



CENTER *for* RURAL AFFAIRS

YOUR RURAL NEWS FOR OVER 40 YEARS | LYONS, NEBRASKA | POPULATION 851 | JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2018

REBUILDING SOVEREIGN FOOD SYSTEMS

BY WYATT FRAAS, WYATTF@CFRA.ORG, AND BECKY KEIM

Prior to European colonization efforts, the Santee Sioux people in northeast Nebraska were a “food sovereign” nation – they existed in a closed loop system in which they provided for themselves, by their own efforts, from their own land, and without dependence on outside governments and systems. By producing and preserving their own food, the people ensured they had access to abundant sources of healthy food year round.

This closed loop food system was an integral part of Santee Sioux culture, providing sustenance in addition to existing as an essential component of religious

—SEE **FOOD SYSTEMS** ON PAGE 2



The Santee Sioux people in northeast Nebraska have a desire to rebuild a sovereign food system, creating a healthier community, revitalizing traditional foods, creating a self-sufficient food system, and developing a more resilient Nation. | Photo by Center staff

KEEPING COMMUNITIES VIBRANT THROUGH FORWARD THINKING

BY JORDAN FEYERHERM, JORDANF@CFRA.ORG, AND CARLOS BARCENAS, CARLOS@CFRA.ORG

For hundreds of years, immigration has shaped U.S. history. And, it continues to shape America, especially in rural areas. Jordan and Carlos recently sat down to chat about our inclusion work.

WHAT DOES INCLUSION MEAN?

Inclusion is making sure

everyone in the community has a chance to participate and knows how to participate. It’s welcoming new people to the community and helping them access resources.

We’re talking about biases, so we can successfully navigate those and not let those influence decisions. We know immigration plays a big role in the inclusion conversation, but we’re not only focusing

on ethnic diversity. Instead, maybe the issue is about religion, gender, or generational differences. There is more to diversity than ethnic diversity.

It’s not an agenda to teach one side to work with the other. Our goal is to empower community leaders to identify biases and set

—SEE **INCLUSION** ON PAGE 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2 Note from the editor

4 Whole Farm Revenue Protection: A risk management tool for diversified farms

5 Eberle serves east central small businesses

6 Successful USDA program aids beginning farmers

7 \$665,000 more available in lending capital

8 Passage of tax bill puts rural priorities at risk

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

BY RHEA LANDHOLM, RHEAL@CFRA.ORG

This edition of our newsletter focuses on genuine OPPORTUNITY for all to earn a living, raise a family, and prosper in a rural place.

Brian writes about current opportunities that may be slipping away from rural citizens. As they stand at the time of print, both tax bills in Congress benefit the wealthy and large corporations, while doing little for everyday people and small town development.

We learn about USDA's beginning farmer and rancher program that focuses on training opportunities. A recent report found this program reached 60,000 beginners in nine years.

We are working hand-in-hand with two Native American communities to examine their food systems. Alongside the Santee Sioux Tribe, we released a report in November. Residents are



coming up with opportunities of access to fresh and traditional food, including more gardens and local markets.

We recently were awarded a large grant for lending capital. This adds to the existing capital we have available to loan to small businesses in Nebraska. We are looking to rebalance the scales of opportunity, building inclusive

and vibrant communities.

My colleagues, Jordan and Carlos, sit down to talk about their inclusion work. They explain that inclusion is making sure everyone in a community has an opportunity to participate, and chat about the conversations they have with community leaders.

Lastly, we hear about Daniels Produce, a farm that found Whole Farm Revenue Protection to be an answer to their problems. The program is a new form of crop insurance that allows farmers and ranchers to insure commodities they couldn't insure before, such as small grains crop, fruits and vegetables, even livestock.

Many opportunities are found throughout our work; this is just an example of some of the projects we're working on. Be sure to visit our website for more: www.cfra.org

FOOD SYSTEMS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and other ceremonies. Today, however, the Santee Sioux people face a loss of cultural connection to food, as well as numerous barriers to food access, including unemployment, poverty, and limited food outlets.

