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 ... Teachers delivering knowledge that works to North America's Farm and Ranch Families

# NUTS & BOLTS

**President's Message: Continuing to 'Pivot'**  
 By Pauline Van Nurden, 2020-21 NFRBMEA Co-President

November 10, 2020



Last summer I wrote about change. We've certainly experienced changes never expected over the last 6+ months. The swift and dramatic changes brought on by the pandemic have led to another theme for all of us - the ability to pivot. We pivoted last spring to a virtual conference; our leadership teams have pivoted to meeting via Zoom; and we continue to have a pivot option in future planning. Our hope is meeting in person next June will be possible, but also realize the need for a virtual conference will remain. Therefore, the conference planning team has plans in place to pivot to a virtual conference again if needed.

I know you have all pivoted personally as well. Many of us work from home the majority of the time and meet a lot via Zoom. Educational modalities have pivoted for our children and our normal routines and activities have pivoted. These changes, living life in flux, and concerns over the pandemic are exhausting. I know, I am there myself. Therefore, I hope we can all pivot in one more way (at least this is a change for me). Take time for self-care. Take care of yourself, finding time to relax and keep a renewed spirit. Seek the positives during this difficult time. I again ask, how can you embrace all of this and positively impact yourself and those around you as a result?

I wish you all a happy holiday season, filled with good health.

— Pauline

## NFRBMEA Seeking Applicants for NCAE Representative

NFRBMEA will be looking for someone to take Lori Tonak's spot on the National Council for Agriculture Education. Thanks in part to Lori's efforts, the tide is changing at the National Council to be more inclusive as to the role of the National Council and is now looking at how can it support Adult Agriculture Education along with High school and post-secondary.

If you are a meek and mild-mannered person like Lori and would be up to the challenge of continuing to push the efforts for Adult education as well as support all Agriculture Education then let Pauline or me know of your interest. Feel free to contact Lori about time commitments and such. Lori has indicated her intent to retire June, 2021 so we need to have a candidate by next summer's Conference and Annual meeting.

Job requirements include: knowledge of Agriculture Education; ability to communicate; ability to stand up for your position; willing to do some travel (depends on Covid-19); commitment/ belief in Agriculture Education.



Photo: "Soybean Pods" by Deb Pike

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## What is in Your Future?

By Myron Oftedahl, NFRBMEA President Elect

None of us know what is in the future, and for the most part I do not want to know. 2020 has given us a multitude of items that stress us. Covid-19, Zoom meetings, riots, weather, the list could go on. One thing that I emphasize to my farms is that high production is often necessary to be profitable, and that high production is about stress release or stress management. What can they do to relieve stress on that growing crop or on their livestock?

Do we have sufficient nutrients available, are field operations being done timely? Are livestock being fed adequately, is water and shade plentiful? The list goes on, but I want them to think about the things that they can control. We can stress out about the weather, but we don't have any control over it. We can manage residue so that we maintain more moisture, we can provide shade and fans for livestock in the heat of summer. These are examples of stress management.

So, I ask you, what can NFRBMEA do to help you manage stress so that you can be a more productive instructor? I would offer that we do have the annual Conference that provides professional development activities ranging from national level speakers to sharing information in the hallway with a group of Instructors. Sometimes these hallway/lunch/dinner/bar discussions are the highlight for that year's conference. I would challenge anyone if they said that they didn't get one thing or idea that would help them do their job after attending a conference.

We send out the NUTS & BOLTS, and thanks to the leadership over the last couple of years, this has happened on a more regular basis. Any member can

share an article for NUTS & BOLTS, not just the Board of Directors. And then we also do a NUTS & BOLTS Real-Time Update when something comes along that needs to be shared before the next newsletter is scheduled.

My second question to you is this, why isn't your colleague a member? Could you sit down with them and explain the benefits of NFRBMEA membership? Would you need help? The ability of NFRBMEA to meet its goals is due to Conference profits and dues. NFRBMEA maintains a seat on the National Council for Ag Education, and while some years we were probably silent, recently FBM has become more vocal in their message that the Council is not just for FFA and High School Agriculture. It should also be concerned with post-secondary and adult education. In order to continue this presence, we need your support.

