Policy Development Process

1. Issue Surfacing & Prioritization
   - Individual members contribute to the issue surfacing process by submitting and prioritizing important issues any time at www.nefb.org. By prioritizing an issue, members are indicating their support to elevate the issue for further education, discussion, and research in the policy development process. Popular state and national issues will be reviewed and considered by County Farm Bureaus and the State Legislative Policy Committee.

2. Issue Education and Discussion
   - Policy Discussion Guides are designed to assist Farm Bureau members in state and national policy development and in writing policy resolutions.
   - They are researched and written by the NEFB Public Policy Department. Find them at www.nefb.org and in the NEFB News.
   - Issue orientation meeting for State Legislative Policy Committee.

3. Resolutions Adopted
   - 200 Voting delegates, representing the 86 County Farm Bureaus, debate and approve state and national resolutions.
   - National resolutions are forwarded to the American Farm Bureau for debate and approval at the national convention.

4. Draft State Resolutions
   - State Legislative Policy Committee reviews recommendations from 86 County Farm Bureaus at the Policy Forum on Nov. 16 in Kearney.
   - Writes the first draft of resolutions for the voting delegates at the Nebraska Farm Bureau Annual meeting, Dec. 3-5 in Kearney.

5. Adopt County Resolutions
   - County Farm Bureau’s host Policy Development meetings to draft proposed resolutions.
   - Proposed resolutions are debated and approved at the County Farm Bureau policy adoption meeting or annual meeting.
   - Approved County Farm Bureau policy resolutions must be mailed or e-mailed by Friday, Nov. 3, 2023.

How Can You Get Involved?

- Contact your county policy development committee with issues of concern
- Participate in your county’s policy adoption process
- Let yourself be heard

Farm Bureau's year-long policy development process is the strength of the organization.

*Mail to: Nebraska Farm Bureau, ATTN: Public Policy P.O. Box 80299, Lincoln, NE 68501. Email to: Whittney Kelley at whittneyk@nefb.org.

www.nefb.org
FOREIGN OWNERSHIP OF FARMLAND

ISSUE
As globalization continues to increase, many are questioning how long it will be before other countries purchase enough ground in the United States to influence our way of life. This is seen much more frequently in undeveloped countries but is an issue of concern in developed ones as well. Other countries have recently been leasing land on U.S. soil for a variety of reasons, and it is being reported as those countries, foreign entities, or foreign people owning it. Nebraska Farm Bureau is asking our members for guidance on how they would like to approach this issue.

BACKGROUND
There is little federal regulation on this issue. Under the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act of 1978 (AFIDA), all foreign people who acquire an interest in agricultural land are required to report it within 90 days. If land owned by a foreign person becomes agricultural land or ceases to be agricultural land, or if an individual becomes or ceases to be a foreign person, they must report that information within 90 days of the change. If they fail to report, they can be fined up to 25% of the value of the land.

While state laws vary, the four differing factors are whether the states (1) explicitly allow foreign ownership, (2) require reporting of foreign ownership, and (3) regulate corporate farming. Nebraska prohibits foreign corporations or individuals from buying land or holding a lease of more than five years in the state and has a law requiring reports to the secretary of state if there is corporate interest in farmland.

There are some state Farm Bureaus that have policies on this issue. Iowa supports prohibition of foreign ownership and encourages improved enforcement and transparency. Kansas only holds that foreign owners should not get preferential tax treatment. Missouri supports prohibition of foreign ownership of ag land and is against preferential tax treatment for foreign parties. South Dakota opposes ownership of any agricultural ground by a majority of foreign stockholders.

Regardless of current laws, concerns about foreign ownership of agricultural land have been growing alongside the tensions between the United States and countries that are not our allies. Concerns are amplified by information not being easily interpreted, leading to people believing land is foreign owned when it is foreign leased, just recently the Senate voted to prohibit the purchase of U.S. farmland by China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia as part of its annual defense policy bill.

