SUMMER 2025

SoybeaNebraska

A Publication of the Nebraska Soybean Association and the Nebraska Soybean Board

DEMAND DRIVEN

Nebraska Soybean Association
4435 O Street, Suite 210
Lincoln, NE 68510


CLEAN FUELS
Good for Soybean Farmers.
Good for America.
America's soybean farmers are at the heart of our nation's future. By supporting clean fuels, you're not just fueling vehicles. In 2025, clean fuels will utilize 13.6 billion pounds of soybean oil.
Visit cleanfuels.org
and learn how clean fuels can secure a stronger future for U.S. agriculture.
Clean Fuels
ALLIANCE AMERICA
Materials supported by United Soybean Board, soybean farmers and their checkoffs.

SoybeanNebraska

The Nebraska Soybean Association (NSA) and the Nebraska Soybean Board (NSB) are proud to share the FY25 Summer edition of this publication with you—members of our shared community.

Here's How It's Been Growing

NEBRASKA SOYBEAN BOARD

4625 Innovation Drive
Lincoln, NE 68521
402-441-3240
nebraskasoybeans.org

The Nebraska Soybean Board is a private, nonprofit checkoff board responsible for the research and promotion of soybeans in an effort to increase the profitability of the state's 22,000 soybean producers.

On The Cover

Ag Processing Inc.'s (AGP) new soybean processing facility in David City, Nebraska. *Photo by Thomas Hoxmeier, June 2025.*

Note from the

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

By Andy Chvatal

We've had a lot of change in the soybean landscape here in Nebraska, specifically regarding the start-up of new soybean crush plants in back-to-back years. Does the process by which you grow soybeans change because of that? No, probably not. Do the dynamics of marketing that soybean crop change for those first purchasers? Absolutely! Shifting from a state that marketed a large volume of whole soybeans to one that can now crush most of its annual production represents a significant change.

It would be remiss not to remember the reason for the crush expansion, and that would be credited to the tremendous growth in renewable diesel usage on the West Coast. Our farmer leaders have invested a lot of time, energy and checkoff dollars to help establish such a large opportunity for soybean oil. Education and communication remain key as we continue to expand the market into marine, rail and airline industries. The education component will be an ongoing necessity as more consumers and decision-makers become further disconnected from agriculture and the sustainable manner in which you all produce soybeans. Telling your story has never been more critical.

Only so many of these growing seasons come along in one's farming career, and none of them ever seem to be the same as the one before. I hope the second half of the growing season is a productive and prosperous one. As always, please reach out regarding new ideas for checkoff investments or if you are interested in getting involved.

Checking In With The Chairman

PRODUCER PRIORITIES

By Mark Caspers, NSB Chairman, Auburn

Greetings, fellow Nebraska soybean producers. Summer is still a couple of weeks away as I write this for the summer edition of SoybeaNebraska. The planting in my area of southeast Nebraska got off to an early start and for the first time in my farming career, I was able to finish planting in April. Initially, it was exceptionally dry in my area with little rain forecasted. That changed on May 19, and I received more than five inches of rain in the three weeks that followed. The crops are off to a good start, and I'm hopeful the rainfall pattern continues.

The Nebraska Soybean Board met in March for our annual research meeting and approved 22 projects, including 12 research continuation programs. We are currently reviewing 131 proposed projects that have been submitted for funding consideration at our upcoming July meeting. These project proposals are spread across our four project areas as follows: 61 in Demand & Utilization, three in Production & Research (the majority of research proposals were considered at the March meeting), 34 in Farmer Support and 31 in Community Engagement. There are also two strategic planning proposals.

As the Nebraska Soybean Board budgets have decreased over the past few years due to a combination of drought and price, it makes it even more necessary to closely examine each proposal and only fund those that will provide the best return to the soybean producers of Nebraska. I can assure you that I take this task very seriously and only vote in favor of funding proposals that I deem worthy of spending the hard-earned checkoff dollars collected from my fellow Nebraska soybean producers.

I hope you all have a safe and productive summer and encourage you to attend Nebraska Soybean Management Field Days in August!

Soy Action Center

GRASSROOTS IN GEAR

By Kent Groteluеschen, NSA President, Octavia

The past few months have felt like a roller coaster, keeping up with all the soy industry issues. From tariffs to negotiations, urging the EPA to raise the renewable volume obligation (RVO) for biomass-based diesel and biofuels, to budget resolution discussions and farm bill talk.

More than 300 organizations including Nebraska Soybean Association (NSA) and the American Soybean Association (ASA) signed a letter to health, agricultural and environmental leaders regarding the Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) Commission report that lacked transparency for using sound science and have created unfounded fears about the safety of our food supply and the impact on seed oils. Our organizations advise the administration to create opportunities for public comment and include farmers, ranchers and food producers at the table in the process for future reports and activities of the Commission.

A win we have recently celebrated is the EPA's release of its long-awaited RVO proposal for 2026 and 2027. It included historic increases in biomass-based diesel volumes to strengthen domestic markets for U.S. soybean farmers. The proposed rule makes significant increases in volume requirements for biomass-based diesel, from 3.35 billion gallons in 2025 to 5.61 billion gallons in 2026. We will continue to engage with EPA as the proposal enters a period of stakeholder feedback.

State Legislature: On the final day of the Nebraska Legislative session in early June, Governor Pillen highlighted the wins and encouraged Senators to stay connected with their constituents. Highlights include: LB264 passing the Governor's mainline budget bill; LB645 provides for a gradual reduction in state contributions to the School Retirement Fund and LB650 represents the State's efforts at reversing spending increases with reevaluation of incentive programs for business and agriculture.

Property Tax Relief: LB264 included scheduled increases in Tier I & Tier II Property Tax Relief Funds and LB303 creates the School Finance Reform Commission.

Our industry will always have some challenges, that's why the grassroots organizations like ASA and NSA are here to engage for the soy industry. Now more than ever, the advocacy work of both NSA and ASA is critical. Reach out to our office at 402-441-3239 or visit nesoybeans.org to become a member. Enjoy your summer.

Kent Groteluеschen

Applications open for the 2026 Young Leader Program

Applications are being accepted for the 2026 ASA/Corteva Agriscience Young Leader Program. Individuals or couples who are passionate about the future of agriculture should apply for this two-phase leadership training program.

PHASE I: December 1 - December 4, 2025, Corteva Global Business Center in Johnston, Iowa

PHASE II: February 24 – February 27, 2026 in San Antonio, Texas, in conjunction with Commodity Classic

Apply by September 19, 2025, at soygrowers.com (Education Resources tab) or contact NSA at 402-441-3239

Corteva Agriscience™ YOUNG LEADER PROGRAM American Soybean Association

Nebraska Soybean Association
4435 O Street, Suite 210
Lincoln, NE 68510
Phone: 402-441-3239
association@nebraskasoybeans.org
nesoybeans.org

American Soybean Association

A member-driven, grassroots policy organization that represents U.S. soybean farmers

soygrowers.com

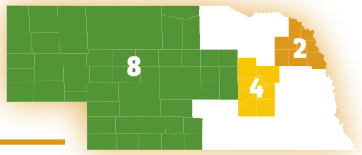
SOYBEANEBRASKA is printed four times a year by the Nebraska Soybean Association and managed by the Nebraska Soybean Board.

For address corrections, contact the Nebraska Soybean Association, 4435 O Street, Suite 210, Lincoln, NE 68510.
Phone: 402-441-3239
Email: tom@nebraskasoybeans.org

For advertising information in **SOYBEANEBRASKA**, please contact Larson Enterprises.
Phone: 515-440-2810
Email: dave@larsonent.com

To contact the editor:
Email: tom@nebraskasoybeans.org
Comments and statewide news articles should be sent to the above address. Advertising space reservations must be made by the first day of the month preceding publication. In consideration of the acceptance of the advertisement, the agency and the advertiser must, in respect to the contents of the advertisement, indemnify and save the publisher harmless against any expense arising from claims or actions against the publisher because of the publication of the content of the advertisement.

