For Immediate Release

**Nebraska Farm Women Travel to S.C. to Find CommonGround**

Lincoln, Neb. (2/2/12) – Five Nebraska farm women will travel to Charleston, S.C. this week to attend the national CommonGround Shared Voices Conference. The goal of the conference is bring volunteers from participating states together annually. Sessions are geared for learning how to reach more consumers with the truth about farming and food.

The CommonGround movement started over a year ago as a partnership between the United Soybean Board (USB) and National Corn Growers Association (NCGA). The movement started as a pilot program set up in the five original states of Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Nebraska and South Dakota. Since then, 10 states have been added including of Colorado, Delaware, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Ohio, Pennsylvania and South Carolina.

The three-day conference, which will begin on Thursday, February 2 and conclude on Saturday, February 4, will include sessions on collaboration between states, guest speakers, media training and social media.

Five volunteers from Nebraska will join the 27 other registered participants at the conference. Nebraska volunteers include Shana Beattie, Sumner; Diane Becker, Madison; Leslie Boswell, Shickley; Joan Ruskamp, Dodge; and Linda Schwarz, Bertrand.

Diane Becker, who farms corn and soybeans with her husband near Madison, says she’s excited to share her experiences with other CommonGround volunteers. “I’m excited to see everyone. There are so many amazing women in this program and I love listening to their stories and what they do on their farms. By bringing volunteers together from a variety of states, we are able to learn about types of farming not native to our respective areas as well as brainstorm new ways to reach consumers and address their concerns more fully.”

Joan Ruskamp, who owns and operates a feedlot with her husband near Dodge, says she is also excited for the conference. “The conference is a great resource for us because it provides an opportunity to come together and talk about the issues that consumers are bringing to us about food and how it’s produced. By pooling our knowledge, we can do a much better job of answering consumers’ questions.” Ruskamp said that she is often asked about animal care practices, including why they give their livestock implants. “It’s not about pumping up their muscles so they can look like Mr. Universe, she said. We do it so we can increase feed efficiency. Using implants, we are able to produce the same amount of meat using fewer resources. Once we explain that, it’s easier for them to understand why we do what we do.”
At the end of the day, although they may live and work on opposite sides of the spectrum, farm women and urban women share the same concerns about how they feed their families. CommonGround volunteers are passionate about agriculture and want consumers to understand how American farmers and ranchers work to provide a safe, abundant, affordable food supply and are dedicated to ensuring the best conservation and care for our land and animals.

For more information about CommonGround, please visit www.findourcommonground.com. For more information about CommonGround Nebraska volunteers, please visit www.commongroundnebraska.com.

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