In 2022, American Farm Bureau Federation received 11 different policy proposals from nine states on the subject with the delegate body ultimately deciding to stand on current policy. Over the past several months, members of the American Farm Bureau’s Market Structures and Budget/Economy Issue Advisory Committees (IAC) met several times and decided to propose new language for members to consider. The proposed language is as follows:

420/Foreign Investment
We support additional funding to improve data collection, auditing techniques, and enforcement of reporting under the Agricultural Foreign Investment Disclosure Act (AFIDA). Current data collection and reporting on foreign ownership of U.S. agricultural land is incomplete, flawed, and unclear. Farmers need an accurate image of current ownership dynamics to inform policy development.

ENERGY STRATEGIC PLAN

ISSUE
Nebraska agriculture as a whole is the largest user of electricity in the state, due mostly to the energy needed to run irrigation systems. There are also multiple projects that have either broken ground or are in the works that would be heavy users of electricity. And recently, Omaha Public Power District suggested a rate increase to support increased electricity demand.

The state finds itself passing legislation regarding and in conversations concerning energy source reliability and affordability as well as the future of energy in Nebraska. It also is creating working groups in support of alternative energy sources like nuclear and hydrogen. However, Nebraska does not have a comprehensive short- or long-term plan on how to address this issue as a state. Rather, because it is a public power state, it relies on Nebraska Public Power District (NPPD), rural electric associations, and other power providers to submit strategic plans regarding how power is generated, provided, stored, and used.

BACKGROUND
NPPD has a process for submitting a five-year outlook plan that shows how it produces energy and plans to provide it at an affordable and reliable rate. Recently, NPPD has set a goal to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, meaning it has set a goal to create a balance between greenhouse gasses that are produced by NPPD and those that are separated from the atmosphere through emission reduction and removal. During the public meetings that accompanied this five-year planning process, many questions arose regarding exactly how NPPD will achieve this goal and whether prices and immediate availability of energy would be affected.

There are issues that need to be addressed in the energy field by not only the Legislature, but also the state and regulatory agencies. Several of the issues are listed below.

Increased electricity usage throughout the state could potentially put producers at risk, especially during drought conditions. When irrigation systems are needed most are also times when electricity loads are heaviest.

Rural Electric Association approaches to provide energy generation behind the meter continue to vary. Some associations are limiting the ability of producers to install their own cost-saving, energy-generating technology (solar panels, wind turbines, etc.) due to limits of renewable energy generation placed on the associations.

The city of Lincoln is considering enacting a ban on installation of gas hook-ups on newly built homes similar to those passed throughout the country. This idea could potentially spread. A bill has been introduced in the Legislature that would prohibit such bans from being enacted, although it has not been passed.

The Nebraska Farm Bureau and other key groups have formed a state-selected group to pursue a Hydrogen Hub designation, which would make the area one of eight locations in the country to receive $1 billion in federal funding to research and build hydrogen energy infrastructure. The parameters of what that generation could look like and who it could impact are still up in the air, specifically whether the federal government will use these efforts and others like them to lessen the use of fossil fuels.

Further development of nuclear energy and technologies surrounding it are up for discussion.

As the costs continue to consume energy and demand that energy be produced in a renewable fashion, the Midwest has become a hotbed of wind and solar production. Nebraska trails behind states like Iowa and Kansas in these areas but further buildout of wind and solar is often discussed.

FARM BUREAU POLICY

STATE POLICY: FOREIGN OWNERSHIP (2023)
Farm Bureau is opposed to the sale and/or holding as collateral of any agricultural real estate in Nebraska to any foreign governments, foreign entities, or foreign individuals.

FEDERAL POLICY:
AFBF policy states all foreign investment in U.S. assets should be monitored. It also says foreign ownership in ag land should be limited to less than a controlling interest and subject to standard tax laws.

QUESTIONS
1. Should NEFB take a stronger stance on foreign ownership of real property within the state?
2. Is the current Nebraska state statute prohibiting foreign ownership of ag land and extended leases sufficient in upholding NEFB policy?
3. Should reporting of foreign interest in agricultural land be done in a clearer and more uniform manner?
4. Do you support the proposed AFBF IAC language listed above?
ISSUE
Since the Legislature adjourned, there have been conversations in the state Capitol about changing the way Natural Resource Districts (NRD) are funded. In the last session, the Legislature changed the primary source of funding for community colleges from property taxes to state funding. Now, some elected leaders are considering doing the same for NRDs.

