



# NEBRASKA'S SAWMILL INDUSTRY

*Hardwood pallet lumber produced at Barcel Mill and Lumber Company in Bellwood, NE.*

*Nebraska is home to a small, yet storied forest products industry with many businesses having been in operation for generations. Today, Nebraska's sawmills produce a variety of wood products to meet the needs of their customers.*

## INDUSTRY SIZE

Nebraska is home to eight sawmills producing at least 100,000 board feet of lumber products (such as lumber, paneling and fencing), including three which produced over 1 million board feet. In 2014, these eight operations produced nearly 8 million board feet of products.

Additionally, there are another 15 sawmills which produce 10,000 to 100,000 board feet of products, totaling approximately 500,000 board feet of lumber products.

There are also dozens of small, portable sawmills operating across Nebraska which are used for contracted custom sawing projects or are used for personal or hobby use. Production from these sawmills varies significantly from year to year based on customer demand and frequency of use.



*Hardwood pallet lumber produced at Trade Well Pallet in Ashland, NE.*

## SAWMILL LOCATIONS

While there are sawmill businesses across most of Nebraska, there are only four sawmills producing more than 10,000 board feet of lumber which are located in the western half of Nebraska (west of Highway 183). The remaining 19 sawmills producing more than 10,000 board feet are scattered across eastern Nebraska from South Sioux City to Falls City and from Springview to Kenesaw.

Please visit [nfs.unl.edu/timber-buyers](http://nfs.unl.edu/timber-buyers) for more information on the location and contact information for Nebraska's sawmills.



*Bandsaw mill in operation at The Sawle Mill Inc. in Springview, NE.*



**Did you know? ... The agricultural economy has a significant impact on the sawmill industry. When farm investments are high, demand increases for pallets and shipping material, increasing the demand for Nebraska lumber.**



While most lumber produced in Nebraska is sold to Nebraska businesses or individuals, a small percentage is shipped to customers across the United States, with some even being exported overseas.

## NEBRASKA SAWMILL PRODUCTS

While Nebraska's sawmill industry is made of up relatively few medium to large sized operations, these businesses produce a wide variety of products. These products are used for industrial, commercial and residential use across the state. Some products are even exported across the United States and internationally.

- Kiln-dried hardwood and softwood lumber
- Green, rough lumber
- Pallet and packaging lumber
- Industrial veneer
- Finished lumber slabs
- Fencing lumber
- Interior paneling

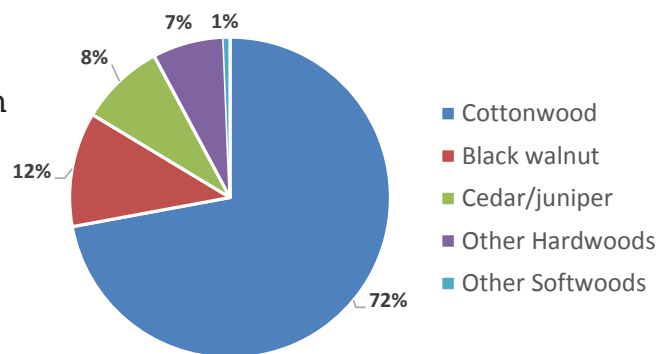


*Stickered lumber prepared for kiln drying at Big Red Sawmill in Palmyra, NE*

## TREE SPECIES UTILIZED

A variety of tree species are utilized to produce wood products in Nebraska. The species used the most is by far cottonwood, the state tree of Nebraska. In fact, more than 70% of all lumber produced in Nebraska is made from cottonwood. Typically used for the manufacture of pallet lumber and shipping dunnage, the massive size and rapid growth of cottonwood trees make it a great option for producing these products.

Proportion of Sawmill Products, by Species



Black walnut and eastern redcedar are the next most used species, equally almost 12% and 9% of Nebraska lumber, respectively.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

- Developing interest in utilizing urban wood resources
- Increased emphasis on management of eastern redcedar encroachment into grasslands and forests
- Increased interest in emerging wood products such as mass timber construction and biochar
- Increased social consciousness and desire to utilize wood as opposed to other materials

## INDUSTRY CHALLENGES

- Increased operational costs due to high worker's compensation and other insurance
- Lack of knowledgeable workforce
- High transportation costs for raw materials and finished products
- Product penetration into established wood product markets
- Lack of public awareness of Nebraska's forest products industry

Information source used to develop this publication:

Haugen, David E.; Piva, Ronald J.; Smith, Adam. 2018. **Nebraska timber industry, 2014**

Resource Update FS-173. Newtown Square, PA: U.S.

Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Northern Research Station. 6 p.