Staff Credits
Thomas Hoxmeier ..... Editor, Staff Writer
Lori Luebbe ..... Staff Writer
Wesley Wach ..... Staff Writer
Dave Larson ..... Sales Director



NEBRASKA SOYBEAN BOARD

CONTINUING THE MISSION

MEET THE 2025 NEBRASKA SOYBEAN BOARD CANDIDATES IN DISTRICTS 2, 4 AND 8.

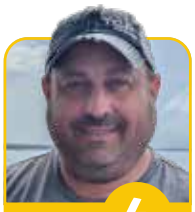
2
INCUMBENT & RUNNING UNOPPOSED
NO ELECTION

Jason Penke

Craig, NE | Burt County (District 2)

- Jason and his wife, Kylie, live near Craig, Nebraska, where they are raising their three sons: Tate, Tye and Travis. Kylie teaches agricultural education at Oakland-Craig Public Schools.
- Jason farms alongside his parents, Stan and Susan, on a family operation that includes 2,700 acres of soybeans and corn, along with a small cow-calf herd.
- He also works as a field sales agronomist for Central Valley Ag in Oakland, Nebraska, and is active in the community through fire and rescue, youth sports, FFA events, church involvement and local fair boards.

Comments by Jason: "I'm excited to continue serving on the Nebraska Soybean Board because it gives me the chance to be a voice for farmers in my area and help move the industry forward. Whether it's building demand through new uses or supporting research that makes us better growers, being part of this board allows me to give back to an industry and community that means a lot to me. I also have a strong passion for education and helping others understand Nebraska agriculture and the importance of what we do. At the end of the day, I want to help keep our farm successful so the next generation has the opportunity to be a part of it."



4
RUNNING UNOPPOSED
NO ELECTION

Travis Runge

Columbus, NE | Platte County (District 4)

- Travis farms 800 acres alongside his father near Columbus, Nebraska, with a 50/50 corn and soybean rotation. The operation is about three-quarters no-till and mostly irrigated. They also raise hogs and cattle.
- He holds an associate degree in crop production from Northeast Community College and graduated from Lakeview High School.
- Travis also works for a local fertilizer company, is a Certified Crop Adviser (CCA), and holds a real estate license.
- He participated in the 2024 to 2025 ASA/Corteva Young Leader program alongside his girlfriend, Jennifer Alexander.

Comments by Travis: "I'm excited to serve on the Nebraska Soybean Board and bring a fresh, practical perspective from the field. I've always been a process-driven person and want to help local farmers understand what's happening behind the scenes in our industry, especially with new crush plants coming online and market changes ahead. I'm passionate about improving our soybean production, from no-till practices to chasing that 100-bushel goal, and I look forward to learning and contributing to something that benefits farmers in my community."

Since all three candidates in Districts 2, 4 and 8 are running unopposed, they will be seated on the Nebraska Soybean Board and begin their three-year terms on October 1, 2025. Looking ahead, soybean farmers in Districts 5, 7 and the At-Large position will have the opportunity to run or vote in the 2026 election. Contact the Nebraska Soybean Board for more information.

8

INCUMBENT & RUNNING UNOPPOSED

NO ELECTION

Blake Johnson

Holdrege, NE | Phelps County (District 8)

- Blake is a fifth-generation farmer near Holdrege, Nebraska, where he is part of 37 Ag Inc., a family operation with his wife, Holly, and their three sons. Grady is back home working on the farm, Quinn is currently attending Hastings College and Jett is a high school student in Holdrege.
- The operation includes primarily irrigated corn and soybeans, along with some dryland acres in rotation with winter wheat.
- Over the past 37 years, the farm has transitioned from conventional tillage and gravity irrigation to no-till and center pivots, cutting water usage from 35 inches to around 8 to 10 inches annually.
- Their rotation has evolved from continuous corn to a 50/50 mix with soybeans and now to a 75/25 corn and soybean split due to pest and weed resistance. Blake has also participated in the soybean TAPS program.

Comments by Blake: "I believe the Nebraska Soybean Board continues to play a key role in building demand and supporting production. I'm especially excited about the future of biodiesel and renewable fuels. On our farm, we rely heavily on diesel, and we continue to look for every opportunity to integrate soy biodiesel into our operation, while promoting it to other farmers in the area. I want to keep helping move the industry forward by promoting new markets and continuing research to tackle real challenges like weed and insect resistance. It's a challenging, yet exciting time to be a soybean grower."

NEBRASKA SOYBEAN BOARD

HIGHER ROI IS WITHIN REACH

The Soy Checkoff is driving demand for high oleic soybeans across the U.S., and our investment has already delivered $320 million in premiums to farmers at a 3-1 ROI[1].

SOY CHECKOFF™

1 United Soybean Board Investments, 2008-2024

STUDY:

Seed Oil Ban Would Be Costly for Farmers and Consumers

By the American Soybean Association (ASA)

A new study from the United Soybean Board and World Agricultural Economic and Environmental Services (WAEES) outlines the dramatic consequences of a potential U.S. ban on seed oils—including soybean, canola, corn, cottonseed and others. The findings show such a ban would hurt farmers and raise costs for consumers and disrupt the food supply chain.

Using long-term economic models, WAEES analyzed two scenarios for removing seed oils from the food supply: one where overall consumption of fats and oils remained steady and another where consumer budgets limited substitution. In both cases, domestic seed oil usage plunged, while demand for imported palm oil soared.

In the first scenario, a 58-pound per capita loss of seed oils would be replaced mostly with palm oil, requiring an estimated 3.3 million new acres of global palm plantations. Consumer prices for fats and oils would rise nearly 29%, and consumer spending on vegetable oils would jump by $7.7 billion annually on average—a 43% increase.

In the second, more constrained scenario, practical substitution constraints among oils were recognized. Consumers were also assumed to be willing to only spend 8% more for fats and oils. The result is that Americans would reduce their overall fat and oil consumption by 29% while the Consumer Price Index for fats and oils would rise more than 35%.

The economic ripple effects wouldn't stop at the grocery store in either scenario. Soybean prices would fall over 3%, with farmer returns dropping 7%. Farm income nationwide would decline by $2 billion annually, and soybean acres would shrink by 2.8 million per year on average. Reduced oilseed processing would also raise feed costs, cutting U.S. meat supplies by 12 pounds per person annually.

The report notes that common substitutes like tallow, lard, olive oil and nut oils are either limited in supply, expensive or come with functional concerns. Dr. Scott Gerlt, ASA chief economist, explained why a switch to non-seed oils is not readily feasible, "Simply put, there is not enough production. Animal fats have limited ability to expand production, and a sizeable share of what is available already goes to the food supply."

Soybean oil has recognized health benefits, with FDA and European reviews supporting its use to reduce bad cholesterol and heart disease risk.

Nebraska ranks among the top soybean-producing states in the country, with **5 million acres planted in 2025**. A seed oil ban could disproportionately impact rural economies here, reducing crush demand and lowering returns to thousands of Nebraska growers.

