

Plant and Animal Life

Nebraska's most abundant native vegetation is grass. In eastern Nebraska, tall prairie grasses flourish, especially bluestem. In the west, the dominant types are perennial short grasses, such as grama and buffalo grass.

When settlers first came to Nebraska, only 3 percent of the land was covered with forests. In 1872, Nebraska became the first state to establish Arbor Day, and tree planting has been an important part of Nebraska's conservation efforts ever since.²⁰ Ash, box elder, cottonwood, locust, oak, walnut, elm and willow trees are common to eastern and central Nebraska. In the western part of the state, pine and cedar are prevalent varieties.

Native shrubs include wild plums and chokecherries, found throughout Nebraska. A variety of flowers, such as goldenrod, larkspur, columbine, wild roses and sunflowers, thrive throughout the state.

Before white settlers arrived in Nebraska, buffalo and beaver populations were significant. Today, buffalo are never seen outside game preserves. The beaver population, after being diminished by trappers, has become more plentiful in recent years. Other animals in Nebraska include white-tail and mule deer, elk, bighorn sheep, antelope, bobcats, foxes, coyotes, badgers, squirrels, prairie dogs, muskrats, skunks, raccoons, rabbits and opossums.

Game birds, especially pheasants, grouse, ducks, geese and quail, are plentiful in Nebraska. The state's waters yield a variety of fish, including bass, carp, catfish, crappie, perch, pike, trout and walleye. The Platte River and lakes in the Sandhills serve as "rest stops" for many migratory birds, including the famous Sandhill cranes.

Another migration rest stop of international significance is the Rainwater Basin district in south-central Nebraska. Within this district, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages more than 23,000 acres of wetlands and adjacent tall-grass prairie to provide habitat for migratory birds and resident wildlife.²¹

ECONOMY²²

Agriculture

Nebraska's economy revolves around its agriculture industry. In 2021, 92 percent of the state's land — 44.8 million acres — was farm and ranch land. Cash receipts from farm marketing contribute more than \$21 billion to Nebraska's economy. Producers have utilized the state's fertile soil, abundant water and technological advances to produce record-high crop yields in recent years.

²⁰ For more information about Arbor Day, see Page 21.

²¹ For more information about the Rainwater Basin Wetland Management District and national wildlife refuges in Nebraska, see Pages 141-144.

²² Information for this section compiled from the following sources: Nebraska Department of Agriculture; Nebraska Department of Economic Development; Nebraska Department of Labor; Bureau of Economic Analysis and Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce; Bureau of Business Research, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; *Fortune* magazine.

Crop Production²³

Nebraska is a national leader in crop production. In 2021, Nebraska led the nation in production of Great Northern beans, grown in the western one-third of the state. The state ranked second in proso millet, pinto bean and light red kidney bean production; third in corn for grain production and all hay production; fourth in soybean and all dry edible bean production; fifth in soybean exports and sugar beet production; eighth in sunflower production; and eleventh in winter wheat production. Potatoes also play a significant role in the state's agricultural economy.

Nebraska's top cash crop is corn. Each year, more than 8 million acres of the state's land is planted in corn. The state's livestock, poultry and ethanol industries are the largest corn consumers.

Products relating to agriculture, such as irrigation systems and farm equipment, are manufactured in the state. Agricultural businesses are an important part of Nebraska's economy, with one in four jobs in the state relating to the agricultural industry.

Livestock Production

Nebraska also is a leader in livestock production, and livestock and poultry can be found on half of the state's farms. There are 22 million acres of rangeland and pastureland in the state, half of which are in the Sandhills. In 2021, Nebraska was second in the nation in all cattle and calves and all cattle on feed. The state ranked second in commercial red meat production and beef and veal exports, third in cash receipts from all livestock and products and sixth in all hogs and pigs on farms that year.

Turkey, poultry, dairy, sheep and goat production add diversity and play an important role in the state's economy as well.



Cattle Ranching in Nebraska

Other Industries

Although agriculture dominates Nebraska's economy, Nebraska's employment in other occupations also is strong.

In 2020, the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages program reported an average of 948,478 jobs in Nebraska. Office and administrative support, transportation

²³ See Page 456 for a complete set of Nebraska's rankings in agriculture production.

and material moving and sales and related occupations were the top three employers.

Lincoln is a major employer in education, led by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and other institutions of higher education. The city has a higher proportion of educational services and public administration employees than the state as a whole. Omaha is a major center for the finance and insurance industries. Nebraska's largest city also is home to livestock and grain exchanges.

Four Nebraska-based businesses, all of which are headquartered in Omaha, are in the Fortune 500, *Fortune* magazine's annual list of the largest industrial and service corporations in the United States based on revenue.

Fortune 500 Companies Based in Nebraska, 2022²⁴

Company	Headquarters	Fortune 500 Rank	Revenues
Berkshire Hathaway	Omaha	7	\$276,094,000,000
Union Pacific	Omaha	163	21,804,000,000
Peter Kiewit Sons'	Omaha	313	12,149,000,000
Mutual of Omaha	Omaha	324	11,459,700,000

²⁴ Source: fortune.com, 2022

Income in Nebraska, 2021²⁵

Income ²⁶	2021
Total Personal Income	120,103,546
Nonfarm earnings	51,257,427
Farm earnings	5,832,344

²⁵ Figures are in thousands of dollars. Source: BEA Personal Income and Earnings by NAICS Industry, 4th quarter 2021.

²⁶ Farm earnings consist of proprietors' net farm income, wages of hired farm labor, pay-in-kind and officers' salaries of corporate farms.

Employment by Major Occupation in Nebraska, 2021²⁷

Occupation	Number of Employees
Office and Administrative Support	126,840
Transportation and Material Moving	91,280
Sales and Related	89,760
Food Preparation and Serving	77,490
Production	67,500
Management	61,770
Healthcare Practitioners	60,260
Education, Instruction and Library	58,310
Business and Financial Operations	51,640
Construction and Extraction	46,270
Installation, Maintenance and Repair	42,760
Healthcare Support	35,590
Computer and Mathematical	31,260
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	29,040
Personal Care and Service	20,860
Protective Service	15,870
Community and Social Service	13,260
Architecture and Engineering	11,220
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports and Media	10,870
Life, Physical and Social Science	8,040
Legal	5,650
Farming, Fishing and Forestry	2,710
TOTAL	958,260

²⁷ Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, State Occupational Employment Statistics, May 2021.