My goal for the next couple of years is to help you manage stress by offering high quality professional development activities, that we continue to share information, that we continue to support our fellow instructors and maybe push each other if needed. That means that we need all of you to help, to accept that leadership role when asked, and to support each other.

You as a member also need to be willing to ask that question and expect an answer or some advice. We are all in this together, as our former Governor stated, "it takes a village to raise a child". In our case, it takes a village to raise an FBM instructor. None of us came into this job knowing everything that we needed to know. It was because of our fellow instructors and NFRBMEA that we have become the instructors that we are.

Stay safe!

## NCAE Update

By Lori Tonak, NFRBMEA Rep on the National Council for Agriculture Education

I don't know about anyone else, but I have had my fill of zoom meetings and any type of virtual conferences! Why do I bring this up in this article? Well, the National Council of Ag Ed met once a week for six or seven weeks. By not traveling to meetings, it has saved our organization money but working on a new AgEd Vision statement virtually has not been ideal. Now that I have that off my chest, on to the heart of this article.

Visioning by the Council has moved forward, and we are hoping to put the finishing touches on the Vision by the beginning of the new year. The four main overarching areas we are discussing at this point are:

1. Recruiting, preparing, retaining, and supporting agriculture teachers.
2. Including all people, diversifying Ag Ed & globalizing our perspective.
3. Preparing, credentialing, & transitioning students to careers in AFNR.
4. Developing partnership across Ag Ed, with AFNR industries, and with educational institutions.

There are two industry partners, the first industry partners that have served since I started on the Council, that have triggered great discussion and insight into what is being developed. Those two gentlemen have

been a breath of fresh air by triggering discussions about post-secondary and adult education. There has been some heated discussion from yours truly on a couple of topics, but all is moving forward.

Once we have the vision fleshed out a little more, I will share it with all of you. Keep in mind, this is a vision not a definite plan of action. It is being developed to make people think of how Agriculture Education can be "planted in all communities".



## In the Zone Analysis Prep

By Tina LeBrun, South Central College FBM

This year I have been finding myself a little more anxious in preparing for analysis season. Has there been enough time to rejuvenate before the winter craziness, with navigating through a pandemic? Time spent this summer understanding and implementing financial assistance programs along with the CARES Act didn't allow for much escape. Personally, I find the downfall of this profession being how the busyness of our seasonal career is sometimes not recognized by those who aren't in this industry.

Even to our farmers, I find a great deal of disconnect as to how prepared they should be to aid in our efficiency of time and energy not to mention mental health. Here are a few of the tasks I try to implement to help me get in the zone for analysis prep.

- 1. Organization throughout the year.** Have you been checking in with your students this summer or fall? Have you assisted in their successful record keeping while transactions are occurring during the year rather than months after they have been long forgotten? Staying on top of records, yields, loan developments while they are happening makes everyone involved work smarter rather than harder. This process also helps keep students organized while insuring the most accurate financials will be generated.
- 2. Communication of expectations.** You can't take enough time to communicate with your students what your expectations of follow thru to get financials complete will be. Making sure deadlines are met and information provided is clear and accurate for a successful learning outcome. This also allows for financials to get complete in a timely manner where the farm will get the most use out of them, who wants old news?

- 3. Make sure all software is the latest and greatest version ahead of the game.** Taking the time to download the most recent version of Finpak, PC Mars, Zoom, etc., will save you time and energy in the heat of the battle. Every program my farms use with or without me at their side, I have updated before we begin the season. This limits glitches on my end when we are in the middle of crunching numbers. Sometimes it even fixes an issue the farm might be having with their end of the record keeping program, again saving time and hassle trying to troubleshoot errors.
- 4. Self-Care goes a long way.** Looking back over the years-four pregnancies and now raising a fleet of germ balls all while navigating through a pandemic, staying healthy is always a large concern during analysis season. Physical exercise has been one way I keep going while the littles may be down and out or all my students are wanting my attention. Whether it be checking cattle or a brisk walk, anything that gets my heart pumping while giving my mind a clear focus, always helps me fuel up for the long day's analysis season brings. It only involves about 20 minutes, but it saves even more time in the end. I can't tell you how many times I hit a glitch with a file and the answer jumps right to me while walking the cattle yards. I firmly believe we can get too immersed in the action at times allowing us to work less efficient.