GLOBAL AQUACULTURE IS ON THE RISE

U.S. Soy Protein Goes Global with WISHH

ASA American Soybean Association®

WISHH 25 YEARS

SOY CHECKOFF™

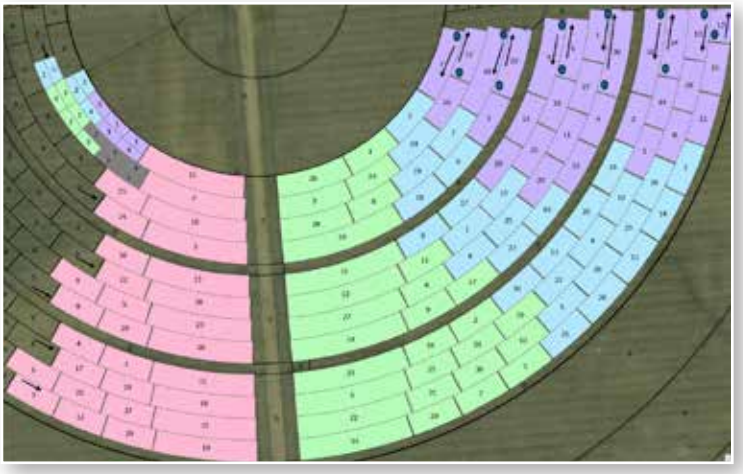
wishh.org

RESULTS & REAL CONVERSATIONS

Soybean Management Field Days Return for 27th Year

We look forward to you joining us for the 27th year of Soybean Management Field Days (SMFD), this August 12th through the 15th. The 27th year of the program will feature two formats. Three locations across Nebraska will host an evening program from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday night. At these programs, we will focus on giving updates on relevant, local soybean topics and give you an opportunity for dialogue with University of Nebraska-Lincoln researchers and the Nebraska Soybean Board. The program switches gears on Friday, with a shift to a mid-day program at the University of Nebraska's Eastern Nebraska Research, Extension and Education Center (ENREEC) near Mead, NE. The focus on Friday will highlight the 2025 soybean Testing Ag Performance Solutions (TAPS) program competition, with presentations about past results, an overview of decisions made by this year's participants and plot tours.

This year, we have 30 teams participating in the soybean TAPS competition, giving them the opportunity to test and implement tools, technology and strategies for profitable and input-efficient farm management. With the move to a different field featuring a variable rate center pivot, we are pleased to offer irrigation management decisions to participants during this 2nd competition. In addition to irrigation, each soybean team is tasked with making critical farm management decisions such as crop insurance, variety and seed treatment selection, seeding rate, pest management decisions (fungicide and insecticide), nutrient management and grain marketing. To highlight the differences we see across teams, a total of 15 different varieties were chosen from five different seed companies and seeding rates ranged from 105,000 seeds per acre to 190,000 seeds per acre. If you want to learn more about how this affects yields and profitability, make plans to attend this year's field days.



The 2025 Soybean TAPS Plot Layout near ENREEC.

We will be sharing more information about this year's Soybean Management Field Days closer to the events, so watch your mailbox, listen to the radio or visit our website, enreec.unl.edu/soydays, for more information about locations and topics.

GROWING OPPORTUNITY *from the Ground Up*

Celebrating 50 Years of Soybean Checkoff Work in Nebraska

This year marks 50 years since Nebraska's soybean checkoff was established and 30 years since the Nebraska Soybean Board (NSB) began leading those efforts on behalf of farmers across the state.

In that time, soybeans have grown from a smaller part of Nebraska agriculture into one of its most significant crops. Throughout the decades, NSB has stayed focused on one thing: serving the farmers who grow them.

"The Nebraska Soybean Board was created for farmers, and it's still led by farmers today," said Andy Chvatal, executive director of the Nebraska Soybean Board. "That farmer leadership has guided every decision we've made, and it keeps us grounded in what really matters."

The Nebraska soybean checkoff officially began in 1975, when the Nebraska Legislature passed LB 74. It created a half-cent per bushel assessment on all soybeans sold in the state, managed by the Nebraska Soybean Development, Utilization and Marketing Board under the Nebraska Department of Agriculture. This allowed Nebraska farmers to invest in their crop and its future.

In 1995, just four years after the national soybean checkoff was established in 1991, NSB adopted its Articles of Incorporation and became certified as a Qualified State Soybean Board. With the launch of the national checkoff, farmers began investing 0.5% of the market price per bushel sold. That investment is split evenly: half stays in Nebraska to be directed by NSB, while the other half goes to the United Soybean Board to support national and international efforts.

Early on, NSB focused on strengthening the crop through university research, growing demand for biodiesel and expanding market opportunities around the world. In 1999, Soybean Management Field Days launched to bring research-based insights directly to growers. Free soil testing for soybean cyst nematode began in the early 2000s, helping farmers detect a serious threat to yields and profitability.

Over time, NSB has continued to listen to farmers and respond to new challenges and opportunities.

"We've tried to stay flexible and forward-thinking," Chvatal said. "As the industry has changed, we've adapted, but we've always stayed true to the goal of making sure every checkoff dollar goes to work for Nebraska farmers."

Pictured from left: Sens. Bond and Pryor, ASA President James Lee Adams and Rep. Glickman discussing the checkoff legislation. The soybean checkoff was passed as a provision of the 1990 farm bill.

1995 NSB Articles of Incorporation

NSB is headquartered in Lincoln, Nebraska, where it leads efforts to invest soybean checkoff dollars in research, education, promotion and market development to benefit Nebraska soybean farmers.

Partnerships have been a key part of that progress. In 2013, NSB helped fund the Nebraska Soybean Producers Presidential Chair in Soybean Breeding at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Around the same time, the board started a cost-share program to install biodiesel blender pumps across the state, helping fuel retailers offer higher blends of clean-burning biodiesel.

While NSB's work has a global reach, its roots are planted firmly in Nebraska. Programs like the Ag Sack Lunch have helped thousands of fourth graders understand where their food comes from. The See For Yourself program has given farmers the chance to witness firsthand how their checkoff investment makes a difference at home and abroad.

Today, Nebraska soybeans are a part of a global supply chain. More than half of U.S. soybeans are exported, and Nebraska farmers planted a record 5.75 million acres in 2022.

In 2025, NSB opened its new office at 4625 Innovation Drive in Lincoln. The new space reflects how far the organization has come and its continued commitment to working alongside the farmers it serves.

"We're proud of where we've been, but we're even more excited about where we're headed," Chvatal said. "With farmers representing eight districts and one at-large seat, our board brings together voices from across the state. The challenges on the farm keep changing, and it's important to have people at the table who live it every day and want to make a difference."

After five decades, the Nebraska soybean checkoff is still focused on building markets, supporting innovation and funding research that keeps the state's soybean farmers moving forward.

"We want to be a partner in the success of every soybean farmer in Nebraska," said Chvatal. "That's what this board was created to do, and that's what we'll continue doing together."

Through successes big and small, from cutting-edge research to hands-on education, the checkoff has had a lasting impact across Nebraska and far beyond. Regional, national and international partnerships have allowed NSB to stay connected with organizations and talented individuals who work for the benefit of Nebraska soybean farmers. At every step, NSB has remained focused on its mission: "Growing value for Nebraska farmers by maximizing their checkoff investments."

A Timeline of Soybeans in Nebraska and Beyond

Explore the history of soybeans in Nebraska and beyond. Check out our timeline, celebrating 50 years of the Nebraska soybean checkoff and 30 years of leadership under the Nebraska Soybean Board.

DEMAND DRIVEN

From crush capacity to clean fuels and innovative new uses, see how soybeans are shaping the future at home and abroad.

NEBRASKA SOYBEAN BOARD

DEMAND & UTILIZATION COMMITTEE:

Eugene Goering (Chair) | Mark Caspers | Jason Penke | Greg Anderson | Blake Johnson

Unlocking New Value for Nebraska Soybean Farmers

By Heather Buechter, Director of Communications, Clean Fuels Alliance America

A new economic impact study commissioned by Clean Fuels Alliance America and funded by the Nebraska Soybean Board shows how clean fuels like biodiesel, renewable diesel and sustainable aviation fuel are reshaping the soybean economy and positioning Nebraska farmers to benefit. The study, "Economic Impact of Biodiesel on the U.S. Economy 2024," conducted by GlobalData, found that the clean fuels industry supported $42.4 billion in U.S. economic activity, including 107,400 jobs.

