

Gov. Dave Heineman previewed the schedule for the 2012 Governor's Ag Conference, being held Wednesday and Thursday, Feb. 15-16 at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Kearney. The theme for the 24th annual conference is "Nebraska Agriculture: Today's Challenges, Tomorrow's Opportunities."

"This annual event allows agricultural producers and leaders to come together to learn more about their industry and to ensure the industry remains strong," said Gov. Dave Heineman.

The conference begins at 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday, with a panel of opening speakers who will discuss connecting consumers with farmers and ranchers to share information about agricultural production.

The panel includes Willow Holoubek from the Alliance for the Future of Agriculture in Nebraska (A-FAN), Dawn Caldwell from Common Ground Nebraska and Pete McClymont with We Support Agriculture.

The "Celebrate Nebraska Agriculture" reception follows, featuring a wide variety of Nebraska food products and entertainment.

Conference activities resume at 9 a.m. on Thursday.

The keynote presentation will be delivered by John Doggett, senior lecturer of International Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainability as well as a senior research fellow at the University of Texas at Austin. He will discuss the role of Nebraska agriculture in the future global economy.

Featured speakers include Bruce Knight of Strategic Conservation Solutions, who will provide an update on the federal Farm Bill reauthorization. Dr. Archie Clutter with the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska will explain how the University is positioning itself to be a part of meeting the challenge of providing food to a growing world population. Bill Holbrook from The ProExporter Network will discuss the opportunities and challenges farmers will face in meeting that food production demand.

NDA Director Greg Ibach said, "It is a pivotal time for our industry, but I have great confidence in our farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses. Attendees can expect a wealth of information that will help them as the industry progresses."

Those interested in agriculture issues are invited to attend. An \$80 registration fee covers participation at activities on both Wednesday and Thursday.

Registration is available online at www.agr.ne.gov, or by calling NDA toll-free at (800) 831-0550.