According to the U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance, the most accepted definition of "food sovereignty" is the "right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically

sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems."

Santee community members and the Center for Rural Affairs take a look at the Santee Sioux people's food efforts in our latest report, "Digging In: Supporting a Healthy, Sustainable Food Future in Santee Sioux Nation."

For the past several years, Santee residents have been embracing more gardens and local markets

for fresh and traditional foods. The report identifies new ways to bring fresh foods into the community overcoming barriers of income and transportation.

By asserting a desire to rebuild a sovereign food system, they can create a healthier community, revitalize traditional foods, create a self-sufficient food system, and develop a more resilient Nation.

Visit www.cfra.org/DiggingIn Santee to view the report.

PAPER & E-NEWS

This newsletter is available both electronically and in print. To receive it online, sign up at the Center's website, cfra.org, or email us at info@cfra.org.

Editing and layout by Rhea Landholm

Printed at West Point News,
West Point, Nebraska

The Center for Rural Affairs is
an equal opportunity employer and provider.

Address corrections:

You may correct your mailing address by faxing the back page to 402.687.2200, or call the Center for Rural Affairs at 402.687.2100.





ABOVE: In March 2017, we hosted a conversation about inclusion and immigration in York, Nebraska, featuring community leaders from Hastings and Fremont, and staff member Lucia Schulz. | Photo by Rhea Landholm

BELOW: In Schuyler, Nebraska, a group of mainly first generation Latino immigrants formed a committee to start a conversation among Spanish-speaking residents and community leaders. These conversations have helped residents feel like they belong. | Photo by Center staff

INCLUSION, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

up plans to intentionally work on leadership.

HOW DO CONVERSATIONS BEGIN WITH COMMUNITY LEADERS?

It’s not an easy task. We’re encouraging leaders to have uncomfortable, comfortable conversations. How do we move forward in order to make our communities stronger?

We’re finding there are a lot of differences among residents. Differences are what make each community vibrant. We’re trying to explore those and celebrate them.

We are not experts. You cannot change a community without changing the individual, so that conversation has to start at the individual level.

Conversations begin with, “It’s OK to have biases. We all do.” Then we ask, “Is this bias preventing you from becoming a better leader, or from making better decisions that affect your community?” We let the community drive the conversation.

HAS THE NATIONAL POLITICAL CLIMATE AFFECTED THIS WORK?

Yes. The immigration and inclusion conversation has changed in the last year, along with the national political climate. Before the president was elected, we saw the race conversation pushed forward. As soon as Trump was elected, there was almost a complete shift.

People don’t want to talk about it anymore. They are not as curious or open to talking about race, diversity, and inclusion. We also see more people justifying their prejudice and their bias. We see more acts of pushback.

WHAT IS ON THE HORIZON?

Conversations about inclusion are some of the most challenging things, especially in a community climate where the conversation seems to be dominated by one group.

How can we sit down, behind closed doors if needed, to say, “How do we move forward and



challenge our own bias, our biases?”

The demographics are changing in rural America. And, in a lot of rural communities, people are asking how they can keep their small towns vibrant.

Being forward-thinking about how we approach future problems is a big part of keeping rural areas vibrant.



Daniels Produce workers harvest sweet corn to be sold at farmers markets and grocery stores. Owners of Daniels Produce use Whole Farm Revenue Protection to insure revenue from crops that are not covered under traditional crop insurance. | Photo submitted

WHOLE FARM REVENUE PROTECTION: A RISK MANAGEMENT TOOL FOR DIVERSIFIED FARMS

BY CORA FOX, CORAF@CFRA.ORG

Daniels Produce found Whole Farm Revenue Protection to be an answer to a problem many diversified producers face: the inability to receive crop insurance coverage for a variety of crops they grow. With the help of their crop insurance agent, Daniels Produce is now able to insure all of their crops – minimizing risk and providing greater security within their farming operation.

