

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS AG HORIZONS



MESSAGE FROM DEPT. HEAD

Another fall semester is well underway, and it’s inspiring to see the energy and collaboration across our department. Students, faculty, and staff have worked together to make this semester a success, and we’re proud of the progress and achievements that continue to define Agricultural Economics at UNL.

This issue highlights some incredible work and milestones. The Center for Agricultural Profitability (CAP) received the prestigious Omtvedt Innovation Award, recognizing its impact through decision tools, webinars, and research that support Nebraska producers. We also celebrate Dr. Daniela Mattos, who earned the Omtvedt Innovation Award for Teaching for her outstanding work connecting students with Nebraska communities through service-learning projects. These honors reflect the dedication and creativity of our faculty in advancing education and outreach.

We also spotlight the Nebraska Cooperative Development Center’s efforts during the International Year of Cooperatives, showcasing how communities across the state are building resilience through cooperative models—from grocery stores to childcare and homecare initiatives.

Our department continues to grow with new faces and expertise. We’re excited to welcome Dr. Felipe Grimaldi Avileis, Sourav Barua, and Ishani Lal, who bring fresh perspectives in agricultural finance, applied analysis, and profitability research. You’ll also find inspiring stories in our faculty, staff, and student spotlights, including research on sustainable food choices and reflections on careers dedicated to agricultural economics.

HIGHLIGHT

MESSAGE FROM
DEPT. HEAD

CAP REPORT

BUY FRESH BUY
LOCAL

AWARDS &
RECOGNITIONS

FACULTY/
STAFF/
STUDENT/
SPOTLIGHT

WHAT’S NEW &
EVENTS

CONTACT

CONTINUED.....

MESSAGE FROM DEPT. HEAD

Please take time to explore the activities and stories featured in this newsletter. We also encourage you to share your career and family developments so we can keep your fellow alumni informed and connected. Your updates help strengthen our community and inspire the next generation.

These accomplishments are possible because of the dedication of our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and supporters. Your engagement and generosity help us provide exceptional learning experiences and outreach programs. Looking ahead, the university will host the 2026 Glow Big Red event on February 11–12. Be on the lookout for more information about how you can support students in the Department of Agricultural Economics at UNL during this exciting campaign or give today to support students at: Ag Economics Scholarship Fund:

<https://nufoundation.org/fund/01075800/> .



As we look ahead to winter and beyond, let's continue to build on this momentum—supporting Nebraska agriculture, advancing research, and preparing the next generation of leaders. Thank you for being part of this journey.

Wishing you a productive semester and a joyful holiday season!

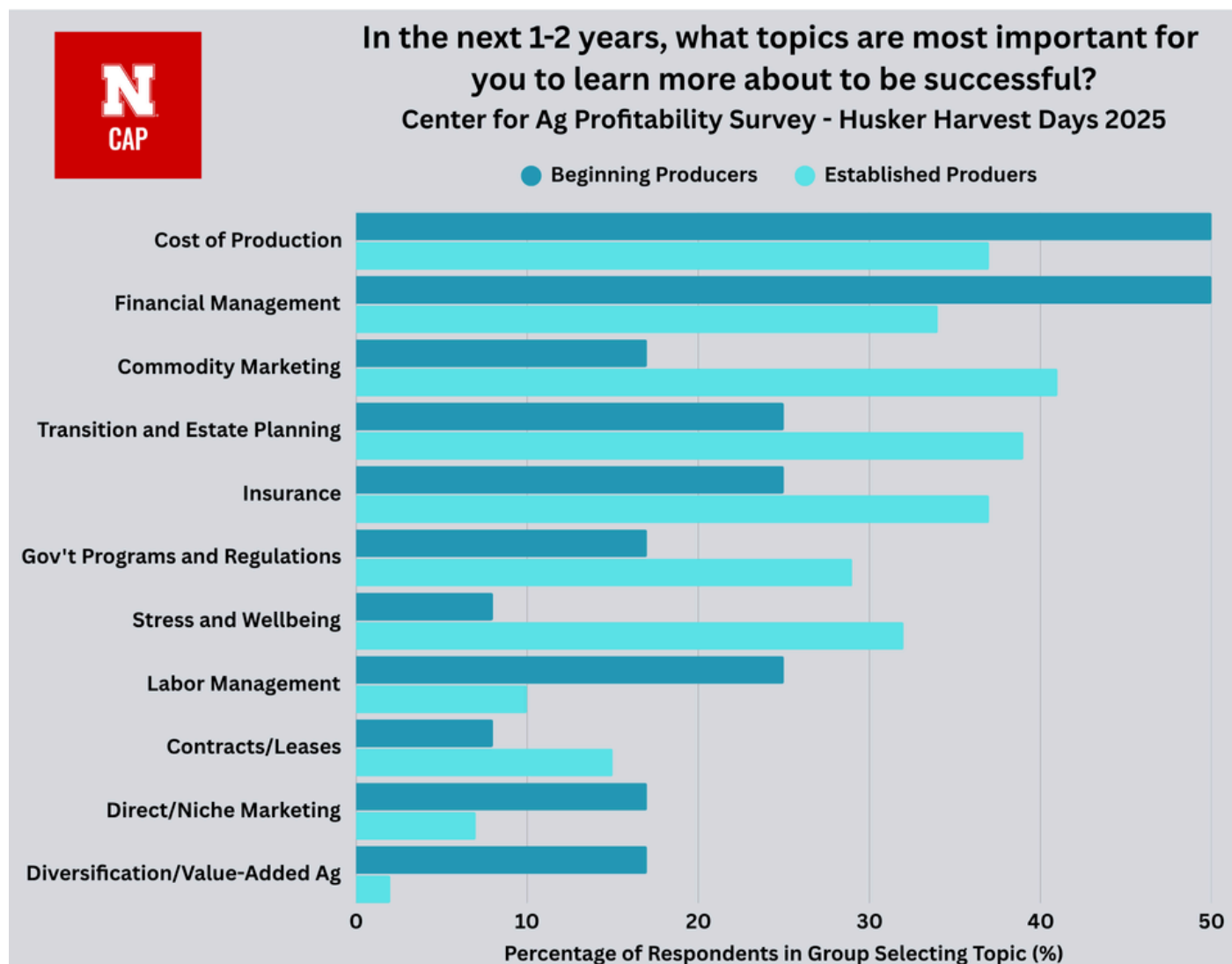
Dr. Kate Brooks
Department Head, Agricultural Economics
kbrooks4@unl.edu

