



# Insider

Quarterly Newsletter  
Winter 2014  
Volume 2, Issue 1

## Other Annual Meeting Notes:

A-FAN Executive Director Willow Holoubek presented a brief overview of A-FAN's work through 2013 for stakeholders at the annual meeting in November, with a peek toward 2014. Heading the list is A-FAN's deepening involvement with communities across the state to help build strong economies through livestock industry development. She also reported on the organization's proactive consumer awareness programs, including: hosting three by-invitation bus tours:

- Educators (curriculum specialists from the Nebraska Department of Education)
- Food industry influencers (chefs, nutritionists, supermarket representatives)
- Media representatives who visited modern farming operations in eastern Nebraska counties
- She also highlighted the successful "Farmers Feed Us" campaign that drew 7,900 website entries to create a sizable database to receive the new "Farm and Food Connection" newsletter; and a variety of public relations campaigns aimed at raising consumer awareness of Nebraska agriculture in general, and animal agriculture with its interdependence with the state's row crop farmers. Other communications efforts included two four-page inserts in the Omaha World-Herald to help introduce

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## Farmers Can Add Value to Row Crops Through "Layering," A-FAN Stakeholders Told

The future of American agriculture may include a return to the days of "layering" when most row crop farmers also raised livestock, according to featured speakers at the annual stakeholders meeting of the Alliance for the Future of Agriculture in Nebraska (A-FAN) November 25 in Lincoln.

In his opening remarks, Nebraska Department of Agriculture Director Greg Ibach said that one of his department's chief areas of focus is to help build strong local communities by going back to 1950s-style "layering." "Back then," he said, "everybody had a few acres of row crops and also raised livestock, kept dairy cows, or finished pigs."

His vision includes agriculture revitalization "that allows our sons and daughters to return to the family farm with promise of a successful career," he said. "That means we need to figure out how to let those farms grow, and how we let the industries in those communities grow to support those families coming back to the farm. This ties in with A-FAN's goal of building strong community economies through animal agriculture. This is where the "layering" comes in, he said. "The scale will be different, but that will create

opportunities in those communities."

Keynote speaker Dr. Chris Hurt, extension agronomist and agricultural economist at Purdue University, agreed that "layering" may be in the cards for American farmers as a way to create added value to their operations. While row crops may run in the \$3.00 per bushel range, feeding that grain to livestock on the same farm can bump the value of that bushel of corn to \$5 or \$6 or more in the future, he said. "The key is finding the balance between crops and animal sectors of agriculture."



Dr. Chris Hurt, Purdue University

**"Livestock has always been the historical value-adding system"**

— Dr. Chris Hurt

"We are interested in the balance between crops and animal sectors of agriculture," Hurt said. "Going back to about 2006, it turns out crop and animal receipts are pretty much in balance. There are times when we get a surge in grain prices and then in livestock prices. But in the long run things tend to balance out."

The 2012 drought reduced crop supply, for example, "leading to increased prices in the feed market, in turn causing increased consumer prices at the meat case," he said. But he sees a leveling off on the horizon.

According to Hurt, the world is anxious to raise crops. "With rising income levels worldwide, demand will continue to grow

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## A-FAN Website Being Upgraded, Including Added Member Features

A-FAN's website has been undergoing upgrades and enhancements and is adding new features to better inform and serve the organization's nearly 250 members as well as consumers who may be interested in agriculture-related issues.

The website was visited over 8,100 times during the November 2012-2013 period, a total of 18,248 page views, and an average visit of nearly two minutes. Website demographics show 61% of visitors were in the very desirable 18-to-34 age group. The "Farmers Feed Us" informational campaign and contest alone drew 7,900 website visitors during the first quarter of 2013, helping A-FAN build a significant consumer database.

Melissa Slagle, A-FAN's online

communications manager, says website visitors will notice several major design changes and improvements, revamped functionality and more up-to-date information and blog posts.

*"We are redesigning our website to be more dynamic, responsive to trending topics and useful for anyone interested in Nebraska agriculture."*

—Melissa Slagle, A-FAN online communications

"We know consumers as well as farmers and ranchers are spending more time online and on social media sites these days," Slagle says. "We are redesigning our website to be more dynamic, responsive to trending topics and useful for anyone interested in Nebraska agriculture. We would like visitors to get to know Nebraska agriculture and the people responsible for producing the food on our dinner tables."