FARMERS MANAGE RISK

Farming involves risk from weather, prices, and a host of oth-

er sources. Many farmers are able to manage some of that risk with crop insurance. Until recently, crop insurance hasn't been available to every farmer. Prior to 2014, many diversified farmers and ranchers were unable to insure their fruits, vegetables, or livestock because individual insurance plans were either too costly or did not exist for that crop in their area. This changed in 2014 when Whole Farm Revenue Protection became available.

DANIELS PRODUCE INSURES VEGGIES

Daniels Produce is owned and

operated by Andy and Tannie Daniels in Columbus, Nebraska, and is the culmination of more than four decades of hard work and ingenuity.

The operation grows almost 600 acres of fresh market vegetables including sweet corn, cucumbers, zucchini, cabbage, peppers, squash, and more. The fresh produce is sold through farmers markets, produce vendors, and grocery stores throughout Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri, Texas, and Florida.

Like many other farmers, the

—SEE [WHOLE FARM](#) ON PAGE 5

WHAT IS WHOLE FARM REVENUE PROTECTION?

The majority of crop insurance in the United States covers just four crops: corn, soybeans, wheat, and cotton. For producers of other commodities – such as peppers and squash – insurance coverage has been limited. Whole Farm Revenue Protection is a crop insurance product that allows a farmer or rancher to insure the entire revenue for their operation, covering the revenue of those other commodities.

Owners of diversified operations can use Whole Farm Revenue Protection as an alternative or in combination with Multi-Peril Crop Insurance or other individualized crop insurance plans, as it allows farmers and ranchers to insure commodities they couldn't insure before – small grains crop, fruits and vegetables, even livestock – as long as there is a history of revenue.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

EBERLE SERVES EAST CENTRAL SMALL BUSINESSES

BY LIZ DAEHNKE

The Center for Rural Affairs recently hired Craig Eberle, of Bradshaw, Nebraska, as a small business loan specialist.

Eberle's role is to work with new and existing small businesses to help them develop business plans, obtain funding, and receive training.

"I look forward to working with small businesses; helping them either expand their existing business, or start a new business," he said. "It's very rewarding to work with individuals who live and work in rural Nebraska."

Eberle brings 18 years of agricultural, consumer, commercial, and residential lending experience to the Center's small business program, the Rural Enterprise Assistance Project (REAP). Eberle was most recently assistant direc-



Craig Eberle

tor and business loan officer at the Southeast Nebraska Development District.

Gene Rahn, interim REAP staff manager and senior loan specialist, said Eberle will be a valuable asset to the team.

"Craig brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the Center

for Rural Affairs," he said. "He is working on getting to know his region and the individuals involved with small business activities in east central Nebraska."

Eberle serves the east central region of Nebraska including Boone, Butler, Colfax, Dodge, Garfield, Greeley, Hall, Hamilton, Howard, Merrick, Nance, Platte, Polk, Saunders, Seward, Sherman, Washington, Wheeler, Valley, and York counties.

Eberle grew up near Bradshaw, Nebraska, where his family raised hogs, corn, and soybeans. He recently returned to the area with his wife, to raise their four-year-old son and one-year-old daughter, and to help on the family farm.

He can be contacted at his home office outside of Bradshaw at 402.736.4417 or craige@cfra.org.

WHOLE FARM, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Daniels family felt existing crop insurance options weren't fitting the unique needs of their operation.

Whole Farm Revenue Protection was the right fit for Daniels Produce because of the highly diversified nature of their operation. They had previously found it difficult to find crop insurance policies that fit their operation and provided adequate coverage in case of hail, drought, or any other natural disaster that would cause yield loss.

Though the Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program was available, the Daniels did not feel the basic coverage, similar to that of catastrophic level of insurance coverage, was the right option for their operation. The Noninsured

Crop Disaster Assistance Program provides coverage for 50 to 65 percent of production on the farm, as opposed to Whole Farm Revenue Protection, which provides coverage levels between 50 and 85 percent.

