

2006

## Agriculture Builders of Nebraska, Inc. Annual Meeting

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**Agriculture Builders of Nebraska, Inc. Annual Meeting  
Noon Comments  
Wednesday, January 11, 2006  
John C. Owens  
NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor**

Those of us in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at your land-grant university view ourselves as "partners" with Nebraska. Taking the resources of this great university to the citizens of our state is a mission we take very, very seriously. We work hard to apply the university's resources in a diverse number of ways to benefit Nebraska. Today it is my very great pleasure to have this opportunity to provide a brief report to you, our partners, on some of the ways we are returning your investment in us to benefit our state.

We in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources have the privilege – and the responsibility – of being Nebraska's food-and-water and sustainable-environment researchers and educators. Communities, youth, and families are key parts of our research and our educational focus. What could be more

important than that set of responsibilities?

In the Institute we define agriculture as “everything” from the farm gate to the restaurant plate. That ranges from production agriculture to food safety to new product development. It encompasses resource management and water. Nutraceuticals. Pharmaceuticals. Redox biology. Biochemistry and genomics, and some of the most heavy-duty, mind-blowing science anyone could ever dream about. It covers rural development, community issues, families, youth development, nutrition, business, animal care, and more. So very much more.

For students with scientific and social interests, “what” could be better than benefitting people, preserving and helping manage the precious resources of water and soil, developing new products, revitalizing rural communities, strengthening families, and perhaps, through their own work, <sup>EVEN</sup> diminishing the devastating impacts of World Hunger?

We are proud of “what” we bring our state. Proud of what we have to offer. For instance:

\*Our scientists' pioneering research demonstrating the feasibility, benefits, and economic-advantages of feeding ethanol byproducts wet instead of drying them first and then shipping them to dry feed markets has provided an economic benefit to Nebraska worth about \$400 million between 1992 and 2004.

\*Extensive muscle profiling research conducted by our scientists laid the groundwork for the beef industry to develop exciting new products, such as the popular Nebraska developed flat iron steak, that have increased demand and added \$50 to \$70 in value per head in the past seven years.

More than 26 million cattle are fed and marketed in the United States each year. That represents \$1.3 *billion* to \$1.8 *billion* in added value annually. More than 20,000 restaurants “nationwide” now offer these new beef cuts on their menus, good “both” for the industry and for consumers. Industry experts expected 10 million pounds of flat iron steaks to be sold in 2005.

Beef is very big business in Nebraska. We in the Institute

are tending to Nebraska's business through our work – work that matters in this state, our country, and, indeed, our world.

\*Listening sessions we've held the past several years throughout Nebraska tell us water, both its quantity and quality, is a top Nebraska concern. Here in our state we sit over the majority of the largest underground aquifer in the world. Water is a finite resource, and water concerns are in the news virtually every day. Drought is very real – and highly devastating – in so many parts of our world. Over 80 faculty throughout the University of Nebraska-Lincoln work on water issues, many of them in the Institute. We consider Nebraska's land-grant university uniquely poised to be the national leader in water research and education, and we are working hard toward that goal, because we recognize the importance of water for Nebraska and beyond.

An example of our work to address water concerns is seen in our Republican River Basin Irrigation Management Project in

water-short southwest Nebraska. There, UNL Extension teaches research-based strategies for conserving water. In our 2005 impact reports, program participants estimated knowledge gained through this program is worth an average of about \$16,500 per operation, [REDACTED].

\*Extension education also is helping grow jobs throughout our state as extension's EDGE program. EDGE stands for Enhancing, Developing, and Growing Entrepreneurs and has, since 1993, helped nearly 2,000 Nebraskans transform their ideas into viable business opportunities, creating full- and part-time jobs. We all know that even a few new jobs have tremendous value in small communities. A recent survey of EDGE participants showed that since participating in EDGE, 33 percent of them added new employees. More than 70 percent increased their business volume.

