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## NEWS

### A letter from the president and CEO: In full swing this spring

*By Mike Seyfert, President and CEO*

Hello from Washington where flowers are blooming, the temperatures are beginning to rise and peak tourist season is rapidly approaching. I know that April is often the start of a busier time of year for many of you and your employees, and it means that we are just weeks away from the start of wheat harvest for some of our members. Maybe it's because our oldest child is a senior this year, and we're managing all the activities and important choices that come with it, but it feels like the first quarter of the year has passed by in the blink of an eye. It was also a very busy and productive quarter for NGFA on behalf of our members.

The Executive Committee met in January and twice at the convention in Orlando in mid-March, along with the Board of Directors meeting. NGFA's budget was approved for our new fiscal year which runs from April 1 to March 31. The meetings also included updates on the continued implementation of the long-range plan approved in March 2022, implementation of the Committee Task Force recommendations approved by the Board last September (more on this topic below), and efforts to expand and improve communications to NGFA members. New Board members were seated for the first time and appointments were made to the Executive Committee, including new members Jeff Bechard, Paul Katovich and Kellie Melton. I want to especially thank Gary Beachner and Jean Bratton, whose terms on both the Board and EC ended in March, for their many years of service to NGFA in these leadership positions as well as other committees and task forces.

NGFA's 128<sup>th</sup> annual convention was highly successful, with more than 650 attendees enjoying the beautiful Orlando weather for numerous networking opportunities, meetings of NGFA committees and outstanding general session speakers.

Notably, this year's convention served as the backdrop for the full implementation of the new committee structure approved by the Board. In 2023, NGFA conducted the first major review and restructuring of the committees in many years. All new, continuing and restructured committees met during the convention with great discussion and feedback. Our committees and the more than 300 volunteers serving on them guide NGFA's priorities in all areas. Members consistently tell us that our committees are the "backbone" of NGFA and are viewed as one of the most important aspects of membership in the association.

Convention is always NGFA's premier event of the year, and I thank each of you who attended. I also thank our staff team that put in hundreds of hours to make it a success for our members. We invite you to join us next year in Carlsbad, Calif., on March 9-11 for NGFA's 129<sup>th</sup> annual convention.

In addition to convention, members of the NGFA staff team spoke at numerous meetings around the country in January, February, and March. We also continued hosting regional safety seminars, which members say are one of the most valuable benefits NGFA offers.

In the second quarter, we are planning for the Trade Rules Seminar in St. Louis, Mo., in early May, along with a Capitol Hill fly-in and advocacy campaign in June that will include meetings of the Executive Committee, several NGFA committees and our Committee Apprentice Program (CAP) participants.

Thank you for your decision to invest in NGFA each year. I promise that the association and our team are committed to delivering to you on behalf of that investment.

Thank you and best wishes for a safe and productive spring and early summer.

Warmest Regards,



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## NASS discontinues county-level production data

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) announced on April 9 that it is discontinuing several programs and reports including county estimates for crops and livestock.

NASS said it is discontinuing all county estimates for crops and livestock beginning with the 2024 production year as well as canceling the July cattle report and discontinuing the cotton objective yield survey.

"The decision to discontinue these surveys and reports was not made lightly, but was necessary, given appropriated budget levels," NASS stated in its notice.

NGFA staff will meet with USDA and the Congressional Agriculture Committees on this topic. If the elimination of this data will pose a problem for your member company, please contact NGFA staff at [ssee@ngfa.org](mailto:ssee@ngfa.org) or [mfisher@ngfa.org](mailto:mfisher@ngfa.org).

Information about all NASS surveys and reports is available at [www.nass.usda.gov](http://www.nass.usda.gov).

## NGFA supports tax relief bill

NGFA joined 33 other agriculture groups to urge Senate leaders to take up the Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act, which includes provisions for business expenses and bonus depreciation.

“Producers and businesses throughout the food and agriculture industry are facing tax increases today and cannot wait a year or more for relief,” the groups noted in an [April 8 letter](#) to Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

H.R. 7024, the Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act passed the House of Representatives with broad bipartisan support and is awaiting action in the Senate.

Farmers, ranchers and agricultural businesses are facing a series of tax increases as provisions in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) have either already expired or are set to expire at the end of 2025, the groups noted.

“In the interim, we must immediately restore the already expired and slimmed-down business provisions to help these families and to stimulate economic growth,” the groups stated.

## Biden administration finalizes two-person rail crew rule

The Transportation Department’s Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) [finalized a rule](#) earlier this month to require major freight railroads to maintain two-person rail crews.

A top priority for rail labor unions, the rule codifies train crew staffing rules at a federal level. In limited cases, the rule permits exceptions for smaller railroads to continue or initiate one-person train crew operations by notifying FRA.

In comments submitted to the agency, rail carriers argued the rule would stifle technological efficiencies and put them at a disadvantage to trucking which is becoming more automated.

