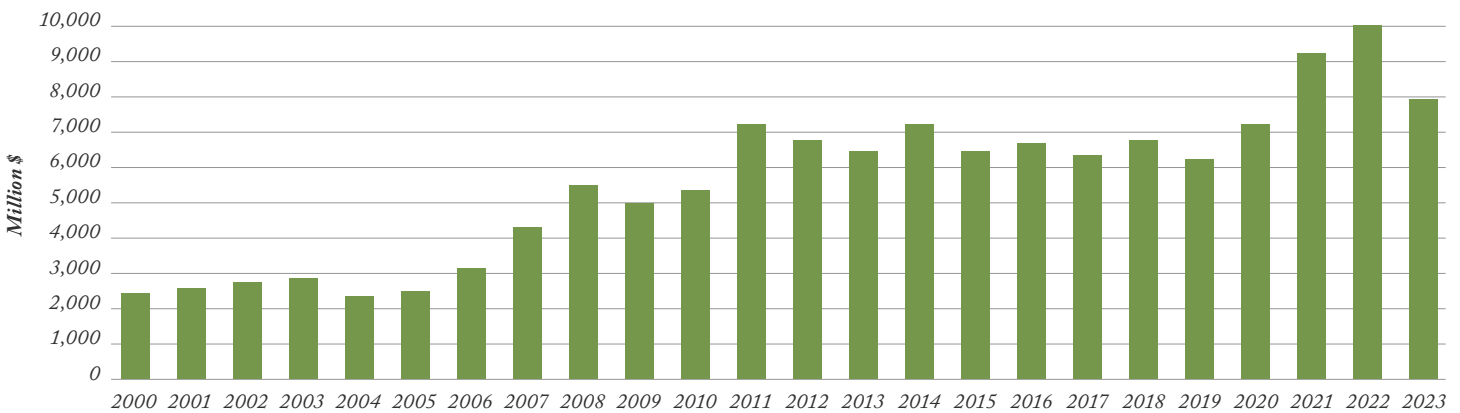


BACKGROUND

Nebraska’s agricultural exports in 2023 were \$7.9 billion, a drop of over \$2 billion or 21% from 2022 (Figure 1). This marks the largest percentage drop in the state’s agricultural export value since at least 2000, and the largest since 2004 when the value of exports fell 18% with the discovery of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in a cow in late 2003. The decline comes after three consecutive years of record-setting exports. Still, even with the marked decline, 2023 saw the third-highest export total ever for the state. Exports remain an integral part of Nebraska’s agricultural sales—exports in 2023 were 3.5 times greater than those in 2000.

Nebraska again was the fifth-largest agricultural exporting state trailing only California, Iowa, Illinois, and Minnesota. After nearly reaching the fourth spot in 2022, trailing Minnesota by just \$58 million that year, Nebraska fell off the pace in 2023 finishing \$1.2 billion behind Minnesota in 2023. Nebraska topped the nation in exports of beef at \$1.59 billion and hides and skins (\$130.4 million); was the third-largest exporter of corn (\$1.46 billion), feed (\$1.13 billion), and processed grain products (\$419 million); the seventh-largest exporter of soybeans (\$1.75 billion) and soybean meal (\$465 million); and the eighth-largest exporter of vegetable oil (\$170 million) and pork (\$283 million). Other Nebraska products exported included ethanol, popcorn, wheat, and dry edible beans. Table 1 lists export values of selected Nebraska commodities and processed products since 2018. Figure 2 tracks Nebraska export values of several commodities between 2000-2023.

FIGURE 1. VALUE OF NEBRASKA AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS, 2000-2023



Source: Rolling Prairie Economics graphic using data from the USDA Economic Research Service

TABLE 1. NEBRASKA AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS, 2018-2023 (MILLION \$)

