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1-1-2008

Review of *Roots of Change: Nebraska's New Agriculture*. By Mary Ridder.

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Roots of Change: Nebraska's New Agriculture. By Mary Ridder. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007. 139 pp. Illustrations, resource information. $24.95 paper.

Economies of scale that correspond to increasingly larger farms are now the norm for agriculture in Nebraska, a phenomenon contributing to the decrease in the number of farms and the corresponding decline of rural communities. Times are changing, however, and a new type of agriculture involving concepts of sustainability, value added processing, and direct marketing is beginning to show promise in the otherwise bleak world of today's agriculture.

Roots of Change provides compelling evidence of the opportunities this new agriculture offers and its effects on communities. Twenty-seven examples are cited outlining successful— and unsuccessful—cooperative ventures developed to add value to the agricultural economy thereby, helping farm families and the communities they live in. Where successful, farm families no longer compete with each other for declining land resources and are actually working together for the benefit of themselves and their communities.

These agroenterprises range from small community-oriented ventures to large farmer cooperatives. The St. James Market Place is a good example. Five northeastern Nebraska farm wives started looking for a way to market a variety of locally developed products directly. With the assistance of several agencies, they formed a cooperative and purchased an abandoned school where they developed a successful market place. Today, St. James Market is the site of a farmer's market, craft room, tea room, and a display of historical information and literature.

Other examples of successful ventures cited include a natural meats cooperative known as North Star Neighbors, and the Nebraska Sandhills Yellow Perch Cooperative, which sells fish raised in Sandhills lakes. Unsuccessful ventures include a community grocery store in Lewellen, Nebraska. All the examples offer readers a grasp of what does and doesn't work and why.

One of the benefits of the book is its description of the many agencies—the Nebraska Cooperative Development Center premier among them—that provide technical and financial assistance to entrepreneurs. Many an enterprise would have failed without it.

For anyone interested in learning about value-added agriculture in Nebraska, reading *Roots of Change* should be a mandatory first step. **James M. Peterson**, *University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension Educator, Washington County.*

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