

NEWS RELEASE

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Kansas Ag Leaders Gather for Annual Ag Growth Summit

MANHATTAN, Kansas — The Kansas Department of Agriculture hosted nearly 300 Kansas farmers, ranchers, business owners, educators, leaders, and policy makers at the 11th annual Kansas Governor’s Summit on Agricultural Growth on August 20 in Manhattan.

The focus of the day was Transportation in Kansas Agriculture, and the program offered a variety of perspectives on the ways in which transportation and infrastructure have an impact on the supply chain. Discussions also emphasized the importance of partnerships across the many sectors, agencies and organizations which work together to address the concerns facing the future of agriculture.

“The Ag Summit puts all Kansas industries and commodities in one room, and past discussions have highlighted the shared needs across these varied sectors of agriculture,” said Secretary of Agriculture Mike Beam. “Transportation is one of those shared needs. Addressing that challenge will take continued collaboration among all of our partners.”

Governor Laura Kelly ended the day by challenging attendees. “Our agricultural industry is powerful and it is resilient. It is innovative. And it is absolutely essential to the very being of our state,” she said. “You are the leaders who will determine what our state looks like in 10, 20, 50 years. Keep pushing, keep innovating, keep working together.”

This year’s Ag Growth Summit featured Alejandra Castillo as the keynote speaker. Castillo is the President and Chief Executive Officer of the North American Export Grain Association. She shared her expertise on the challenges facing agriculture in global trade, with a focus on export infrastructure.

Attendees also heard comments from Kansas Secretary of Transportation Calvin Reed, who spoke about collaborative efforts to improve infrastructure to benefit the supply chain, which was followed by a panel discussion with Kansas businesses which have been active participants

in those collaborative projects related to transportation, freight and market access. Kade Grafel with Decision Innovation Solutions provided an update on the commodity flow study the company has been working on for Kansas agriculture.

A highlight of the day was the afternoon panel which featured the executive leadership from several Kansas ag organizations and commodity groups providing their perspective on transportation, infrastructure, trade and more.

For more about the 2026 Kansas Ag Growth Summit and the full Ag Growth Project — including information from previous Ag Growth Summits — go to the KDA website at www.agriculture.ks.gov/Summit.

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SUGGESTED CUTLINES:

PHOTO 1: Governor Laura Kelly spoke to members of the agriculture community representing a variety of ag interests from across Kansas who gathered in Manhattan for the 2026 Kansas Ag Growth Summit.

PHOTO 2: Kansas Secretary of Agriculture Mike Beam greeted FFA state officers who were in attendance at the 2026 Kansas Ag Growth Summit in Manhattan on Thursday.

PHOTO 3: The 2026 Kansas Ag Growth Summit featured a keynote address from Alejandra Castillo, President and Chief Executive Officer of the North American Export Grain Association.

PHOTO 4: The morning session of the 2026 Kansas Ag Growth Summit in Manhattan featured a panel discussion about Transportation, Freight and Market Access. From left: **Steve Hart**, National Carriers, Inc.; **Tom Novitske**, KYLE Railroad ; **Heather Jantz**, MJE Livestock Equipment; **Trent Schairer**, Bartlett Grain/Bartlett Milling; Moderator: **Cory Davis**, Kansas Department of Transportation.

PHOTO 5: The afternoon session of the 2026 Kansas Ag Growth Summit in Manhattan featured executive leadership from many of the primary Kansas ag organizations and commodity groups providing their perspective on transportation, infrastructure, trade and more. From left: **Justin Gilpin**, Kansas Wheat; **Matt Teagarden**, Kansas Livestock Association; **Adam York**, Kansas Sorghum; **Josh Roe**, Kansas Corn; **Nick Levendofsky**, Kansas Farmers Union; **Chelsea Good**, Kansas Dairy; **Kaleb Little**, Kansas Soybean; **Terry Holdren**, Kansas Farm Bureau; **Tim Stroda**, Kansas Pork.