The Nebraska Department of Agriculture, along with representatives of the Nebraska Dry Bean Commission and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, recently hosted the second annual seminar on the usage of dry edible beans in food manufacturing in China. The event, held in Beijing, was attended by over 100 participants representing major Chinese food manufacturers and Chinese food and nutrition researchers.

"This year's event is a follow up to the initial conference held last year in Beijing," said Agriculture Director Greg Ibach. "There is great interest in China in adding nutritional value to their foods, and Nebraska's dry edible beans hold great promise to assist Chinese food companies with that effort. The Chinese market is huge, so collaborative efforts such as this event hold great potential for our agriculture industry.

"I feel like this really is a game-changer for Nebraska dry beans," Ibach said.

The Nebraska Dry Bean Commission and the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, through its specialty crop block grant program, have provided research funding to University of Nebraska Lincoln researchers to study ways to incorporate more dry edible beans in food products and to understand all the positive health effects of dry edible beans. The results of this ongoing research were presented at the event.

"By working collaboratively with appropriate officials in China, and our UNL partners, we hope to increase marketing opportunities for Nebraska dry edible beans," said Cindi Allen, producer from Ogallala and a member of the Nebraska Dry Bean Commission. "I am excited that the attendance at this year's conference doubled from last year."

Other sponsors of the Beijing conference include the Chinese Institute of Food Science and Technology, the Agricultural Trade Office of the U.S. Embassy in China, and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Nebraska presenters at the conference included: Dr. Wajira Ratnayake, research assistant professor at The Food Processing Center at UNL; Dr. Devin Rose, assistant professor, Food Science and Technology at UNL; and Dr. Beth Arndt, director of research and development for ConAgra Foods, and adjunct professor, Food Science and Technology at UNL.