

Word Count: 550

Nebraska Agriculture is Building the Future! Celebrating National Ag Week March 15-21

By: Sherry Vinton, Director, Nebraska Department of Agriculture

As Nebraska's Director of Agriculture, and a rancher myself, it is a distinct honor and privilege to celebrate National Agriculture Week each year. This annual recognition is a time to celebrate and thank our hardworking farmers, ranchers, agribusiness professionals, educators and innovators who power our state's economy, so we can feed and fuel the world. With one in four jobs directly related to agriculture in Nebraska, it is our state's largest industry.

Youth outreach is an integral part of our work here at NDA and this year's poster contest theme, Agriculture: Building the Future, really rings true. Agriculture is not just about sustaining the present, it is about innovating, investing and working together to create a stronger, more resilient tomorrow for everyone. From Omaha, that is home to great transportation, technology, insurance and financial companies that serve our agricultural commodities, to our corn and soybean fields in eastern Nebraska, to the cattle operations and the western rangelands, our producers and entrepreneurs are leading the way in sustainable practices, cutting-edge technology, processing and forward-thinking stewardship.

Our farmers and ranchers are building the future in remarkable ways now. With new seed technologies guided by precision agricultural tools from planting to harvest they are using data analytics to optimize yields while conserving water and inputs. Our first-class ethanol industry with carbon capture abilities continues to advance renewable fuels supporting energy independence, affordability and clean air.

Recent investments in soybean processing exemplifies progress and surging demand for renewable fuels. Soybean oil from these crush facilities serves as the base feedstock for biodiesel, renewable diesel and other clean energy solutions. These state-of-the-art plants process millions of additional bushels annually, creating local markets for our growers, supporting good paying jobs and delivering value added products right here at home.

This progress ties directly into the truly world class circular economy found uniquely here in Nebraska. The ethanol industry transforms corn into high octane, clean burning fuel while returning about a third of each bushel as distillers grain, a high protein, high energy perfect feed for livestock. Complementing this, the expanded soybean crush produces high quality soybean meal, a premier protein source for Nebraska livestock. Our state leads in production of the best tasting protein choices in our beef, pork and poultry products.

All of this equals a bright opportunity for our youth and the future. Those interested in learning more about a career in agriculture should check out the premier program offered by NDA, the Nebraska Ag Youth Institute. NAYI is a weeklong program for high school juniors and seniors hosted through generous donations where the infinite possibilities of careers in agriculture can be explored. For more information along with an application for NAYI visit www.nda.nebraska.gov/NAYI. The deadline to apply for NAYI 2026 is April 15th.

As we mark this week, please take a moment for gratitude and reflect on how agriculture touches every aspect of your daily life: the food on your table, the fuel in your vehicle and the jobs that support so many families. Take time to thank a farmer or rancher and ask them about their Nebraska ag story.

Together, we are building the future, one harvest, one innovation and one generation at a time. Nebraska's ag community is resilient, adaptive and forward leaning and I am honored to serve alongside you.