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FLOOR DEBATE

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LB 962

we don't have irrigation, we lose out of producing crops and livestock. We lose tremendous a lot of dollars in trade with other countries. I think a good share of our produce in Nebraska is exported. One thing we talked about is property taxes. As your value of your land goes up because of irrigation being put on there, property taxes go up. If we...if the farms were worth half what they are now, guess what state aid would be. If property taxes go up, some of our littlest counties, poorest counties, are nonequalized just because it's basically all farmland and not a lot of students, therefore we don't have to put a lot of state aid into that. So I think the whole state benefits from irrigation. If we would not have irrigation, I can't imagine what we'd be like. Not only more wells being put in has affected this, but it's really been the drought. And the Upper Big Blue Natural Resource District, in 1970s, there was a real fear that we were going to run out of water, and we had to put meters on everything, thinking we would be allocated. And from 1980 up until about 2001 or 2002, our water table has actually risen, and that's with about double the development in irrigation. Basically because of our practices, being more efficient, because of little retention ponds and reuse pits that have helped replenish our aquifer, our water table has actually risen during that time. It's only been the last two or three years, because of the drought, that our water table has dropped the way it has. It will change again when it rains. But I think it's very important that we're proactive and we don't sit around and wait until we don't have water until we react to something. I think the economy of the whole state is involved. It's not just the agriculture. When we put in center-pivot and all the wells and all the costs to irrigate some ground, we never get...take part of LB 775 money. This is all done at the expense of the farmer or the rancher. And not only is it expense to do that, but as Senator Schrock mentioned, taxes go up considerably. You pay property taxes on all the equipment. Your land values go up, which makes more real estate taxes. More produce comes off of there, which is again taxed, which is again been able to help us in our balance of trade in overseas sales. Ethanol plants are able to grow because we have crop production. I think we all benefit. And for us to just think it should be...that it's just the farmers that are benefiting I think is wrong. I think it's very important that we're