Daniels Produce qualified for the highest subsidy level with Whole Farm Revenue Protection due to their highly diversified operation that exceeds the three-commodity minimum.

Whole Farm Revenue Protection is a viable insurance option for many farmers and ranchers in Nebraska, like the Daniels family, and across the United States. It is important producers are aware of all crop insurance options and have the choice to determine what

product best suits their individual needs.

CAN YOUR OPERATION BENEFIT?

To learn more about the program and determine if it is a fit for you, contact Cora at 402.687.2100 ext. 1012 or coraf@cfra.org. Or visit: www.cfra.org/whole-farm-revenue-protection

Whole Farm Revenue Protection was authorized by the 2014 farm bill. The Center for Rural Affairs supported this change to make crop insurance more widely available to diversified farms. If you are interested in learning how you can support this and other risk management options for diversified farmers, get in touch with us.



Beginning farmers tour Fox Run Farms near Brainard, Nebraska, and learn about growing vegetables. According to a recent report, USDA's Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program reached 60,000 beginners in nine years. | Photo by Rhea Landholm

SUCCESSFUL USDA PROGRAM AIDS BEGINNING FARMERS

BY WYATT FRAAS, WYATTF@CFRA.ORG

The 2008 farm bill introduced U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) first – and so far only – program focused on the next generation of farmers: the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program. The Center for Rural Affairs was a leader in designing, writing, and winning the program. A new report documents the success of the program in offering training opportunities to new farmers and ranchers.

The report, "Cultivating the Next Generation," was released by the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition in October 2017 as the first evaluation of the program's impacts.

The release is timely, as the 2018 farm bill approaches and as USDA programs receive critical review. It is also timely to the state of U.S. agriculture, as many young people and returning military veterans consider careers in agriculture at the same time many senior farmers reach the end of their careers.

Interest in farming is strong among beginners. We hear from beginners, as well as retiring farmers and ranchers, each day who are looking for opportunities

and searching for solutions to farm transition.

The program funds organizations to conduct training activities for new farmers and ranchers. During the past nine years, 250 projects have reached some 60,000 beginners. Half of those projects have focused on audiences that USDA has historically not served well, such as Native Americans, Blacks, women, and ethnic minorities. Nearly all projects include business management training, skills that previous generations of farmers largely had to learn on the job.

Surveys and interviews with project leaders, as well as project reports, provided in-depth information on what worked across the country. Among the findings were that farmer-to-farmer mentoring and information sharing were very effective; helping new farmers create networks of peers and advisors was valuable; and one-on-one advising addressed specific needs.

Organizations also benefited from the program. Many developed tools and resources that are now widely shared; with a majority still available. The Center for Rural Affairs, for example, led one

project (with three partners), and has participated in six other projects from coast to coast.

Key to this infrastructure growth was the structure of the program. Community-based organization participation was a high priority: 56 percent of projects were led by organizations, and 40 percent were led by land-grant universities. Partnerships are required, which joins the strengths of several organizations and creates lasting networks. The program required 25 percent of funds to reach underserved and socially-disadvantaged farmers; over half of the funding served these audiences.

The report noted several recommendations for improving the program. These included suggestions to project leaders to use farmers more in project development stages and to continue farmer-to-farmer teaching strategies. USDA is advised to help organizations track their participants beyond three years and to provide more opportunities for project leaders to learn from each other.

The report is available at: <http://sustainableagriculture.net/publications/bfrdp/>

\$665,000 MORE AVAILABLE IN LENDING CAPITAL

BY BRIAN DEPEW, BRIAND@CFRA.ORG

Recently, we learned of a \$665,000 grant awarded to our Rural Investment Corporation for lending capital. The Rural Investment Corporation is a subsidiary of the Center for Rural Affairs that is certified as a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI).

The award comes from the U.S. Department of Treasury CDFI Fund. This was our first ever application to the CDFI Fund for loan capital. We were among 303 CDFIs who were awarded \$208.7 million to increase lending and investment activity in low-income and economically-distressed communities across the nation.