CENTER FOR AGRICULTURAL PROFITABILITY (CAP) REPORT

Producer priorities highlight CAP's impact

At Husker Harvest Days this fall, the Center for Agricultural Profitability (CAP) gained valuable insights from beginning and experienced producers about the topics on their minds.

Established producers identified commodity marketing, transition and estate planning, and cost of production as leading educational needs, reflecting the ongoing challenges of volatile markets and the need to make transition decisions that will secure the future of their operations. Beginning producers shared many of the same concerns but placed greater emphasis on financial management. Half said this was a critical need, along with understanding production costs and risk management tools such as insurance.



CAP REPORT - CONTINUED

CAP honored with Omtvedt Innovation Award

The Center for Agricultural Profitability received the 2025 Omtvedt Innovation Award in the team category from the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the IANR Distinguished Faculty Celebration on September 25.

Tiffany Heng-Moss, Interim NU Vice President and Interim IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor, recognized CAP's impact through webinars, podcasts, newsletters, and decision tools like the Agricultural Budget Calculator. She highlighted popular extension publications like the Nebraska Farm Real Estate Report and farm income forecasts, CAP's support since 2021 of 86 funded projects (totaling \$22.6 million) and 24 peer-reviewed journal articles, as well as the development of an agricultural economics curriculum for high schools, piloted by more than 20 Nebraska teachers in 2025.

"We're grateful for this honor that recognizes the work of our entire team and the partnerships that allow us to serve Nebraska agriculture in meaningful ways," said Jay Parsons, director of CAP. "We're excited to build on this momentum and continue developing resources that help producers, educators, and future generations make sound decisions."



CAP team receiving their award

Working Together For Tomorrow's Future



The United Nations has declared 2025 the International Year of Cooperatives, highlighting the vital role cooperatives play in economic development and community resilience. Since 1999, the UNL Nebraska Cooperative Development Center, housed at the Department of Agricultural Economics, has supported over 300 projects, helping form cooperative businesses that strengthen local economies and provide essential services.

NCDC has guided communities and groups in their cooperative exploration through technical assistance, education, training, and collaboration. The primary objective has been and is to improve the economic condition of rural areas through cooperative business development. NCDC is committed to working with communities and organizations from idea formation to implementation.

Nebraska has a history of cooperatives. The most common types are agricultural marketing and supply cooperatives. These cooperatives have been successful at meeting the needs of their members in the state. Meeting the needs of its members is a key tenant of the cooperative model. NCDC has been working to increase awareness of how the cooperative model can benefit other industries.



