, including soy based, vegetable based, synthetic, and cell cultured should be prevented from using the term "meat" on their product. Alternative proteins should not be considered or included in any traditional meat international trade negotiations; they should be considered an entirely separate category of food.



March 21, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader McCarthy, and Minority Leader Schumer:

On behalf of the nearly 200,000 family farmer, rancher, and rural members of the National Farmers Union (NFU), thank you for your work during this unprecedented crisis. As Congress considers legislation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, NFU urges the inclusion of provisions that would provide prompt and appropriate assistance to family farmers and rancher and their rural communities. Immediate action must be taken to better prepare the rural health care system for the pandemic, and all links in our food supply chain, including family farmers and ranchers, must be able to function in this crisis.

NFU, along with other organizations that represent rural residents, sent a letter this week to the Trump Administration urging immediate action to address the dangerous situation in the struggling rural health care system. The coalition letter called for administrative action to expand the capacity of rural facilities, such as increasing the availability of necessary medical supplies and funding for hospitals, migrant health centers, and other community health providers. Such efforts will help rural Americans access necessary medical services during this crisis. Congress should also ensure that rural health concerns are not overlooked in the pandemic.

Efforts to provide more economic stability must include farmers. Assistance should be made available for all commodities directly and indirectly impacted by market disruptions. The economic shockwaves from this pandemic will likely result in volatile markets for all crops. Just as agricultural exports declined because of disputes with our major trading partners in the last two years, the economic impact of efforts to minimize the surge of COVID-19 cases will similarly disrupt the market. One of the first examples of this is the precipitous drop in demand for corn ethanol as fuel consumption has fallen dramatically in the last two weeks. Additionally, many farmers across the country are still recovering from 2019 weather disasters and will need economic assistance to continue farming through these very difficult times.



Ranchers have suffered record losses and bankruptcies in recent years, and market losses due to the pandemic may cause further harm. The gap between shelf prices for beef and prices for cattle widened in the last two weeks, and the decline in prices for live cattle is seriously affecting many ranchers. Although recent efforts to help other sectors of the farm economy have largely not included beef, assistance is now sorely needed. Such assistance should be directed to ranchers rather than to packers and processors.

Between 2014 and 2018, roughly 7,500 U.S dairy farms went out of business as low milk prices failed to cover the average cost of production. Dairy farmers were hopeful for 2020 to be a year of improved prices. However, economic and supply chain disruptions are likely to have serious impacts on the dairy market. Existing programs, such as the Dairy Margin Coverage (DMC) program, offers modest support for farmers but enrollment this year was low. The program should be strengthened, and farmers given another opportunity to enroll. Additional immediate assistance will be needed to reduce the loss and the ensure the viability of family dairy farms.

Farmers and ranchers face significant credit challenges from several years of low prices and weather disaster. This new economic reality adds even more financial pressure. Just as provisions have been made for small business loans, student loans, and mortgage relief, action must also be taken to extend credit and credit terms for farmers. Loan forbearance, loan forgiveness, extended repayment periods, and suspension of interest are some of the many ways to help farmers with credit. There will be many difficulties in the farm economy in 2020; farm foreclosures should not be among them.

Special attention must be paid to loss of market access for the many farmers who sell through their local and regional food systems. These farmers use a variety of marketing channels, including direct-to-consumer markets such as farmers markets, institutional partners such as schools and universities, and intermediaries such as food hubs. These farmers face heightened market uncertainty. Already, some jurisdictions have ordered farmers markets closed and many school systems have been shuttered. While some farmers are finding creative ways to continue to market their products during the pandemic, many will lose the preponderance of their revenue in the weeks and months ahead.

The needs of specialty crop producers must also be accounted for. Growers of fruits and vegetables cannot rely on the same farm safety net as commodity crop producers.

Throughout all these efforts, the integrity of farm programs must be maintained. In many cases, existing farm programs could be improved to avoid lengthy implementation processes for new initiatives. The assistance must be made available to farmers in a timely manner even as governmental operations are challenged during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, geographic disparities in payments and assistance levels should be minimized, although benefits should be based upon the direct and indirect damage to all crops and commodities. Payment limits and eligibility requirements should be enacted to ensure that assistance is appropriately directed to family farmers and ranchers and should reflect the limits set in the 2018 farm bill.

Thank you for your attention to these important matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Larew". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Rob Larew  
President

March 18, 2020

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for your Administration's efforts to protect our nation during these unprecedented times. Like you, we take very seriously the health and safety of our nation, as well as the ability to maintain a steady supply of U.S.-produced food, fiber, feed, and fuel. We request your assistance in ensuring this steady supply continues.

