

Fields of Green

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Spring Update

Spring is here and everything is starting up again whether it be field work, calving, machinery prep, or tax season work the pace has sure picked back up here on the farm. Right now we are in the middle of calving so that is keeping us busy most days but before too long we will be back in the field planting the 2017 crop. Not much has changed on the farm since the last update. One change was in November Wade was elected to the Shickley Village Board.

We are just weeks away from starting at another one of our "40 Chances to



(View of our farm after a wet spell during calving season)

plant a crop" (as Howard Buffet would say) and make it our best one yet.

As always if there is something you need me or another one of us to

address on or about your farm feel free to reach out or stop by our Shop/Office if you are in the area.

The Hats a Farmer Wears

Anytime when reading articles online you come across lots of list type articles. I've often heard in the past that a farmer has to wear many different hats to be successful in agriculture. Here are just a few of the many jobs a farmer has to take on throughout the year: Agronomist, Machinery Equipment Operator, Precision Ag Specialist, Mechanic, Feed Truck Driver, Inventory Specialist, Plumber, Electrician,

Accountant, Financial Analyst, Bookkeeper, Carpenter, Welder, Herdsman, Materials Purchaser, Veterinarian, Engineer, Animal Nutritionist, Resource Conservation Tech, Meteorologist, Grain Merchandiser, Truck Driver, Caretaker, Landscape Tech, and Negotiator in Chief.

Along with these roles a farmer must also be fluent in several other industries we deal in

every day in such as the banking, insurance, seed, fertilizer, chemical and machinery industry.

In our line of work one must be a jack of all trades to be successful. The more areas we are fluent in the better off we are and the less we have to outsource. On our farm though we have started to specialize more so that each team member can become more efficient and effective with our time.

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FYI

We no longer have a landline phone in our shop. The best way to get ahold of one of us is on our cell phones or through email.

Do you have a topic in agriculture you would like to know more about? Contact Wade so he can write an article on it for a future newsletter.

If anyone has any interest in following the progress on your farm throughout the growing season please send Wade an email at walterswade@outlook.com and we will e-mail you pictures periodically.

Nebraska Real Estate and Tax News

As I have written in previous newsletters property taxes continue to be a top issue for us here in rural Nebraska and several groups are working to get a solution passed this legislative session to get some property tax relief to landowners and homeowners alike. It looks less and less likely though every day that we will get comprehensive reform this year. It seems that senators are more worried about reducing income taxes of top earners this year than property taxes even though the state doesn't have extra money laying around to cut either. Property tax reform will be a tough one to pass through to get any meaningful relief because of the fact that education funding is tied so closely

to property tax collections here. Unless the state finds another way to fund education they will not fix our issues here. Valuations steadily creep up and since levies are nowhere near their caps for school districts they will just keep raising their tax levies to keep their budgets growing. So the state will need to step in with some sort of funding solution if we are to ever have any lower property taxes here. The Nebraska Farm Bureau has done a lot of analysis of this issue and I will share a few of their graphics they have put out this spring showing the high tax problems we have here in Nebraska compared to other states.