We won the award in a very competitive field where applications far exceeded dollars available. This award will provide attractive lending capital for small business lending in rural Nebraska.

CDFI financing lags in Nebraska, especially in rural areas. To answer this need, we created the



Our small business programs have helped Rachel Liester, owner of Red Road Herbs Retreat & Learning Center, LLC, with one-on-one counseling and microloans for training, marketing, repairs, gap financing, and ongoing business expenses. | Photo by Kylie Kai

Rural Investment Corporation and were certified in 2013. Since, more than \$5.7 million has been loaned through the CDFI.

In a world facing increased capital concentration, community led efforts to rebalance the scales of capital are increasingly important to building inclusive and vibrant communities. That's what this work is about.

The future of the Rural Investment Corporation includes expanded small business lending as well as exploration of lending in other sectors of need in rural places.

Small business loans up to \$150,000 are available to small businesses in rural Nebraska. Visit www.cfra.org/reap for more information on lending services.

TAX BILL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

of four. In rural areas, these cuts and coverage losses could imperil small town hospitals that operate on thin margins.

CUTS TO CORPORATE INCOME TAX PERMANENT; CUTS FOR INDIVIDUALS TEMPORARY

The final bill cuts corporate tax rates from 35 percent to 21 percent, and makes the cut permanent. For individuals, the final bill lowers rates and increases the standard deduction. However, the bill also eliminates the personal

exemption and caps the deduction for state and local taxes at \$10,000. The final impact on each household will be determined by how changes to deductions and credits apply to each particular situation. Some low and middle income households are expected to see an actual tax increase as a result of the bill. Furthermore, cuts for individuals expire after 2025, while corporate tax cuts remain in place.

These are just a few of the provisions that will affect rural people and small towns. We believe the

final bill was hastily written and benefits the very richest individuals and corporations too much, while doing too little for everyday people and small town development.

There are innovative changes to our tax code worth considering. The Center supports proposals that use the tax code to promote investment in employer-owned small businesses, beginning farmers, and small town infrastructure. We will continue to look for opportunities to create a more just tax system that works for everyday people and rural places.

**Save the date:** Answering the Call: Veteran Farmer Conference is March 24 in Hastings, Neb.

FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PASSAGE OF TAX BILL PUTS RURAL PRIORITIES AT RISK

BY BRIAN DEPEW, BRIAND@CFRA.ORG

The tax bill secured final passage just as we went to press. The Center opposed the bill and we called on Congress to return the bill to committee for further debate and deliberation. In our initial review of the bill, a few provisions give us pause, including:

TAX CUT FOR WEALTHIEST ESTATES

Under current law, a married couple can pass on \$11 million of assets in their estate without paying any estate tax. The final bill that was approved will double the exemption to \$22 million per couple. Even under current law, only 0.2 percent of estates pay any estate tax. Just 28 estates in our home state of Nebraska were sub-

ject to the tax in the last year.

Congressional leaders tout the estate tax roll back as a boon for small businesses and family farmers. In fact, it is a cut for the wealthiest individuals, and allows for a continued consolidation of wealth.

TAX BILL TRIGGERS AUTOMATIC CUTS

Under existing budget sequestration rules, if Congress takes no action following the passage of the tax bill, countless federal programs could see automatic budget cuts as soon as 2018.

For example, \$3.8 billion would be cut from farm bill programs including conservation, beginning farmer, and small town infrastructure programs. The Center will

support congressional action to prevent automatic cuts to these programs that small towns and family farmers rely on.

HEALTH CARE PROGRAMS TARGETED

The final bill could trigger \$25 billion in cuts to Medicare. Furthermore, by ending the individual mandate for health insurance, an expected 13 million low-income Americans will drop health coverage, leading to major reductions in tax credits designed to help working adults afford health insurance.

In our home state of Nebraska, it is estimated that the change will cause insurance premiums in the individual market to rise by more than \$3,000 per year for a family