



# Nebraska Farmers Union

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

For Immediate Release

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[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

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## **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.

# Nebraska Farmers Union 2020 Legislative Bill Summary

2020 Testified: 22		Supported: 14	Opposed: 7	Neutral: 1
<b>As of March 19, 2020</b>		*Denotes a Senator, Committee, or Speaker Priority Bill		
<b>AGRICULTURE COMMITTEE</b>				
2020 Testified: 7		Support: 4	Oppose: 3	Neutral: 0
Bill Number	Bill Description	NeFU Position	Introducer	Bill Status
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>				
2020 Testified: 1		Support: 1	Oppose: 0	Neutral: 0
Bill Number	Bill Description	NeFU Position	Introducer	Bill Status
1073*	Create the School Financing Review Commission	Support	DeBoer	Committee
<b>EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE</b>				
2020 Testified: 1		Support: 1	Oppose: 0	Neutral: 0
Bill Number	Bill Description	NeFU Position	Introducer	Bill Status
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 exemption 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)

## Gage Wind Energy Center



### Overview

- » Located in Gage County, Nebraska
- » Developed and permitted by a subsidiary of NextEra Energy Resources, LLC
- » Expected maximum capacity up to 124 megawatts produced by up to 50 GE turbines
- » Each turbine will be 90 meters tall from the ground to the hub in the center of the blades
- » Commercial operation is currently targeted for end of 2021

### Benefits

- » Provides employment opportunities
- » Adds tax base to the counties
- » Delivers landowner lease payments
- » Creates no air or water pollution
- » Uses no water in power generation
- » Allows land to remain in agricultural use
- » Supports economy through purchases of regional goods and services

### Projected Local Economic Impact

Construction Jobs:	Approximately 200
Full-Time Operations Jobs:	Approximately 5
Capital Cost:	Over \$185 million
Property Taxes:	Over \$23 million*
Landowner Payments:	Approx. \$16 million*

*\*Estimated over first 30 years of the project. All figures are estimated and subject to change.*

### About NextEra Energy Resources, LLC

- » We are a subsidiary of NextEra Energy, Inc., a leading renewable energy developer in North America.
- » We are the largest generator of wind energy in the world.
- » We operate more than 119 wind projects in 19 states and four Canadian provinces with more than 15,000 megawatts of generation from more than 9,000 wind turbines.
- » We are capable of generating enough electricity to power more than 3.7 million homes with our wind fleet alone.

*\*\*Includes megawatts associated with noncontrolling interests related to NextEra Energy Partners, LP.*

## Little Blue Wind Energy Center



### Overview

- » Located in Webster and Franklin counties, Nebraska
- » Developed and permitted by a subsidiary of NextEra Energy Resources, LLC
- » Expected maximum capacity up to 250 megawatts produced by up to 100 GE turbines
- » Each turbine will be 90 meters tall from the ground to the hub in the center of the blades
- » Commercial operation is currently targeted for end of 2021

### Benefits

- » Provides employment opportunities
- » Adds tax base to the counties
- » Delivers landowner lease payments
- » Creates no air or water pollution
- » Uses no water in power generation
- » Allows land to remain in agricultural use
- » Supports economy through purchases of regional goods and services

### Projected Local Economic Impact

Construction Jobs:	Approximately 200
Full-Time Operations Jobs:	Approximately 5
Capital Cost:	Over \$185 million
Property Taxes:	Over \$36 million*
Landowner Payments:	Approx. \$60 million*

*\*Estimated over first 30 years of the project. All figures are estimated and subject to change.*

### About NextEra Energy Resources, LLC

- » We are a subsidiary of NextEra Energy, Inc., a leading renewable energy developer in North America.
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