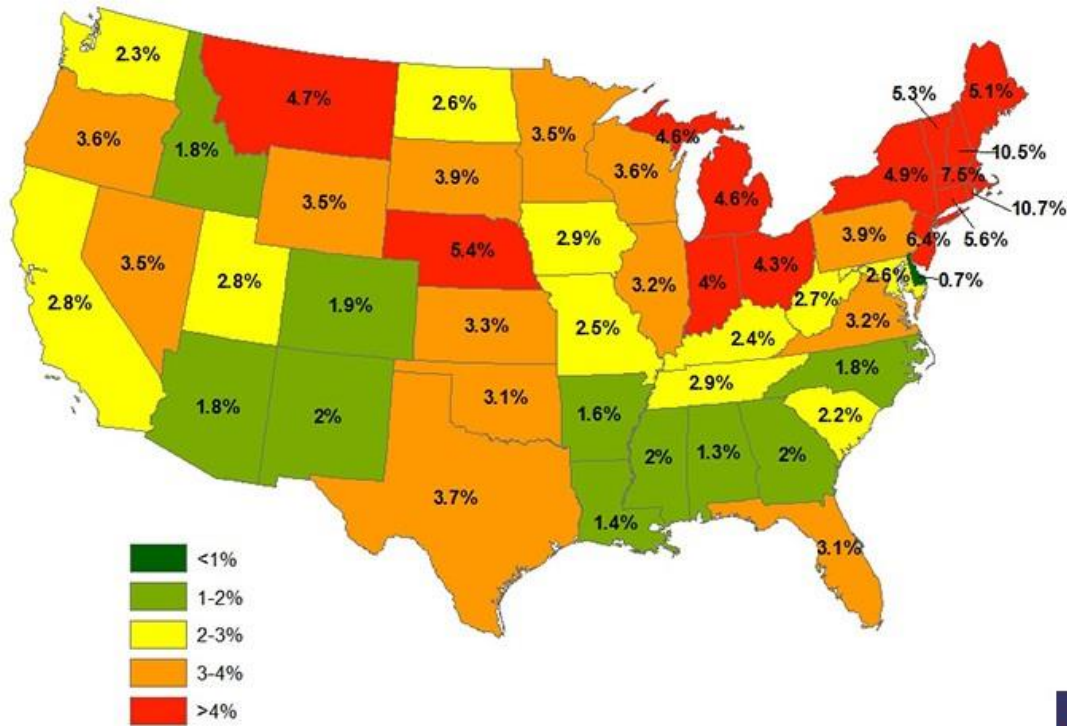
Speaking of land valuations the University of Nebraska-Lincoln came

out with its Nebraska Farm Real Estate Market Survey on Feb 1st and they have found out that in the Southeast District which Fillmore County is part of land values decreased 9% to an average of \$6,290/acre over the last year. For farm rental rates on pivot irrigated ground they also declined 9% on average across the SE district last year to an average of \$265/acre. The range they listed in their findings was a top end of \$315/acre and a low end of \$225/acre for center pivot irrigated crop ground where landlords own the total irrigation system. The complete survey is available at: <http://agecon.unl.edu/cornhusker-economics/2017/2017-trends-nebraska-farmland-markets>

From Washington to the Farm

As farmers we are always keeping an eye on what is going on in Washington D.C. that could affect us here on the farm. As of now though we are still kind of in a wait and see mode to see what policies the Trump administration will put forth for ag, conservation, and rural development. Congress has started work on the 2018 Farm Bill and there have been a few hearings about it but the inner workings are still widely unknown. We are pleased at the work that they are doing at the EPA to roll back some of the overbearing regulations that had been put in place during the previous administration which could have been detrimental to agricultural producers nationwide. Healthcare is also a big issue we are following. As farmers we are put in a unique position many other Americans are not in that we are self-employed and thus have to provide our own health insurance 100% out of our own pockets. With costs going up every year it takes more and more of our income to purchase health insurance. We are anxiously awaiting any new system that could be put in place there that could help our farmers and other self-employed persons to lower costs.