In Nebraska alone, the industry supported 4,618 jobs and contributed over $204 million in wages, highlighting the local impact of this national success story. As demand grows, those returns will scale, benefiting farmers, processors and the regions they call home.

One major sign of that momentum is Ag Processing Inc.'s (AGP) announcement of a new soybean processing facility in David City, with the capacity to process over 50 million bushels per year. This investment is part of a broader shift across the country. The growing demand for clean fuels is contributing to a 30% increase in U.S. soybean crush capacity, leading to more processors competing for crops and keeping more value close to the farm. For Nebraska farmers, that means shorter hauls, stronger basis, more marketing flexibility and increased resilience against export market uncertainty.

Demand for soybean oil from biodiesel and renewable diesel accounts for 10 percent of the value of every bushel grown in the United States, a major shift from when soybeans were valued mainly for their protein and oil was just a byproduct. Today, soybean oil is a premium commodity, driven by its role as a key feedstock for low-carbon fuels. In Nebraska, that oil may be used for biodiesel production in adjacent states or transported to coastal refineries serving clean fuel markets in California, Oregon and Washington.

The GlobalData study also looks ahead to a scenario where clean fuel production scales up to 7.4 billion gallons annually, based on announced investments. At that level, the industry could support 145,700 jobs and contribute $60.25 billion to the U.S. economy each year.

With AGP's new plant in David City, Norfolk Crush's facility in Norfolk and a nationwide surge in crush capacity, Nebraska soybean farmers are entering a new era of opportunity. The Nebraska Soybean Board's investment in the economic impact study reflects its commitment to helping farmers see the full picture—and the full potential—of today's soybean markets. Clean fuels are a key piece of that puzzle.

Learn more about the study and its findings by scanning the QR code or visiting the full report online at cleanfuels.org.

Soybean Crush

CHANGING DYNAMICS IN NEBRASKA AND ABROAD

By Wesley Wach, NSB Demand & Utilization Coordinator

Norfolk Crush

After years in the making, increased domestic soybean utilization is arriving in Nebraska, with ribbon cuttings to prove it.

The demand for soybean oil to be used in renewable fuels like biomass-based diesel (BBD) has led to soybean crush facility developments across the country. However, some of these projects have stalled due to supply chain issues and tightening margins. Despite this, Norfolk Crush in Norfolk and Ag Processing Inc. (AGP) in David City are both going to be operational in 2025.

On May 29, Norfolk Crush celebrated its grand opening with more than 100 visitors, including Gov. Jim Pillen and Sen. Deb Fischer.

Speaking about the opening in Norfolk, Chad Spohn, president and CEO of Norfolk Crush, said soybean crush capacity in Nebraska is growing exponentially as two new soybean crush plants are creating significant growth in demand for Nebraska-grown soybeans. "Many soybeans that were leaving the state for export through the Pacific Northwest and Mexico will now be crushed locally," Spohn said.

These shifting dynamics are significant, as almost 50% of the soybean value has traditionally come from whole soybean exports, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Norfolk Crush welcomed over 100 people to celebrate the grand opening of its new soybean processing facility, joined by Nebraska leaders, plant leadership and community partners including the Norfolk Area Chamber of Commerce.

"As a result of the change, soybean meal will now be a featured export commodity as this additional crush will be met with the need to move soybean meal from the Midwest toward various export markets," Spohn said.

Crush capacity at the Norfolk site is estimated to be about 39 million bushels per year, with the ability to crush almost 110,000 bushels of soybeans every day.

"I enjoy delivering my soybeans to Norfolk," said Eugene Goering, a farmer from Columbus and District 4 director on the Nebraska Soybean Board (NSB). "The facility employs 58 people, adds value to our ag products, supports livestock production and exports meal to new foreign markets. At the same time, it is supplying oil as a feedstock to the growing biofuels industry."

The new facility has provided a means for farmers to market their soybeans to a domestic end-user, while also adding value to the community as it has begun operations over the past year.

Mike Tomes, a farmer from Utica and District 6 NSB director, attended the grand opening and is optimistic. "The new Norfolk Crush facility is quite impressive. Very efficient unloading for farmers delivering soybeans. This is a great opportunity to market soybeans in northeast Nebraska."

Ag Processing Inc. (AGP)

On July 17, near David City, Nebraska, Ag Processing Inc. (AGP) hosted a grand opening of its new plant, and it hopes to receive soybeans this year. Attendees were able to receive tours of the facility.

The completed plant has the capacity to crush 150,000 bushels of soybeans per day and degum 1.8 million pounds of crude soybean oil per day, creating more than 60 jobs to support the local economy.

Brett Kinney, senior merchandiser at AGP, said, "AGP is set to begin operations at our second Nebraska soybean processing facility in David City this fall. We are pleased to provide increased opportunities for the Nebraska soybean grower and our member cooperatives by expanding demand for their soybeans and transforming them into high-value products."

The plant will have strong access to rail infrastructure, supporting domestic customers in addition to international markets.

"The facility will produce high-protein soybean meal for local livestock operations, as well as soybean oil for use in food production and biofuel processing," Kinney said.

This investment in Nebraska also coincides with AGP's Port of Grays Harbor expansion and redevelopment of Terminal 4 in Aberdeen, Washington. It is a project that includes the addition of a new, dual-track railcar receiving facility, feeding a three-tower ship loader capable of loading Panamax-size ships, increasing annual soybean meal exports from 3 million metric tons to over 6 million metric tons.

These developments will elevate Nebraska's role in the global soybean ecosystem because it brings value to communities in the state while providing vital nutritional needs to millions around the world.

Gregg Fujan, United Soybean Board director and soybean grower from Weston, lives only 15 minutes from the David City facility. "It's a natural fit for locally grown soybeans to be processed locally with the meal fed to poultry and other livestock in the area to add profitability to those same soybean farmers. With three crush plants within a 40-mile radius of my farms, increased competition for soybeans will mean better profit opportunities for area farmers."

AGP's new facility in David City, Nebraska, has the potential to process more than 50 million bushels of soybeans annually.

Nebraska's total crush capacity will now be roughly 234 million bushels of soybeans, which is more than 70% of the 300 million bushels typically produced each year.

WISHH DELIVERS INNOVATIONS TO MEET NEW MARKET DEMAND

U.S. Soy Protein Goes Global with WISHH

ASA American Soybean Association®

WISHH 25 YEARS

SOY CHECKOFF™

wishh.org

Nurturing USSOY Exports by Nurturing Trust and Training

By Colby Pinkstone, Senior Director of Strategic Programs, U.S. Soybean Export Council

The U.S. Soybean Export Council (USSEC) differentiates the quality and value of U.S. Soy for global customers, thanks in part to investments from the Nebraska Soybean Board (NSB). We aim to create and elevate customer preference for U.S. Soy products.

Nurturing trust in U.S. Soy is at the heart of our work. That requires building, strengthening and deepening relationships. Our team blends in-the-trenches support and big-picture strategic insight throughout the global soy supply chain, creating environments where relationships and trust flourish.

These relationships ensure that U.S. Soy, including Nebraska soybeans, reach customers around the world. U.S. exports for marketing year 2023/24 totaled 60.8 million metric tons (MMT), valued at $31.2 billion. That includes more than 50% of Nebraska's soybean crop. At the same time, U.S. soybean meal exports set a record of 14.4 million metric tons, valued at $6.7 billion.