Among the new website features:

- A login page to allow only A-FAN

members to access such new features as helpful PowerPoint presentations and industry fact sheets.

- A redesigned, dynamically built news homepage to enable A-FAN to use its YouTube videos more and to rotate them by appropriate topic.
- User-friendly menu drop-downs for the "Learn" and "Meet" and "Stay Current" items.
- The ability to post and distribute news releases on-site.
- To expand blog content to permit additional contributing writers and to allow for posting viewer comments

A-FAN welcomes comments about the website and how we can make them more user-friendly as well as to provide information our followers may find interesting. Please contact Melissa Slagle at melissas@a-fan.org with any comments or ideas.





## UNL Students Learn to ENGAGE in “Food” Conversation

About 20 University of Nebraska-Lincoln East Campus students gathered on December 12 to take part in an interactive training program to help them tell agriculture’s story to their collegiate peers and others interested in where their food comes from.

The training program highlighted industry trends and taught strategies for using values-based messaging in daily conversations, public speaking and media opportunities.

Presented by the Center for Food Integrity, the program was led by Jana McGuire, Senior Project Manager with CMA Consulting, Kansas City. The group engaged in lively discussion, role plays, mock media interviews and public speaking practice. McGuire emphasized that “silence is no longer an option. If we don’t tell our story, someone else will.” Dinner was sponsored by the Nebraska Soybean Board.



UNL East Campus students learned how to communicate effectively the truth about today’s farming

“It’s important to East Campus agriculture majors to remember that there’s a whole world of uninformed or misinformed consumers, including fellow UNL students, who can benefit from our knowledge of being in the ag industry,” said A-FAN team member Lukas Fricke, who coordinated the event. “This training, along with our A-FAN social media efforts and Husker Food Connection, are all part of the process of bringing the

two campuses closer together in understanding where our food comes from and who raises it.”

The training encompassed everything from what to do if and when the media calls, communicating via social media, giving a presentation, coffee-shop talk and many other situations students may find themselves in when it comes to explaining modern agriculture.

## Third Annual Husker Food Connection Set for April 8

The 2014 “Husker Food Connection” is scheduled for Tuesday, April 8 at the north entrance to the Student Union of the UNL city campus. In case of bad weather, the event will be moved to Wednesday, April 16.

“Theme of the annual event is protein production, which we are calling “Meating in the Middle,” says Lukas Fricke, A-FAN student intern in charge of organizing the event. Purpose of the event is to promote agriculture to urban

students and help them understand better how their food is produced. Fricke expects 20 to 30 East Campus student volunteers to help staff the event.

Last year’s Husker Food Connection drew 2,000 students in chilly, rainy weather. Fricke is planning for 2,500 students attending this year. Students will receive free lunches made from Nebraska-produced products.



The food line at the 2013 “Husker Food Connection,” which drew 2,000 campus students.

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## Introducing A-FAN's "A-Team"

If you want something done, call in the A-FAN "A-Team."

That's Executive Director Willow Holoubek's call to action for A-FAN members, food consumers and Nebraska communities needing the organization's support for accessing agriculture industry information, the truth about today's food, and help in building strong ag-based community economies through livestock program development.

### The A-Team:

WILLOW HOLOUBEK, executive director and "A-Team" leader, leads A-FAN in its mission to provide expertise and development support as well as getting the truth out about today's agriculture and its importance to Nebraska's economy. Contact Willow at the office at 402-421-4455 or 1-888-580-2326, by cell at 402-710-1110 or by email [willowh@a-fan.org](mailto:willowh@a-fan.org).



Willow Holoubek

EMILY TAYLOR, A-FAN's administrative assistant, handles membership responsibilities for the nearly 250 A-FAN members, billings, as well as manages the A-FAN office. "Emily holds down the fort when the rest of the A-Team is on the road," Willow says. Contact Emily by phone at 402-421-4416, or email [emilyt@a-fan.org](mailto:emilyt@a-fan.org).



