

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS AG HORIZONS

MESSAGE FROM DEPT. HEAD

Dear Friends, Alumni, and Partners,

Welcome to the Spring/Summer 2026 edition of AgHorizons.

As I reflect on the past year, I am filled with gratitude for the people who make the Department of Agricultural Economics such a vibrant and impactful community. Our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and partners continue to demonstrate excellence in ways that advance our mission and strengthen agriculture, rural communities, and the broader economy.

This issue highlights several accomplishments that make us especially proud. The Center for Agricultural Profitability received the Western Agricultural Economics Association Outstanding Extension Career and Project Award, recognizing the center's commitment to delivering practical, research-based education that helps producers and agribusinesses make informed decisions. We also celebrate faculty excellence through the recognition of Professor Konstantinos “Dinos” Giannakas with the Darrell W. Nelson Graduate Student Advising Excellence Award, honoring his outstanding contributions as a scholar, educator, and mentor.

One of our greatest points of pride each year is celebrating our graduates. This spring, the Department of Agricultural Economics awarded 58 bachelor's degrees in Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, two (2) M.S. degrees, and one (1) Ph.D. degrees in Agricultural Economics. As these students begin the next chapter of their careers, they carry forward the analytical skills, leadership experience, and commitment to service that are hallmarks of a Nebraska Agricultural Economics education. We are proud of the impact they will make as leaders, professionals, entrepreneurs, researchers, and decision-makers serving Nebraska, the nation, and the global agricultural economy.



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MESSAGE FROM DEPT. HEAD

We are also proud to recognize members of our extended Agricultural Economics family whose accomplishments exemplify the values of our department. This year, we honored outstanding alumni Mike Miller and Alejandro Plastina for their professional achievements and leadership in agricultural business, finance, and policy. We also recognized Nebraska Farmer with our Outstanding Service Award for its longstanding commitment to Nebraska agriculture and its partnership in sharing timely information with producers and rural communities. These honorees reflect the enduring impact of our graduates, partners, and supporters across the agricultural industry.

You will also meet members of our department community who are helping shape our future. From new faculty perspectives and dedicated staff leadership to the achievements of our students, the stories featured in this issue reflect the talent, curiosity, and commitment that define Agricultural Economics at Nebraska.

As we look ahead, we remain focused on preparing future leaders, generating impactful research, and delivering Extension programs that address real-world challenges. Agriculture continues to evolve, and so must we. Through collaboration, innovation, and service, we are committed to helping individuals, businesses, and communities navigate change and seize new opportunities.

Thank you for your continued support and connection to our department. Whether you are a graduate, industry partner, producer, collaborator, donor, or friend, you play an important role in our success. We are grateful for your engagement and look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead.

I hope you enjoy this issue of AgHorizons and stay connected with us throughout the year.

Warm regards,

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

CENTER FOR AGRICULTURAL PROFITABILITY (CAP) REPORT



Center for Agricultural Profitability Honored with Regional Award for Extension Excellence

The Center for Agricultural Profitability (CAP) at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln has been selected for the 2026 Western Agricultural Economics Association Outstanding Extension Career and Project Award for its work delivering practical, research-based economic education to farmers, ranchers, and agribusiness professionals. The center is based in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Nebraska.

The award recognizes extension programs that demonstrate the importance of their subject, overall effectiveness, sound economic analysis, strong communication, and clear evidence of positive impact, according to the Western Agricultural Economics Association.

In 2025, the center delivered 260 extension education programs that reached nearly 11,000 participants through weekly webinars and in-person workshops, while attracting over 225,000 website users to its articles and decision tools. The center's Agricultural Budget Calculator program has enrolled 1,800 users who have generated 4,000 individualized enterprise budgets since the tool launched in 2021.

The center leads statewide efforts related to farm succession and estate planning, policy education, enterprise budgeting, financial benchmarking, risk analysis, and whole-farm decision-making, ensuring economic considerations are a key part of production agriculture. CAP also developed a 12-module farm and agribusiness management curriculum for high school students, piloted by more than 20 teachers in 2025, and enhanced the farm and agribusiness management portion of the FFA Career Development Event, hosting a simulation competition for 95 teams. Since 2021, CAP's research program has supported 22 graduate students through MS and Ph.D. degrees.