BACKGROUND
Nebraska’s Natural Resources Districts were established in 1972 as local government units with broad responsibilities to protect the state’s natural resources. Major Nebraska river basins form the boundaries of the districts. NRDs are funded. In addition to the fairness in assessment resulting from this method, LB 820 also contains limitations to assure limits to the increase of property taxes for NRD purposes.

FARM BUREAU POLICY
NRD RESPONSIBILITIES (2023). We support retaining the NRDs and the powers granted therein for local elected board members to manage and conserve the natural resources of their respective districts. We also believe that responsibility for regulation should be kept as close as possible to the affected area. We oppose merging NRDs.

We are opposed to any blanket statutory mill levy increase for these districts without a vote of the people. However, we are not opposed to providing NRDs located in areas determined by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to be fully or over-approximated with a limited, specific, targeted levy authority to implement IMPs in these areas. We are opposed to granting NRDs bond authority for funding of storm water control, recreation areas, or private development projects. In the event that bond use by NRDs is approved by the Legislature, we propose that those bonds would be subject to tax because they would enhance a private activity.

QUESTIONS
1. Should NRDs be funded all or in part by state revenues?
2. Can we ensure that NRDs will retain their local governance if funding is coming from the state?
3. Should reductions in property taxes to NRDs be via tax credits for property taxes paid or an elimination of NRDs levy authority?

PROPERTY VALUATIONS

ISSUE
Introduced in 2023, LB 820 would enact the Agricultural Valuation Fairness Act to provide a more fair and uniform assessment of agricultural and horticultural land in Nebraska. It declares that sales of agricultural and horticultural land are influenced by uses other than agricultural or horticultural purposes and cause the price paid for agricultural and horticultural land to exceed the value such land has for agricultural or horticultural purposes. To achieve fairness, all agricultural and horticultural land will be assessed based on its capacity to produce income, called agricultural use value. The intent of this legislation is to be revenue neutral. The Nebraska Constitution, (Article VIII, Section 1, subsections (a) and (b)), authorizes this method of assessment.

BACKGROUND
Procedurally, LB 820 would create an Agricultural Land Valuation Committee to establish agricultural land values by Land Capability Groups (LCG) for agricultural land throughout the state. Land values are established utilizing a production approach to value. Gross income will be computed using eight-year average yield data, with the highest and lowest values removed. Gross income is reduced to net income by utilizing expense ratios. The net income is then capitalized to determine assessed value. The capitalization rate is also determined by the committee and is calculated to arrive at valuations within 65-75% of market value, ensuring assessed values are uniformly and proportionately assessed within the class of agricultural land.

LB 820 retains elements of local control by keeping the county assessor responsible for classifying land. County assessors currently inventory agricultural land on a productivity index, making the implementation of this bill simple at the county level. County assessors have representation on the Agricultural Land Valuation Committee created in this bill and have the option to petition the tax commissioner for alternative values they determine are not uniform and proportionate. In addition to the fairness in assessment resulting from this method, LB 820 also contains limitations to assure the resulting values for all agricultural and horticultural land statewide cannot be above the current market-based standard of 75% of value and cannot increase more than 3.5% over the prior year.

FARM BUREAU POLICY
AG LAND ASSESSMENT (2022). Nebraska Farm Bureau supports an income capitalization approach as the most equitable means of valuing agricultural land for tax purposes. The implementation of such an approach should use the best price, yield, expense, and landowner share data available; take into account the land’s location; and allow for obsolescence in order to assess the land based on its earnings capacity and remove influences outside of agriculture from the assessment process. The approach shall be implemented in a way to maintain landowners’ rights to appeal. There should be consideration of the formation of an advisory review commission to assist in implementation of an income capitalization approach and capitalization rates.

If an income capitalization approach is legislatively unattainable, we support lowering the current 75% of the market level of agricultural land value and increasing the number of years used to set assessed values. Under a market approach, we support giving county assessors the flexibility to give less weight to non-agriculture sales of agricultural land when determining countywide valuation adjustments. County assessors should have the primary decision-making authority on which comparable sales are used to determine market value.