Emily Taylor

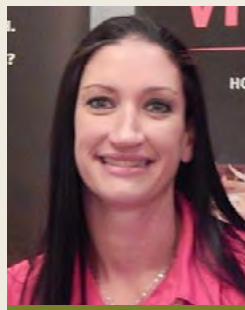
LUKAS FRICKE is A-FAN's communications intern, is a sophomore at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln studying agronomy and animal science.

Fricke grew up on a fifth generation family farm near Ulysses, Nebraska. He is overseeing the annual UNL event, "Husker Food Connection," the purpose of which is to raise awareness among urban students about agriculture and how food gets to their dinner tables. The event's theme for 2014 will be "Meating in the Middle," focusing on meat production in Nebraska and the U.S. Contact Lukas by email at [lukasf@a-fan.org](mailto:lukasf@a-fan.org).



Lucas Fricke

MELISSA SLAGLE is responsible for A-FAN's website content and maintenance, including the quarterly online version of the A-FAN Insider newsletter that is sent to 650 stakeholders and industry partners. "We get an open rate of 32%," Melissa says, "double the industry average." She also handles the "Farm & Food Connection" e-newsletter containing tips, recipes and other information emailed monthly to the 7,900 consumers who entered the "Farmers Feed Us" campaign in early 2013. Contact Melissa at [melissas@a-fan.org](mailto:melissas@a-fan.org).



Melissa Slagle

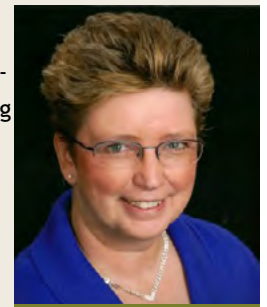
TALIA GOES manages A-FAN's growing social media outreach, including the organization's Facebook and Twitter pages. Facebook enjoys 263 "new likes" with 877 total "likes," and an average post reach of 1,350. The Twitter account has over 350 followers with monthly retweets of 6,000. Contact Talia at [taliab@a-fan.org](mailto:taliab@a-fan.org).



Talia Goes

KAREN BROKAW handles A-FAN's extensive public relations program, including the quarterly A-FAN Insider Newsletter, media relations, advertising coordination, on-going news release production and distribution.

She coordinated a radio campaign featuring grilling tips and promoting Nebraska meat as a great source of protein that aired in the Omaha and Lincoln metro markets on 15 radio stations in the summer of 2013 and produced two Omaha World-Herald four-page inserts to consumers, with over 460,000 inserts distributed each time. Contact Karen by phone at 402-432-2299 or by email at [karenb@a-fan.org](mailto:karenb@a-fan.org).



Karen Brokaw

"We have a terrific team," Willow says. "If you need information or help, I urge you to contact them."



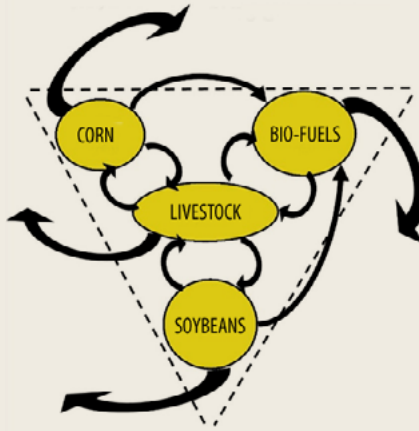
## Agriculture’s “Golden Triangle” Brings Economic Strength to Nebraska’s Economy

Nebraska’s economic well-being depends on agriculture, as everyone reading this newsletter already knows. The livestock farming industry contributes over \$7.2 billion a year to the state’s economy, while one in every four jobs in Nebraska is related somehow to agriculture. It is truly an interdependent economy.

For every dollar of crop production value in Nebraska, for example, 59 cents is created in additional receipts for the state’s businesses outside agriculture. Additionally, every dollar of livestock production creates another 62 cents in additional final sales for businesses outside the agriculture industry.