In her nomination letter, Dr. Kate Brooks, head of the Department of Agricultural Economics at Nebraska, cited the center's multi-channel outreach, its grounding in applied economic analysis, and the coordination of a team spanning faculty economists, Extension educators, communications staff, and technical personnel. "CAP is a model for how interdisciplinary teams can organize effectively to deliver meaningful economic education," wrote John Westra, director of the Nebraska Panhandle Research, Extension, and Education Center, in support of the nomination.

CAP will accept the award on June 23 at the WAEA annual meeting in Flagstaff, Arizona. More information about the center's tools and programming is available at cap.unl.edu.

Congratulations Dr. Giannakas!

Congratulations to Dr. Konstantinos “Dinos” Giannakas on being selected as the recipient of the 2026 Darrell W. Nelson Graduate Student Advising Excellence Award. This prestigious recognition highlights Dinos’ exceptional commitment to graduate student mentoring, guidance, and academic excellence, as well as the lasting impact he has made on students and the university community through his dedication and leadership.

An internationally recognized applied economist, Professor Giannakas develops and employs cutting-edge economic methods to address critical issues affecting Nebraska, the United States, and the global community. His research has made significant and sustained contributions to the fields of Agricultural and Food Industrial Organization, Food Economics and Policy, and the Economics of Innovation and Product Differentiation.



Throughout his distinguished career, Professor Giannakas has examined a diverse range of complex and timely issues. His work has explored the welfare impacts and optimal design of agricultural, food, environmental, and energy policies under varying enforcement structures; the role of cooperative organizations in fostering innovation and improving agri-food system performance; the economic implications of transformative technologies such as agricultural biotechnology and food nanotechnology; the role of innovation and policy in combating global hunger; and the effects of incomplete and asymmetric information on food quality, market outcomes, governance structures, and policy design.

Among his many pioneering contributions, Professor Giannakas was among the first researchers to systematically analyze the impact of enforcement issues in the economic evaluation of output quotas, deficiency payments, decoupled payments, export subsidies, conservation programs, intellectual property rights, and food labeling policies. He also conducted groundbreaking work on the market and welfare effects of first- and second-generation genetically modified products and food nanotechnology under alternative regulatory and labeling frameworks. His research has further advanced understanding of the causes and consequences of food fraud and the effects of member heterogeneity and commitment on cooperative performance, product innovation, and process innovation.

Recognizing the importance of individual differences in shaping economic outcomes, Professor Giannakas developed a novel and empirically relevant framework for market and policy analysis that explicitly accounts for consumer and producer heterogeneity alongside factors such as imperfect competition and supply chain interdependence. Components of this framework have been published in the Oxford Handbook of Food Economics & Policy and leading academic journals, while its comprehensive treatment forms the foundation of his 2019 book, *Accounting for Agent Heterogeneity in Market and Policy Analysis*. The book has received widespread acclaim and strong endorsements from leading scholars in the field.

Continued...



Professor Giannakas' recent research addresses some of today's most pressing policy challenges, including the role of premium subsidies in crop insurance, the impact of agricultural cooperatives on technology transfer, the market and welfare effects of a nationwide sugar-sweetened beverage tax in the United States, and the economics of transitioning to a circular bioeconomy.

His scholarly impact is reflected in an extensive publication record across major academic journals, more than \$6 million in competitive research funding, and invitations to present his work at seminars, workshops, and conferences around the world. His recent articles on the transition to a circular economy and on the causes, consequences, and deterrence of food fraud received the 2025 and 2024 High Impact Publication Awards from the Agricultural Research Division at UNL, respectively. Earlier, his influential research on the economics of agricultural biotechnology was honored with the 2017 Enduring Quality Award from the Canadian Agricultural Economics Society.

As both a scholar and mentor, Professor Giannakas exemplifies excellence in research, teaching, and graduate student advising. The 2026 Darrell W. Nelson Graduate Student Advising Excellence Award is a fitting recognition of his outstanding contributions to the university, his profession, and the many students whose academic and professional lives he has helped shape.

Please join us in congratulating Dinos on this well-deserved honor.

2026 Outstanding Alumni and Service Award Winners

The Department of Agricultural Economics recognized two distinguished alumni and one longstanding agricultural institution during its annual Department Student, Alumni, and Service Recognition Banquet held March 10, 2026.