As the COVID-19 situation evolves, concerns have been raised regarding the availability of food and supplies. Members of our organizations – farmers, ranchers, input manufacturers and suppliers, processors, retailers, grain handlers, feed and ingredient manufacturers, lenders, applicators, and many others – contribute to the production, distribution, and availability of this supply to consumers.

We are proud to have a role to play in the great success story of American agriculture, including the abundance produced to feed and sustain U.S. and global consumers. However, this has not been without challenge. In 2019, over 19 million acres in the United States were left unplanted due to severe weather challenges. A difficult planting season in the spring was followed by production and harvest season challenges. Global trade issues impacted agricultural commodity markets.

With this year's spring planting season upon us, we face not only the potential for weather and price-related challenges but new uncertainties. As you consider additional steps to restrict movement to protect our nation from COVID-19, we ask your Administration to be mindful of the food, feed, and agricultural supply chain and workforce impacts on the ability of U.S. agriculture to meet the needs of consumers. These include but are certainly not limited to impacts on accessibility of seed, fertilizer, crop protection products, agricultural labor, equipment, feed and ingredients for food-producing animals, modes of transportation, the availability of required U.S. government inspection services, and daily movement of milk.

Our organizations look forward to sharing questions, needs, and concerns with the Administration in the coming days and weeks.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association  
American Association of Crop Insurers  
American Farm Bureau Federation

American Mushroom Institute  
American Seed Trade Association  
American Soybean Association  
American Sugar Alliance  
Association of Equipment Manufacturers  
Biological Products Industry Alliance  
Cotton Warehouse Association of America  
Crop Insurance and Reinsurance Bureau  
Crop Insurance Professionals Association  
CropLife America  
Farm Credit Council  
Hop Growers of America  
Independent Community Bankers of America  
Independent Professional Seed Association  
International Dairy Foods Association  
National Agricultural Aviation Association  
National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants  
National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Cotton Council  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Farmers Union  
National Grain and Feed Association  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Onion Association  
National Potato Council  
National Sorghum Producers  
North American Export Grain Association  
Northwest Horticultural Council  
Panhandle Peanut Growers Association  
Select Milk Producers  
Society of American Florists  
Southwest Council of Agribusiness  
The Fertilizer Institute  
USA Rice  
U.S. Apple Association  
U.S. Durum Growers Association  
U.S. Peanut Federation  
Western Growers  
Western Peanut Growers Association

March 24, 2020

Dear Governor:

Thank you for your Administration's efforts to protect the citizens in your state during these unprecedented times. Like you, we take very seriously the health and safety of our nation, as well as the ability to maintain a steady supply of U.S.-produced food, fiber, feed, and fuel. Members of our organizations include farmers, ranchers, input manufacturers and suppliers, processors, retailers, grain handlers, merchandisers, animal food and ingredient manufacturers, warehouses and logistics operators, textile manufacturers, lenders, applicators, and many others that contribute to the production, distribution, and availability of this supply to consumers. We are writing to request your assistance in ensuring this steady supply continues during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On March 19, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) released guidance to help state and local jurisdictions and the private sector identify and manage their essential workforce while responding to COVID-19. This list appropriately identifies workers in the food and agriculture supply chain as "Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers."

To ensure a consistent approach across all 50 states and local governments, the undersigned organizations respectfully request that you incorporate the CISA list and any future amendments into your state response plan, and any critical shelter-in-place or shut down orders for your state, thereby allowing these workers, facilities and services to continue to operate and provide necessary inputs for the food and agriculture supply chain.

These include but are certainly not limited to impacts on accessibility of seed, fertilizer, crop protection products, credit providers, agricultural labor, equipment, grains, oilseeds and processed commodities, flour, animal food and ingredients for food-producing animals, modes of transportation, daily movement of milk and all other agricultural commodities. With the spring planting season already upon us, the next six to eight weeks will be crucial to ensure that American agriculture can operate safely and without undue burdens that could inhibit our ability to do what we do best, feed the world.