Section 1031 exchange purchases should be reported to county assessors and not be used for valuation purposes. We support the exclusion of any exchange sales for the purpose of comparable sales when assessing property.

We believe when agriculture land is sold and its primary use has changed from agriculture purposes to hunting and recreation, or the sale price is influenced by market forces other than agriculture, like preservation, those sales should not be used in the determination of the value of agricultural land. We support the use of market areas to differentiate areas of market activity for agriculture land and adjustments to market areas to obtain uniform values. Counties should have uniform raises or decreases in value among similar soil classifications outside of market areas.

We believe assessed values should be equalized between counties. Nebras-ka Farm Bureau supports the reform of the Tax Equalization and Review Commission. Farmsteads involved in active farming operations should be appraised similar to other active farmsteads, not as subdivided residential property. Agricultural land not used for agricultural purposes that is being mined for soil should be valued and taxed as commercial property and not as agricultural property. We support legislation that requires “no sales” with open, active bids at public auction to be considered as the sale price for the market value of the land. We believe irrigated pasture should have its own tax classification. Annexations should not disqualify land for Special Use Assessment. Agricultural land operators should be notified prior to the sale of said land for land tax deficiency prior to the tax sale.

AG LAND DEFINITION (2019). We support changes to the definition of agriculture land to define parcels used primarily for the production of agricultural and horticultural purposes as agriculture land. Parcels could be defined as agricultural land if they are under common ownership and managed in conjunction with other agricultural land, are enrolled in federal or state conservation programs, or it can be demonstrated the gross sales from the parcel exceed the USDA threshold for defining farms. We believe landowners should have notification and an opportunity for a hearing prior to change of classification of agriculture land for valuation purposes.

QUESTIONS
1. Should Farm Bureau consider changing its policy to reflect a position on revenue neutrality?
2. Revenue neutrality means the amount of revenue generated statewide will not change, but there will be winners and losers across that state. Is that acceptable?
3. Farm Bureau policy regarding the income capitalization approach does not have an explicit statement aimed at using such to reduce property taxes.
4. Should a statement to that effect be included in Farm Bureau’s policy?
5. Farm Bureau policy supports changes to the definition of agriculture land to define parcels used primarily for the production of agricultural and horticultural purposes as agriculture land.
6. Should the definition of agriculture land be expanded to include barn sites, grain handling facilities, etc.?
7. Should Farm Bureau have policy for reducing the valuation of all classes of real property (agriculture, residential, and commercial) with the intent being the reduction of property taxes for all property taxpayers?
LIVESTOCK mRNA VACCINES

ISSUE
As the issue of vaccinations continues to be a topic of conversation and heated debate throughout the country, agriculture is now facing similar discussions in other states and in Nebraska. Bills have been introduced in other states to ban the use of mRNA vaccines in livestock. These vaccines are created with the same technology used in the COVID-19 vaccination.

BACKGROUND
The conversations stem from vaccine technology that is in use in pork production and is being researched for other forms of livestock as well, though no such vaccine is approved for use in beef cattle. Misinformation on the use of mRNA vaccines in livestock has filtered through social media and other sources allowing proponents of the legislation to speculate that such vaccinations are a way to indirectly vaccinate the populace through the food supply. The consensus from many veterinarians in those in the research community is that the use of or continued research of mRNA vaccines in livestock is needed for faster response to new disease and that no evidence of harm to or effect on the consumer has been shown.

Other state Farm Bureaus have developed policies on this topic and have opposed legislation that would ban the use of the vaccine in livestock, stating that support for veterinary independence and research is key in all livestock vaccinations. The University of Nebraska is developing positions based on its Beef Extension recommendations that support the continuation of use and research according to veterinary recommendations. It is not outside the realm of possibility to see legislation having to do with livestock mRNA vaccines introduced in the next session.

FARM BUREAU POLICY
DISEASE CONTROL (2022). We favor the enactment and enforcement of laws that will assure protection of the livestock industry against importation of disease from any source. We believe the Nebraska Department of Agriculture should have timely access and adequate resources to address emergency disease outbreaks. We urge the Nebraska director of agriculture to work to develop a species-specific program so that a disease outbreak can be contained.