\*Nebraska leads the nation for the highest involvement percentage of youth enrolled in 4-H programs – approximately 33 percent of Nebraska’s eligible youth. Nebraska 4-H offers more than 150 educational projects that attract 4-H’ers of diverse backgrounds, including urban, rural, non-English speaking and ages 5-19. Nebraska 4-H reaches approximately 118,000 youth and has over 16,000 youth and adult volunteers. This translates to about one-third of Nebraska’s youth who are age-eligible to participate. Over 15 percent of those reached are ethnic minorities. Over half – 53 percent – are from towns over 10,000.

Projects are diverse, offering 4-Hers the opportunities to develop skills and foster interests in such areas as citizenship and civic education, plants and animals, healthy lifestyles, science and technology, and more. 4-H currently is developing a new entrepreneurship curriculum to foster the business skills needed for entrepreneurship in interested Nebraska youth. We <sup>know</sup> know this will be of great value both to our young people and to Nebraska’s economic development. Currently, teenagers with an interest in

business can learn business and life skills through 4-H's Business Sense curriculum, which includes how to write a business plan, determine customer needs, relate to customers, determine overhead costs, and set prices. 4-H'ers have used what they learn to turn interests, hobbies, or skills into part-time businesses. One teen used her new skills to start a business selling "antique tractors" over the Internet. In one year, she sold "eight tractors" and made from \$500 to \$1,000 per tractor.

\*Food processing is Nebraska's largest manufacturing segment. Training and supporting prospective food processing entrepreneurs is "vitally important" to Nebraska economic development statewide. Our Food Processing Center's *From Recipe to Reality* seminars train and support new entrepreneurs in launching new food-related businesses, teaching participants "key aspects" of starting a food business. Those who complete the seminar can continue their training in the *From Product to Profit* phase of the program, which offers individual consultations with



university food scientists and business consultants. In the past decade, more than 1,300 entrepreneurs have taken one or both seminars. Participants have started more than 100 food companies after completing both phases of the program; more than 70 percent of these companies remain in business.

Dr. Rolando Flores - MARCH 1 -  
HEAD + DIRECTOR - ENGINEER - GREAT PERSONALITY

\*The College of Education and Human Sciences and the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources have worked together to create a new major in Hospitality, Restaurant and Tourism Management, which will launch next fall through the Department of Nutrition and Health Sciences. The Nebraska Hotel/Motel Association approached us about such a major to help meet an identified need of their members and our state. The new major includes courses from both colleges and will lead to many new career opportunities for Nebraska students. We are particularly excited that one of the options for this new major at Nebraska is agro-tourism and ecotourism. We think this emphasis will be one of the program's distinguishing features.

\*Livestock odor is an increasingly contentious and emotional issue in some communities. Our scientists are working on a research-based computer tool to predict how often annoying odors will exist in areas surrounding a livestock operation. Called the Nebraska Odor Footprint Tool, the modeling-software illustrates how far a livestock-operation needs to be from-neighbors in different-directions to avoid odor-related conflicts. This should help communities, planners, and producers make better-informed decisions about where to locate livestock operations to reduce conflicts and improve environmental quality.

\*With growing interest in the fate of antibiotics in the environment, Institute research is providing information about what happens to antibiotic residues in manure when it's applied to irrigated cropland. While we have much to learn, current findings lay the scientific foundation for further research to better understand potential health and environmental implications.

\*Sediment erosion from "new construction sites" in the Omaha area can be a "major-pollutant" in metropolitan lakes, streams, and the Missouri River. Extension seminars in the last several years have helped architects, engineers, contractors, and others better understand ways to reduce soil erosion and pollution, and to comply " with federal regulations. An average of 94 percent of building industry participants said they would apply " what they learned " at extension's seminar to better control urban erosion.

These are just " a few examples " of the many diverse ways the Institute is daily working to return Nebraska's faith and investment in it. I thank you for your time, for the leadership and dedication you show for our state, for your support and understanding of " the importance " of the University of Nebraska in moving our state forward, and for your vision and thoughtful consideration for Nebraska's future. Thank you.