



# Nebraska Farm Bureau Discussion Guide

Each year, Farm Bureau creates questions to be used in a Discussion Meet competition. This competition is evaluated on an exchange of ideas and information on a pre-determined topic. Participants build basic discussion skills, develop a keen understanding of important agricultural issues, and explore how groups can pool knowledge to reach consensus and solve problems.

Use the information and articles provided to think about and answer the following questions:



## Question 1

International trade is important to agriculture. We must continue working to build strong relations with existing customers while seeking out new trade partners to strengthen market stability. How can we enhance existing, and establish new and diverse foreign trading partners?



### ARTICLE 1

USMCA Takes Effect: Welcome News for Struggling Farmers

[VIEW ARTICLE](#)

### ARTICLE 2

Japan-U.S. trade deal will be good for Nebraska, officials say

[VIEW ARTICLE](#)

*\*View full articles starting on page 8 or click button to link to article.*

## Discussion Starters

1. Who are the United States' biggest trading partners?
2. What trade agreement did the U.S. most recently enhance? What did our trading partners agree to?
3. Which country is a relatively new trading partner for Nebraska?
4. Why would Nebraska want to seek out new trading partners for its products?



## Question 2

Connectivity underpins the modern economy. What mix of investment and policy initiatives can provide reliable broadband access to farmers, ranchers, and rural America?



### ARTICLE 1

For Farmers and Ranchers, Rural Internet Is More Crucial than Ever

[VIEW ARTICLE](#)

### ARTICLE 2

Broadband Map Fix Will Reveal Needs

[VIEW ARTICLE](#)

## Discussion Starters

1. Why is high speed connectivity crucial for farmers and ranchers and rural America?
2. What program was established in 2011 to increase broadband services?
3. What steps are Congress and the Nebraska Legislature currently taking towards providing reliable broadband?



**After you have answered these two questions discuss as a chapter/class:**

1. What can you individually do to address these challenges (international trade/broadband) in agriculture?

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2. What can your FFA Chapter do to address these challenges (international trade/broadband) in agriculture?

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# Answer Guide

## Question 1

1. Who are the United States' biggest trading partners?
  - a. *Mexico & Canada*
2. What trade agreement did the U.S. most recently enhance? What did our trading partners agree to?
  - a. *USMCA (United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement)*
  - b. *Canada – Dairy Products, Wheat; Mexico – non-discriminatory grading standards*
3. Which country is a relatively new trading partner for Nebraska?
  - a. *China*
4. Why would Nebraska want to seek out new trading partners for its products?
  - a. *This question can be based on student's interpretation after reading the articles.*

## Question 2

1. Why is high speed connectivity crucial for farmers and ranchers and rural America?
  - a. *Precision agriculture and quality of life, this question can be based on student's interpretation of the articles and personal experiences.*
2. What program was established in 2011 to increase broadband services?
  - a. *Connect America Universal Services program*
3. What steps are Congress and the Nebraska Legislature currently taking towards providing reliable broadband?
  - a. *Creating broadband maps to determine where broadband is needed most.*

## Farm Bureau Policy:

The power of Farm Bureau has always been vested in our grassroots policy development process. That means farmers and ranchers ultimately determine where Farm Bureau stands on agricultural issues. Policy development starts with a member having an idea and sharing it with other farmers and ranchers at the county Farm Bureau. From there, the idea can advance from the county, to the state, and then onto the national level, provided it meets consensus approval from other farm and ranch members along the way. American Farm Bureau and Nebraska Farm Bureau's policy book reflects the opinions of our members relating to agriculture and rural issues.

### **Insert from Nebraska Farm Bureau Policy Book**

**Trade Agreements 7.1.** Our government should insist on strict adherence to bilateral and multilateral trade agreements to which the United States is a party to prevent unfair practices by competing nations and to assure unrestricted access to domestic and world markets. All trade agreements should be continuously monitored and enforced to ensure they result in fair trade. **7.2.** We support the Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) for the president of the United States. **7.3.** We oppose efforts to put in place any sunset provision in free trade agreements. **8.** We support: **8.1.** Entry of the U.S. into the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP); **8.2.** The immediate ratification of the new United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) trade deal; **8.3.** A positive resolution for the United States with China to end the trade war; and **8.4.** Removal of Canadian provincial tariffs on U.S.-produced wine, beer and distilled products.

**RURAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS (2019).** We believe rural areas should have access to affordable and reliable telecommunications services and support the Federal and Nebraska Universal Services' Funds. We oppose diverting dollars from these funds for other non-communication related purposes. We support ways to improve and expand local service options and improve equity in high speed access between rural and urban areas. We support the use of NUSF (Nebraska Universal Service Fund) for both fiber optics and wireless expansion in rural areas; providing at least 25 MB download and at least 3 MB upload speeds. We support accountability and transparency at the Public Service Commission to assure that the companies which are receiving subsidies are using those subsidies to expand rural broadband service and reliable telephone service. We strongly endorse and encourage the maintenance and expansion of the broadband infrastructure in the under-served rural areas of Nebraska with the use of Nebraska Public Power infrastructure. We believe that the funding of the expansion should be jointly funded from the state, federal, and private entity efforts.

# Articles and Sources

## USMCA Takes Effect: Welcome News for Struggling Farmers

American Farm Bureau  
[www.fb.org/newsroom/usmca-takes-effect-welcome-news-for-struggling-farmers](http://www.fb.org/newsroom/usmca-takes-effect-welcome-news-for-struggling-farmers)  
June 30, 2020

The United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) goes into effect tomorrow, at a crucial time for farmers and ranchers struggling to recover from COVID-19 losses and a depressed agricultural economy. The expected \$2 billion annual increase in U.S. agricultural exports and overall increase of \$65 billion in gross domestic product will provide a welcome boost.

USDA estimates COVID-19 contributed to a \$50 billion decline in commodity value alone for 2019, 2020 and 2021 production totals. This does not include all of agriculture’s losses, which would be billions more.

“The launch of the USMCA brings optimism to the country’s farmers and ranchers at a time they need it the most,” said American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall. “We’re grateful for the opportunity to build on the success of the North American Free Trade Agreement, and we’re eager to see the results on America’s farms. It’s important that our neighbors uphold their end of the deal, so the agreement provides a stabilizing force amid the unpredictability of a pandemic in all three countries.”

Under USMCA, Canada will increase quotas on U.S. dairy products, benefitting American dairy farmers by \$242 million. Canada will also treat wheat imports the same as domestic wheat for grading purposes. Mexico has also agreed that all grading standards for ag products will be non-discriminatory. The agreement also enhances science-based trading standards among the three nations.

USMCA is not a magic bullet for all the challenges facing agriculture, however. A University of Florida study shows Mexico gaining ground in imports of produce like tomatoes, strawberries and bell peppers. USMCA does not alter the rules for imports of produce from Mexico. Farm Bureau supports the United States Trade Representative and USDA field hearings to receive grower input on the issue.

“As with all trade agreements, there are some areas that still need attention,” said Duvall. “We will continue to work with the administration to level the playing field for fruit and vegetable growers facing increased competition from Mexico.”

In 2019, Mexico was our nation’s largest overall trading partner followed by Canada.

That same year Canada was America’s number one trading partner for agricultural products followed by Mexico.

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## Japan-U.S. trade deal will be good for Nebraska, officials say

Lincoln Journal Star  
[journalstar.com/business/agriculture/japan-u-s-trade-deal-will-be-good-for-nebraska-officials-say/article\\_9a164140-f430-5a4c-9cc1-a66ef8aa950a.html](http://journalstar.com/business/agriculture/japan-u-s-trade-deal-will-be-good-for-nebraska-officials-say/article_9a164140-f430-5a4c-9cc1-a66ef8aa950a.html)  
August 26, 2019

Nebraska officials cheered the news that the U.S. and Japan have reached a deal in principle on trade.

President Donald Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced the deal Sunday at the G-7 summit in France. It would cut Japanese tariffs on most agricultural products while delaying any additional U.S. tariffs on Japanese automobile imports.