Thank you again for your time and continued efforts to keep citizens safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. We look forward to working with you to ensure that American food and agriculture businesses can continue to operate in these unprecedented times and provide our nation with a safe and abundant food and fiber supply now and in the future.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Retailers Association  
AMCOT  
American Association of Crop Insurers  
American Cotton Producers  
American Cotton Shippers Association  
American Farm Bureau Federation  
American Mushroom Institute  
American Seed Trade Association  
American Soybean Association  
American Sugar Alliance  
Association of Equipment Manufacturers  
Biological Products Industry Alliance (BPIA)  
Cotton Growers Warehouse Association  
Cotton Warehouse Association of America  
Cottonseed and Feed Association  
Crop Insurance and Reinsurance Bureau  
Crop Insurance Professionals Association  
CropLife America  
Farm Credit Council  
Hop Growers of America  
Independent Community Bankers of  
America  
Independent Professional Seed Association

National Association of Wheat Growers  
National Corn Growers Association  
National Cotton Council  
National Cotton Ginners Association  
National Cottonseed Products Association  
National Council of Farmer Cooperatives  
National Council of Textile Organizations  
National Farmers Union  
National Grain and Feed Association  
National Milk Producers Federation  
National Onion Association  
National Sorghum Producers  
Panhandle Peanut Growers Association  
Select Milk Producers  
Society of American Florists  
Southwest Council of Agribusiness  
The Fertilizer Institute  
U.S. Durum Growers Association  
U.S. Peanut Federation  
USA Rice  
Western Growers  
Western Peanut Growers Association



March 20, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-230, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Democratic Leader  
United States Senate  
S-221, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Republican Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
H-204, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer and Leader McCarthy:

Thank you for your swift response thus far in building a robust federal toolkit as small businesses across the country prepare to deal with the consequences of the Coronavirus outbreak. As you finalize Phase 3 of the Congressional response to the virus, we ask that you ensure all cooperative businesses are eligible to participate in federal disaster assistance under these emergent circumstances. We also ask that Congress remove burdensome regulations that currently bar cooperative businesses from accessing critical assistance, including at the Small Business Administration.

The very characteristics that make cooperatives stronger and more resilient than other business models – that is, their equally-shared ownership among all members – is the basis for which SBA denies financing. To ensure that all cooperative businesses can fairly access federal assistance in response to COVID-19, we ask that you require SBA waive the personal guarantee requirement for cooperative businesses, and instead determine eligibility based on past revenue, past and projected cashflow, and assets.

Cooperative businesses continue to thrive in every sector of our economy because of the hard work and commitment of their member-owners. Today, more than 115 million Americans are a member of at least one of the 65,000 cooperative businesses. Collectively, these businesses generate \$75 billion in annual wages and more than \$650 billion in annual revenue.

In these times of uncertainty, cooperatives remain rooted in their community and committed to doing right by their member-owners, in many instances going well above and beyond what traditional shareholder-owned corporations will do to weather this crisis. It is imperative that cooperative businesses – the lifelines for many rural and underserved communities – can access federal resources at the Small Business Administration. These loans and guarantees will provide critical economic relief for businesses to carry out fixed financial obligations and maintain or resume normal business operations – just like every other small business will be able to do.

Once again, we are grateful for the swift, bipartisan manner with which Congress is acting to ensure a robust toolkit for our nation's response. We look forward to working with you to ensure that all businesses have access to these tools to help our nation fully recover.

In cooperation,

Douglas J. O'Brien  
President and CEO  
**National Cooperative Business Association**  
**CLUSA International**

Jim Nussle  
President & CEO  
**Credit Union National Association**

Melissa Hoover  
Executive Director  
**Democracy at Work Institute**

Todd Van Hoose  
President and CEO  
**Farm Credit Council**

Cornelius Blanding  
Executive Director  
**Federation of Southern Cooperatives/  
Land Assistance Fund**

C.E. Pugh  
Chief Executive Officer  
**National Co+op Grocers**

Charles F. Conner  
President and CEO  
**National Council of Farmer Cooperatives**

Charles E. Snyder  
Chief Executive Officer  
**National Cooperative Bank**

Rob Larew  
President  
**National Farmers Union**

Jim Matheson  
Chief Executive Officer  
**National Rural Electric Cooperatives Association**

Erbin Crowell  
Executive Director  
**Neighboring Food Co-op Association**

Roger Noonan  
President  
**New England Farmers Union**

Shirley Bloomfield  
Chief Executive Officer  
**NTCA – the Rural Broadband Association**

Esteban Kelly  
Executive Director  
**U.S. Federation of Worker Cooperatives**

March 19, 2020

President Donald Trump  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Alex Azar  
U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services  
330 C St SW  
Washington, DC 20416

Dear President Trump and Secretary Azar,

The undersigned organizations representing rural residents urge you to ensure that the rural health care system has adequate resources and support to respond to the novel coronavirus.

To this point, the majority of confirmed coronavirus cases – and correspondingly, the majority of media coverage, testing kits, and safety precautions – have been concentrated in densely populated areas. Though the impact on rural communities may be delayed, epidemiologists and health professionals expect it to be at least as serious, especially because those communities are more vulnerable to the virus and less equipped to treat it.