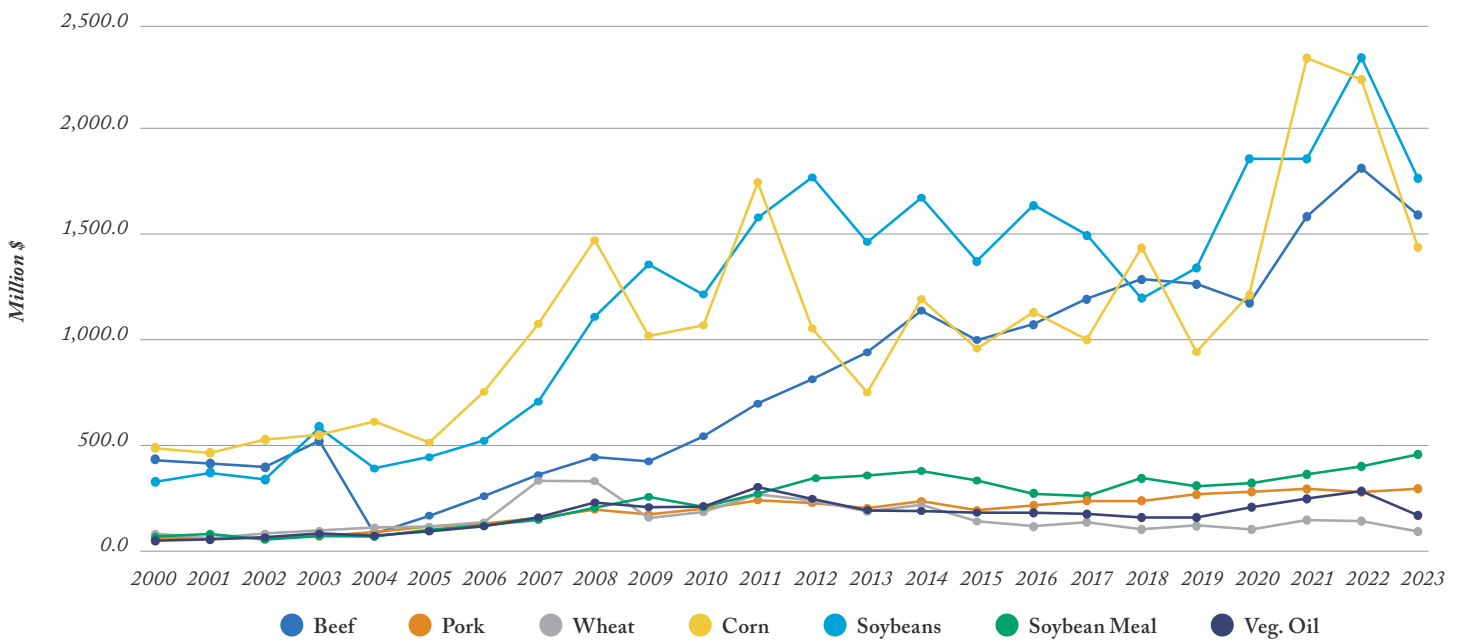
	Beef	Pork	Corn	Soybeans	Hides	Soy Meal	Wheat	Vegetable Oils	Total
2023	\$1,590.0	\$283.1	\$1,460.9	\$1,752.6	\$130.4	\$464.3	\$111.1	\$169.8	\$7,902.3
2022	\$1,860.9	\$273.1	\$2,254.4	\$2,343.3	\$140.7	\$417.3	\$152.0	\$277.5	\$9,977.0
2021	\$1,639.7	\$307.6	\$2,340.5	\$1,906.2	\$143.8	\$390.5	\$156.3	\$252.0	\$9,213.8
2020	\$1,167.8	\$304.1	\$1,185.0	\$1,907.3	\$103.3	\$352.9	\$122.4	\$231.3	\$7,141.3
2019	\$1,288.9	\$275.4	\$958.7	\$1,357.3	\$135.5	\$319.3	\$150.5	\$188.9	\$6,293.9
2018	\$1,318.5	\$246.8	\$1,476.6	\$1,218.7	\$188.6	\$364.6	\$134.7	\$186.8	\$6,802.3

Source: Rolling Prairie Economics graphic using data from the USDA Economic Research Service

Soybeans, corn, and beef remained solidly entrenched as Nebraska’s most valuable agricultural exports, accounting for 61% of the total export value in 2023, although all three saw significant declines in exports in 2023. Soybean exports, the state’s top export commodity, were down 25% from the prior year. Beef exports, the second-largest export, were off 14%, and corn exports declined 36%. The declines come as no surprise as total U.S. agricultural exports were down 11% for the year. For the U.S., 57% of the decline in the value of exports were due to decreased exports of soybeans and corn driven by increased competition, especially from Brazil, and lower commodity prices. China, the United States’ top soybean destination, sourced 29% more soybeans by volume for the year from Brazil, and 11% less from the United States compared to 2022. In 2023, Brazil surpassed the U.S. as the largest corn exporter in the world. The decline in beef exports was largely due to a decrease in domestic beef production.