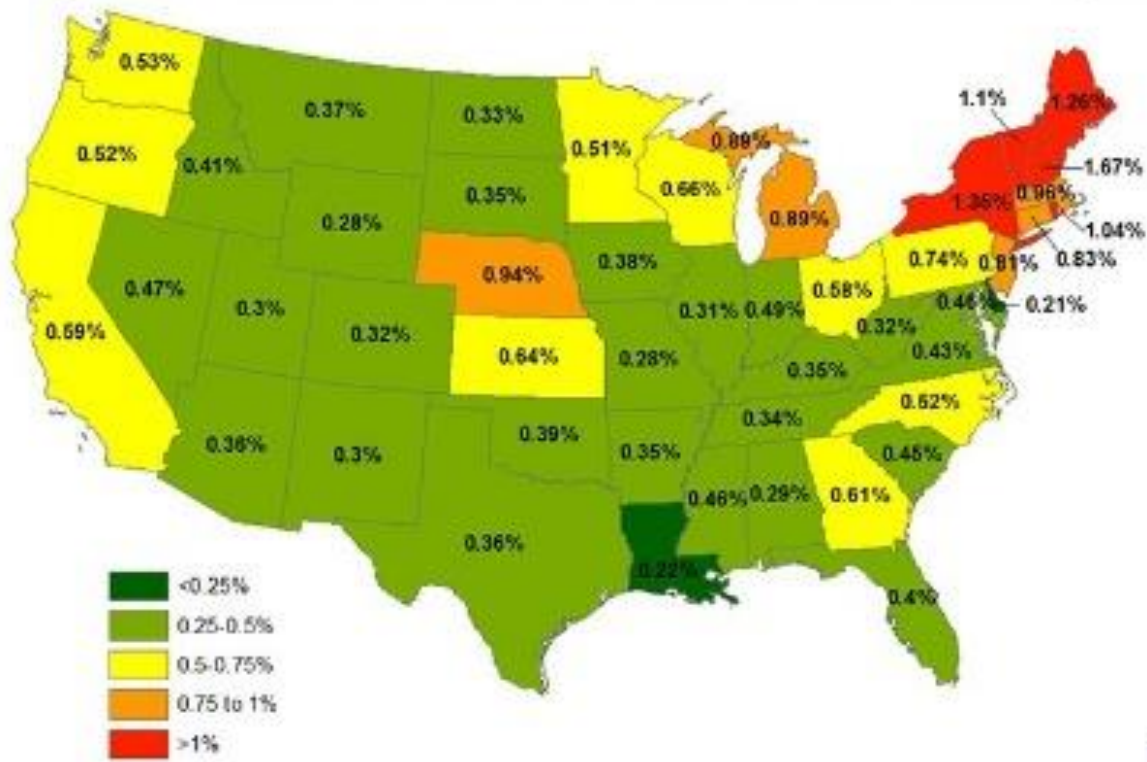
Figure 2. Farm Real Estate Taxes as a Share of Farm Production Expenses, 2015



Source: USDA Economic Research Service Farm Income and Wealth Statistics



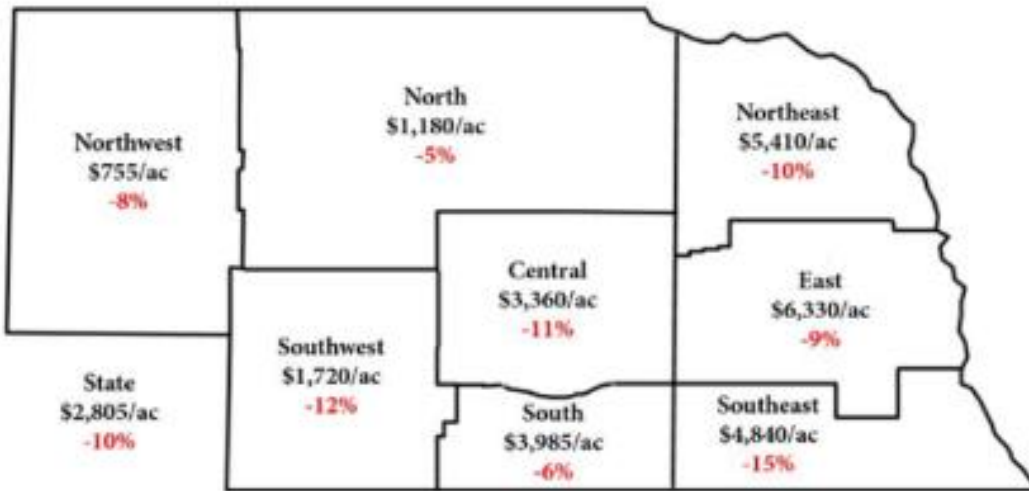
Figure 1. Farm Real Estate Taxes as a Share of Farm Real Estate Values, 2015



Source: USDA Economic Research Service Farm Income and Wealth Statistics



Figure 1. Average Value of Nebraska Farmland, February 1, 2017 and Percent Change From a Year Earlier. **Preliminary**



Source: UNL Nebraska Farm Real Estate Market Developments Surveys, 2016 and 2017.