Nebraska's expanding crush capacity contributed to that record. Facility expansions since 2023 now allow more than 57% of Nebraska's soybean crop to be crushed in the state, compared to the prior 46%. As more planned expansions come online, crush capacity is expected to increase to 72% of Nebraska soybeans annually. As a result, Nebraska can export more soybean meal.

"When you meet customers face to face, you see how much they value the quality of U.S. Soy and the relationships behind it," said Ed Lammers, a farmer and executive committee member of the United Soybean Board. "It makes you proud to know our soybeans are feeding the world and building trust across borders."

Our most recent USSEC annual report highlights a remarkable network of relationships that contribute to ongoing demand for U.S. Soy. Explore our work in animal nutrition, aquaculture, soy foods and soybean oil made possible by Nebraska soybean farmers in the annual report.

Investing in Today for an Abundant Tomorrow

NSB also directly supports the Soy Excellence Center (SEC) program led by USSEC. The SEC delivers trusted professional development for early- to mid-career protein professionals in emerging markets. This training builds trust, relationships and knowledge as researchers and experts from top U.S. and global universities support curriculum in aquaculture, poultry, feed milling and more.

"The Soy Excellence Center is about more than training. It is about building up people who are helping grow demand for U.S. Soy," said Anne Meis, Vice Chair of the Soy Excellence Center GAP and NSB farmer-leader. "Programs like this connect our soybeans to real progress around the world."

The strategic learning centers provide virtual and in-person training in the Americas, India, the Middle East and North Africa, Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Explore SEC global impact in the 2024 Soy Excellence Center annual report.

USSEC delivers a strong return on investments from NSB and other partners to grow markets for the farmers who anchor the U.S. Soy supply chain.

INNOVATING WITH INTENTION

A Q&A with Barry McGraw of Airable Research Lab on building the soybean-based product pipeline.

Nebraska Soybean Board (NSB): How did Airable Research Lab get its start?

Barry McGraw (BM): In 2018, I had an idea. I cold-called multiple universities and landed at Ohio Wesleyan University, as they were open to the idea of renting lab space. I started out renting one lab and began developing a plan to expand this idea into an Ohio Soybean Council (OSC) business lab. OSC calculated the money spent funding external projects and compared it to the cost of conducting our own research and commercialization. We evaluated the other benefits as well, such as maintaining IP and working directly with commercial companies to develop the products they need (vs. guessing what consumers or industry wants). OSC decided to go forward, and in 2019, signed a three-year lease for three labs at Ohio Wesleyan and brought in a few contractors and consultants to help us get started. In 2021, we formed an Airable board, and since the lab was seeing early success, we decided to make a full launch. We now have 12 full-time scientists and three part-time employees and have developed over 12 new products.

NSB: What sparked your interest in developing new uses for soybeans?

BM: The primary reason I jumped into soy biobased product research and development is the challenge of utilizing soybean oil, meal and byproducts to replace petroleum products, creating biobased products that are economical, technically feasible and scalable. Later, the reward and motivation of working for and with very entrepreneurial-thinking soybean farmers became just as important.

NSB: Can you share some of the most promising or large-scale applications for soybeans your lab is currently exploring that could truly help move the pile?

BM: We're increasing our focus on polymers or bioplastics. There's a strong market for that; around 430 million metric tons of plastic are produced annually worldwide, and plastic waste is becoming a real issue. And most of the products will likely be profitable. What's particularly exciting is the opening of the second Airable location, which will really add to our capabilities in the polymer space.

We're also looking at ways to create demand for meal and hulls—looking beyond soy oil to use the whole bean. Soybeans are roughly 20% oil and 80% meal, and with the rising interest in using soy oil for biofuels, farmers are expecting to have a surplus of meal. So they're eager to learn what can be done with the meal, beyond animal feed. Less waste, more profit.

NSB: What are the biggest market factors currently driving demand for soy-based products?

BM: The market for biobased products has been decades in the making.

For many of those years, governments have tried to regulate the economy into sustainability, and although that's not the most efficient or effective approach, it does encourage industry to start making preparations. The government has also invested significant resources into greener products and processes, helping to set the stage for the transition away from substances that are unhealthy for our planet and our people.

But at the end of the day, companies answer to consumers, and consumers are becoming more environmentally conscious and willing to pay a little more for sustainable products. They see the issues with relying on petrochemicals and other feedstocks that have wildly varying availability and pricing. They're ready to put their dollars toward greener, cleaner solutions that support the farmers right here at home. And of course, as biobased products enter the market, more consumers become aware of them and their benefits, and it becomes an upward spiral.

In addition, industry understands that the United States has to participate in the global green economy or get left behind. Sustainable practices will soon be key to remaining competitive on the global stage. So now the private sector is making serious commitments—and investments.

And now that the market is opening up, all those years of preparation are paying off, as technology breakthroughs are making it possible to develop and produce biobased products cost-effectively—products that are just as good as, if not better than, their petroleum-based counterparts.

NSB: What are some of the biggest challenges you face at Airable?

BM: The economics is a challenge. Petroleum is typically less expensive than soy-based starting materials. One of the biggest challenges is functionalizing and/or finding unique properties of a soy-based product that bridges this cost gap. For example, soy-based polyurethane (PU) coatings cure slower than petro PU, thus creating a stronger chemistry network that provides a tougher PU coating for wood floors and other applications.

A second challenge is building an innovative team that doesn't get wrapped up with research and the analytical side but is always looking at technology from a consumer and industry perspective. For example, we may have a unique chemistry, but it has to be scalable at a cost reasonable enough that someone would be willing to manufacture the product—and a cost that allows the soy-based product to compete against petrol-based products of a similar nature.

NSB: What makes soy a valuable molecule in industrial chemistry that farmers might not know about?

BM: Soybean oil is incredibly versatile. Its molecular structure and fatty acid profile are easily modified for many applications. Soybean oil, in particular (vs. some other natural oils), has fatty acids with double bonds. These provide multiple reactive sites (i.e., the fatty acids react well with other chemistries). The double bonds also lend themselves to key characteristics that are attractive to industry, such as durability. Soybean oil also has a long carbon chain that lends product attributes such as flexibility, strength and hydrophobicity (i.e., moisture resistance).

But the most obvious and impactful differences between soy and petroleum are fairly obvious. Soy creates far fewer CO_2 emissions throughout the production lifecycle (both its own and any product in which it is a component—growing soybeans even capture CO_2 from the atmosphere). Soy has lower volotile organic compounds (VOCs) and toxic content than many incumbent feedstocks. Soy is entirely safe to handle. It's locally sourced and abundant, furthering domestic independence and stable supply chains.

NSB: How does Airable typically work with companies to turn soy-based concepts into commercial products?

BM: One of the things that sets Airable apart is our partnerships with commercial and industrial enterprises. A company may come to us with an idea to improve an existing product—or an idea for a new product—and ask whether the idea is feasible. The company reps specify technical targets for the product. If we think we can hit those targets, we do the research at no upfront cost to the company, as long as they commit to evaluating the samples we send them. They provide us with feedback, and we adjust the formulation in response to that feedback, and we go back and forth until we develop a product that meets their specifications. The next phase is development, which involves scaling up the product for field trials. If field trials go well, the company licenses the formulation, and the product enters the market. The whole process, from concept to commercialization, can take anywhere from nine to 24 months.

The benefit is that we're not doing research for the sake of doing research. When Airable partners with a company, that partner has already identified market demand—or some company requirement—for a specific biobased product or feedstock. The company has already established commercialization pathways, most of which are quite effective. So we're not reinventing the wheel. If we develop a product for a big company like DeWALT, it will probably sell.

NSB: What opportunities do you see for Nebraska soybean farmers to benefit from your research?