Just two commodities exported from Nebraska saw growth in value in 2023, pork and soybean meal. Pork exports from Nebraska grew 3%, buoyed by record U.S. sales to Mexico, Dominican Republic, Colombia, and Guatemala. Soybean meal exports rose 12% mostly due to higher export volumes.

FIGURE 2. NEBRASKA COMMODITY EXPORTS, 2000-2023



Source: Rolling Prairie Economics graph using data from the USDA Economic Research Service

VALUE OF AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS TO NEBRASKA PRODUCERS

The value of international trade to Nebraska producers can be measured in several ways. Two ways are to apportion values by county or on a per-farm basis in each county. Each county is unique in its commodities produced. Thus, the importance of export markets and the sensitivity of a county’s agriculture to these markets will vary. For this analysis, each county’s total export value was calculated by apportioning state commodity export values to counties based on each county’s share of total state production. These values were then summed across commodities to estimate the total value of exports for a county. Commodities included in the analysis were corn, beef, pork, soybeans, soybean meal, vegetable oil, wheat, hides and skins, ethanol, and distillers’ grains. The per-farm export value for each county was calculated by dividing the estimated total county export value by the number of farms in the county reported in the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture.

Both estimates should be taken with a “grain of salt” and are not meant to denote exact dollar amounts for county exports or per-farm export values. Tracing the value of commodity exports to a county is fraught with difficulty. For example, a commodity could be produced in one county, sold to an elevator in another county, and processed in a third county, dispersing the value of the exports across all three counties. Instead, the estimates are intended to provide insights or hint of the significance of exports to Nebraska counties and producers. The appendix provides a discussion of the approach used and difficulties of tracing export value for those readers interested. Finally, not all counties have estimates for each commodity because data was not available for some counties.

Table 2 lists the estimated 2023 total value of exports for each county. Table 3 lists the estimated per-farm export value for each county. Figure 3 maps the county total export values and Figure 4 maps the per-farm values. Cuming County nudged out Platte County in 2023 as the top county with nearly \$204 million in value of exports. But Platte County was not far behind with a value from exports of \$202 million. The value of exports for both counties was down significantly in 2023 compared to 2022 when they were estimated at \$233 million for Cuming County and \$245 million for Platte. The two counties were the only ones to exceed \$200 million in 2023 compared to six counties which did so in 2022. Custer, Holt, Lincoln, Dawson, Phelps, and Cedar Counties had estimated export values exceeding \$150 million. All these counties have a mixture of crop and livestock production, contributing to the value received from trade. Counties least affected by trade include Hooker, Thomas, Loup, Blaine, and Arthur Counties with less than \$10 million in export value.

The importance of trade looks different when measured on a per-farm basis. As in past years, Phelps County scored as the most reliant on trade with an export value per-farm of \$474,832. Other counties heavily reliant on trade on a per-farm basis were Kearney and Boone Counties, each with a per-farm value of trade exceeding \$300,000. The diversity of commodities produced along with the size and productivity of farms in these counties most likely contributes to the high per-farm export values. Dawes, Kimball, Douglas, Nance, Thurston, Scotts Bluff, and Lancaster Counties were on the other end of the spectrum with per-farm export values of less than \$60,000.

The importance of trade looks different when measured on a per-farm basis. As in past years, Phelps County scored as the most reliant on trade with an export value per-farm of \$552,000. Other counties heavily reliant on trade on a per-farm basis were Kearney, Fillmore, Boone, York and Harlan counties, each with a per-farm value of trade exceeding \$350,000. The diversity of commodities produced along with the size and productivity of farms in these counties most likely contributed to the high per-farm export values. Dawes, Kimball, Douglas, and Lancaster were on the other end of the spectrum with per-farm export values of less than \$60,000.