The greatest risk factors for serious illness from COVID-19 are advanced age and serious chronic medical conditions– both of which disproportionately affect rural Americans. Rural areas are home to the vast majority of counties with more than 20 percent of their population aged 65 years and older. Rural Americans also experience higher rates of heart disease, hypertension, COPD, and diabetes, and are more likely to smoke cigarettes, all of which could increase risk of serious illness.

While rural Americans are more susceptible to coronavirus, they may not be able to easily access testing or medical care if they are exhibiting symptoms. This is, in part, a financial issue; poverty and uninsured rates are elevated in rural counties, meaning that residents of those counties are less likely to be able to afford health care. Those numbers are much higher for farm workers, a particularly concerning fact given the difficulty they may have maintaining social distance at work or at home.

Even when a patient can afford health care, they still may not be able to obtain it. The closure of more than 125 rural hospitals over the past decade has overburdened remaining facilities, which now serve far more people than is ideal. While urban areas have 31.2 physicians per 100,000 people, rural areas have less than half that, at 13.1 per 100,000. The disparity in the number of specialists is even starker, with 263 per 100,000 in urban areas and only 30 per 100,000 in rural areas. To make matters worse, rural health professionals have fewer resources, including fewer beds, less funding, and older medical equipment.

Even in the best circumstances, rural hospitals are often ill-equipped to handle acute medical issues. But in the event of a pandemic, understaffed and underfunded facilities will undoubtedly struggle to meet the needs of every patient. This may be particularly true as high-demand items like testing kits, respirators, and personal protective equipment have already been funneled to urban hospitals and may not be available when rural hospitals need them.

To curtail a rural health crisis, we ask that swift action be taken by the administration. Respirators, testing kits, hospital beds, and other necessary supplies must be made widely available in rural areas to increase the capacity of local facilities. Testing and additional medical fees must be waived in order to eliminate any financial barriers to treatment. Small rural health care providers should be offered priority access to no-interest loans so that they may be able to purchase extra supplies and pay staff throughout the crisis. Furthermore, grants to rural health care providers, made through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program, should be increased and expedited. We also strongly support additional investment in migrant health centers and other rural community health centers in addition to rural hospitals and other rural health care providers because these centers serve as a medical home to many farmworkers and other rural residents.

We are committed to working together, with other organizations, and with the administration to help ease the extreme stress that our rural health care system is likely to face in the coming weeks and months. Thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,

American Federation of Teachers  
Farm Credit Council  
Farmworker Justice  
National Association of Counties  
National Farmers Union  
National Rural Health Association

Cc: The Honorable Sonny Perdue, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture



March 17, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C St NW,  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We are writing to express deep concern about the Department of State's decision to suspend regular visa processing at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City and all U.S. consulates in Mexico in response to the coronavirus pandemic. While we were pleased to hear the Administration announce they will be prioritizing interview waiver cases, the State Department's own data suggests that such workers eligible for waivers may only comprise a portion of workers employers need this season as evidenced by approved petition beneficiaries. Therefore, it is imperative that more be done. We agree that governments and the private sector must take all necessary precautions to reduce further transmission of the virus in our communities, however those steps must be proportional and reasonable. The Food and Agriculture Sector remains critical at this trying time and must be able to continue to provide sustenance.

As you know, many sectors within the agriculture industry are highly labor-intensive and especially dependent upon foreign labor, including the H-2A agricultural visa program, and other non-immigrant agricultural worker visas to meet labor needs. Like much of agriculture, the production for many of our crops is set to begin this month. A significant number of farmers have applications currently pending, or will soon be filed, with appointments at U.S. Consulates scheduled beginning next week.

An interruption to the processing of agricultural worker visas will undoubtedly cause a significant disruption to the U.S. food supply. As you know, the Food and Agriculture Sector, responsible for food manufacturing, processing, and storage facilities, accounts for one-fifth of the nation's economic activity and has been designated a "Critical Infrastructure Sector" by the Department of Homeland Security. Critical infrastructure sectors are considered so vital to the United States that their incapacitation or destruction would have a debilitating effect on security, national economic security, national public health or safety, or any combination thereof. Presidential Policy Directive 21 (PPD-21): Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience advances a national policy to strengthen and maintain secure, functioning, and resilient critical infrastructure.

In order to ensure uninterrupted food, crop, and commodity production, we urge you to recognize all H-2A, as well as any other non-immigrant visa petition involving an agricultural worker, visa consular processing functions as "essential" and direct the U.S. Consulates to treat all agricultural worker appointments as emergency visa services.



The American people need a stable food supply to maintain healthy diets and strong immune systems, especially now during this national health crisis. The failure to take necessary action to protect our food supply will result in bare shelves in grocery store produce aisles, not from panic buying, but as the result of the federal government directly causing a shortage of critical labor. We urge you and the President to not let that happen.

