

President's Message: Evolving Through the Journey By Tina LeBrun, 2022-23 NFRBMEA President

May 3, 2023

Lately I find myself switching gears from educating farmers one-on-one to entering the classroom or educational event setting. Not only speaking with farmers, but also ag industry and educational stake holders. It strikes me that we not only focus discussion on farms financials, but also the characteristics of today's farms. Are they diverse farm operations, how many generations are on the farm, or do farms practice sustainability or green initiatives? Now these questions could be interpreted many ways. More broadly, this questioning is related to the evolving ag environment. As I write this, I find myself continuing to reflect on the future of agriculture as an educator and a producer.

You may or may not be aware that MN FBM is currently celebrating 70 years in the making. You may not find this info critical to your own personal journey in this profession, yet I ask you to reflect on the dynamics this milestone surfaces. From mode of operation to delivery of education, our educational approaches have evolved. Like our farm students/clients our profession has changed to a more efficient means of educating. Some practices are easier and often new issues or areas of concern surface. Which leads me to focus on the past at what hasn't changed, or what is still a purposeful effort. I will let you reflect on that for yourself, but I find one item that is still very impactful to our profession is the power of collaboration. Partnerships, teamwork, and relationships are so critical for all of us. Whether it be personal or professional I think we can all find some value over the course of time in the alliances we incorporate in our world.

This association is no different. We have some pretty wonderful partners that have come along with us to offer support to our profession and association. Without these collaborations it would be more of a

challenge to forge forward in the past and more importantly in the future. Several of our supporters and collaborators will be joining us for the National Farm Management Conference. That's one of many reasons why I'm excited to attend every year.

I encourage everyone to register for this year's conference. As a reminder, the dates are June 12-15 in Bellaire, Michigan. There are a number of interesting topics sure to meet your professional development needs. The conference website has all the details you need to know so take a moment to head over and check out the agenda. I hope you will take the time out of your schedule to attend. This conference is a "must attend" event for many FBM instructors. It is always a great event with timely topics related to farm business management education and your daily work with producers. I personally look forward to the conference each year as a means to evolve my own professional development. I look forward to seeing you all in Michigan!

-Tina



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Empathy Fatigue

By Denise Reeser, FBM instructor, South Central College, Montgomery, MN

This is a transitional time for us as instructors and for our farmers. We are wrapping up our visits which involve setting goals and analyzing the data, as our farmers are anxiously awaiting spring field work. It feels good to see the accomplishments of our students, as they meet or exceed the goals they have set for themselves. So much hard work has been accomplished during the past few months from completing balance sheets, analysis, and the cash flow completion. It has also been an exhausting time for us as instructors too, as our students need us so much during this time.

This week I was sharing my feelings about this time of year with a colleague, and she also agreed with having had the same experiences. She mentioned the idea of “empathy fatigue”. This is a well-documented concern for counselors and other in “high touch” professions that rely on their emotional connection to their clients to perform their jobs such as teachers, counselors, or coaches. When we feel tapped out emotionally and physically working with others. This year has been very demanding of us in our profession. We know that many of our farmers are isolated in their daily jobs working on the farms and often times we are the ones that serve as that listening ear whether it’s related to farming or often times about personal issues that arise for our students.

A few common ways to combat the feelings of empathy fatigue are to take care of yourself, practice mindfulness, take time off, ask for help, and try something fun. As our farmers start spring fieldwork, I will make plans to do just that. I plan to spend more time with my family and friends as well as get back to some of my personal interests and hobbies I have set aside for the past few months. It also gives me time to think about how great the benefits of NFRBMEA are to each of us. I am so grateful to have a network of professionals to interact with when I need it, as this job can be very isolating. I always have someone that I can lean on for advice or support.

I am also looking ahead to our annual National Farm Business Management Conference in Michigan this June. I really look forward to networking with other professionals, taking time to relax and enjoy the beautiful areas where our conference is held. I would recommend spending some time on Mackinac Island before or after the conference. I also look forward to taking some time to learn and expand my skillset and focus on my own professional development. I always learn so much when I attend the conference whether it is meeting new people across the nation, during the tours, or the many workshops and speakers at the conference. Even though it can be tough to get away from your daily life, I challenge you to attend the conference this year and take time out for yourself, personally and professionally.

Conference Registration Is Open!

Registration for the 2023 NFBM Conference, scheduled for June 12-15, 2023 at Shanty Creek Resort, Bellaire, Michigan, is open!



Visit the 2023 National Farm Business Management Conference website, www.nfbm-conference.org/2023/index.html, and click “Register!” at the top of the page.

The tentative agenda was most recently updated 4/21/23. Please continue to check back for further updates.