TABLE 2. ESTIMATED TOTAL AGRICULTURAL EXPORT VALUE, 2023
TABLE 3. ESTIMATED AGRICULTURAL EXPORT VALUE PER-FARM, 2023

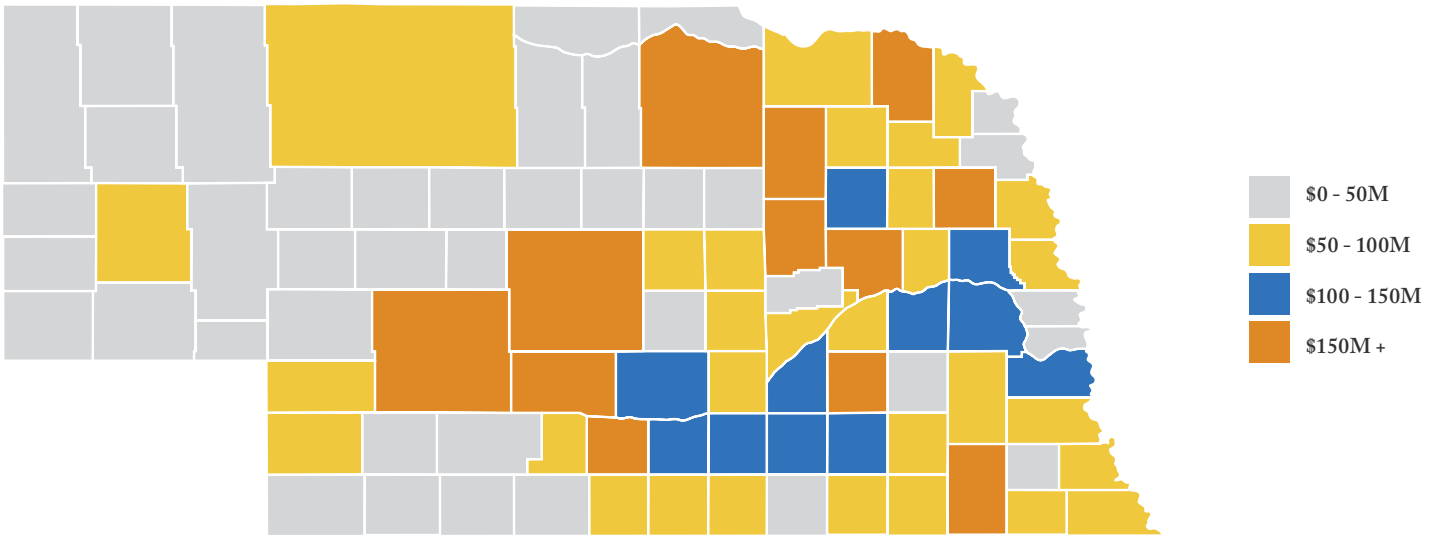
County	2023 TOTAL EXPORT VALUE	2023 PER-FARM EXPORT VALUE
ADAMS	\$114.8	\$235,765
ANTELOPE	\$172.0	\$259,032
ARTHUR	\$8.4	\$106,667
BANNER	\$19.6	\$86,546
BLAINE	\$9.8	\$115,212
BOONE	\$152.3	\$314,007
BOX BUTTE	\$42.2	\$96,529
BOYD	\$31.2	\$143,257
BROWN	\$47.9	\$164,598
BUFFALO	\$124.9	\$124,748
BURT	\$94.1	\$170,136
BUTLER	\$106.1	\$147,707
CASS	\$101.1	\$152,671
CEDAR	\$153.9	\$181,105
CHASE	\$85.9	\$282,583
CHERRY	\$90.4	\$148,257
CHEYENNE	\$37.6	\$60,525
CLAY	\$107.1	\$232,408
COLFAX	\$91.0	\$199,606
CUMING	\$203.8	\$244,932
CUSTER	\$195.0	\$180,054
DAKOTA	\$46.5	\$185,812
DAWES	\$19.9	\$45,015
DAWSON	\$168.1	\$250,546
DEUEL	\$17.6	\$86,663
DIXON	\$72.8	\$141,308
DODGE	\$113.7	\$163,870
DOUGLAS	\$14.5	\$46,633
DUNDY	\$40.2	\$167,466
FILLMORE	\$122.5	\$247,048
FRANKLIN	\$61.8	\$209,381