BM: The benefits of soy-based product R&D are evident. Developing new soy-based products and feedstocks leads to new markets for the farmers' harvest and increases demand for soybeans.

As OSC realized when we founded Airable in 2019, using checkoff funds to sponsor a few soy R&D projects here and there doesn't really have much of an impact. By having a dedicated soy lab, the whole process is accelerated, and far more products enter the market. More products, more demand for soybeans. And since Airable works directly with commercial companies, the products are more likely to sell. For instance, Airable provided the formulation for DeWALT bar and chain oil, which is available and selling well on Amazon and in 1,500 Home Depot stores nationwide, as well as other online platforms and brick-and-mortar locations. In its inaugural year, we project that single product will generate a demand of 55,000 bushels.

In addition, the work Airable does increases soy's value. Soybean oil that is used for biodiesel or even cooking oil delivers a significantly lower profit than the same amount of soybean oil in a bottle of bar and chain oil that sells for over $10.

Alex Shand, Airable engineer, conducts a soy-based synthesis reaction.

Meat Exports Produce Long-Term Demand for Nebraska Soybean Farmers

By U.S. Meat Export Federation Staff

While global trade issues have created uncertainty in recent weeks, global demand for U.S. red meat remains strong. In 2024, U.S. pork exports eclipsed previous highs in volume and value, and despite an uncertain trade environment in 2025, pork exports have dipped only slightly through April.

Export market diversification has been a key goal for the U.S. pork industry and broad-based market development growth is helping sustain long-term growth (see chart below). In 2024, pork exports achieved annual volume and value records in Mexico, Central America, Colombia, New Zealand, Malaysia and several Caribbean markets. Value records were reached in South Korea, Australia and the Dominican Republic.

"Livestock is the number one customer for Nebraska-grown soybeans and recent years have been record-setting for exports of U.S. red meat," says John Hinners, senior vice president of industry relations for the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF). "Exports now account for nearly 30% of pork production and a robust pork industry provides critical support to the bottom lines of soybean producers."

Hinners points to a recent study that quantifies the impact of pork exports on Nebraska soybean production. In 2024, according to statistics provided by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service and data compiled by The Juday Group:

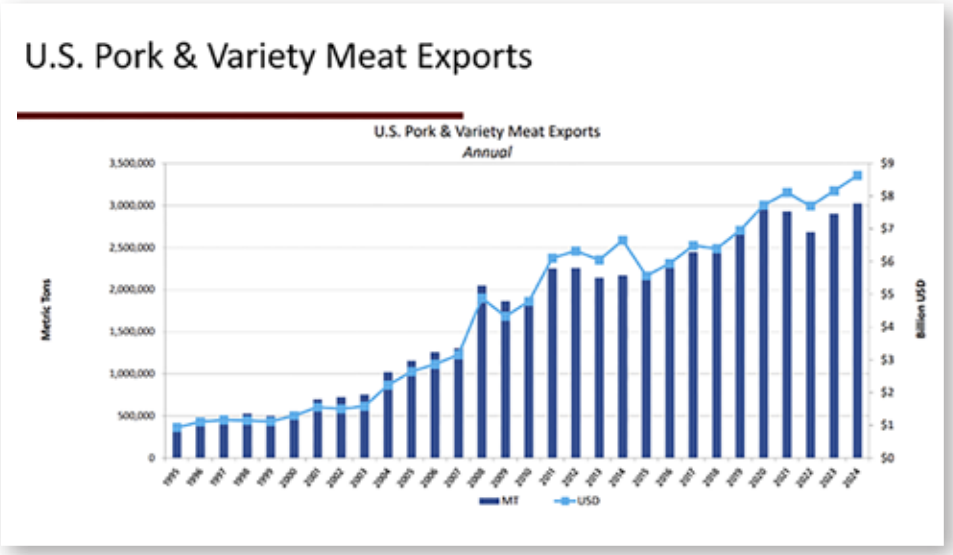
- Pork exports accounted for **6.95 million bushels** of Nebraska soybean usage in 2024.
- In 2024, the market value of pork exports to Nebraska soybeans = **$77.25 million** (soybeans consumed by pork exports at average soybean price: 6.95 million bushels x $11.11 per bushel).

GLOBAL GROWTH IN SPENDING POWER

"The global population is growing and middle classes are expanding, but it's the growth in spending power that motivates consumers to upgrade their protein options," says Hinners.

Colombia is a prime example. U.S. pork exports to Colombia have grown from 34,000 metric tons valued at $88 million in 2013 to 124,971 metric tons worth $360 million in 2024. Colombia has rapidly evolved from being primarily a destination for pork raw material for further processing into a well-rounded market for center-of-the-plate U.S. pork items.

With a focus on the center-of-the-plate, USMEF recently developed eight new pork products derived from the U.S. Boston butt and introduced them to the trade and consumers at a launch event in late 2024. Several of the products are now being sold in Colombia with one product—the Boston butt burger, or "BBB"—having generating a great deal of interest. The BBB is now being sold at several foodservice and retail chains throughout the country.



USMEF Chef Nicolás Díaz cooked Boston butt burgers (BBB) live on a popular TV show in Medellin, Colombia.

TWO ORGANIZATIONS WORKING FOR *You*

YOUR MEMBERSHIP SUPPORTS YOU HERE

What do Nebraska soybean farmers consistently rank as a top concern? State and federal regulations. The Nebraska Soybean Association (NSA) provides Nebraska soybean farmers with leadership in promoting effective policies and legislation. NSA represents its members on a state and federal level while working cooperatively with the American Soybean Association (ASA). The primary focus of NSA and ASA is assuring sound policy and regulatory decisions are made in Lincoln and Washington D.C. that support soy industry priorities.

Both organizations work on policy issues impacting soy growers including farm bill policy, trade, biotechnology, transportation, infrastructure, biofuels, sustainability, regulatory decisions and more.

Soybean checkoff dollars cannot be used to lobby or for legislative activities, which is why your NSA membership is vital to the profitability and sustainability of the industry in Nebraska. Consider joining our efforts to ensure Nebraska soybean farmers remain strong in protecting and promoting our industry.

Visit nesoybeans.org to learn more.

YOUR CHECKOFF SUPPORTS YOU HERE

The Nebraska Soybean Board (NSB) directs the state's efforts in utilizing soy checkoff dollars to benefit soybean farmers. Established through a provision in the 1990 Farm Bill, the checkoff program requires soybean farmers to contribute 0.5% of the market price per bushel. Half of this goes to the United Soybean Board (USB) for national initiatives, while the other half stays within the state through NSB.

Led by nine volunteer farmers, NSB focuses on production research, marketing, promotion, product development and education to maximize profit opportunities for Nebraska's soybean farmers.

The mission is to grow value for farmers by maximizing their checkoff investments. NSB's initiatives include Farmer Support, which encourages information sharing and collaboration among Nebraska's farmers; Production & Crop Research, which funds projects to improve soybean production and quality; Community Engagement, aimed at showcasing Nebraska farms and educating the public and Demand & Utilization, which promotes the versatility, sustainability and economic impact of soybeans for food, fuel and industrial uses.

Visit nebraskasoybeans.org to learn more.

Sharing A Soy-Based FIREFIGHTING Solution

The Nebraska Soybean Board Highlights Soy-Based Firefighting Foam at Nebraska State Fire School

Soybeans are finding new purpose in unexpected places, including fighting fires. Earlier this May, the Nebraska Soybean Board (NSB), took part in the Nebraska State Fire School expo in Grand Island to showcase SoyFoam™ TF 1122, a soy-based firefighting foam developed by Cross Plains Solutions.