The deal, assuming it is finalized, will be good news for Nebraska farmers, as Japan is the top export destination for many of the state’s agricultural products.

Japan is Nebraska’s fourth-largest export market overall, but it is No. 1 for beef and pork and No. 2 for corn.

“While we’re anxious to learn more of the specifics of the pending bilateral U.S.-Japan deal, any agreement that opens the door for greater market access and puts our farmers and ranchers on a more competitive playing field with producers around the globe is major step forward,” Steve Nelson, president of the Nebraska Farm Bureau, said in a statement.

Nelson said U.S. farmers have been “on the outside looking in” since the U.S. chose not to be a part of the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement, and any deal that offers more access to Japanese markets is “great news for Nebraska farmers and ranchers,” Nelson said.

Gov. Pete Ricketts said in a news release that Nebraska’s trade relationship with Japan is one of its most important.

“Getting this trade deal done and lowering tariffs for our beef and pork is vital for Nebraska’s farmers and ranchers as well as our Japanese customers,” he said.

Sen. Deb Fischer said in a news release that the deal “would bring great opportunities to Nebraska farmers and ranchers, and I’m pleased to see President Trump working to fulfill his promises to provide them with more certainty.”

## **For Farmers and Ranchers, Rural Internet Is More Crucial than Ever**

Government Technology

[www.govtech.com/network/For-Farmers-and-Ranchers-Rural-Internet-is-More-Crucial-than-Ever.html](http://www.govtech.com/network/For-Farmers-and-Ranchers-Rural-Internet-is-More-Crucial-than-Ever.html)

March 19, 2018

(TNS) — Broadband internet access is more crucial now than ever before for ranchers and farmers in Northeast Missouri, and finding ways to reach underserved rural areas in the region are top priorities for stakeholders from the local area all the way to Washington, D.C.

Marion County Farm Bureau President Joe Kendrick said farmers and ranchers depend on internet access for various tasks every day, including Global Positioning System (GPS) guidance for farm equipment and vital data collection and transmission. For organizations and providers at the local and state levels, expanding high-speed internet is mentioned as a top priority. But stakeholders differ on what speed level is suitable and which methods would work best for each region doing without access.

Farm Bureau members appealed for more emphasis on rural broadband during a recent Capitol Connection. Kendrick said Representatives and Senators were receptive to the topics that affect agriculture and residents in rural areas.

“I was impressed,” Kendrick said. “When we said we were from Farm Bureau, we had their attention.”

Expanding access to high-speed internet in rural areas is among the top three priorities for the Missouri Farm Bureau. Kendrick said that the actual data speeds are a point of contention, because there is a wide discrepancy between available service in metropolitan areas compared to some proposals for rollouts in rural areas.

Some discussions called for a 10-megabyte download, one-megabyte download speed, which Kendrick compared to traveling 25 mph down the highway; Missouri Farm Bureau is advocating for a faster 25-megabyte/three-megabyte option — which he said is still measurably slower than the service available in metropolitan areas.

In the field, Kendrick and other farmers regularly collect data like soil conditions, dew points, temperature and wind speed before sending it to a cloud-based system. From there, they make real-time decisions regarding factors like seed population and fertilizer rates — Kendrick said the data needs to be collected and accessed quickly for successful production in a global agricultural economy.

“It’s very important because more and more of what we do is internet-based,” he said.

### **A FEDERAL PROGRAM MOVES CLOSER TO MAKING CONNECTIONS IN RURAL AMERICA**

In 2011, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) established the Connect America Universal Services program aimed at identifying and connecting rural regions of America lacking high-speed broadband internet service. Mark Wigfield, with the FCC, said the second phase of the Connect America program will consist of a nationwide auction in July that will cover regions commission officials selected based on weighted criteria like associated costs, individual need for services and efficiency.

Providers from those regions will compete with one another to determine which regions will receive voice and broadband internet service. Wigfield stressed that while there are more areas in need of access than available funds, a second auction will follow in 2019. The FCC determined in 2013 that about 23 million Americans did not have the infrastructure necessary to support high-speed broadband internet. FCC Chairman Ajit Pai has been dedicated to moving the project forward, following a successful year of collecting data accurate down to a census or “city-block” level, Wigfield said.

