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## NEWS

### A Letter from the President and CEO: Gratitude and Joy

*By Mike Seyfert, President and CEO*

Dear National Grain and Feed Association Members (NGFA):

As we approach the holiday season, I want to take a moment to express my gratitude to each of you. This season is a time of reflection, appreciation, and joy, and I thank you for putting your trust and investment in NGFA this past year.

There are many areas where NGFA has worked and achieved success on your behalf. You also play a vital role in the success of the industry. NGFA truly is a member-driven organization. The backbone of our strength on your behalf is the 300+ volunteers that serve on the Board, committees and task forces. Your hard work, innovation, and commitment to excellence contribute not only to the success of your business but also to the strength of our industry. Thank you.

The rail challenges on the U.S./Mexico border this past week are an important reminder that even as we look back on 2023, this industry is always on call to feed and fuel this nation and the world regardless of the time of year and we must always be ready to engage on your behalf.

Looking ahead to the new year, I am excited about the possibilities that await us. Even numbered election years always bring new challenges and opportunities. The NGFA staff team stands ready to work on your behalf. Thanks to your investment and support of our first dues increase in 22 years in 2023, we have solidified the financial footing of NGFA for today and the future. Together we will continue to work together to achieve great things for the grain and feed industry in North America. NGFA is privileged to have such dedicated

and passionate members, and I am confident that our collective efforts will lead to even greater success in the coming year.

My wish and prayer for you and your families is for rest, reflection and many good times as you celebrate Christmas and the New Year. As we enjoy the holiday season, let us also remember the bonds that unite us and the achievements that make us proud. Thank you for your trust and partnership in 2023. My sincere best wishes for a very Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and a safe and prosperous 2024.

Warmest regards,



## Looking back on 2023 – An NGFA year in review

NGFA is adopting a new, year-end format for our weekly newsletter to reflect on the previous year. Throughout 2023, NGFA hired several new team members as well as launched new structural changes and internal systems. NGFA leaders and staff look forward to the efficiency and modernity these changes will bring in the new year. In Washington, D.C., NGFA worked with lawmakers and federal agencies to improve soybean grading standards, endorse new feed ingredient regulations and garner support for conservation program reforms, among other issues important to the industry. Meanwhile, NGFA's conferences and events enjoyed large turnouts and excellent programing and support from sponsors, exhibitors and volunteer speakers.

## NGFA and NAEGA called for reopening of rail corridors at Eagle Pass and El Paso

The most recent national issue impacting NGFA members occurred earlier this week when the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) closed international rail crossings at Eagle Pass and El Paso, Texas. CBP announced it would temporarily close the crossings beginning early on Dec. 18 “after observing a recent resurgence of smuggling organizations moving migrants through Mexico via freight trains.”

In a statement issued on Monday, NGFA and the North America Export Grain Association (NAEGA) called for the reopening of the crossings to allow for the immediate passage of trains between the United States and Mexico.

“The North American market and grain trade supply chain are deeply intertwined,” NGFA and NAEGA noted. “The closure of these two crossings is impacting the flow of grain and oilseeds for both human and livestock feed to one of the United States most important export markets and trading partners. According to USDA data rail represents 64 percent of grain and oilseed exports to Mexico, including 15,565,138 MTs of grains and oilseeds exported via rail in 2021 and 3.45 MTs of grains and oilseeds in the third quarter of 2023.” Staff and leaders at both organizations urged CBP to work with the agricultural industry, railroads and other federal partners to develop an “expedient solution that reopens this critical mode of agricultural transportation for the U.S. and North American markets.”

## NGFA gained new team members and partners

**Stephanie See** joined NGFA as vice president, legislative and public affairs. NGFA announced her hiring on Jan. 4.. Stephanie brings 18 years of lobbying experience to NGFA with previous roles at the Association of Equipment Manufacturers, the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions and Associated Builders and Contractors.