The event brought together hundreds of firefighters from across Nebraska, many of whom serve on volunteer departments in rural communities. For NSB, the expo was a unique opportunity to connect with departments, large and small, and discuss how soy is powering safer, smarter solutions.

Greg Greving, a United Soybean Board farmer-leader from Chapman, praised the innovation behind the foam.

"We're proud to be part of an effort that uses soybeans in an incredible way, and gives back to the very communities where soybeans are grown," Greving said.

He added, "It was encouraging to see so much interest, especially knowing that 90 percent of Nebraska's fire departments are volunteer-based and often include farmers. It was a good way to show how soybean checkoff dollars are being invested back into rural communities."

At the expo, NSB gave away 15 sample pails of the foam through an entry process to departments across the state, including Blair, Broken Bow, Chapman, Dakota City, Elwood, Fort Calhoun, Giltner, Hastings, Hershey, Kearney, McCool Junction, Ralston, Randolph, Valparaiso and Wymore.

A Safer, Smarter Foam

SoyFoam TF 1122 is made from soy meal through soy flour, a product of the soybean crush process. The foam is 84 percent biobased and is certified under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's BioPreferred program. It works with standard firefighting equipment and extinguishes Class A fires, such as wood and paper, and Class B fires, including fuel and oil.

What sets the product apart is what it does not contain. Traditional foams often rely on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances or PFAS. These are known as "forever chemicals" because they do not break down in the environment. PFAS exposure has been linked to serious health issues, including cancer, liver disease and developmental problems. So, mitigating forever chemicals through soy-based products can create real impact, for the safety of our first responders and to maintain the integrity of our local communities' soil health, air quality and drinking water.

"With support from NSB, we had the chance to engage firefighters across Nebraska and explain how soybeans can help put out fires while keeping first responders and our communities safe," said Dave Garlie, chief technology officer for Cross Plains Solutions.

He added, "First responders face a 72 percent higher risk of cancer than the general population due to chemicals like PFAS in their work environment."

SoyFoam is the only firefighting foam in the world to earn GreenScreen Certified GOLD status, which recognizes safer chemical formulations. The foam also meets the National Fire Protection

Maria and Dave Garlie of Cross Plains Solutions with United Soybean Board Director Greg Greving (middle) at the Nebraska State Fire School expo in Grand Island.

Association's standard for wetting agents, known as NFPA 18.

Garlie explained that the foam has already demonstrated effective vapor suppression across multiple fuels and is designed to seamlessly integrate with current foam nozzles, inductors and pump pressures, requiring no adjustments to a fire department's existing standard operating procedures.

"The fact that departments can use this with their current setup makes adoption easier and more cost-effective," Garlie said. "We've seen strong interest from departments that want to be proactive about safety without compromising performance."

The soy checkoff has long supported research into new uses for soy, and SoyFoam is a strong example of those efforts in action. As the soy industry looks for new ways to add value to the crop, products like SoyFoam provide market opportunity and real solutions that touch lives across the state.

Pails of SoyFoam on display at the Nebraska State Fire School highlight soy's potential as a safer, sustainable firefighting solution.

For more information about SoyFoam and where to get it, visit crossplainssolutions.com/soyfoam-info.

GREASING THE WHEELS WITH SOY

Soy-based grease pads keep trucks moving and soy demand growing.

Truckers. If you haven't been one, you surely know more than a few. They haul our soybeans to market and keep rural economies moving.

So when a soy-based innovation makes life easier for truckers and creates new opportunities for quality soybean products, it's something Nebraska farmers can proudly support and share.

Enter Gear Head Lubricants, a family-owned company based in Cedar Falls, IA. They have been formulating specialty greases and lubricants for trucking, railroad maintenance and other heavy equipment since 2019. And their fifth-wheel grease pads are a prime example of soy product being put to work in smart, practical ways.

They've simplified one of the messiest parts of the job: greasing a fifth wheel. The innovation? Leveraging soy oil as a natural lubricant to create a solid, soy-based pad that transforms under pressure into high-performing grease without the usual hassle of guns, mess or waste.

It's not just a clever idea. It works. Truckers and fleet managers who try it don't go back, citing time savings, better protection and a cleaner ride. Demand continues to grow, with distribution expanding nationwide and early traction taking hold in key global markets as word spreads.

> "Greasing the fifth wheel is the worst part of the job... with Gear Head Lube's soy-based pads, I can hold it in my hand with no mess. All you do is take two pads, place them on your fifth wheel, hook your trailer up and go about your day."
>
> —BILLY CLARK, INDEPENDENT TRUCK OPERATOR

And while most farmers may only need to grease a fifth wheel once or twice a year, they can still play a big role in this product's momentum. Spreading the word to trucking friends, neighbors and local parts suppliers helps fuel demand. And that demand fuels more use of soy in new, value-added ways.

"This is a poster child product for soy. The more it's supported, the more it encourages other innovators to bring soy-based solutions to market," said Todd Whiting, Director of Product Development for Gear Head Lube.

In a time when farmers face market uncertainty and weather stress, new markets, even small ones, can make a difference. Supporting soy-based innovations—especially ones that serve the shared working world around us—is a smart way to keep our communities and industry strong.

Gear Head Lube's Fifth-Wheel Grease Pads

82% soy-based, USDA BioPreferred®

- No grease guns, no mess, easy storage
- Solid pad crushes into high-performance grease
- Long-lasting, clean, soy-based product

Know a trucker who should hear about this or want to try it yourself?

Connect with the folks at **GearHeadLube.com**.

FIFTH WHEEL GEAR HEAD LUBRICANT

Growing Roots with CommonGround Nebraska

By Liz Hamm, CommonGround Nebraska Coordinator

As the new Program Coordinator for CommonGround Nebraska, I'm thrilled to help amplify the voices of women in agriculture across our state. I grew up as the fifth generation on our family farm just outside of Stromsburg, where we grow soybeans, corn and raise cattle. Agriculture has always been a huge part of who I am.

Most of my professional career has been in Extension/4-H Youth Development and community engagement roles, both in Nebraska and North Carolina. I have always been a proud "agvocate," passionate about helping others understand where their food comes from.

In 2022, my husband, Zach, and I moved back to my hometown, and earlier this year, welcomed our first child, Eloise. Zach also grew up on a farm in North Carolina and currently works in the agricultural field. We're excited to raise our kids with the same values we learned as farm kids: hard work, stewardship and responsibility.

CommonGround is a grassroots movement that connects women who grow food with the people who buy it. Through honest conversations and storytelling, we bridge the gap between producers and consumers, especially when it comes to how food is grown, raised and cared for. Our Nebraska volunteers are farm women with diverse experiences and shared passions. They want to connect, listen and engage in meaningful dialogue about agriculture.

What excites me most about CommonGround is the people behind it. In a world where misinformation spreads quickly and food decisions can feel overwhelming; we're a trusted source for real-life perspectives. Whether it's through speaking events, social media or casual conversations in grocery store aisles, our volunteers are making a difference across the state every day.

Looking ahead, my vision is to support these women with meaningful training, strong community and creative ways to share their stories. I also hope to grow our network of volunteers. The more voices we have at the table, the stronger our message becomes.

If you're passionate about building trust in agriculture and want to share your farm story, now is a great time to get involved. You don't need a background in public speaking, just a willingness to connect with consumers and share your story.

Together, we can cultivate curiosity, foster understanding and sow seeds of trust across Nebraska.

If you're a woman engaged in farming or ranching in Nebraska and want to volunteer, you can register at www.commongroundnebraska.com. Join us on Facebook or Instagram, where our volunteers consistently share their stories and kitchen creations.

Ground Control 2025:
NAVIGATING NEBRASKA'S DRY SPELLS

Nebraska soybean farmers know a good rain is worth its weight in gold. And while Mother Nature delivered some much-needed moisture this spring, we're all approaching July with the long game in mind.