Farm Republican River Valley Home Care Cooperative founding worker-owners Cathy Bowers and Linda Grafton attending the 9th Annual National Home Care Cooperative Conference in Dulles, Virginia (courtesy photo).



CONTINUED.....



Community supported grocery stores such as cooperatives are one example of communities working together for a common need. President Gold lifted up NCDC in his 2025 State of the University address as an example of excellence. He shared, "...Lynch, Nebraska—a town of fewer than 200 residents that had lost its only grocery store. With critical guidance from UNL's Nebraska Cooperative Development Center ... the community came together to create the Valley Foods Cooperative. Less than three years after opening, the store has surpassed \$1 million in sales. But its impact is greater than dollars. The cooperative has become a vital source of affordable groceries, a hub of community connection, a driver of local economic activity and a powerful reminder of the power of community."

NCDC strives to work with communities and groups to achieve their common goals. This is accomplished through teaching, research, engagement and partnerships. Other current examples include:

- Four cooperative grocery stores (including Lynch) opened in Nebraska in the last four years:

Farm to Family Cooperative in Hay Springs; [MG1] Post 60 Market in Emerson; Valley Foods Cooperative in Lynch and Centennial Market Cooperative in Utica. In addition, five community-supported stores have opened; and, we are currently working with four stores in cooperative exploration.

- In 2023, Norfolk formed the first employer assisted cooperative, Norfolk Area Childcare Collaborative. This nonprofit operating as a cooperative in Nebraska is meeting the needs of the members and the community to create a sustainable business model.

- Republican River Valley Home Care Cooperative incorporated in 2025. This first homecare worker cooperative showcases a viable option for elderly rural Nebraska citizens to remain in their homes and their communities. In addition, it provides job opportunities for caregivers.

- The Omaha tribe is introducing indigenous cooperative models in their community. This includes creating and identifying a pathway to create cooperative businesses.



Farm to Family Cooperative in Hay Springs, Nebraska grand opening (courtesy photo).

CONTINUED.....



Through the Buy Fresh Buy Local Nebraska program, NCDC has worked to connect Nebraska's farmers and ranchers to consumers. In 2026, increased efforts will be made to explore how cooperative models can achieve the goals of farmers and ranchers to achieve common goals.

In addition, NCDC is working with the Center for Rural Affairs, Nebraska Grocery Industry Association and the Rural Prosperity Nebraska team to explore ways stores can work together to offer affordable foods in their community and to enhance producers' capacity to source local foods.

As we look to the future, NCDC will continue to work together with communities and organizations, local businesses and farmers to improve the economic condition of rural areas through cooperative development.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

DANIELA MATTOS RECEIVES OMTVEDT TEACHING AWARD

Dr. Daniela Manhani Mattos, an assistant professor of practice in agricultural economics, was the recipient of the Omtvedt Innovation Award for Teaching. A collaboration between Mattos and Rural Prosperity Nebraska has connected students in her Rural Community Economics course (AECN 376) with communities throughout Nebraska for a semester-long service-learning experience. The students meet with local leaders to help by delivering actionable plans to address community concerns such as housing, workforce development, and business retention. The course was redesigned by Mattos in 2021, now bridging theory and practice to demonstrate how economics can serve rural vitality. It also helps students develop leadership, communication, and systems-thinking skills that they can share along with portfolio-ready work in job interviews.

Photos below show Daniela receiving her award.



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT - DR. LILYAN FULGINITI

Tell us A Little About Yourself?

I grew up in the north of Argentina, close to Paraguay and Brazil, where I went to school and to college obtaining a degree in Economics. My first job was in a bank, Banco del Chaco, lending to agricultural organizations, in particular cooperatives. I came to the US with a Rotary scholarship to study for one year at the University of Pennsylvania. As I was ready to head back to Argentina, they told me that with one more semester I would obtain a master's degree in Economics, so I stayed and completed this degree. I later applied for a scholarship to continue my studies from the Organization of American States (OAS) who covered 2 years of the PhD program and directed me to study at North Carolina State University (NCSU). A third year of my studies was covered by a scholarship from the American Association of University Women. At NCSU, I taught Introduction to Statistics Applied to Management, Accounting, and Economic Problems. After graduation I worked at the World Bank on a research project that focused on the political economy of agricultural pricing policies in 18 developing countries, project directed by Dr. Anne Krueger then World Bank chief economist. In 1989 I accepted an assistant professor position with a focus on international trade and development at the Department of Economics at Iowa State University, where I obtained tenure and was promoted to associate professor. In 1996, I moved to the University of Nebraska, where I joined my husband Dr. Richard Perrin. I have one son Nickolas who grew up in Lincoln and is an orthopedic surgeon in Los Angeles, a grandson Enzo (2 years old) and a granddaughter Clio (9 months old).