The 10 Habits of Highly Successful Producers: “How To Run a High Profit Farm”

By Ron Dvergsten, FBM instructor, Northland College, Thief River Falls, MN

Successful producers run very profitable farms and their success is strongly influenced by the type of people they are. The following are characteristics reflective of successful producers:

1. They are production driven and always produce more per unit than the benchmark average. The most successful producers will generally gross 30-50% higher revenue per unit above the benchmark group and achieve most of this through greater production.
2. They have good expense control and a low per unit cost of production. These producers may spend more per acre than the average but because of higher yields and improved quality their net return per unit is better than the benchmark averages.
3. They sell their product for a premium. The most attractive aspect of premiums is that they cost very little extra to achieve, but generally do require a higher level of management skills to attain them.
4. They are exceptionally well informed. Information and how it is used is another fundamental key to success. The most successful producers spend at least 30 minutes a day reading and gathering knowledge to keep themselves up to date.
5. They run a simple management system. They keep the number of enterprises to a manageable level and are timely in the performance of production practices.
6. They do not overcapitalize, especially on machinery. Overcapitalization is a key factor of poor profitability measures on farms. Rate of Return on Assets is a key measure directly affected by overcapitalization.
7. They set goals, plan, and achieve well thought-out objectives. Most successful producers will have their management plan (cash flow plan) written out along with short and long-range goals.
8. They have a good grasp of their financial affairs. The best managers are either computerized or have a well-designed manual account book system for recordkeeping and have the capacity to know their financial position at any time. They also strive to always keep their lenders well informed.
9. They are prepared to take risks and can cope with debt. The most successful managers accept that risk is part of life.
10. They thoroughly enjoy what they do. The most successful producers really enjoy what they do and rarely if ever consider an alternative vocation.

Are You Ready?

By Myron Oftedah, Immediate NFRBMEA Past President

We will be electing NFRBMEA officers at our Annual Business Meeting during the 2023 NFBM Conference in June. Are you ready to serve your organization? Are you willing to devote time as a member of the Board of Directors, helping guide NFRBMEA into the future? We will need candidates for Secretary and President Elect. President Elect is a 3-year stint: President Elect > President > Past President. Now is your chance to join this fun-filled group and help guide NFRBMEA.

Officer nominations fall to the Past Presidents of our organization, so if you are a Past President, it is time to start talking to your fellow members about considering serving on the NFRBMEA Board.

Some of the current discussions include envisioning what future conferences will look like if we move away from our partnership with NAFBAS; how the National Council for Agricultural Education can help

Farm Business Management; what will or should NFRBMEA look like in the future; how to we reach new members, and how to serve our current members.

I am going to be blunt; we need your commitment to step into one of these leadership roles for the health of NFRBMEA. It is easy to sit back and assume someone else will do it, and now is the time to step forward. Will you consider becoming an officer candidate for NFRBMEA? Contact me or any of the Past-Presidents, which would include Pauline Van Nurden, David Gillman, Brad Sirianni, Bruce Fowler, Jay D. Olsen, Ron Dvergsten, Wayne Pike, and Tom Weygandt, to name a few.

We need your help to move NFRBMEA forward!

For more information on these positions, visit www.nfrbmea.org/board.html#job-desc

What is Professionalism?

By Myron Oftedahl, NFRBMEA 2022-23 Past President

The definition of the word professional is “engaged in an activity as a means of livelihood or for gain or pertaining to or connected to a profession.” The definition of professionalism is “professional character, spirit, or methods.”

Remember your first year as an Agricultural Educator? You were given a copy of the Agricultural Educator Creed. The first line states that “I am an educator by choice and not by chance.” It then goes on to say, “I believe in American Agriculture; I dedicate my life to its development and the advancement of its people.” Have you as an Ag Educator dedicated your life to developing and advancing its people? I think most of us would say yes.

A little further on the Creed states that I will endeavor to develop professionally through study, travel, and exploration. How have you developed professionally? How can or will you develop professionally? We can see in the definition that a professional is engaged in an activity as a means of a livelihood and is connected to a profession. If we develop professionally that should give us a more secure livelihood, shouldn't it? The Creed urges us to develop through study, travel and exploration.

I think that all of us would agree that we are much different persons now as compared to our first days as an Ag Educator. We got there through study, whether it was structured courses or natural curiosity, we have learned much more over the years. Sometimes it was information shared by a mentor. Maybe it was a speaker at a Conference. Sometimes it was through travel and exploration. How many of you have asked questions of the native people when traveling? Have you tried something that you witnessed on your travels? Or adapted something because of what you saw and learned from a trip?

We owe it to ourselves and our students to improve professionally, to become better educators. We write professional development plans or complete continuing education credits to document our attempts at development. Do we do this merely to satisfy the College or are we doing this to improve ourselves and our knowledge base? By writing a professional development plan we admit to being professional. Do we act like professionals?