**Lauren Thrall** joined NGFA as manager, legal affairs and arbitration on Aug. 14. She helps manage the arbitration caseload as well as the administration of the Trade Rules Committee, Arbitration Appeals Panel, Rail Arbitration Rules Committee and Legal Council. She also assists National Grain and Feed Digital Solutions (NGFDS) and the management of the Barge Digital Transformation (BDT) platform.



**Trent Baker** joined NGFA as Manager, Systems and Office Operations in late October. He most recently worked at the Food Processing Suppliers Association. In this new role, Trent is responsible for all data input and management, overseeing the invoicing of dues, serving as the lead contact for meeting registrations and conferences, and for all administrative activities for the office. He also provides additional administrative support to the arbitration program.



**Mary Hitchcock** assumed the title Vice President, Systems and Office Operations. She will maintain her responsibilities with both the arbitration program and National Grain and Feed Digital Solutions. She is responsible for oversight of the database, the new platform and all office operating systems as well as oversees HR and benefits.



**Rebecca Grubbs** assumed the title Vice President, Marketing and Member Services. She will maintain all current responsibilities associated with marketing, meetings and the National Grain and Feed Foundation as well as oversight of membership activities.

**Joe Mlynek**, [Progressive Safety Services LLC](#), began a consulting agreement with NGFA. Joe will work with NGFA on a project-by-project basis to review and update NGFA safety programs; create new training materials; provide safety webinars; and assist with regional safety seminars as needed. He also serves as a partner with [Safety Made Simple](#) and is a Certified Safety Professional (CSP) and an Occupational Health and Safety Technician (OHST).



### **Alejandra Castillo named NAEGA Successor President and CEO**

The [North American Export Grain Association](#) (NAEGA) Board of Directors announced on Nov. 2 the appointment of Alejandra Castillo as NAEGA's successor president and CEO. NGFA is co-located and has a strategic alliance with NAEGA. Castillo brings 15 years of industry experience having worked previously as regional director for South Asia based in Singapore and India and most recently as director of global programs in Washington, D.C. for the U.S. Grains Council. Before this, Alejandra also worked in trade execution for Cargill, Inc. The successor president and CEO position was created to support a transition as current NAEGA President and CEO Gary C. Martin plans to step away from the role in 2024.



### **The Association launched structural improvements in 2023**

**NGFA announced changes to its committee structure:** NGFA Chairman Greg Beck and NGFA President and CEO Mike Seyfert notified members on Nov. 15 of changes to the structure of NGFA committees. The recommendations were developed by the NGFA Committee Structure Task Force and approved by the NGFA Board of Directors to align with the feedback from members during the five-year



Long-Range Planning (LRP) exercise recently completed and approved by the Board of Directors. The formation of new committees and changes to current committees will occur over the next several months. Following the formation of new committees, NGFA will implement additional recommended changes to enhance the operation and function of all committees. View the full document – [NGFA Committee Structure Task Force Recommendations](#). NGFA will rename the **Country Elevator Committee** to reflect the current scope and breadth better. NGFA will establish the following committees: **Sustainability; Feed** (This committee will include a Feed Legislative and Regulatory Affairs Subcommittee and a Feed Manufacturing and Technology Subcommittee); **Trade and Crop Technology** (This committee will include subcommittees for Crop Technology and Trade); **Ag Policy and Legislative Affairs; Transportation and Logistics** (This committee will include subcommittees for Rail Shipper/Receiver, Motor Carrier, and Waterborne); and **Communications, Marketing and Membership**.

**NGFA launches new internal database system:** To improve efficiency for its members, NGFA launched a new database and communications system this month. The system will allow NGFA staff to streamline event registration, dues payments and external communications to NGFA members, among other functions. In the new year, all members will be prompted to sign into a new account to pay membership dues and to register for the upcoming annual convention.