What is your position at UNL? I am the Judith and Roy Frederick Professor of Agricultural Economics.

What drew you to this career path and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln? While growing up I assisted my father, a surgeon, in a public hospital. I then realized that the problem in poor regions was not the lack of medical attention but the lack of income as people could not afford the most basic meds. This initially drove me to Economics. While in the US, I learned the difference between a private university and a land grant university. It is the mission of land grant universities that is consistent with my values and drove me to ISU and to UNL.

What is the most memorable moment in your career? There is no one memorable moment but a few. The idea of pursuing a degree in the US was a dream, but somehow I was able to do it. The idea of teaching in a US university was also a dream, but somehow I was able to do it. The idea of devoting a big part of my work to research in agricultural economics, an important area in development, international trade and policy, was a dream and I was able to do it. These are all memorable to me.

CONTINUED...

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT - DR. LILYAN FULGINITI

Is there a personal highlight or achievement you would like to share? I am a woman economist during a time in the profession when this was not all that common. I did not think or realize that this was the case until much later, when looking back at my career. I think that being able to balance profession and motherhood is a personal highlight/achievement I feel the most proud of.

What is your greatest achievement? Rather than list a number of awards I received through time, I think my greatest achievement has been the opportunity to pass whatever knowledge I have to others. It is the success of my students as professionals that is my greatest achievement.

What is something that most people don't know about you? People do not know how passionate I am about equal opportunities for all.

What do you enjoy outside of work? I enjoy time with my family. I enjoy reading history. I enjoy traveling. I enjoy cooking.

What's your advice to the next generation? It is not networking but conviction and hard work that will make your dreams a reality. Be kind to others and follow your heart.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT - JEANINE ANDERSON

Tell us a little about yourself. I have been married for 27 years to my husband Spencer. We have 4 adult children (2 boys and 2 girls), one daughter-in-law, and 2 grandsons and 1 granddaughter. I grew up on a dairy farm in Nebraska and was involved in 4-H & FFA all my life. I worked at the Nebraska State Fair in the Dairy Cattle department in various roles for 30 years. We love to spend time and travel with our kids and grandkids. The greatest thing is being on FaceTime and seeing your grandchild's eyes light up when they see you!

What is your position at UNL? Office Associate

What drew you to this career path and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln? This is my 2nd time at UNL. I worked at the Southeast Research & Extension Center in Mussehl Hall for 5 years before resigning to get married and move to Columbus. I returned to UNL as a part-timer and appreciated the flexibility. I'm full-time now and travel 60 miles, one way, to get to work when I'm on campus, so I truly appreciate the opportunity to work remotely.

What is the most memorable moment in your career? While at UNL the first time, my Department Head promoted me to Project Assistant. I traveled to counties in the southeast part of Nebraska, working with extension staff to create their first web pages by typing in HTML code. I appreciate his confidence in my abilities and can't believe where the World Wide Web has gone. I am grateful for my knowledge of HTML code!



What is your greatest achievement? Being able to be a stay-at-home Mom for over 10 years. I will always cherish the time spent with my kids while they were little and I'm thankful to Spencer for supporting me!

What is something that most people don't know about you? When I was a teen, I was the back-up person to climb the Harvestore silos during harvest to open and close the doors at the top if my Dad was busy. I loved being 90 feet off the ground and able to see for miles. It was also a very quiet spot as one of eight children!

What do you enjoy outside of work? Spending time in the peace and quiet of our acreage with Spencer and our family. I also enjoy baking homemade cinnamon rolls and kolaches and reading.

What's your advice to next generation? Enjoy your time and slow down. Life goes way too fast.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT - SUSHIL SAPKOTA

What program are you in, and what are you studying?

I am a PhD Student in the Department of Agricultural Economics.

Can you tell us about your research focus or current project?

My research focuses on behavioral, health, and environmental economics—particularly how tools like augmented reality and AI influence decision-making in areas such as food choices. One of my main projects, the Pulse Project, explores ways to encourage greater consumption of pulses (beans, lentils, chickpeas, etc.) to promote nutrition and sustainability.

What inspired you to pursue this area of study and how do you hope your work will make an impact?

I'm fascinated by how economics helps explain human decision-making—why we make the choices we do around food, health, and the environment. I hope my work informs policies that support healthier and more sustainable lifestyles.

What's been the most rewarding part of your graduate school journey so far and do you have any advice for your peers?