County	2023 TOTAL EXPORT VALUE	2023 PER-FARM EXPORT VALUE
FRONTIER	\$45.0	\$133,184
FURNAS	\$45.2	\$122,492
GAGE	\$130.4	\$112,841
GARDEN	\$32.3	\$144,999
GARFIELD	\$16.8	\$101,094
GOSPER	\$50.4	\$235,553
GRANT	\$11.0	\$166,426
GREELEY	\$51.9	\$236,018
HALL	\$95.4	\$172,782
HAMILTON	\$112.5	\$221,945
HARLAN	\$65.7	\$228,748
HAYES	\$31.3	\$123,339
HITCHCOCK	\$25.1	\$88,743
HOLT	\$172.7	\$144,164
HOOKER	\$6.9	\$70,220
HOWARD	\$73.2	\$139,192
JEFFERSON	\$70.5	\$123,267
JOHNSON	\$45.5	\$119,073
KEARNEY	\$118.0	\$360,736
KEITH	\$32.8	\$97,683
KEYA PAHA	\$17.3	\$102,486
KIMBALL	\$11.0	\$24,696
KNOX	\$75.0	\$78,917
LANCASTER	\$84.8	\$47,855
LINCOLN	\$169.1	\$169,981
LOGAN	\$18.2	\$189,622
LOUP	\$9.9	\$106,019
MADISON	\$103.9	\$152,592
MCPHERSON	\$14.3	\$118,120
MERRICK	\$85.2	\$176,739
MORRILL	\$62.1	\$124,144

County	2023 TOTAL EXPORT VALUE	2023 PER-FARM EXPORT VALUE
NANCE	\$10.6	\$35,652
NEMAHA	\$67.4	\$169,774
NUCKOLLS	\$39.0	\$116,195
OTOE	\$79.0	\$92,296
PAWNEE	\$52.2	\$139,605
PERKINS	\$65.3	\$172,225
PHELPS	\$161.4	\$474,832
PIERCE	\$60.3	\$113,993
PLATTE	\$201.8	\$223,683
POLK	\$93.0	\$208,955
RED WILLOW	\$26.0	\$89,455
RICHARDSON	\$92.8	\$131,260
ROCK	\$45.2	\$194,677
SALINE	\$81.8	\$119,436
SARPY	\$19.5	\$60,516
SAUNDERS	\$134.1	\$117,363
SCOTT'S BLUFF	\$43.1	\$57,332
SEWARD	\$15.4	\$15,590
SHERIDAN	\$31.6	\$61,276
SHERMAN	\$48.2	\$147,925
SIOUX	\$27.7	\$88,745
STANTON	\$63.7	\$119,827
THAYER	\$91.0	\$208,150
THOMAS	\$9.4	\$89,486
THURSTON	\$10.1	\$42,259
VALLEY	\$54.4	\$205,935
WASHINGTON	\$55.3	\$80,387
WAYNE	\$74.0	\$165,989
WEBSTER	\$70.4	\$201,172
WHEELER	\$47.1	\$272,380
YORK	\$112.7	\$226,267

