

Celebrating Agriculture

I am a little late to the party recognizing National FFA week but I kind of did it on purpose as this time of year is when we recognize many things agriculture.

I want to say congrats to our area schools and FFA programs and all the youth involved. There are now more than 735,000 FFA members across the country embracing and writing more chapters to the story of agriculture. FFA members today will certainly play an important role for agriculture in the future through production agriculture, leadership, and embracing careers that will take agriculture to new heights in helping feed the world.

March itself celebrates National Pig Day which was celebrated this past week (March 1). As they say, we use everything from the pig except the squeal. Pigs have been found to be around through fossil records for some 40 million years now. I am especially fond of the pigs since I am the 4th generation of my family to raise pigs. I am also fond of the pig since I do have 2 animal heart valves now. Thanks to the Pig!!

March is also a time we celebrate National AG Day and National AG week. March 22, 2022 will be the day this year to recognize - and celebrate - the contribution of agriculture in our everyday lives. As part of National Ag Week, (March 20-26, 2022), the National Ag Day program encourages every American to understand how food and fiber products are produced. Value the essential role of agriculture in maintaining a strong economy. The theme for National Ag Day 2022 is "Growing a Climate for Tomorrow."

Why Celebrate Agriculture?

Agriculture provides almost everything we eat, use and wear on a daily basis. But too few people truly understand this contribution. This is particularly the case in our schools, where students may only be exposed to agriculture if they enroll in related vocational training.

Each American farmer feeds more than 165 people ... a dramatic increase from 25 people in the 1960s. Quite simply, American agriculture is doing more - and doing it better. As the world population soars, there is an even greater demand for the food and fiber produced in the United States.

There are more national ag celebrations throughout the year. I thought I would finish this week with some facts about agriculture and the American farmer.

Did you know - after accounting for input costs, farmers and ranchers receive only 8 cents out of every dollar spent on food at home and away from home. The rest goes for costs beyond the farm gate: wages and materials for production, processing, marketing, transportation, and distribution. Twenty-five percent of all farmers are beginning farmers (in business less than 10 years); their average age is 46.

One day's production for a high-producing dairy cow yields 4.8 pounds of butter, 8.7 gallons of ice cream, or 10.5 pounds of cheese.

Careful stewardship by America's food producers has spurred a 34% decline in erosion of cropland by wind and water since 1982.

Americans throw away about 25% of the food they purchase for at-home consumption.

Two million farms dot America's rural landscape. About 98% of U.S. farms are operated by families – individuals, family partnerships, or family corporations. 86% of U.S. ag products are

produced on family farms or ranches. Farm and ranch families comprise less than 2% of the U.S. population.

Women make up 36% of the total number of U.S. farm operators; 56% of all farms have at least one female decision-maker.

U.S. farm feeds 166 people annually in the U.S. and abroad. The global population is expected to increase by 2.2 billion by 2050, which means the world's farmers will have to grow about 70% more food than what is now produced.

About 11% of U.S. farmers are serving or have served in the military.

Cattle and calves, corn, and soybeans are the top three U.S. farm products.

Of the 10% of disposable income Americans spend on food each year, 46% is for food eaten at home and 54% is for food eaten away from home.

I hope you realize that we rely heavily on our farm families involved in production agriculture to produce so much we take for granted on a day-to-day basis. Yes, we can find our food we enjoy at the local grocery almost every day but without the farmer, our shelves would be bare.

So, as we get ready to start this year's crop season and celebrate Agriculture Week, take time to thank our farm families. Our wonderful community would not be what it was without the foundation of agriculture and farm families. THANK YOU FARMERS!



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