Dry spells in recent years and the unpredictability of what comes next have sharpened the focus on how to work smarter with water.

"We're in a better spot than we were at this time in years prior, like in 2023," said Bruno P. Lena, PhD, water and cropping systems assistant extension educator with Nebraska Extension. "But if that rainfall doesn't keep coming, we're going to start seeing damage in our dryland fields."

Across east-central Nebraska counties like Boone, Platte and Nance, recent storms helped recharge the soil profile. For now, many fields are at adequate soil moisture down to about three feet. That's a relief for farmers who have watched the drought monitor bounce between moderate and severe classifications the past few seasons.

Still, Lena warns not to get overly optimistic. "Dryland farmers are in a position where there's just not much you can do. If you're on a light-textured soil like sandy soils that have low soil water holding capacity, and rain doesn't come, you're going to start seeing some signals of water stress. But in fields with clay or clay loams, water stress signals will take longer to occur."

That contrast makes knowing your field's natural advantages and limitations key. And it explains why irrigation, when available, is as much an art as a science.

"In a typical mid- to late-July, soybeans use about two inches of water per week," Lena said. "If you're irrigating, it's all about matching that crop water demand at the right time without overdoing it. The goal is to let the roots chase moisture during spring and then step in before stress hits."

The most sensitive time, of course, is pod fill. Strategic farmers wait to water until the soil nears its depletion threshold, then replenish just enough to keep the crop healthy. Too much too early can actually weaken root development.

That's why Lena encourages growers to lean into data, not just routine.

Technologies like crop evapotranspiration (ET) models and soil moisture sensors are giving farmers real-time insights into when and how much to irrigate. "They take the guesswork out of it," Lena said. "Some on-farm research studies showed that you can save an inch or more of water per field, without hurting yields."

Small Changes, Big Returns

Being strategic is not just good for a farmer's bottom line, it's good for the entire community. "One inch of irrigation water on a 130-acre field equals about 3.5 million gallons," Lena said. "If every farmer saved just one inch, that's enough to supply water to a small town for a day."

Even with a modest upfront cost, the payoff adds up quickly. In 2024, on-farm trials across four Nebraska fields showed that growers using irrigation scheduling tools saved an average of 1.2 inches of water—1.5 inches on corn fields and about 0.9 inches on soybeans—compared to their standard practices. Importantly, yields and net returns remained statistically the same.

One Platte County grower used just 3.5 inches of irrigation for the entire 2024 season by relying on soil sensor data. The approach drew attention from his neighbors and the local Natural Resources District (NRD), proving that precision pays off when the conditions are right.

Dryland farmers may not have those levers to pull, but they aren't powerless. Crop insurance remains one of the few tools in their belt to guard against risk. Many choose Revenue Protection plans with 75 to 85 percent coverage. Others layer on options like ECO or SCO for added peace of mind, though those come with added costs. It's always wise to consider your options and consult with trusted insurance professionals. That, along with an understanding of your soil and geography, can set the tone for resilience when the skies stay dry.

"It's one thing you can control when you can't control the weather," Lena said.

Water-Wise Moves

- Understand your soil type and water-holding capacity
- Let roots grow deep before irrigating early
- Use moisture sensors or ET models to guide decisions
- Focus on replenishing rather than overwatering
- Review crop insurance coverage while there's time to adjust

"And when paired with a good understanding of your soil and location, it gives you a better chance at staying resilient."

Ultimately, July decisions set the tone for the rest of the season. Investing in smart water strategies, staying informed through tools like the UNL Drought Monitor and weekly forecasts, and leaning on Extension educators can all help reduce stress when the skies dry up.

As Lena puts it, "The more rain, the better. But the more we understand what's happening in the soil, and use that to guide our choices, the more likely we are to come out ahead."

> "I see a lot of folks who want to keep the pivot running just to be safe. But with today's irrigation scheduling tools, you can know when it's truly needed so you're not wasting water and money."
>
> — BRUNO P. LENA, PHD, WATER AND CROPPING SYSTEMS ASSISTANT EXTENSION EDUCATOR, NEBRASKA EXTENSION

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE ON-FARM BIODIESEL CREDIT PROGRAM

THE NEBRASKA SOYBEAN BOARD IS HELPING SUPPORT AG OPERATIONS BY OFFERING FUEL CREDITS FOR BIODIESEL PURCHASES MADE FOR ON-FARM TANKS.

EARN

$0.25 per gallon *for B2 blends*

$0.50 per gallon *for B5 and higher*

Up to **$500** back!

To qualify, submit an application along with a paid fuel invoice that includes:

- Fuel type and blend percentage
- Gallons purchased
- Name and address
- Zero balance due

Receipts must be from Fiscal Year 2025 (Oct. 1, 2024 – Sept. 19, 2025). One submission per fiscal year. Applications can be completed online or printed and mailed.

Apply Here

Call **402-441-3240** or email **info@nebraskasoybeans.org** with questions.

NEBRASKA SOYBEAN BOARD | BIODIESEL Cleaner Fuel For Nebraska

Jay Hanson, a farmer and Nebraska Soybean Board director near Mead, Nebraska, refuels his tractor during the 2025 planting season.

Building A Farm Legacy with Purpose

By Andy Chvatal, Nebraska Soybean Board Executive Director & Farmer

Thinking about legacy and passing on the family farm is a daunting task, not only in thought, but even more-so in action. Where do you start and who do you listen to? Maybe more important than the monetary decisions are the relationships that will be molded. And when does that conversation happen? Lots of times the can gets kicked down the road and that transition begins by reading a piece of paper after a funeral. It almost always creates more hardship than having a conversation when everyone is still alive and capable of understanding your desires for the future of the operation.

There are lots of resources available to learn about the different opportunities in determining how your legacy lives on or how to keep your farm in the hands you want it to for future generations. Or even just understanding the difference in meaning between fair and equal.

First, go have conversations. You probably know families who have done things right and maybe even more who have had it go the other way. Ask them questions and get perspective. Secondly, reach out to those you have in your corner. Maybe that's your banker, your local cooperative, an extension educator or just a trusted acquaintance. Finally, I would encourage you to read and soak in as much information as possible. There is no right answer, but taking notes on a combination of discussions and literature will help mold your process. The latest issue of Farm Futures magazine was loaded with articles and stories about farm transition. Another good read is Splitting Heirs by Ron Blue.

Earlier this spring I was fortunate enough to be invited by Kurt and Barb Ohnoutka and family, as they hosted new Ag Secretary Brooke Rollins on their family farm. This was the unveiling of the USDA's Farmers First Initiative, which is designed to support family farming operations. I was super grateful to be able to attend with my dad and my three daughters. The girls probably didn't and still don't grasp the whole importance of the visit, but it was empowering for them to converse with Secretary Rollins as they donned their 4-H shirts and spoke about their life on our family farm.

I chose to continue investing my time, money and sweat equity into my family operation because it's important for me to continue that legacy. Ashley and I have made the decision to keep our girls active on the farm. We're here to empower our girls and show them opportunity IF that's the life they want. For our family, livestock is that opportunity. It bears the responsibility of washing 4-H steers in the summer and watching calving cameras in the winter. Your story and your situation is unique to you. Continue to seek advice and learn, and please reach out if you need help finding the resources that you need.

From left to right, Kolbi, Leyton and Baylor Chvatal alongside their 2025 show calves.

The Chvatal girls visit with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke Rollins at the Ohnoutka farm near Valparaiso.

BECK'S

There is a relentless spirit that unites us all in agriculture - a conviction we can dream big and that together, we become unstoppable.

**As iron sharpens iron,
so one person sharpens another.
Proverbs 27:17 NIV**