The department presented its 2026 Outstanding Alumni Awards to Mike Miller, Vice President of Trading and Risk Management for Ardent Mills, and Dr. Alejandro Plastina, Frank G. Miller Professor of Agricultural Economics and Director of the Rural and Farm Finance Policy Analysis Center (RaFF) at the University of Missouri. Nebraska Farmer magazine received the department's 2026 Outstanding Service Award.

These honors are awarded annually to recognize individuals and organizations whose contributions have advanced Nebraska agriculture and reflect the department's mission in research, teaching, and outreach related to agribusiness, agricultural production and profitability, natural resources, rural development, international trade, and industrial organization.

MIKE MILLER



Mike Miller serves as Vice President of Trading and Risk Management at Ardent Mills, where he leads enterprise-wide wheat and mill feed price risk management and oversees trading and customer risk strategies. With more than 35 years of experience in commodities trading and risk management, Miller has held leadership positions at Ardent Mills, Horizon Milling, and Cargill.

A native of Clatonia, Nebraska, Miller earned his agribusiness degree from the University of Nebraska in 1990. Throughout his career, he has remained committed to advancing the industry through service on numerous boards and advisory councils, including the National Grain and Feed Association and the JP Morgan Center for Commodities. He also shares his expertise as an adjunct professor teaching Foundations of Commodities at the University of Colorado.

2026 Outstanding Alumni and Service Award Winners

ALEJANDRO PLASTINA



Dr. Alejandro Plastina earned both his Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics and M.S. in Statistics from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, receiving multiple academic and departmental honors during his time on campus.

Today, he serves as the Frank G. Miller Professor of Agricultural Economics at the University of Missouri and Director of the Rural and Farm Finance Policy Analysis Center (RaFF). His research focuses on farm financial management, agricultural policy, conservation, and risk management. Plastina has led and collaborated on numerous USDA-supported research initiatives and has received several national honors, including the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association’s Distinguished Extension Program Award and a Farm Foundation Agricultural Economics Fellowship.

NebraskaFarmer[®]

Nebraska Farmer, founded in 1859 by future Nebraska Governor and Civil War officer Robert Furnas, is one of Nebraska’s oldest farm publications and among the nation’s longest-running agricultural reporting titles. Former Governor Samuel McKelvie guided the magazine as publisher and owner for nearly 50 years, helping shape its longstanding mission to support farm and ranch families in improving profitability, caring for natural resources, and sustaining family life on the land. Today, the magazine reaches about 25,000 Nebraska farm households in print—and many more digitally—and continues its close partnership with the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and Nebraska Extension to help producers succeed.

Faculty Spotlight - Jake Smith

Tell us A Little About Yourself?

I just finished my first year at UNL. I came to UNL from Iowa State University, where I completed my PhD in Economics and a postdoc at the Center for Agricultural and Rural Development. I moved to Lincoln about a year ago with my wife, Lauren, and our son (now 3 years old), Graham. We have been loving getting to know Lincoln and exploring all the fun family things to do here.



What is your position at UNL?

I am an Assistant Professor in the Agricultural Economics department. My position includes teaching agribusiness management and marketing classes and research on agricultural supply chains, industrial organization, and innovation.

What drew you to this career path and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln?

My bachelor's degree is in mechanical engineering, and after college I worked as a software engineer and related technical managerial roles. I had always believed in the power of innovation and technology to improve people's lives, but over time I began to realize that the economics surrounding the technology, such as how consumers and producers make decisions about adopting or creating new technologies, was just as important as the technology itself. This eventually drew me back to school to get my PhD in economics. During grad school, my interests broadened a bit to my current research areas: strategic competition in concentrated markets, supply chain resilience, as well as innovation and technology adoption.

I was drawn to UNL because my current position is a great fit for my background and my interests. In my classes, I get to share some of the real-world lessons I've learned from managing people and bringing new products to market with my agribusiness management and marketing students. I have great colleagues in the department that I've been able to learn a lot from already in my first year here, and I've felt a lot of support from the broader IANR community as well. Joining UNL has been a great career decision for me so far.

continued... Faculty Spotlight - Jake Smith

What is the most memorable moment in your career?

A memorable moment for me was a conversation with my wife when I was still working in software and tech. I was telling her about how I was really interested in the broader economic impacts of the work I was doing, and she said to me, "It sounds like you need to go get a PhD." That thought had never crossed my mind before, but it changed the course of my life and career. It turns out she was right, and I wouldn't be here today without that moment and her support.

