



Protein Power:

CJ Bio America Helps Iowa Select Farms Power Rural Iowa

PROFILE

CJ America
FORT DODGE, IOWA



Employees: 200

Iowa Select Farms purchases amino acids from CJ America for swine finishing diets. CJ America delivers product to the feed mills used by Iowa Select Farms, then the mills deliver complete feed to finishing farms located between Storm Lake and Parkersburg.

While high-protein diets for weight loss are all the rage right now, the reality is that protein has always been important to a healthy diet. Now rural Iowa is playing an innovative role in developing some of most efficient, natural, eco-friendly ways to produce protein.

It comes down to amino acids, which are the building blocks of all proteins. The CJ Bio America plant near Fort Dodge produces amino acids that help create balanced diets for hogs, chickens and other livestock. "Our goal is to optimize the diet for the pig," said Ben Haberl, director of nutrition and feed for Iowa Select Farms.

Replacing a portion of dietary protein with amino acids cuts the amount of nitrogen livestock excrete, which is an environmental win. "Using supplemental amino acids like lysine, threonine and tryptophan has allowed US pork producers to routinely decrease nitrogen excretion rates by 30 percent, while lowering their production costs," said Joe Lucas, vice president and general manager of CJ America.

Iowa Select Farms received its first shipment of amino acids from the CJ Bio America plant in August 2019. "We like to buy local," said Haberl, who appreciates the Fort Dodge plant's convenient location and capacity to provide a consistent supply of amino acids. "About 90 percent of the product from Fort Dodge is used in feed delivered to farms between Storm Lake and Parkersburg."

Partnerships help Iowa thrive

As CJ America's only production facility in North America, the Fort Dodge plant currently produces two of the seven amino acids that CJ America supplies to customers. "We plan to produce more amino acids here in the future," Lucas noted.

Making amino acids at CJ Bio America starts with an Iowa-grown ingredient--corn dextrose purchased from the Cargill grain milling facility next door. "Our plant creates a market for approximately 11 million bushels of Iowa corn a year," Lucas said.

The dextrose provides the sugar to start the fermentation process that creates amino acids. "Our fermentation process is first cousin to beer brewing and ethanol production," Lucas said. "It's a green system, plus we recycle the water."

While fermentation is natural, it's also complex. More than 200 skilled employees, including Ph.D. chemical engineers, operate the plant, which runs 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. The CJ Bio America plant also creates jobs for truck drivers who haul the amino acids to customers like Iowa Select. "We're retaining and attracting homegrown talent back to Iowa," Lucas said.

CJ Bio America is currently partnering with Iowa Select Farms on new research to better understand the specific amino acid requirements in swine diets. "We're excited to see CJ Bio America's product offerings continue to grow, and we look forward to growing our relationship with them," Haberl said.

All this helps enhance livestock production, which remains a key to Iowa's vitality, Lucas added. "Animal agriculture offers a fantastic way to add value to the corn that Iowa farmers grow."

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- Ben Haberl, director of nutrition and feed, Iowa Select Farms