Agriculture has its own set of complex interdependencies, as well, with over half of the state’s corn and soybean crops used as livestock feed. Livestock and row crop farmers are dependent on each other for their economic strength. A soon-to-be-published research study from the University of Nebraska’s Institute of Agriculture calls the state’s unique agricultural production complex encompassing corn, soybeans, bio-fuels and livestock as comprising our “Golden

### NEBRASKA’S GOLDEN TRIANGLE



Triangle”—a combination of resources that can be used by communities to their advantage as they seek to ensure the future viability of their local communities.

*Agriculture has its own set of complex interdependencies, as well, with over half of the state’s corn and soybean crops used as livestock feed.*

The study, to be published in January, 2014, is funded by the Nebraska Corn Board and the Nebraska Soybean Board. The study is being directed by Dr. Bruce Johnson, UNL professor of agriculture economics.

Local community leaders are encouraged to contact A-FAN for assistance as they work to strengthen agricultural and business interdependence to build a stronger, self-sustaining economic growth.

“Our mission is to provide community leaders with the information and guidance they need to build strong economies in their areas by making proactive decisions,” says Willow Holoubek, executive director of A-FAN. “We provide this assistance to any community leaders who ask for our help. Given Nebraska’s local zoning organization, local control is key to Nebraska’s agricultural development.”

For example: Dodge County community and business leaders sought A-FAN assistance during 2013 to develop a program to attract the attention of out-state agricultural production businesses. Last summer, a large California dairy farmer visited the area, learned about Nebraska’s strength through its “Golden Triangle” and is considering moving to the county. The county’s efforts have also resulted in being designated by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture as a “Livestock Friendly County.” To date, 24 of the state’s 93 counties have earned that designation.

A-FAN encourages all other communities in the state to follow Dodge County’s example. To get started, call Willow Holoubek, Executive Director, at 402-421-4455 or e-mail her at [willowh@a-fan.org](mailto:willowh@a-fan.org)



## Other Annual Meeting Notes:

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the theme, “Growing Your Food Is Our Passion.”

Holubek thanked supporting partners for opening their farming and production operations to the bus tours, including: Grass Valley Farms, Prairieland Dairy, Pillen Family Farms, the Terry O’Neel family, Sunnyside Farm, Bart and Geoff Ruth, Tuls Dairy and Farmland Foods. She also recognized retiring A-FAN Board Member Susan Joy, of the Nebraska Poultry Industries.

A video produced by A-FAN intern Lukas Fricke provided a glimpse of the organization’s activities for the year. See the video at <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=655491551161977>

For your copy of the annual report, call Emily Taylor at 402-421-4416 or email at [emilyt@a-fan.org](mailto:emilyt@a-fan.org)

## Farmers Can Add Value to Row Crops Through “Layering,” A-FAN Stakeholders Told (continued from Page 1)

and U.S. agriculture is not going to be able to keep up in a sustainable way. That growth will go to South America, where they can bring more land into production,” he said.

Hurt believes the best way to add value to your corn is to also raise livestock. This is where “layering” re-enters the conversation.

“Livestock has always been the historical value-adding system,” he said. This makes livestock people and



Director Greg Ibach, Nebraska Department of Agriculture

crop people happy. If you have feed priced in the \$5-6 range, both crop and live-stock sectors will be kept in balance.”

Price trends shift over time based on supply and demand in the marketplace, according to Hurt, but over the long run they achieve a balance. He expects consumer prices for poultry and pork to lower in the next year or so, with beef prices lowering in 2016.

The reason, he said is that the marketplace trends toward moderation over time.

## Third Annual Husker Food Connection Set for April 8

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Informative exhibits will include live animals up close and personal as well as tractors to check out. There will be games revolving around livestock production and prizes.

“Often consumers distrust American livestock producers and their ways,” Fricke says. “We are trying to increase transparency of the next generation of farmers and ranchers, and to positively educate the student body. We want the public to embrace our

traditions and passion for food growth and development.”

A-FAN is co-hosting the event with the student group, also called “Husker Food Connection.” Fricke is working to line up co-sponsors which will include ag-related businesses and other student organizations. Last year over 40 such organizations helped with the event.



[www.youtube.com/BecomeAFANtv](http://www.youtube.com/BecomeAFANtv)  
[www.twitter.com/AFANofAG](http://www.twitter.com/AFANofAG)  
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