### **HIGH-SPEED CONNECTIONS BEING MADE IN RALLS COUNTY**

Lynn Hodges, CEO/Manager with Ralls County Electric Cooperative, said that Ralls Technologies has been focused on bringing high-speed internet access to customers for more than 15 years. He said wireless and satellite solutions are sometimes the most viable option due to terrain limitations. Ralls Technologies offers high-speed internet, high-definition TV and digital phone services throughout Northeast Missouri, and Hodges said they are focused on leveling the playing field for high-speed internet access in rural regions with metropolitan areas.

“There are providers [in urban areas], there’s competition for providers, but there’s a lack of both providers and competition in rural America,” he said.

Hodges was recently elected to the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC) Board of Directors during its annual meeting in Nashville, Tenn., pointing out the group works to lower energy costs, develop infrastructure for rural customers across the nation and work on new technologies for internet, power and TV customers. He said his experience in bringing a fiber-optic system to rural customers that’s designed for the next 40 or 50 years influenced his decision to run for the NRTC board seat.

“We have been a nationwide leader in pushing fiber out,” he said. “We actually are in our ninth year of providing fiber optic services. ... My focus is trying to help them with what I know about fiber deployment in rural settings.”

Although some regions and terrain make fiber optic installations cost-prohibitive, NRTC provides satellite and wireless services. Hodges said he recognized the importance of ensuring high-speed internet access for ranchers and farmers in the area — for present-day commerce and for passing down the tradition of agriculture to future generations.

“They’re trying to market their goods to more of a world economy instead of a local economy, so that broadband access means a lot to them regarding their business, but it’s also about quality of life,” he said. “Their ability to access the world of the internet goes a long way toward helping retain those folks and keep them in a rural setting.”

## **Broadband Map Fix Will Reveal Needs**

American Farm Bureau

**[www.fb.org/newsroom/broadband-map-fix-will-reveal-needs](http://www.fb.org/newsroom/broadband-map-fix-will-reveal-needs)**

December 20, 2019

The House of Representatives passed Farm Bureau-backed legislation that will improve the accuracy of broadband coverage maps to better identify needs.

The Broadband Deployment Accuracy and Technological Availability (DATA) Act (H.R. 4229) requires broadband providers to report more specific data to create a significantly more accurate and granular National Broadband Map. With more precise data, federal agencies can target funding to areas that need it most.

“Broadband is a necessity and many rural areas still don't have access to it or are underserved. With limited funding, it's critical we target resources where they are needed most,” said American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall. “Farm Bureau thanks members of the House who worked diligently to pass this legislation and who are committed to delivering broadband access to rural communities. We strongly encourage the Senate to take up this issue without delay.”

Current broadband coverage maps are inadequate because they rely on census block data to determine which areas are covered. Census blocks are too large in rural and remote locations to accurately determine need. If even one household in a given census block is reported by a provider as being served, then the entire block is considered served. Census blocks larger than 2 square miles comprise more than 64% of the U.S. land area, so every rural area is impacted by this problem in some way.

In addition to creating more accurate maps, the bill requires the FCC to establish an audit process that ensures internet service providers are providing accurate data used to create the maps. It also would create a user-friendly process to challenge the data.



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: December 16, 2018

CONTACT: Craig Head, vice president issue management, (402) 432-4723

## **Report Finds \$1 Billion Hit to Nebraska from Retaliatory Tariffs, Farm Bureau Offers Path Forward on Trade**

KEARNEY, NEB. – A new report from the Nebraska Farm Bureau shows retaliatory tariffs imposed by U.S. trading partners in response to U.S. steel and aluminum tariffs have cut Nebraska farm level revenue between \$700 million and \$1 billion dollars in 2018. The report also shows the retaliatory tariffs have cost the state of Nebraska between \$164 million and \$242 million in lost labor income, in addition to the loss of 4,100 to 6,000 Nebraska jobs. In addition to identifying financial losses, the report “A Path Forward on Trade – Retaliatory Tariffs and Nebraska Agriculture,” also offers specific actions to eliminate retaliatory tariffs and secure long-term access for agriculture and other U.S. products into international markets.