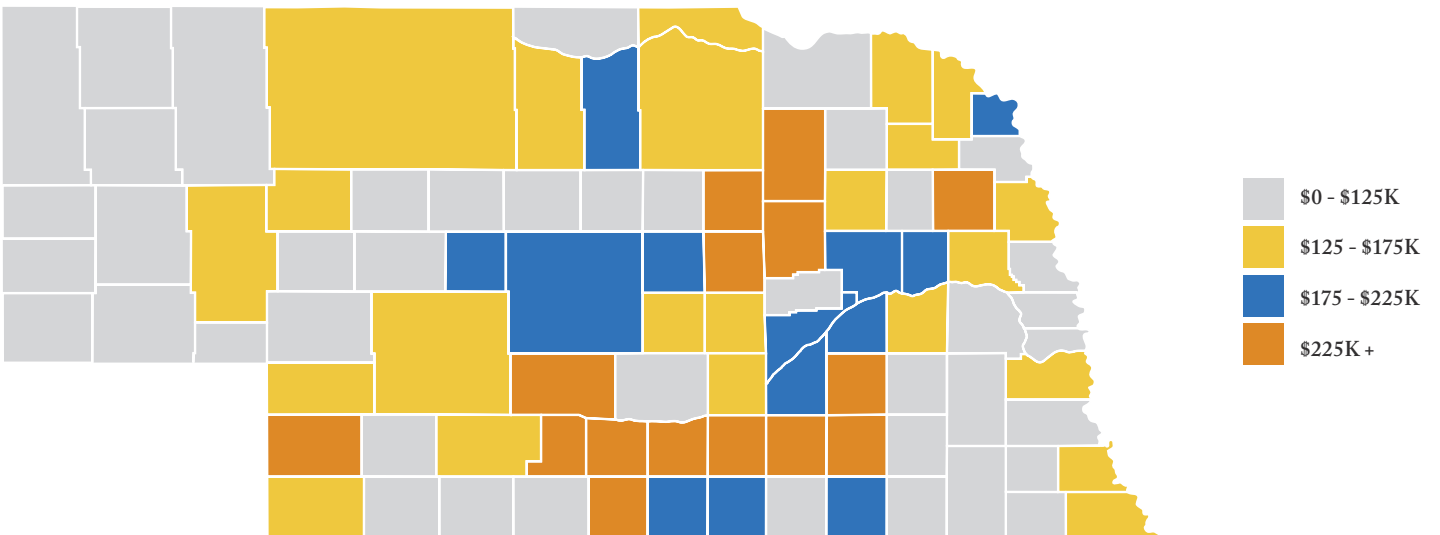
Source: Nebraska Farm Bureau estimates.

FIGURE 3. ESTIMATED TOTAL AGRICULTURAL EXPORT VALUE PER-COUNTY, 2023



Source: Estimates by Rolling Prairie Economics

FIGURE 4. ESTIMATED AGRICULTURAL EXPORT VALUE PER-FARM, 2023



Source: Estimates by Rolling Prairie Economics

COUNTIES' TOP EXPORT COMMODITIES

Agricultural commodities are not produced uniformly across the state. The importance of a commodity's exports will differ across counties. Likewise, the sensitivity of a counties' agricultural sectors to trade fluctuations will vary. Thus, the estimated commodity export values can be used to look at the geographic differences between commodities in terms of export values. Table 4 lists the number of counties for which a commodity is the top export product. Figure 5 plots the top export commodities for counties on a map.

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF COUNTIES & TOP EXPORT COMMODITY, 2023

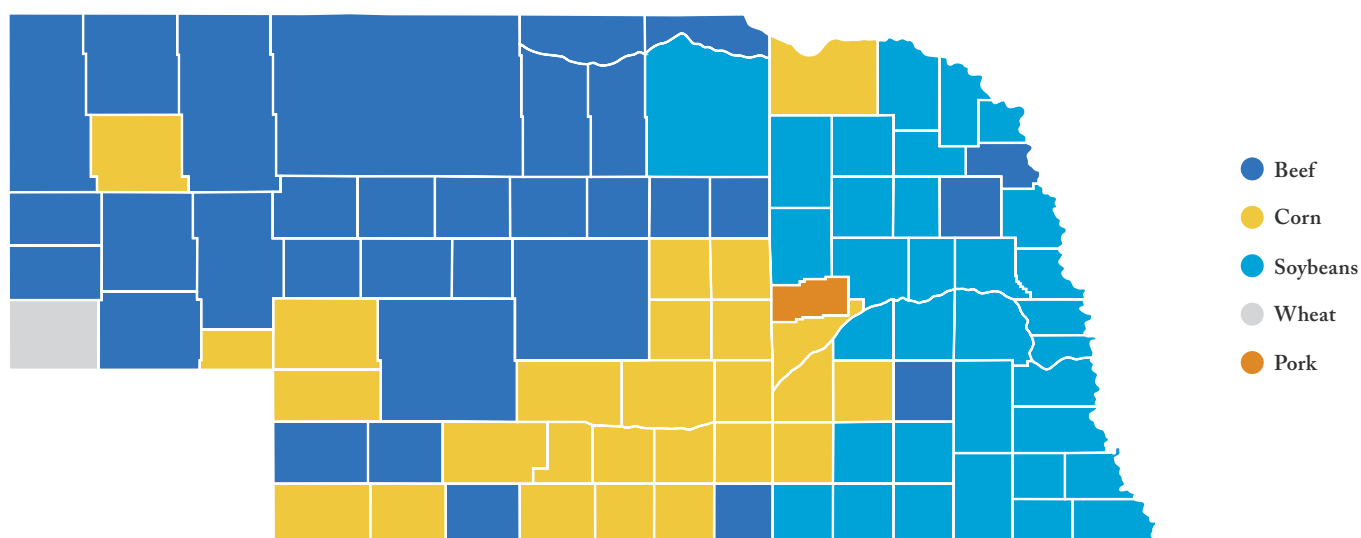
Soybeans	33 counties
Beef	32 counties
Corn	26 counties
Wheat	1 county
Pork	1 county