### NGFA published new grain safety tools

**Harvest Safety Week resources available on [ngfa.org/safety](https://ngfa.org/safety):** All resources from NGFA’s fifth annual Harvest Safety Week can be found at [ngfa.org/safety](https://ngfa.org/safety). This year’s event, which took place Aug. 21-25, focused on “Safety as a Workplace Value” and the importance of building safe environments at grain handling facilities. New videos published during Harvest Safety Week include: [Safety as a Workplace Value](#) (NGFA member interviews); [Evolution of Safety in Grain Handling](#) (NGFA member interviews); [Harvest Hazards](#) (NGFA member interviews); and [Hazard Identification Methods](#) (Presentation).



NGFA thanked the following member companies for providing safety experts to contribute to these new videos: ADM, Bartlett, Bunge, Cargill, Co-Alliance Cooperative Inc., J.D. Heiskell and Company, Key Cooperative, Michigan Agricultural Commodities Inc., MFA Incorporated, MKC, Scoular, and Viterra. These videos are supported by funding from the National Grain and Feed Foundation.

**NGFA publishes ‘Safety Tips’ video on lockout/tagout:** NGFA published a short video detailing the most critical aspects of lockout/tagout and energy isolation. This is the first in a series of videos that will aim to transform NGFA’s series of “Safety Tips Sheets” into video format. [Access the video here](#).

### NGFA advocated for regulatory reform and new legislation

**NGFA submitted comments on the OSHA heat rule:** The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) is in the process of finalizing a proposed rule on Heat Injury and Illness Prevention in Outdoor and Indoor Work Settings. NGFA submitted comments to OSHA on Oct. 3 reiterating opposition to any broad federal regulation on heat. Specifically, NGFA is opposed to the creation of one-size-fits-all federal regulation. The Association’s primary concern with the proposed rulemaking on heat injury and illness prevention is that it will place an undue regulatory burden on grain

handling facilities in both indirect (employee time) and direct costs (equipment) and additional paperwork requirements. NGFA firmly believes that employers should be responsible for or address heat hazards at individual facilities as climate varies from region to region and the health and underlying factors that contribute to heat stress vary by employee. The NGFA encouraged OSHA to consider the recommendations of the SERs and not burden facilities with a one-size-fits-all standard that is overly complicated and lacks the necessary flexibility for employers to determine and implement appropriate controls to protect their employees.

**NGFA published a new crop biotechnology policy:** NGFA's Crop Technology Committee announced final updates to the NGFA Crop Biotechnology Policy, which the NGFA Board of Directors approved during its March 23 meeting in La Quinta, Calif. NGFA modified the policy to address gene-edited traits that had not yet been commercialized when the policy was last updated in 2012. The new document has been reviewed by the in-house counsel of several member companies. [Read the full NGFA Crop Biotechnology policy here.](#)

In [comments](#) submitted to the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) on Feb. 3, NGFA emphasized that government agencies need to prioritize transparency in the commercialization of products produced through genetic engineering. NGFA and seven other agriculture groups submitted the comments in response to the OSTP's request for information on the Coordinated Framework for Biotechnology Approval, which outlines regulatory policy for ensuring the safety of biotechnology products.

**The Innovative FEED Act would establish new feed ingredient pathway at FDA:** Lawmakers introduced a bill this year that would establish a new pathway at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for novel feed additives to increase livestock efficiency and production. NGFA endorsed the Innovative Feed Enhancement and Economic Development (FEED) Act of 2023 ([S.1842](#)), sponsored by Sens. Roger Marshall, R-Kan.; Tammy Baldwin, D-Wisc.; Jerry Moran, R-Kan.; and Michael Bennet, D-Colo. Reps. Greg Pence, R-Ind.; Jim Baird, R-Ind.; Kim Schrier, D-Wash; and Angie Craig, D-Minn., and eight other co-sponsors introduced companion legislation in the House on Dec. 7.

The Innovative FEED Act would establish a new category of animal food additives to cover ingredients that provide animal health, food safety or production benefits. Today, these ingredients must go through the same approval process as animal health drugs. This can result in an approval timeline of up to 10 years to bring new ingredients to the market. The Innovative FEED Act establishes that zootechnical animal food substances would gain approval for use through the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) premarket animal food additive petition process.