As I stated earlier, professionalism is defined as “professional character, spirit, or methods.”

Professional character means supporting your fellow Instructor, not tearing them apart behind their backs. It means shouldering your share of the load when there is work to be done. It means being able to depend on your fellow Instructors for help when you need it. It means sharing information and experiences. We all have strengths that we can share with others, just as we all have weaknesses that we can work on improving. Professionals support each other in our colleges and beyond. A professional helps mentor others in the profession so that they can be better Instructors.

Sure, we are all going to make mistakes now and then, but as a professional you should learn from them so that you don't repeat the mistake.

Membership Update

Our 2022-23 membership year is almost over. Here are the latest stats, compared to this time last year.

	2022-23	2021-22
Regular	69	62
Affiliate	11	8
Total	80	70

When you are registering for this year's conference in Michigan, please remember to select to include your dues, as they are not automatically added in.

2023 National Farm Business Management Conference

June 12, 2023 – June 15, 2023
1:00 PM-1:00 PM

Shanty Creek Resort - Summit Village
5780 Shanty Creek Road
Bellaire, MI 49615

Sessions
Select the sessions you'd like to attend.

June 12, 2023

1:00 PM-2:00 PM NFRBMEA Dues \$60.00
Please select if you would like to pay your 2023-2024 NFRBMEA Dues.

National Council for Agricultural Education Update

By Deron Erickson, NFRBMEA Representative to NCAE

The Council for Ag Education has been moving and shaking in the past year. The new Managing Director Melissa Rekeweg has been highly effective guiding us through the year and working on different tasks. The Council meets quarterly, with once a year in person.

Last Spring The Council was notified that the National FFA Advisor was resigning. The Council decided that the new position would be a combination of National FFA Advisor and National Director of Ag Education. The position would remain non-compensated. The Council directed the national search for the Director of Ag Ed/National FFA Advisor. We reviewed the applicants and selected four individuals to interview in Indianapolis in October. We met in October at the National FFA Center for personal interviews and selected Dr. Travis Park from North Carolina State University to be the new Director/National FFA Advisor. Dr. Park was the chairperson of the National Council two years ago and is a former National FFA Advisor. We all felt very comfortable with his selection.

The Council also has been working on a number of initiatives. Currently SAE for All is being launched, AFNR standards are being revised, and the Strategic Plan is being reviewed. None of these necessarily directly apply to NFRBMEA. However, we can play a significant part in the direction that Ag Education takes as part of the Strategic Plan and the AFNR standards. The Council also retook the management of CASE (Curriculum for Ag Science Education) from NAAE (National Association of Ag Educators). CASE has trained over 3,600 secondary teachers from forty-eight states in curriculum for Ag Science and had become too difficult for NAAE to manage. Carl Aakre from Minnesota has taken over as the head of CASE.

Being a part of The Council has made me wonder about the direction of our organization and the role we play in Farm Business Management across the country. NFRBMEA is a national organization and from what I gather, we have been more of an organization that has as its main mission to educate our members through the national conference, newsletters, and recently some very good webinars. Is there more that we should be doing as an organization to promote Farm Business Management

nationally?

The four strategic priorities that The Council has are:

1. Recruit, prepare, retain, and support ag educators.
2. Include all people and leverage diverse approaches.
3. Engage and transition students to be leaders and advocates of AFNR and related industries.
4. Develop collaborations within and beyond our ag education community.

How does NFRBMEA fit with these strategic priorities? For example, should NFRBMEA be part of the Teach Ag initiative that NAAE currently supports? We know that we have had issues in Minnesota and other states bringing in quality applicants to positions. While Minnesota has a great support system for new FBM staff, the same may not be true in other states. Could NFRBMEA provide a support system for Farm Business Management in other states? Should NFRBMEA raise the profile of Farm Business Management through initiatives with sponsoring awards for Farm Business Management contests and or scholarships? If we were to do something like that, where would the funding come from? How could we collaborate with The Council resources to develop better collaborations with the Ag Industry? Should NFRBMEA have a better collaboration with farm organizations, so they are better educated on legislative issues on a national level? All things to consider.

THE NFRBMEA board has talked about doing some Strategic Planning, which The Council would fully support. The Council would like to know what initiatives that their partnering organizations would like help with. My question to the membership is: what can I do as The Council representative to further the mission of the NFRBMEA? What is that mission and how does it relate to The Council?

If you are interested in discussing this or anything related to The Council, please let me know. I am proud to represent the NFRBMEA. I believe there are a number of benefits to having a representative on The Council. Feel free to reach out to me at deron.erickson@MNWest.edu any time.

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Questions or comments? E-mail us at comments@nfrbmea.org

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