Is there a personal highlight or achievement you would like to share?

I won the award for Outstanding Doctoral Dissertation from the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association, the main professional organization in my field. I was very honored to receive this award and the recognition of my research.

What is your greatest achievement?

Within about a 10-month period in 2022-2023 I gained two new titles: "Dad" and "Dr." Both my newborn and my dissertation kept me awake at night during that time, but being able to successfully manage both is an achievement that I'm very proud of.

What is something that most people don't know about you?

In college (undergrad at Iowa State) I was part of a group that planned and set the Guinness World Record for the largest game of knockout basketball. I can't remember the exact number now, but I think we had around 400 people playing a single game of knockout. I don't think it's still the world record though, at least for a time we were the official record holders.

What do you enjoy outside of work?

Outside of work, I enjoy quality time with my family. I especially like going to zoos, parks, museums, and things like that with the family. I also enjoy reading, especially books about American history and biographies.

What's your advice to next generation?

Your career probably won't be a linear path where each step logically follows the last one, and that's a good thing. I found the right career for me by being open to making a drastic change from my technical role into economics graduate school. Keep exploring and trying to figure out what genuinely interests you and where you can have an impact that you care about through your work.

Staff Spotlight - Michelle Garwood

Tell us A Little About Yourself?

A life-long “Sandhiller”, I grew up in the Valentine, NE area on a small dairy farm/cattle ranch. I attended UNL where I received both my B.S. and M.S. degrees in education-related fields. After getting married to my high school sweetheart and living in Lincoln a few more years, we decided to move back home in 2010 to help run the family ranches. I have three children. My oldest daughter is currently attending UNL, majoring in Ag Education. My son will be a sophomore in high school and my youngest daughter will be a third grader.

What is your position at UNL?

I am the Buy Fresh Buy Local Nebraska Coordinator, which is part of the Nebraska Cooperative Development Center.

What drew you to this career path and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln?

My career path at UNL has been evolving over time. While I attended UNL, I worked at the Nebraska State 4-H Office. After I moved back home, to Valentine, I did some teaching and some work in outdoor education, as well as a couple other odd jobs to fit my growing family life. In 2018, the 4-H position opened in our local Extension Office and I was selected. I filled that position for seven years. The Buy Fresh position caught my attention because it was a unique opportunity to work state-wide for UNL while still remaining in my hometown, allowing my family to continue the ranching business. Those opportunities don't come along every day! But more importantly, I remembered my excitement about the local food movement that started years ago in my home garden and when I made my first appearance at a farmers market. Helping Nebraskans consume fresh, healthy foods while helping small scale family farms stay in business is such an important mission. In addition to education, I love doing communication and outreach, so it seemed like a great fit for my skill set.



What is the most memorable moment in your career?

I have only been in this position since September 2025, but I am enjoying my interactions with our members! They all have such unique stories and are doing a lot of creative things to make their businesses work. The other thing I will remember is holding the 2026 Local Food Guide in my hands for the first time! It has always been a personal goal of mine to be involved in a publication project like this and it was so rewarding to see it finally come to fruition. Here's a link to the [2026 Local Food Guide](#).

Is there a personal highlight or achievement you would like to share?

(see the Food Guide above)

What is something that most people don't know about you?

I served as the Nebraska Dairy Princess while I was in college! It was such a fun and unique way to represent the ag industry.

What do you enjoy outside of work?

Gardening, traveling, volunteering, reading, hiking, and kayaking are some of the things I enjoy when I'm not chasing my three kids around at their various activities!

What's your advice to next generation?

At the end of the day, relationships are the most important thing. Don't get so busy chasing the to-do list that you forget your “why”.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT - CALEB BURNSIDE

ACADEMIC JOURNEY

What is your major and why did you choose it?

I am majoring in Agribusiness. I have always had a passion for agriculture and people, and Agribusiness felt like the perfect major to help me grow both inside and outside of the classroom while preparing me for many opportunities after college.

What has been your favorite class so far, and why?

My favorite class so far has been NHRI-ALEC-102. It is one of the most talent-filled and unique classrooms UNL offers. It truly changed my viewpoint on campus and helped me make lasting connections across UNL. I encourage everyone to apply to take it!