Representatives for railroads said the size of train crews should be determined by contract talks and argued that there is not enough safety data to justify a federal rule. Association of American Railroads CEO Ian Jefferies said: “Instead of prioritizing data-backed solutions...FRA is looking to the past and upending the collective bargaining process.”

Labor agreements requiring two-person crews have been in place for decades at most major railroads, while many short-line railroads operate with one-person crews.

At least 11 states have already approved rules requiring two-person crews. According to FRA, the rule will prevent “a patchwork of potentially inconsistent rules governing train operations across the country.”

FRA first proposed a two-person crew mandate in 2016, but it was later abandoned during the Trump administration after the agency concluded it did not have enough evidence to support it. Meanwhile, a rail safety bill introduced in Congress last year included a requirement for two-person crews, but the legislation failed to gain enough legislative support.

## EVENTS

### Recording available of NGFA safety webinar on accountability

The recording of NGFA’s safety webinar on “Accountability” with Joe Mlynek, founder of Progressive Safety Services, LLC, and partner at Safety Made Simple, [is available here](#).

Mlynek discussed several strategies for getting employees to take responsibility for their personal safety and overall team performance. The discussion touched on defining safe behaviors, performance evaluations, and progressive discipline.

Mlynek will host a series of grain safety webinars throughout 2024 as part of a new partnership with the NGFA. In addition to “Accountability” on April 10, other webinar topics include “Hazardous Atmospheres in Confined Spaces” on June 18 and “Serious Injury and Fatalities (SIFs) in the Grain and Feed Industry” on Nov. 14. Recordings of each webinar will be available on [ngfa.org/safety](http://ngfa.org/safety).

Mlynek is a Certified Safety Professional (CSP) and an Occupational Health and Safety Technician (OHST), as well as an active member of the NGFA, Grain Elevator and Processing Society, Ohio Risk Coordinators, National Fire Protection Association, and American Society of Safety Professionals.

### NGFA regulatory compliance seminar with Kansas Grain and Feed Association is May 15-16

NGFA will host a Regional Safety and Regulatory Compliance Seminar with the Kansas Grain and Feed Association in York, Neb., on May 15 and Salina, Kan., on May 16.

OSHA Area Directors and NGFA’s Jess McCluer will provide an update on the status of OSHA standards and enforcement practices that directly impact the grain, feed, and processing industry.

Each year, NGFA jointly sponsors regulatory compliance seminars with affiliated state and regional grain and feed associations. The one-day seminar focuses on emerging and evolving regulatory issues from the Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) as well as overviews of implementing operational, quality and safety and health management best practices for grain handling facilities.

The Kansas Grain and Feed Association event also includes elevator maintenance training. View the full schedule and [more information here](#).

### Trade Rules Seminar is May 8-9

NGFA’s [2024 Trade Rules Seminar](#) is May 8-9 at the Hilton St. Louis at the Ballpark in St. Louis, Mo. This biennial seminar on trading, trade rules and arbitration provides attendees with a primer on contracting principles and trading practices to minimize costly trade disputes and contract non-performance.

It is designed for those involved in trading operations or responsible for merchandising grains, feed and feed ingredients, but everyone involved in contract execution should attend! [Register here](#).

WATCH: [What is the NGFA Trade Rules Seminar?](#)



# SUPPLEMENTS

## Register for next People Spark leadership training by April 19

The deadline to register for the May 2024 leadership program hosted by People Spark Consulting is **April 19**.

NGFA and People Spark Consulting have partnered to further the mission to provide education and training to members at all levels in the agriculture industry. The [People Spark Leadership Transformation Program](#)® is a year-long course that focuses on practical application of leadership skills and tools. It starts with an 8-week intensive training, followed by 10 months of ongoing support to reinforce and sustain the learned skills. NGFA members receive a bonus private coaching session with their Leadership Transformation Program® registration. New cohorts begin monthly throughout 2024.



[Click here for information!](#)

The investment for the 12-month People Spark Leadership Transformation Program® is \$2,500. Use reference code: NGFA

## Extra Supplements

NGFA in the news:

Feed & Grain: [Ag groups oppose California's zero-emissions locomotive plan](#)

Grain Journal: [NGFA, Ag Groups, Urge EPA to Deny 'Dangerous' CARB Freight Rule](#)

American Ag Network: [NGFA, Ag Groups, Urge EPA to Deny 'Dangerous' CARB Freight Rule](#)

Other news:

Agri-Pulse: [House Ag Democrats weigh GOP farm bill offer \(log in\)](#)

Farmdoc Daily: [Potential for Crop Expansion in Brazil Based on Pastureland and Double-Cropping](#)

AgWeb: [North Carolina Reports First Case of HPAI in Dairy Herd](#)

Wisconsin State Farmer: [Economist says Key Bridge collapse should have minimal impact on ag](#)

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