**The bipartisan CRP Reform Act presents farm bill opportunity:** NGFA endorsed the [CRP Reform Act](#) of 2023 introduced by Sens. Cory Booker, D-N.J., and Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, in May. The bill would reform the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) to focus future enrollments on marginal farmland rather than prime farmland. NGFA will continue to advocate its inclusion in the next farm bill. Among its provisions, the bill maintains CRP's overall acreage cap at 24 million acres for fiscal years 2024-2028; reduces the rental rate for general sign-ups to 75 percent; and provides incentives for enrolling marginal land into CRP continuous categories. The one-page summary of the bill can be found [here](#).

**NGFA supported the Reliable Rail Service Act:** Sens. Tammy Baldwin, D-Wisc., and Roger Marshall, R-Kan., in June introduced the Reliable Rail Service Act (S.2071) to better define Class I rail carriers' common carrier obligation. The Staggers Act of 1980 required rail carriers to serve the wider shipping public "on reasonable request," a principle known as the common carrier obligation. However, more

than 40 years later, the common carrier obligation remains poorly defined with no established criteria. The Reliable Rail Service Act statutorily clarifies the common carrier obligation and establishes specific criteria for the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to consider when determining whether a railroad is meeting this obligation to provide rail service. If the STB determined a carrier was not meeting its common carrier obligation, the bill would empower the STB to prescribe service standards consistent with the needs of the shipper making the request.

**NGFA advocates for farm bill, transportation priorities at annual fly-in:** NGFA members gathered in Washington, D.C., in June for the NGFA's annual fly-in to meet with nearly 100 members of Congress to discuss farm bill priorities, transportation issues, trade and other topics important to the grain, feed and processing industry. Fly-in participants included members of NGFA's Executive Committee, Country Elevator Committee, International Trade/Agricultural Policy Committee, and the new class of participants in the Committee Apprentice Program (CAP). NGFA state/regional affiliates also led several visits to congressional offices. In its meetings, NGFA members advocated for support of the CRP Reform Act of 2023, which would focus Conservation Reserve Program enrollments on marginal land and reduce competition for productive farmland between the government and farmers. NGFA members also urged lawmakers to pass a Surface Transportation Board (STB) reauthorization and several bills designed to improve agricultural trucking efficiency.

### **USDA removed “Soybeans of Other Colors” standard**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) published final rules to remove “Soybeans of Other Colors” (SBOC) as a grading factor for determining soybean quality in July. NGFA supported the agency's amendments to the U.S. Standards [for Soybeans](#) when they were proposed on March 31.

NGFA noted in discussions with USDA and throughout the rulemaking process that the amount of seed coat variation resulting in U.S. soybeans had increased over the past two years. “As a result, due to this increased presence of seed discoloration and the SBOC criteria in the standard, more soybeans have been downgraded on account of SBOC.”

NGFA, along with other representatives of U.S. soybean producers and grain traders requested that USDA remove SBOC as a grade-determining factor for describing the quality of soybeans (e.g., U.S. No 1 Yellow Soybeans, U.S. No. 2 Yellow Soybeans, etc.). Importantly, at the request of the Grain Inspection Advisory Committee, the Federal Grain Inspection Service conducted a study that found no significant differences in official protein or oil content in SBOC.



“NGFA appreciates the efforts of USDA Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Jenny Moffit and Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Deputy Administrator Arthur Neal as well as the leadership of the American Soybean Association (ASA) and the North American Export Grain Association (NAEGA) to address this issue that has been impacting the U.S. soybean market over the past two years,” NGFA President and CEO Mike Seyfert said in a July 14 press release. “The fact that our domestic and international customers, as well as farmers and grain marketers, can count on well-known and widely recognized grade standards tends to draw customers to the U.S. grain production/marketing system, and reduces trading risks for market participants,” NGFA stated.