What clubs, organizations, or activities are you involved in?

I am involved in NHRI Leadership Mentoring, Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship, the Nebraska Agricultural Youth Council, Alpha Gamma Sigma Fraternity, and Salt College Ministry.



What's one experience that has really stood out to you?

The CASNR Spain and France Study Abroad trip.

What are your plans after graduation?

After graduation, I plan to pursue a career in agricultural sales, where I can use my passion for intentional relationships and agriculture to make a difference across Nebraska and in small communities.

If you could give one piece of advice to incoming students, what would it be?

Get to know yourself and others as best as you can during college by being intentional, motivated to grow, and investing in the relationships around you!

Continued....Student Spotlight - Caleb Burnside



Caleb Burnside was accepted into the Black Masque Chapter of Mortar Board — an honor that recognized outstanding scholarship, leadership, and service.

This prestigious recognition reflected Caleb's hard work, dedication, and commitment to excellence. We were excited to celebrate this achievement and looked forward to all the great things ahead!

Retirement Announcement

DR. MATT STOCKTON



After more than two decades of dedicated service to the University of Nebraska and the agricultural community, we announce the retirement of Dr. Matt Stockton, Professor of Agricultural Economics, effective June 2026.

Since joining the West Central Research, Extension and Education Center in 2005 (WREC), Matt has been a trusted educator, researcher, and Extension specialist whose work has made a lasting impact on Nebraska's farmers, ranchers, agricultural professionals, and rural communities. His expertise in farm and ranch management, beef cattle systems, cropping systems, risk management, and agricultural economics has helped countless producers make informed decisions and improve the sustainability and profitability of their operations.

Throughout his career, Matt has been committed to developing practical, research-based solutions for producers, including innovative online decision aids and educational programs focused on beef cattle management, crop and pasture management, and water resource management. His extensive research and publications have contributed valuable knowledge to the agricultural industry and strengthened the connection between university research and real-world application.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Matt has been a valued colleague, mentor, and friend. His willingness to share his knowledge, support others, and serve the agricultural community exemplifies the mission of Extension and the University of Nebraska.

On behalf of our department, colleagues, students, stakeholders, and the many producers whose lives and businesses have benefited from his work, we extend our deepest gratitude to Matt for his years of service, leadership, and dedication.

Please join us in congratulating Matt on his retirement and wishing him all the best in this exciting new chapter. His contributions to our department, the University, and Nebraska agriculture will have a lasting legacy for years to come.

Thank you, Matt, for your outstanding service and commitment. You will be greatly missed.

DEPARTMENT HIGHLIGHTS

We're proud to share that Dr. Cory Walters, in Agricultural Economics, was recently promoted to Professor!

This well-deserved recognition reflects his dedication to Extension work, impactful research, and commitment to our students and community.

Please join us in congratulating Cory on this outstanding achievement!



Rosalee has been awarded the 2026 Family & Friends Recognition Award — marking the 24th time she has received this incredible honor!

The Family & Friends Recognition Awards, organized by Student Life and co-sponsored by the UNL Teaching Council and the UNL Parent & Family Association, celebrate faculty and staff who make a meaningful difference in students' lives.

These awards give parents, family members, and friends the opportunity to recognize those who have supported, encouraged, and inspired their Husker. They also highlight the powerful impact of strong student-faculty and student-staff connections across campus.

Rosalee's continued recognition is a true testament to her dedication, care, and commitment to student success. We are so proud and grateful for the positive difference she makes every day! 🌟

Farewell to Jeanine

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to Jeanine for her dedication, hard work, and many contributions during her time with us. Her professionalism and positive presence have been valued by colleagues across the organization, and she will be greatly missed.

We thank Jeanine for her service and wish her all the best in her next chapter. May her future bring continued success, fulfillment, and happiness.

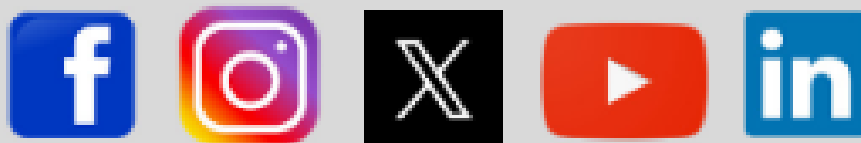


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