

GROWING OPPORTUNITY FROM THE GROUND UP

A Timeline of Soybeans in Nebraska and Beyond

The soybean (*Glycine max*) is more than just a crop. It plays a key role in food, feed, fuel and fiber around the world. From its beginnings in East Asia to becoming a top U.S. crop, soybeans have grown into one of the most valuable and useful legumes. In Nebraska, soybeans have helped strengthen farm operations, supported rural communities and contributed to advancements in research, sustainability and global trade.

This timeline shares important moments in the story of soybeans, both in Nebraska and around the world, celebrating the people, partnerships and progress that continue to shape the industry.

200 B.C. – 300 A.D.

Soybeans are cultivated in Korea and Japan, spreading from their origins in China across Asia as a valued source of food and nutrition.

1765



A colonist plants soybean seeds from China in the British colony of Georgia, marking one of the first known introductions of soybeans in North America.

1851



Soybean seeds are distributed to farmers in the Corn Belt states.

1860-1865



During the Civil War, soldiers use soybeans to brew a version of coffee.

1862



President Abraham Lincoln signs into law an act of Congress establishing the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

1898

The USDA begins importing soybean varieties to the United States to evaluate their potential for American agriculture.

1870



Benjamin Franklin sends soybean seeds to a friend to plant in his garden.

1902

The first mention of soybeans in Nebraska appears when they are tested by the Nebraska Agricultural Experiment Station to see if they could be grown in Nebraska soil and weather conditions.

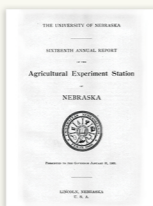
1904



George Washington Carver identifies soybeans as a good source of protein and oil.

1936

Over 3,000 acres of soybeans are planted in Nebraska. Between 1933 and 1937, soybeans averaged \$0.98/bu vs. corn at \$0.68/bu and oats at \$0.35/bu.



1939



Nebraska realizes that other Corn Belt states are profiting from soybeans as livestock feed, human food and ingredients for numerous industrial products. Nebraska acreage increases to 14,000 acres.

1941



Henry Ford develops soybean-based plastic and uses it for automobile parts. Nebraska soybean acreage nears 25,000 acres due to wartime demand and improved local markets.

1920



William Morse co-founds the National Soybean Growers' Association, later renamed to the American Soybean Association, and Taylor Fouts becomes its first president.

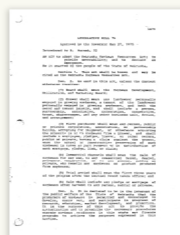
1969



Articles of Incorporation of the Nebraska Soybean Association are filed in Lincoln, Nebraska, on March 14. The Board of Directors includes seven members.

1975

The Nebraska Soybean Development, Utilization and Marketing Board is formed and administered by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. The Nebraska Legislature passes LB 74, creating a half-cent per bushel assessment on all soybeans sold in the state.



1952



Soybean meal becomes a staple in livestock and poultry feed because of its high protein content, boosting demand across the United States.

1979

Nebraska farmers harvest soybeans from 1.6 million acres, an increase of 350,000 acres from the year before. The U.S. soy industry also opens an office in Singapore to better serve Southeast Asia.

1987



Nebraska SOYnews, Winter Quarter Issue, is printed with soy ink for the first time. Soy ink is developed two years prior by the American Newspaper Publishers Association.

1990



The National Soybean Checkoff is created as part of the Soybean Promotion, Research, and Consumer Information Act of 1990. This establishes a national program that directs half of checkoff funds to the United Soybean Board and the other half to the Nebraska Soybean Development, Utilization and Marketing Board.

1991



Legislative Bill 367 increases the number of districts to eight, with an at-large position bringing the total number of board seats to nine. That same year, artist James Gurney paints "60 Uses of the Magical Soybean," illustrating soy's versatility.

1988

The Nebraska Soybean Development, Utilization and Marketing Board begins supporting the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's (UNL) soybean breeding program, investing in better varieties for Nebraska farmers.

1992



Soy biodiesel gets its start in Nebraska as state soybean commodity groups, who fund several biodiesel research and development programs with checkoff dollars, found the National SoyDiesel Development Board. Around the same time, soybean leaders establish the North Central Soybean Research Program (NCSRP).

1994

Glyphosate-resistant soybeans gain commercial approval in the United States. This new technology improves weed control and productivity for farmers.

1995

The Nebraska Soybean Board (NSB) adopts its Articles of Incorporation at a public meeting on June 19 and is certified as a Qualified State Soybean Board, continuing its work as a nonprofit organization. China begins importing U.S. soybeans, expanding Nebraska's export opportunities.



1999



The very first Soybean Management Field Days are hosted in Brock, Holdrege, Neligh and Wayne. The event, led by Nebraska Extension and NSB, brings research-based insights directly to farmers.

2005



NSB begins funding free soybean cyst nematode (SCN) soil sampling across the state to help farmers detect and manage the pest early.

2007



The See For Yourself program launches to give Nebraska soybean producers a firsthand look at their checkoff investments, both domestically and abroad. The Soy Transportation Coalition forms to improve the efficiency and reliability of U.S. soybean transport. Over half of U.S. soybeans are now exported globally.

2010



NSB partners with the Nebraska Pork Producers Association to begin funding the Ag Sack Lunch program, allowing 4th graders visiting the Nebraska State Capitol to gain a better understanding of Nebraska agriculture and where their food comes from.

2013



NSB begins funding of their first Biodiesel Blender Pump program, with a goal of getting a blender pump in each of the eight soybean districts. Jerry's Service in Hartington becomes the first funded facility, receiving \$1 per gallon of B100 up to a total cost-share of \$60,000.

2013



NSB demonstrates its commitment to supporting soybean research at UNL by establishing the Nebraska Soybean Producers Presidential Chair in Soybean Breeding.

2017



Goodyear begins using soybean oil in its tires, launching a new line of soy-based tires that improve flexibility and performance in varying temperatures.

2022



Nebraska sets a record with 5.75 million acres of soybeans planted, marking the highest acreage in the state's history.

2025



Nebraska celebrates 50 years of soybean checkoff work and 30 years of leadership under NSB, and opens its new office at 4625 Innovation Drive in Lincoln.