## Snake River dams debate launched into the national spotlight

After a 22-year-long legal dispute regarding the role of the Lower Snake River dams in salmon declines in the Columbia and Snake River system, the Biden administration on Dec. 14 announced a \$1 billion plan with environmental groups, four tribal governments and the states of Washington and Oregon. The settlement announcement proposes that the administration help fund and conduct studies on “how the transportation, irrigation, and recreation services provided by the four Lower Snake River dams could be replaced, to help inform Congress should it consider authorizing dam breach in the future.”

NGFA issued a statement opposing any actions by federal or state governments that could result in breaching the Lower Snake River Dams.

Negotiations managed by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS) began after a district court judge stayed a federal lawsuit over the dams in 2021. The lawsuit against five federal agencies was brought by a coalition of conservation groups, Northwest Tribal nations including the Nez Perce Tribe and the Couer d’Alene Tribe, and the state of Oregon. The federal agencies named in the 2021 lawsuit – the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, Bonneville Power Administration, Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service – own and operate four dams on the lower Snake River, the main tributary to the Columbia River.



Throughout this mediation process, NGFA has emphasized that breaching the Lower Snake River Dams would create severe economic harm to the entire U.S. agricultural value chain.

“The economic harm of breaching the dams would ripple throughout the U.S. agricultural value chain by effectively shutting down the world’s third-largest export corridor for grains and oilseeds,” NGFA noted in its most recent statement on Dec. 15. “Agricultural stakeholders have been ready and willing to share these insights throughout the mediation process. As major stakeholders in this decision, NGFA members hope the agricultural industry is included in any study that is conducted or proposed as a result of this announcement.”

Barge transportation moves about half of all grain exports to export elevators and is critical to NGFA members in the Pacific Northwest. The Columbia-Snake River System is the third-largest grain export corridor in the world, transporting nearly 30 percent of U.S. grain and oilseed exports. Eleven states export wheat through this river system, which accounts for more than 60 percent of all wheat exports.

## NGFA members and partners turned out for flagship events

Nearly 700 industry members gathered in La Quinta, Calif. for the NGFA’s 127th annual convention on March 21-23. During the event, NGFA distributed several awards to industry volunteers, conducted business meetings of each of its committees and the Board of Directors, and announced the results of its most recent election. NGFA Chairman Greg Beck presented the NGFA Distinguished Service Award to Sharon Clark, senior vice president of regulatory affairs and compliance at Purdue Agribusiness.

Chairman Beck also presented an NGFA Distinguished Service Award to Dennis Inman, the vice president of grain at Central Farm Service. Immediate Past Chairman JoAnn Brouillette presented the second annual “Randall C. Gordon Award for Excellence in Industry Service” to Jan Campbell, the regulatory affairs manager for Purina Animal Nutrition LLC. NGFA Chairman Greg Beck provided the annual Chairman’s Address, during which he summarized his path to leadership at the NGFA. He also shared the priorities of the NGFA’s latest Long-Range Plan and the association’s progress toward its goals over the next few years. View the [Convention photo album here](#).

CONVEY ’23 attracted nearly 200 industry members to Omaha, Neb., for the annual conference and trade show featuring several speakers and panels of experts on a range of safety, operations and regulatory compliance issues. Each year, NGFA partners with the Grain Elevator and Processing Society (GEAPS) and Grain Journal to present this unique opportunity for grain handling employees and leaders to gain practical knowledge and training on real-world compliance issues, best practices and emerging industry trends.

More than 530 industry members gathered at the Omni Louisville Hotel for NGFA’s 52<sup>nd</sup> annual Country Elevator Conference and Trade Show on Dec. 3-5. NGFA Country Elevator Committee Chairman Paul Katovich, CEO of HighLine Grain Growers, welcomed grain merchants, elevator operators, feed manufacturers, processors, and grain industry suppliers to Louisville, Ky., on Dec. 3-5. View the [CEC photo album here](#).



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