The most rewarding part of grad school has been conducting independent research and collaborating with faculty and peers. Balancing coursework, research, and personal life is challenging, but I manage it through good time management and leaning on my support network. My advice to new grad students: stay curious, manage your time, and don't hesitate to ask for help.



Professional Development

After graduation, I hope to work in academia or research organizations focused on real-world challenges. Mentors, coursework, and collaboration with peers have shaped my path. I'm building skills in data analysis, critical thinking, writing, communication, and leadership.

How has being part of this department/university shaped your experience? This department has given me a strong sense of community and purpose.

What does being in this program mean to you personally or professionally? This department has provided me with a supportive community and space to grow. Being part of this program means contributing to meaningful research and building lasting professional relationships.

NEW TO THE DEPARTMENT



Please join us in welcoming Dr. Felipe Grimaldi Avileis to our department! Felipe joined us as Asst. Professor of Agricultural Banking and Finance.

Felipe earned his Ph.D. in Agricultural and Resource Economics from the University of California, Davis, in 2025. His research explores the intersection of agricultural markets, finance, and global trade—examining how policies and market shocks shape commodity market integration, risk management, and land use.

By analyzing the economic mechanisms behind these changes, Felipe provides valuable insights into their broader impact on the agricultural sector and international trade.

We're excited to have Felipe on board and look forward to the expertise he brings to our community!



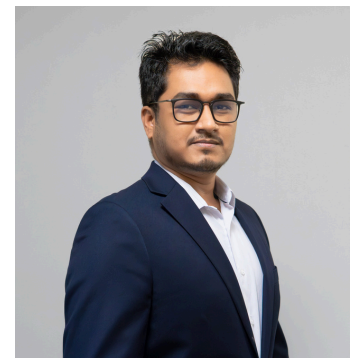
Ishani Lal, who recently joined the Department of Agricultural Economics as an Economic Analyst with the Center for Agricultural Profitability (CAP). In her new role, Ishani works closely with the UNL Testing Ag Performance Solutions (TAPS) program, evaluating how farm-level decisions in the competitions influence profitability, resource use, and risk. Her work connects research in irrigation, soil moisture management, nutrient management, and marketing strategies with real-world producer decisions—helping farmers in Nebraska and beyond make more informed and profitable choices.

Ishani earned dual M.S. degrees in Agricultural Economics and Agronomy from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln in May 2024. She also brings valuable industry experience from her time with Valmont Industries and Sentinel Ag. Please join us in welcoming Ishani to the department and the CAP team!

We're excited to welcome Sourav Barua to the Department of Agricultural Economics at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln! Sourav joins us as an Agricultural Economic Analyst, bringing strong expertise in applied analysis for Nebraska agriculture—from cost-benefit modeling and farm budgeting to economic impact assessments.

He applies tools such as Python, GIS/remote sensing, and datasets including USDA/NASS and IMPLAN to support producers, stakeholders, and policymakers in making data-driven decisions. Before joining UNL, Sourav served as an ORISE intern at Oak Ridge National Laboratory and earned his M.S. in Agricultural & Resource Economics from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Please join us in extending a warm Nebraska welcome to Sourav.



RECENT EVENTS



Nebraska Bankers Association Dinner Showcases Student Internship Experiences

Students recently attended the annual Nebraska Bankers Association Dinner, where they had the opportunity to share their experiences interning with local and rural banks across the state.

Throughout the evening, students reflected on what they learned from working in community banking—gaining hands-on experience, developing professional skills, and seeing firsthand the vital role banks play in supporting Nebraska's communities.

The event highlighted the value of partnerships between educational institutions and the banking industry in preparing the next generation of financial professionals. We extend our sincere thanks to the Nebraska Bankers Association and participating banks for their continued support of student learning and career development.

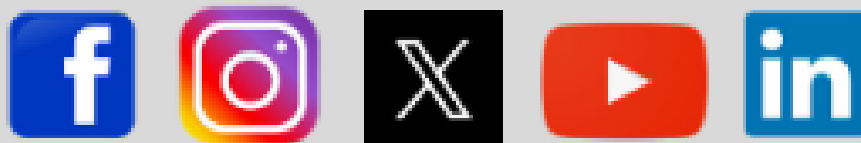
CONTACT INFORMATION

SHEILA AIKANATHAN JOHNSON (EDITOR)
COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN
SHEILA.JOHNSON@UNL.EDU

JEANINE ANDERSON (CO-EDITOR)
OFFICE ASSOCIATE
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN
JANDERSON190@UNL.EDU

SOCIAL MEDIA

CONNECT WITH US:



Subscribe to AgHorizons to stay connected:
agecon@unl.edu