

Ag land assessed values increased 22 percent during the past year

□ *Editor's note: This is the first of two stories examining the assessed valuation of ag land in Chase County and what rising valuation means in determining local tax levies.*

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

With farmground in and around Chase County selling at record prices, it shouldn't come as any surprise that the tax valuations for that ground have increased accordingly.

In Nebraska, state statute allows county assessors to value ag land in a range from 69 to 75 percent of market value.

That legislation came about pre-2010 to help reduce some of the tax burden to ag land owners.

While that gave ag land owners some break, the rising prices being paid for land have erased much of that advantage.

Chase County ag land owners can thank County Assessor Dotty Bartels for keeping assessed valuations closer to 69 percent of market value versus the maximum of 75 percent.

Sales of properties in the county are used to help determine what the tax valuation of the land should be.

Chase County maintains an active market for ag land, generating sufficient sales each year to allow Bartels to assess the county on local sales.

She said she's been challenged by state taxing authorities that valuations should be higher. However, Bartels told them she wouldn't waiver because she had sufficient sales data to back up her valuations.

Her decisions have been validated by the Nebraska Tax Equalization and Review Commission, which has not called her to a show-cause hearing to justify why she set valuations at the levels she did.

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