***Includes value of soybean meal, vegetable oil, ethanol, distillers dried grains, and hides and skins.*

The map of top export commodities by county is much more balanced across commodities in 2023 compared to earlier years. Soybeans were the top export commodity for 33 counties, down from 46 counties in 2022. In contrast, the number of counties with corn as the top export commodity grew from 13 counties in 2022 to 26 counties in 2023. The number of counties with beef as the top export commodity remained stable at 32 counties. Wheat and pork were the top exports in one county each.

The spatial distribution of the top export commodities highlights the regional difference in agricultural production in the state. Counties with soybeans as their top export commodity are in the eastern one-third of the state where soybean production is most prevalent. Counties with corn as the top export commodity are found in central and southwestern regions. Beef continues to dominate as the top export in the Sandhills and northern Panhandle with a few counties scattered in the eastern and southern regions.

FIGURE 5. ESTIMATED TOP EXPORT COMMODITY BY COUNTY, 2023



Source: Estimates by Rolling Prairie Economics

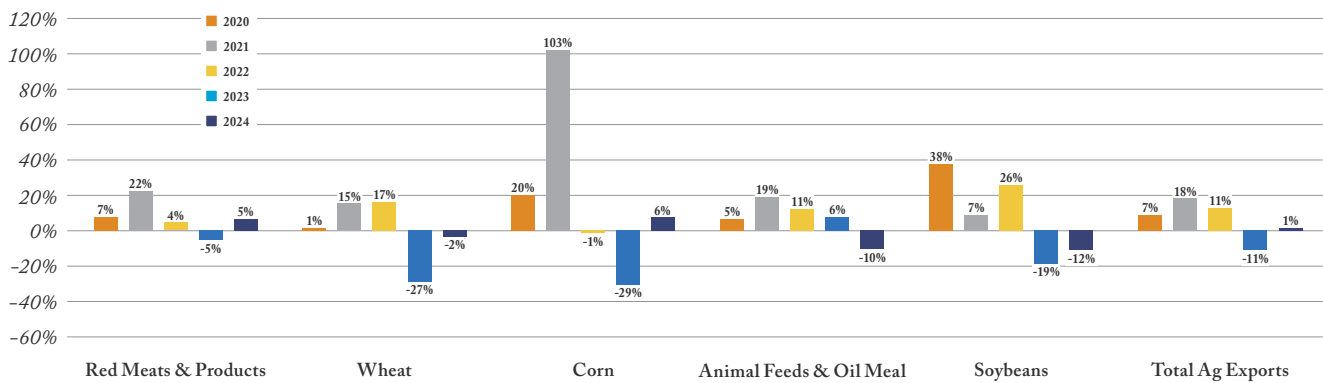
CONCLUSION

Nebraska was the fifth-largest agricultural exporting state in 2023 exporting \$7.9 billion of agricultural goods, down 21% from 2022. Nebraska topped the nation in exports of beef, was the second-largest exporter of hides and skins, the third-largest exporter of corn, feed, and processed grain products, and the seventh-largest exporter of soybeans and soybean meal. Other Nebraska exported products include vegetable oil, ethanol, popcorn, wheat, pork, dry edible beans and a host of other commodities and processed products.