Sincerely,

American Farm Bureau Federation

AmericanHort

Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association

National Council of Agricultural Employers

National Council of Farmer Cooperatives

National Farmers Union

National Milk Producers Federation

National Pork Producers Council

National Potato Council

United Fresh Produce Association

Western Growers Association

USAFarmers

U.S. Apple Association

CC:

Secretary Sonny Perdue

Speaker Nancy Pelosi

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy

Majority Leader Mitch McConnell

Minority Leader Chuck Schumer

<b>Nebraska Farmers Union 2020 Legislative Bill Summary</b>				
<b>2020 Testified: 22</b>		<b>Supported: 14</b>	<b>Opposed: 7</b>	<b>Neutral: 1</b>
<b>As of March 19, 2020</b>		*Denotes a Senator, Committee, or Speaker Priority Bill		
<b>AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE</b>				
<b>2020 Testified: 7</b>		<b>Support: 4</b>	<b>Oppose: 3</b>	<b>Neutral: 0</b>
<b>Bill Number</b>	<b>Bill Description</b>	<b>NeFU Position</b>	<b>Introducer</b>	<b>Bill Status</b>
791*	Change provisions of the Animal Welfare Act	Oppose	Slama	Committee
803*	Adopt the Pulse Crop Resources Act	Support	Hughes	E & R
919	Change requirements for approval or denial of licenses or licensing agreements under the Nebraska Hemp Farming Act	Support	Wayne	Committee
972	Change germination seed testing provisions under the Nebraska Seed Law	Support	Brandt	General File
1152*	Change licensing, cultivation, testing, transportation, violation & penalty, and powers & duties provisions relating to hemp	Support	Halloran	Select File
1165	Eliminate the Nebraska Brand Committee	Oppose	Stinner	Committee
1200	Rename the Livestock Brand Act & the Nebraska Brand Committee	Oppose	Brewer	Committee
<b>EDUCATION COMMITTEE</b>				
<b>2020 Testified: 1</b>		<b>Support: 1</b>	<b>Oppose: 0</b>	<b>Neutral: 0</b>
<b>Bill Number</b>	<b>Bill Description</b>	<b>NeFU Position</b>	<b>Introducer</b>	<b>Bill Status</b>
1073*	Create the School Financing Review Commission	Support	DeBoer	Committee
<b>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</b>				
<b>2020 Testified: 1</b>		<b>Support: 1</b>	<b>Oppose: 0</b>	<b>Neutral: 0</b>
<b>Bill Number</b>	<b>Bill Description</b>	<b>NeFU Position</b>	<b>Introducer</b>	<b>Bill Status</b>
1207	Adopt the Redistricting Act	Support	McCollister	General File

<b>NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE</b>				
<b>2020 Testified: 4 Support: 3 Oppose: 1 Neutral: 0</b>				
<b>Bill Number</b>	<b>Bill Description</b>	<b>NeFU Position</b>	<b>Introducer</b>	<b>Bill Status</b>
LR 288*	Urge Congress & the United States Corps of Engineers to prioritize flood control as a top priority for the management of water systems under their authority in the Missouri River Mainstream Reservoir System Water Control Manual	Support	Slama	Speaker Signed
1072	Authorize certain natural resources districts to issue flood protection bonds & use bond proceeds as prescribed	Support	Hughes	Committee
1132	Change provisions relating to net metering	Oppose	Wayne	Committee
1201	Create the Flood Mitigation & Planning Task Force	Support	Bostelman	General File
<b>REVENUE COMMITTEE</b>				
<b>2020 Testified: 7 Support: 3 Oppose: 3 Neutral: 1</b>				
<b>Bill Number</b>	<b>Bill Description</b>	<b>NeFU Position</b>	<b>Introducer</b>	<b>Bill Status</b>
720*	Adopt the ImagiNE Act and provide Tax incentives	Oppose	Kolterman	Select File
818	Adjust the nameplate capacity tax for inflation	Oppose	Brewer	Committee
930*	Require a minimum amount of tax relief under the Property Tax Credit Act	Support	Briese	Committee
974*	Change taxation & school funding provisions	Neutral	Rev. Committee	General File
1045	Require the posting and reporting of tax incentive information	Support	Brandt	Committee
1070	Change a sales tax exception relating to ag machinery & equipment	Support	Murman	General File
LR 284 CA	CA to eliminate the state income tax	Oppose	La Grone	Committee
LR 300CA*	CA to Prohibit all forms of taxation other than a consumption tax	Oppose	Erdman	Committee
<b>TRANSPORTATION &amp; TELECOM COMMITTEE</b>				
<b>2020 Testified: 2 Support: 2 Oppose: 0 Neutral: 0</b>				
<b>Bill Number</b>	<b>Bill Description</b>	<b>NeFU Position</b>	<b>Introducer</b>	<b>Bill Status</b>
992	Adopt the Broadband Internet Service Infrastructure Act & Provide for certain broadband & Internet services	Support	Friesen	Committee
996*	Create the Broadband Data Improvement Program	Support	Brandt	Final Reading

