



**Dave Heineman**  
Governor

# STATE OF NEBRASKA

**DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
**GREGORY A. IBACH**  
Director

September 7, 2005

Honorable Mike Johanns, Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
14th and Independence Ave  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Johanns:

On August 31, 2005, Governor Heineman held the first of his State-level Farm Bill Listening Sessions. I joined the Governor as we gathered comments from a dozen Nebraska agriculture organizations regarding current agricultural policy and the next farm bill. Governor Heineman asked me to share with you the statements of each participating organization. We hope you will find the enclosed statements helpful and informative as Congress prepares for its discussion of the next farm bill.

Agriculture is the economic engine that powers Nebraska's economy. A sound agricultural policy is vital to our producers and communities. As one of the nation's leading agricultural states, Nebraska and its agricultural leaders stand ready to provide substantive policy input and guidance suggestions. Please do not hesitate to contact the Nebraska Department of Agriculture if you have any questions regarding the Governor's Farm Bill Listening Sessions or any other matter regarding Nebraska farmers and ranchers. Thank you.

Sincerely,

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Greg Ibach  
Director

Enclosures

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**THE GOVERNOR'S FARM BILL LISTENING SESSION**  
**AUGUST 31, 2005**  
**Bill Luckey, President-Elect**  
**NEBRASKA PORK PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION**

As the next farm bill is prepared, this is an excellent opportunity for the United States strengthen the position of our agricultural community, allowing U.S. farmers and ranchers to remain as efficient producers, able to compete in the global marketplace.

To benefit pork producers, the new farm policy must meet at least three specific goals: (1) work toward reducing or controlling costs of production, (2) open markets and increase the price received for pork products, and (3) protect and enhance the quality of U.S. pork products. To meet these goals, careful consideration needs to be made to many issues our producers face on a regular basis.

**Costs of Production** – Corn and soybean meal comprise 65 to 75 percent of the cost of pork production. The impact of feed grain and oilseed programs must be carefully considered, including the impact on input costs of raising pork and other livestock.

Also the costs involved in complying with new regulatory and animal health issues are another burden on producers. Conservation cost-share funds through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) have been made available to pork producers, but yet have not met the need, and the process for applying and obtaining these EQIP funds remains an obstacle to successfully helping many producers. These funds should also be used to encourage the use of modern, science based technology in addressing current regulatory concerns. These regulations also need to be evaluated as to cost/benefit.

**Increasing Prices** – Increasing demand is critical to increasing prices for all producers in the long run. Expanded access to foreign markets, continuing promotion of U.S. exports using Market Access Program funding and aggressive pursuit of export business all have the possibility of increasing demand for U.S. pork products and needs to be priority into the future.

**Protecting and Enhancing Pork Quality** – We feel the farm program should support research designed to ensure that producers continue to provide a safe and wholesome product. This research needs to assure consumers that they are receiving products viewed as being a value as compared to other options.

In conclusion, we must maintain a competitive pork industry, capable of providing opportunities into the future for the next generation to be involved in production agriculture, as well as earning a reasonable return on investment. It is also vital that we maintain a "level playing field" allowing our producers to compete around the world. Our ability to do this will depend in part on the direction the farm program takes on many issues affecting the global marketplace.

As the Farm Bill is developed, we will be formulating specific recommendations related to these key issues. Thank you for holding this forum and listening to our comments.

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