QUESTIONS
1. Should the NEFB take a stance on mRNA vaccines supporting either the limiting, expansion, or research of their use?
2. Should veterinary care, including approval of vaccines for livestock, be based on sound science practices and approval of the Food and Drug Administration?
3. Is the policy we have sufficient to address the issue of mRNA vaccines specifically, keeping in mind the volatile nature of the subject matter?

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

ISSUE
The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasing rapidly in all areas of our economy and society in the United States and around the globe. However, the full integration of this technology is still a ways away, and its application in agriculture and food production and processing is still in the early stages. How agriculture uses this new technology as well as the desire of some in Washington, D.C., to set up regulatory controls over it are all policy questions that must be answered.

BACKGROUND
By the end of this decade, it is projected that AI will increase global economic growth by $1.3 trillion. While its uses in the medical, financial, and general business sectors are more apparent, the use of AI in agriculture is less obvious. Today, approximately 200 AI-based agricultural startup companies are located in the United States. From autonomous farm machinery and autonomous sprayers to drones that collect potential crop health, pest, and yield data, agriculture is in the beginning stages of substantial growth in the use of AI by farmers and ranchers. At the same time, as growth of new AI technologies continues to accelerate, questions surrounding data access and security, labor, and potential regulatory controls are all being considered. In 2022, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce formed the Commission on AI Competitiveness, Inclusion, and Innovation. The commission ultimately concluded that some level of federal regulation of AI should exist because leaving the technology completely unregulated could harm the economy, diminish individual rights, and constrain the development and introduction of beneficial technologies. As other countries, including China, continue to quickly push forward toward more AI development and integration, the commission concluded that the United States must take the lead to promote responsible AI deployment around the globe.

From an agricultural standpoint, just one plant or one animal can provide millions and millions of individual data points on health, weather, nutrition, waste, etc. The data in turn can be used to help farmers and ranchers make improvements in every aspect of production, leading to better overall efficiency including decreased use of water and pest control products. Fast-forward to harvest when the integration of better AI technology in combines could result in automatic machine adjustments rather than manual ones. Animal health and nutrition determinations could be analyzed to help livestock producers ensure cattle, hogs, and poultry are all healthy and growing and help producers make better production decisions.

FARM BUREAU POLICY
AFBF Policy #102 The Constitution, Pg. 2 (We Oppose) “The use of any Artificial Intelligence to impact or compromise constitutionally protected individual rights and liberties or those that compromise national or industrial security and their autonomy.”

QUESTIONS
1. What is the federal government’s role in regulating AI?
2. Should specific rules/regulations be developed related to AI use in agriculture?
3. Should data management/ownership rules/regulations be developed related to AI?

LIVESTOCK mRNA VACCINES

ISSUE
Recently, Nebraska Farm Bureau (NEFB) members have expressed concern over some of the questions included in several United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) surveys, including the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture, which is taken every five years. Some of the questions related to specific business and income information as well as employee data were the top topics of concern. While USDA NASS surveys have a long track record of use by government agencies, lawmakers, businesses, as well as farmers and ranchers, should NEFB actively work to reform what information USDA NASS requests?

BACKGROUND
For more than 150 years, USDA NASS has been the official source of primary comprehensive and current data on our nation’s farms and ranches. Each year, USDA NASS conducts hundreds of weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual surveys to help provide information to decision-makers, businesses, and government agencies. For farmers and ranchers, USDA NASS’ goal is to help make better business decisions through the use of data, including risk management, cash rent negotiations, marketing decisions, etc.

Every five years, USDA NASS conducts the Census of Agriculture. The large, comprehensive survey is updated with new data topics to reflect current trends and changes to U.S. agriculture. For 2022, new questions were added regarding the use of precision agriculture, hemp production, hair sheep production, and internet access. Following the release of the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture, NEFB started receiving phone calls from members concerned with the level of personal and business questions included in the census. Detailed financial questions and employee data were just a few of the topics that members expressed unease about answering.