“International trade is critical to agriculture. In most years the value of agriculture exports will equal roughly 30 percent of the total agriculture commodity receipts or sales for the state of Nebraska. Retaliatory tariffs make our U.S. products more expensive for international customers, meaning they buy less or buy from someplace else. This report provides a clear picture of how much we’ve lost due to those tariffs and the need to improve our trade relations,” said Steve Nelson, Nebraska Farm Bureau president.

The economic analysis in the report specifically examines the impacts of retaliatory tariffs on corn, soybeans, and hogs to the Nebraska economy. Beef is absent from the analysis as the major customers for U.S. beef like South Korea and Japan have not been subject to U.S. steel and aluminum tariffs and therefore have not implemented retaliatory tariffs.

“Fortunately for Nebraska, U.S. beef exports are actually projected to exceed \$8 billion in 2018, a record high. The continued strong demand for our beef helps mitigate the losses in other commodities,” said Jay Rempe, Nebraska Farm Bureau senior economist and co-author of the report.

Using June 1, 2018 cash prices at Hastings, Nebraska, the analysis found retaliatory tariffs dampened corn prices by 14 to 21 cents per bushel and soybean prices by 95 cents to \$1.54 per bushel. Similarly, the analysis found Nebraska pork price reductions in the range of \$17.81 to \$18.80 per head due to the tariffs.

“The total loss in Nebraska farm revenues due to the retaliatory tariffs ranges from \$695 million to \$1.026 billion so far in 2018,” said Rempe. “That’s roughly 11 to 16 percent of the export values of Nebraska agriculture goods in 2017.”

In terms of the broader Nebraska economy, the analysis further shows that when direct farm losses are combined with the state’s labor income losses, the total economic loss to the state of Nebraska from retaliatory tariffs climbs between \$859 million and \$1.2 billion.

“To put a \$1.2 billion loss into perspective, every person in the state of Nebraska would need to contribute \$632 to cover that volume of lost dollars. That’s a significant hit to our state’s economy,” said Rempe.

The report also recommends specific actions to eliminate retaliatory tariffs and improve market access for agriculture and other U.S. goods. Those actions include:

1. Securing Congressional Approval and Finalization of the U.S., Mexico, Canada Agreement (USMCA).
2. Elimination of U.S. Imposed Steel and Aluminum Tariffs.
3. Swift Action to Secure a Free Trade Agreement with Japan.
4. U.S. Inclusion in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) or Securing Bi-lateral Trade Agreements with CPTPP Nations.
5. Securing a Trade Agreement with the European Union.
6. Use of a Multi-National Approach with U.S. Trade Partners to Address China.

“These actions define a path forward in remedying the losses we’ve seen from the retaliatory tariffs imposed by our trading partners, but also present an opportunity to improve trade relations with our closest allies,” said Jordan Dux, Nebraska Farm Bureau’s director of national affairs and co-author of the report.

According to the report, finalization of the USMCA presents an opportunity to continue productive relations with the two largest consumers of Nebraska agricultural goods in Canada and Mexico. It also suggests the elimination of U.S. steel and aluminum tariffs will present an opportunity for the U.S. to get the most out of the USMCA agreement while opening the door for more positive trade relations with the European Union.

“Japan presents a major opportunity for Nebraska beef. However, because the U.S. is not a part of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) Nebraska beef producers stand to lose as part of that agreement has Japan lowering beef tariffs for CPTPP partner countries, like Canada. Nebraska beef producers will be at a major disadvantage in paying higher tariffs than our competitors unless the U.S. joins or secures similar bi-lateral agreements with these CPTPP member countries,” said Dux.

The report also suggests the collective actions open the door for a multi-lateral approach for the U.S. and its trading partners to push China on trade negotiations.