Here is to a successful analysis season for all of you. Control the things you can control; this idea has been a general rule I follow and use when educating on grain marketing. However, this year especially, controlling the things I can has been a solid foundation to live by.

## FINPACK Lite

By Pauline Van Nurdén, NFRBMEA Co-President

As you prepare for the 2020 analysis season, I want to remind you of a tool that may prove useful for you and your students. That tool is [FINPACK Lite](#). If you are unaware, FINPACK Lite is a balance sheet only version of FINPACK that is available free of charge for the farms you work with.

FINPACK Lite can be downloaded at [z.umn.edu/FINPACKLite](http://z.umn.edu/FINPACKLite). (Note, this will download the software set up file automatically. You will not land on a website page to download from.) You can provide the farm with a copy of last year's balance sheet to update. This updated balance sheet can then be imported into your FINPACK file for that operation. (Use this [help guide](#) to learn more about importing and exporting information in FINPACK.)

This is one of many tools available to assist with the farm's financial analysis. What other tools or efficiencies can you share with other instructors regarding analysis season? If you have a timely resource or suggestion for the analysis, provide it for the next NUTS & BOLTS newsletter in January.



## FINBIN - Did You Know?

By Pauline Van Nurden, 2020-21 NFRBMEA Co-President

You are all aware of FINBIN ([www.finbin.umn.edu](http://www.finbin.umn.edu)). But do you know all of the capabilities of this database? There are so many ways to sort and analyze the data using FINBIN, making FINBIN a hidden gem in your work. I'll share a couple of the features I enjoy using.

### Panel Reports

Panel reports show the average results for farms that are included in the database for all years included in your query. Are you interested in learning more about the characteristics of farms that are in the top 20% annually over the last 5 years? A panel report can do this. Panel reports are a feature of Summary Reports and are initiated as you select your query criteria. This type of report is only available when data is sorted by year.

Here is a screen shot of how to prepare a panel report:

The screenshot shows the 'WHOLE FARM Summary Report' interface. The 'Sort By' dropdown menu is open, showing options like 'Years', 'Selected Counties', 'Farm Type', 'Total Crop Acres', 'Gross Farm Income', 'Net Farm Income', 'Total Farm Assets', 'Debt to Asset Ratio', and 'Age of Operator'. The 'Net Farm Income' filter is set to 'High 20%'. The 'Panel Data Reporting' section is also visible, with a checkbox for 'Create a report using only farms that are in every year' checked and 'Year of data used to gather initial farms' set to 2.

The screenshot shows the 'WHOLE FARM Summary Report' interface. The 'Year(s)' filter is set to '2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015'. The 'Net Farm Income' filter is set to 'High 20%'. The 'Panel Data Reporting' section is also visible, with a checkbox for 'Create a report using only farms that are in every year' checked and 'Year of data used to gather initial farms' set to 2.

### Benchmark Reports

Benchmark reports can be an overlooked type of FINBIN report. The ability of operators to compare themselves to the range of data is a powerful tool. The ability to query to enterprise, tenure type, and even utilize the special sorts gives you as an instructor and farms a great tool to help with goal setting and SWOT analysis for an operation.

Consider how FINBIN can help you help your farms in the next year. Take some time to dig into the database and use the wealth of information to assist the farms you work with. Learn more [about the data](#) and [how to use FINBIN](#) on the website.

Take a look at the difference a panel report makes. Here is a [panel report](#) using the above criteria versus a [report for the average farm](#). In the panel report, you can take a look at what these 288 'top farms' did consistently over the last 5 years. Panel reports are available for whole farm, crop, and livestock enterprise summary reports. Depending on what you are reviewing, panel reports can be a useful tool to help further analyze the data.

### Sort By Options

There are several column heading options to sort your query by. The default is years and I think that is where most people stop. Take a look at the drop down options available (which vary somewhat between whole farm, crop and livestock enterprise reports). They include things like, Tenure Type, Selected Counties, Net Farm Income, Age of Operator, Total Farm Assets, Enterprise Size, and Debt to Asset Ratio to name a few. These sorting features let you slice and dice the data differently, allowing for a more robust analysis of the database.

## NFRBMEA Membership to Date

	<u>2020-21</u>	<u>2019-20</u>
Regular	63	69
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TOTALS	73	78

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