

Gov. Dave Heineman previewed the schedule for the 2013 Governor's Ag Conference to be held Tuesday and Wednesday, Feb. 12-13, at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney.

February's event will be the 25th anniversary of the conference and will be celebrated with the theme "A Platform for Nebraska Agriculture's Future."

"We have selected speakers to address big picture topics that will challenge conference attendees to think about the long-term future of Nebraska agriculture," said Gov. Heineman.

"Livestock production methods, biotechnology and farm policy will all be addressed, giving the farmers, ranchers and agribusiness leaders in attendance a variety of issues to discuss," he said.

The conference begins at 3:30 p.m. CT on Tuesday, Feb. 12.

Dr. Roger Beachy, with the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in St. Louis, Mo., will kick off the conference with a discussion about the future of biotechnology, and how new research and policy considerations may influence opportunities for Nebraska. Beachy was previously director of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture at the United States Department of Agriculture.

Two speakers have been asked to address the future of livestock production in the state.

Tyson Redpath with The Russell Group of Arlington, Va., will discuss the effects of state animal welfare laws on interstate commerce. Redpath worked previously on the staff of House Speaker John Boehner.

Dr. Ronnie Green, vice chancellor of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, will discuss a UNL analysis of Nebraska's position within the United States as a food producer now and in the future.

Jerry Hagstrom, with the Hagstrom Report, will provide an analysis of current activity in Washington, D.C., that could affect Nebraska agriculture, including the status of the farm bill, results of activity related to the federal budget and overall deficit, and other federal action that may influence the future for farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses. Hagstrom is a well-known agriculture journalist, commentator and author and is a North Dakota native.

"This 25th anniversary conference comes at what I think is a pivotal time for the agricultural industry," said Nebraska's Ag Director Greg Ibach.

"While we need to get through the months ahead, we also need to plan for our future in the coming decades. I think our line-up of speakers will challenge us to think that way," he added.

Other activities will include a report by State Climatologist Al Dutcher on the year ahead in weather, and the "Celebrate Nebraska Agriculture" reception. The reception begins at 6 p.m. Feb. 12, featuring a wide variety of Nebraska food products, and Nebraska entertainers including magician Adam White and cowboy poet R.P. Smith.

Anyone interested in agriculture issues is invited to attend. A \$100 registration fee covers participation at activities on both Tuesday and Wednesday.

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