# Local View: Don't repeat incentive mistakes

Lincoln Journal Star 3.4.20

- VERN JANTZEN – Vice-President, Nebraska Farmers Union

Have you noticed that when public tax dollars are spent helping poor folks, sick folks or farmers, those dollars are called subsidies? Yet, when public tax dollars are spent helping corporations and businesses, those tax dollars are called incentives.

Let's be honest and call all tax dollars spent helping different sets of citizens the same name. If the federal economic incentive farm and conservation programs I use are called subsidies, then I think it fair to refer to state economic incentive programs as state corporate subsidy programs.

Citizens have long said economic incentive programs cost too much, are secretive, wasteful, not cost effective and usually help the most successful communities the most and struggling mostly rural communities the least.

Instead of learning from past mistakes and making needed changes, LB720 and its AM2207 amendment doubles down and digs the fiscal hole our state is in deeper and faster.

Nebraska is 49th in the nation in the percentage of funding it provides for K-12 education from state sources. No wonder our state has a property tax crisis.

Property taxes are used to make up the state school funding shortfall with the unfair, disproportionate and unsustainable overuse of property taxes.

Everyone knows that property tax reform should be the top priority of this Legislature. Rural Nebraska is in an economic crisis. We cannot afford to kick the can down the road one more time.

During our 33 years of taxpayer-financed corporate subsidies, thousands of small farm and ranch businesses across our state have been forced out of business while our state has ignored the property tax crisis. What is pro-business about that?

Agriculture is still the primary economic driver in our state. When ag makes money, it still drives economic activity, job creation, consumption of goods and services and tax revenues. If the Legislature wants to stimulate real Nebraska economic activity, growth and tax revenues, senators should prioritize property tax relief.

The size, shape and structure of economic incentive programs have a direct impact on state revenue to fund property tax reform. Because state revenues are limited, all major expenditures have to be compared to all other major state expenditures.

Under proposed amendments to LB720, namely AM2207, the state can pay up to \$40 million to keep large companies "believed" to be at risk of leaving the state. That will likely set off a stampede of Nebraska corporations threatening to leave our state in order to also get subsidies so they can compete against other companies that have already received subsidies.

Will this new corporate subsidy program include Nebraska farmers who are threatening to leave our state and move their farming operation to a neighboring state with a fraction of the property tax load? Of course it won't.

Like past failed corporate subsidy programs, funding for LB720 will automatically get priority regardless of whether state revenues are good or bad while also avoiding the Legislature's own budgeting process.

Public investment through tax incentives should focus on creating quality, good paying jobs with benefits. However, LB720 with AM2207 would provide taxpayer subsidies to companies to create jobs in both urban and rural areas that pay wages so low a family of four would still qualify for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, free school lunches and Medicaid expansion.

Further, companies are not required to pay for any benefits -- including health insurance -- to employees they're hiring as a result of receiving taxpayer subsidies. That's providing a taxpayer-financed handout to corporations that do not provide enough wages and benefits to provide a meaningful hand up to their own employees. Job creation should be focused on creating quality jobs with good wages and benefits, whether they are created in Omaha or Plymouth, in Lincoln or Hemingford.

Whether you love, hate or just tolerate corporate subsidy programs, the state of Nebraska cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of past programs. We deserve reformed programs that are targeted, transparent and cost effective.

[https://www.starherald.com/farm\\_ranch/is-farm-bankruptcy-an-alarm-to-sound/article\\_c6ed1983-5741-5827-b928-339c683873dc.html](https://www.starherald.com/farm_ranch/is-farm-bankruptcy-an-alarm-to-sound/article_c6ed1983-5741-5827-b928-339c683873dc.html)

## Is farm bankruptcy an alarm to sound?

By Kevin J. Fink Star-Herald

Mar 1, 2020

BRENDAN SULLIVAN/THE WORLD-HERALD

“Farm bankruptcy is the highest seen in almost 15 years,” UNL Panhandle Research and Extension Center Economist Jessica Groskopf said.

There is a need to be cognizant of what this means for our farmers and communities, she said. Margins are very tight for ag producers.

“The 37 Chapter 12 farm filings in Nebraska in 2019 was a sharp increase over previous years,” Farmers Union of Nebraska President John Hansen said. These are high numbers.