FARM BUREAU POLICY
American Farm Bureau Policy #555 Agricultural Reports Pages 170-171

QUESTIONS
1. Should reforms be made either at USDA or through Congress to reform the questions being asked in the USDA NASS Census of Agriculture?
2. Should reforms be made to other reports/surveys being conducted by USDA NASS?
3. Is data privacy a concern with USDA NASS reports/surveys?
Husker Harvest Days 2023: A Showcase of Agricultural Excellence and Innovation

Explore how Nebraska Farm Bureau helped deliver property tax relief

The 2023 Husker Harvest Days has a lot to offer farmers and ranchers as it gears up to open its gates Sept. 12 - 14 in Grand Island. Organizations like Nebraska Farm Bureau use this event to reach out to their members and provide them with an update on legislative wins. One major win is property tax relief. Nebraska Farm Bureau is working hard to reduce your tax burden. Due to Farm Bureau's advocacy efforts, farmers and ranchers could pay 30% less in property and income taxes! Farm Bureau helped pass legislation to provide direct property tax relief, reduce income tax rates, and increase state funding for K-12 schools and community colleges. These efforts have paved a path to reduce farmers' and ranchers' property and income tax burdens by roughly 30% each year through 2030. That's historic relief for hard working Nebraskans! Stop by the Nebraska Farm Bureau building at Lot 48 to learn more or go to www.nefb.org. If you are a Farm Bureau member, you will receive a postcard in the mail. Just bring it in and sign up for great prizes like a 2023 Kodiak 450 ATV from Yamaha. Nebraska Farm Bureau members can pick their FREE leather work gloves (one pair per membership), and if you sign up to be a Farm Bureau member you can receive a FREE lunch at Pork Place! Of course, don't forget to stop and get a FREE snow cone at the building.

Husker Harvest Days is located west of Grand Island, 1 1/2 miles north and 2 miles west of Alda, in central Nebraska on Husker Highway. Once again, Nebraska Farm Bureau members can buy one ticket and get one free! Use the code NEFB23 at www.nefb.org/hhd to get the online offer! Remember, ages 12 and under are free. 

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Ford (Lot 310)
Nebraska Farm Bureau members receive $500 Bonus Cash* toward the purchase or lease of new Ford Maverick, Ranger, F-150 and Super Duty® trucks. You must be a paid Nebraska Farm Bureau member for 30 days prior to purchase. Visit https://www.fordrecognizesu.com/or contact your local Ford dealer for more information.

Nebraska Farm Bureau (Lot 48 on Main Street)
Nebraska Farm Bureau works every day to make a difference in the lives of our members. Due to Farm Bureau’s advocacy efforts, you could pay 30% less in property and income taxes! Through our member benefit partnerships, Farm Bureau members saved $2,915 annually on goods and services, and Farm Bureau members received more than $85,000 in scholarships to further their educational pursuits. At Husker Harvest Days, you can register to win a Case IH generator and pedal tractor, a John Deere generator and pedal tractor, Milwaukee power tools from Grainger and much more. Once again, Nebraska Farm Bureau members can buy one ticket and get one free! Go to www.nefb.org/hhd and use code NEFFBOGO to get the online offer. Farm Bureau members can show their membership card at the NEFB building and receive a free pair of leather work gloves (while supplies last), and of course we will have FREE snow cones and bottled water. Farm Bureau Financial Services agents will also be available to discuss how they can help protect your rural livelihood. Visit us at Husker Harvest Days and learn how being a Farm Bureau member can make a difference in your life.

Grasshopper (Lot 616)
Nebraska Farm Bureau members save 12% off MSRP on the purchase of new mowers, accessories and implements. There is no waiting period. Ask your Grasshopper dealer or visit nefb.org/benefits for more information.

Case IH (Lot 1154)
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Send your tree photos to nard@nrnd.net.org.

Stop in and visit with your local Natural Resources District (NRD) to learn more about conservation programs available for agricultural producers. The NRD Hub at Husker Harvest Days is your one-stop shop to visit with multiple conservation agencies. We will have FREE trees and native prairie seed and FREE water testing for domestic wells - bring a water sample!

NRD Hub (Blue Building) | Lot 39E
BANKS BACK NEBRASKA

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