This report uses two means to measure the relative value of agricultural exports to Nebraska farmers and ranchers. The total dollar export values by county and per-farm values of exports were calculated to describe the reliance of different areas of the state to trade. The report also examines the top commodity exports by value to counties. It's no surprise given the prevalence of soybean, beef, and corn production in Nebraska these three commodities are important at the county level in terms of export value. Exports of other commodities, though, like wheat and pork, also play important roles in counties across the state.

Initial export figures for last year show little growth in U.S. agricultural exports. State-specific figures will not be reported by the USDA until fall, but U.S. agriculture exports last year were largely flat at \$176 billion, a 1% gain. The export value of red meats (beef, pork, and lamb) and corn saw growth, increasing 5% and 9%, respectively (Figure 6). According to the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF) beef exports increased 5% to \$10.45 billion while pork exports surged 6% to hit a record \$8.63 billion. The values of other Nebraska export products were down. Wheat exports were down 2%, animal feed and oil meal were off 10%, and soybeans were off 12%. Thus, the value of trade in 2024 for Nebraska will likely be flat compared to 2023.

FIGURE 6. CHANGES IN THE VALUE OF U.S. AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS, 2020-2024



Source: Rolling Prairie Economics graphic based on data from USDA Economic Research Service

USDA projections for 2025 are mixed. The values of livestock, corn, and sorghum exports are projected to be higher. The values of wheat, feed, and soybeans are projected to be lower. Of course, as this is written, there is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding U.S. trade policy. Already, importing countries have enacted retaliatory tariffs against U.S. agricultural products in response to tariffs enacted by the Trump administration. Any escalation is likely to have consequences for Nebraska agriculture.

APPENDIX: COMMENTARY ON THE ANALYSIS

The production-based approach used in the analysis is patterned after the approach formerly used by the USDA Economic Research Service (USDA-ERS) to allocate export value to states. Each county's share of state production for a commodity is calculated and multiplied by the commodity's total export value for the state. In this way, each county's export value for a commodity can be estimated. USDA-ERS now uses a cash receipts-based methodology for allocating export value. This analysis uses a production-based methodology instead to take advantage of the most recent data available. Commodity cash receipts are only reported at the county level in the Census of Agriculture every five years.

The approach can provide reasonable estimates of the relative importance of exports to the counties, but it does have shortcomings. For example, the value of beef and pork exports includes other costs like processing, transportation, margins, etc. These costs are reflected in the export value attributable to a state and will consequently be reflected in the county value estimates. In addition, the value of beef and pork exports adds value for producers of corn and soybeans, and this value is not reflected in county level values of these commodities. A commodity produced in one county can be sold in another county, and processed in a third county, further dispersing the value of the exports sold. However, even with these shortcomings, the figures can provide a reasonable approximation of the magnitude or importance of various commodity exports.

Nebraska 2023 export data come from the USDA Economic Research Service. County and state-level production data for 2023 for corn and wheat come from USDA-National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). County-level data for wheat production shares came from the 2022 Census of Agriculture. Cattle numbers for 2023, including both cows and calves, also comes from USDA-NASS. County level data for hog numbers was not available, so a receipts-based approach was used using data from 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture.

Production data is not available for all counties across multiple years due to the insufficiency of the data. Thus, some counties may not have production estimates for a specific commodity. To provide for a more complete data set, estimates of a counties proportion of total state production in previous years were used to fill in holes in the 2023 data. The catch-all “other counties” category in the USDA data was reduced to adjust county production numbers to fit within the state total.

The analysis also sought to account for the export of products and byproducts which could be traced to a specific commodity, such as ethanol and distillers dried grains and corn. The export value for these processed goods was apportioned to counties based on counties’ production share of corn. To estimate the value of exports of beef and veal for each county, the share of each county’s cattle inventory of the state’s total inventory was calculated. The estimated share serves as a reasonable proxy of the importance of beef cattle in the county. Each county’s share was then multiplied by the beef and veal export value for the state to estimate the value of beef exports to the county. Using total cattle inventory blends both the cow/calf and feeding sectors of the industry in the figures, however, given the goal of the analysis is to estimate the relative importance exports to Nebraska counties, the approach taken seemed reasonable.



Nebraska Agriculture & International Trade - 2023

By Jay E. Rempe