“While this increase in Chapter 12 farm bankruptcies sounds like a lot, overall it is not an alarm to sound,” Senior Vice President Platte Valley Bank, Scottsbluff, Galen Larson said.

Larson believes such figures, while representing factual data, are meant to “catch headlines, because in reality farming is not going down the tubes.” The total number of Nebraska farms compared to the total number of bankruptcies does not justify panic, he commented.

“Each farmer who files bankruptcy is impacted, and agriculture as a whole, but bankruptcy itself does not mean the farmer is necessarily finished,” Larson said.

Bankruptcy may allow the farmer to restructure and reorganize to hopefully be viable again, he added. His advice to producers is to try to ride out the current agricultural crisis that has been ongoing for many years.

High debt is driving some farmers into bankruptcy. “High debt, coupled with no off-farm income, can mean trouble,” Hansen said. Increasing debt, a tight budget and poor commodity prices can spell disaster, he added.

“Bankruptcy is a long-term issue, and farmers should be working with their banks right now to assess the health of the operation,” Groskopf said.

“Fifteen percent of Nebraska farmers with operating loans have been in a problem area for a number of years,” Hansen said.



The producers are doing everything possible to lessen costs, like reducing family living expenses, lowering production costs, selling non-essential equipment, and seeking off-farm income, he said.

“At eight years running, Nebraska farming has not seen this kind of chronic, long-stretch downturn in decades,” Hansen said.

It’s a stress on farmers and others that has a breaking point. There’s only so much stress the rubber band can take before it snaps, he added. Some farmers are at or approaching this snapping point; they are in a fragile position to absorb any kind of market-based disaster, like drought, floods, blizzards and the like, Hansen further expressed.

“But farmers should not think they’re bad managers,” Hansen said. A farmer can do only so much with what he’s given in costs compared to prices, he added. Management obviously plays a part in finances, but when income is below production costs for extended periods, it’s increasingly difficult for even the best managers, he further expressed. “The farming industry has lost a lot of good young producers, not because they weren’t good managers, but simply because they didn’t have the equity to ride out extended periods of high costs and low markets,” Hansen said.

Even in good production and market years, some farmers still struggle because of high debt and low equity, he added. “Everyone, small operations to large ones, feels the current financial pinch,” Hansen said. But he believes in the resourcefulness of farmers. “Farmers are extremely resourceful, and will hopefully find a way to push through this and other crises.”

Several assistance programs exist to help farmers through rough times, like Farm Aid, Center for Rural Affairs, Community Crops, Nebraska Farmers Union, and Nebraska Rural Response Hotline.

“The greatest assistance to farmers in this current and ongoing crisis would be for the Nebraska Legislature to get its act together and pass property tax relief,” Hansen said. He believes the state needs to find another way to fund schools other than increasing property taxes.

“Since 1950, Nebraska property taxes on agricultural land are 46% higher than the United States average,” University of Nebraska Lincoln Economist Dave Aiken said. In 2017 agricultural property taxes paid were 47% of Nebraska farm income. When other taxes are taken into account this means that most Nebraska farmers or ranchers were paying 50-60% of their net farm income in taxes, he added.

[kevin.fink@starherald.com](mailto:kevin.fink@starherald.com)



# Growing the Rural Economy with Wind

## A Dollars and Cents Look at What 2,514 MW of Wind Power Means

- \$10.05 million of new annual income for Nebraska farmers and landowners.
- \$16.65 million of new local tax revenues annually.
- 150 direct and 3,000 indirect jobs that are good jobs in rural Nebraska.
- \$4.39 billion of capital investment.

**This** new annual income and tax income will benefit Nebraskans for many years to come. As long as the wind blows, and the wind projects continue to operate, the income will keep coming.

Nebraska has the potential for far more wind power development. According to AWEA, there are 1,011 MWs of wind projects under construction as of 4Q 2019 and another 200 MW in advanced development. Nebraska is ranked 3rd in the nation in wind potential but 14<sup>th</sup> in installed capacity. Some other states are taking advantage of their wind resources more than Nebraska is, and they are taking advantage of the revenue as well.

### ***Let's take a closer look at the numbers.***

Nebraska utilities have contracted for the electricity from several new wind farms over the past decade adding to the capacity for Nebraska wind farms for a total 2,514 MW.

The 2013 Baird Holm Bluestem study pegged landowner income as \$4,000 per MW in annual revenue not counting additional capacity factor income, so 2,514 MWs of wind development in Nebraska generates a minimum of \$10 million.