“By building a coalition with China’s neighbors and largest customers, the U.S. creates a path forward in trying to change China’s behavior when it comes to theft of intellectual property and failure of China to meet World Trade Organization rules and standards. China remains a major market for U.S. goods, especially soybeans. We need to hold China accountable and by using a multi-national approach improves our chances in moving China in the right direction,” said Dux.

The Nebraska Farm Bureau is a grassroots, state-wide organization dedicated to supporting farm and ranch families and working for the benefit of all Nebraskans through a wide variety of educational, service and advocacy efforts. More than 61,000 families across Nebraska are Farm Bureau members, working together to achieve rural and urban prosperity as agriculture is a key fuel to Nebraska’s economy. For more information about Nebraska Farm Bureau and agriculture, visit [www.nefb.org](http://www.nefb.org).

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: October 11, 2019

CONTACT: Craig Head, vice president issue management, (402) 432-4723

## **Farm Bureau Focused on Boosting Reliable, High-Speed Internet Access for Rural Nebraska**

LINCOLN, NEB. – Ensuring all Nebraskans can access reliable, high-speed internet service is the focal point of Nebraska Farm Bureau's engagement with the Nebraska Rural Broadband Task Force. As the Task Force nears a November deadline for making recommendations to the Legislature on how to improve broadband service in rural areas, Nebraska Farm Bureau offered a series of suggestions to the group.

"Approximately one out of every ten Nebraskans report significant limitations with their internet service, while just over half of rural Nebraskans have internet service with download and upload speeds that meet the federal "broadband" definition," said Steve Nelson, Nebraska Farm Bureau president. "It's critical to the future of Nebraska that we make strides in improving broadband deployment statewide. We can't afford to fall behind."

Among Nebraska Farm Bureau's recommendations to the Task Force are:

- Requiring internet service providers to meet the basic federal definition of "broadband" (25 Megabytes per second download and 3 Megabytes per second upload) to receive taxpayer support for broadband development or to be shielded from subsidized competition.
- Recognition by the Public Service Commission (PSC) that fiber deployment might not be the most efficient and affordable way for rural residents to receive high-speed internet service and encouragement of the PSC to be open to evolving technology to address cost and logistical problems for rural broadband deployment.
- Support for PSC to use a grant process for broadband project support and support for public-private partnerships that encourage collaboration between internet carriers, businesses, farms, ranches, cooperatives, as well as schools, municipalities, counties, and public power providers.
- Support for the development of cooperatives for the sole purpose of broadband deployment.
- Support for allocating Nebraska Universal Service Fund (NUSF) dollars to telecommunications companies that experienced damaged infrastructure due to severe weather events and natural disasters if replacement dollars are used to ensure internet services meet the federal "broadband" definition for download and upload speeds.
- Emphasis on the need for more accurate data to ensure precise mapping of broadband services, given such maps are used to identify underserved areas and subsequently receive priority for federal funds for broadband improvement.
- Support for the establishment of a Subcommittee on Agriculture within the Task Force given the importance of broadband to agriculture and the state's economy.

"Improving and expanding broadband isn't just vital to farmers and ranchers wanting to use new technologies. It's vital to our communities, all rural businesses, and future economic growth. It's critical to our children's educational opportunities. It's important to the next generation of rural Nebraskans, as young people won't return to rural Nebraska without it," said Nelson. "Access to high-speed, high quality internet has become a necessity."

The Nebraska Rural Broadband Task Force was created by the Legislature's passage and Governor Ricketts signing of LB 994 in 2018. The bill was introduced by Sen. Curt Friesen of Henderson. The Task Force was charged with reviewing issues related to the availability, adoption, and affordability of broadband services in rural Nebraska and is required to present its recommendations and findings to the Legislature by November 1.

The Nebraska Farm Bureau is a grassroots, state-wide organization dedicated to supporting farm and ranch families and working for the benefit of all Nebraskans through a wide variety of educational, service, and advocacy efforts. More than 58,000 families across Nebraska are Farm Bureau members, working together to achieve rural and urban prosperity as agriculture is a key fuel to Nebraska's economy. For more information about Nebraska Farm Bureau and agriculture, visit [www.nefb.org](http://www.nefb.org).

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