The nameplate capacity tax of \$3,518 per MW and \$3,108 per MW of real property tax realized by local governments adds up to \$6,626 per MW per year for 20 years or the life of the project. Given this amount, Nebraska's wind farms will produce \$16,657,764 of new local tax revenue per year, which could lead to the lowering of local property tax rates and produce savings countywide.

About 170 new good paying jobs with benefits will be there for the young people who want to stay close to home. Baird Holm uses a rough estimate of 1 job per 15 MW. With real jobs and a more prosperous community, Nebraska can look forward to more families staying on the farm. At an estimated \$1.75 million per MW, wind represents almost \$4.4 billion of capital investment.

Nebraska has the **third** most wind energy Development *potential* in the nation, yet is 14th in *actual* development with states. As of today, Iowa has over three times the wind development as

Nebraska, yet Iowa is 7<sup>th</sup> in wind capacity and has a population of 3.1 million compared to Nebraska's 1.9 million. If Iowa can find a way to balance the interests of wind energy development with their rural residents, so can Nebraska.

### Wind energy generation:

- Creates new farm income. A wind turbine is a good part time job that takes no time away from the farm.
- Creates new property tax bases which benefit the entire county.
- Uses no water
- Emits no carbon emissions
- Improves air quality compared to coal powered electrical generation
- Reduces the rate of climate change

### **Wind energy is good for Nebraska**

Sources: American Wind Energy Association, Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy, 2013 Baird Holm Bluestem study



(402) 476-8815

[www.NebraskaFarmersUnion.org](http://www.NebraskaFarmersUnion.org)

1305 Plum Street, Lincoln, NE 68502

# Growing the Rural Economy with Ethanol

## What 2.1 Billion Gallons of Ethanol Means for Rural Nebraska

- \$0.8 billion to \$1.6 billion of additional farm income (50¢ to \$1.00 per Bu of corn)
- 689.6 million bushels of Nebraska corn utilized – 38.74% of annual production in 2018
- 1,453 direct jobs in 2017 producing \$109 million of annual direct income
- 5,166 indirect jobs in 2017 producing \$370 million of annual indirect income
- \$11 million of direct local tax revenues annually
- \$30 million total indirect business tax revenues annually
- \$356 million of direct economic impact and \$4.1 billion of total economic output
- \$584 million of additional economic activity annually
- \$100 million of cost savings on the price of fuel for Nebraska fuel buyers annually
- 43% less greenhouse gas emissions compared to gasoline, including land-use emissions
- **Distillers Grains** and Ethanol feed co-products have helped Nebraska become the top livestock feeding state in the nation
- *Ethanol development is the most effective rural economic development program that Nebraska has ever pursued.* - John Hansen, Nebraska Farmers Union President

### ***Let's take a closer look at the numbers.***

\$ Nebraska workers draw \$71 million in paychecks from the 24 ethanol plants in the state, then spend that in their communities, which induces some of the indirect economic activity. These thousands of paychecks are a great economic stimulus for rural Nebraska.

\$ Likewise, the ethanol plants themselves buy supplies from the communities they are in and that money circulates and enables more economic activity. That activity results in \$41 million of indirect business tax revenues and \$15 million in direct business tax revenues. This new tax base helps rural Nebraska communities that need basic infrastructure like schools and roads, and property tax relief.

\$ The \$5 billion in capital investment that has built the ethanol manufacturing industry contributes to the economic health and vitality of the entire state.

\$ This industry provides a local market for 690 million bushels of corn from Nebraska farmers every year, which is a force for economic stability and farm income in the Nebraska agricultural sector.

\$ When blended with gasoline, ethanol reduces the price of the gasoline for all Nebraska fuel users, resulting in \$158 million in fuel savings annually.

# Because ethanol contains 35 percent oxygen, ethanol helps fuel burn more completely. The use of ethanol in automotive fuel:

- Reduces tailpipe carbon monoxide emissions by as much as 30 percent.
- Reduces exhaust VOC emissions by 12%
- Reduces particulate emissions, especially the fine particulates that are especially hazardous to children, seniors and those with respiratory diseases.

# Ethanol blended gasoline has helped dozens of American cities comply with federal clean air standards. In fact, the American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago credits ethanol-blended gasoline with reducing smog-forming emissions by 25 percent since 1990.

### **Ethanol is good for Nebraska.**

Sources: Economic Impacts of the Ethanol Industry in Nebraska, March 2015; University of Nebraska Department of Agricultural Economics, Bureau of Business Research, Department of Energy's GREET model and Nebraska Ethanol Board, Economic Impacts of the Nebraska Ethanol Industry 2015-2017



(402) 476-8815

[www.NebraskaFarmersUnion.org](http://www.NebraskaFarmersUnion.org)

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