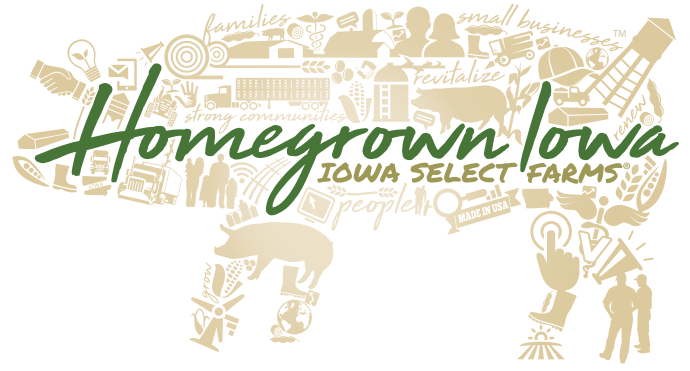


Ten Reasons to Celebrate Agriculture in Iowa



“ There are no miracles in agricultural production. ”

—DR. NORMAN BORLAUG

Being a pig farmer is not for everyone—it can be a tough job, a messy job and it’s always an every-single-day job. We grind through snow, floods, rain, broken feed lines and 2 a.m. loading times—every day. However, farming provides us with a tremendous sense of pride and purpose as we work to feed our fellow Iowans and families across the world.



Here are ten things we think are just great about farming.

1. OUR RESPONSIBILITY IS BIG, AND COMMITMENT EVEN BIGGER

Ag Secretary Mike Naig says it best—“God made Iowa for agriculture,” recognizing the blessing the Midwest has with its rich soil, ample rainfall and of course, our farmers.

If there is one topic that unites every single Iowan, it’s food. While fewer than two percent of us produce food in Iowa, that two percent feed many.

“We recognize Iowa is like no other state in the nation or country in the world,” said Katie Wedel, DVM. “Being number one in pigs in the U.S. is a point of pride for everyone I work with, and drives us to be the best at what we do on the farms every day.”

2. WE ARE FAMILY FARMERS—ALL OF US

“Farming is my dream job,” said Jamie Zellweger, manager of farm near Arispe, Iowa. “Growing up I always wanted to be in the hog industry. Being able to live and raise a family in my hometown of Creston and manage a farm has made for a great career.”

Jamie doesn’t own the farm or the pigs, but that doesn’t make her any less of a farmer. “Farming has evolved and looks different today than it did years ago,” she said. “I’ve looked up every definition of farmer and what I do fits perfectly. Farmers produce food, fuel and fiber, and I’m proud to be one.”



3. WE LIFT UP OUR COMMUNITIES

"The land in this great state gives much to its farmers," said Jen Sorenson, communications director of Iowa Select Farms. "We believe it is our responsibility to give back, help our fellow lowans and make our communities stronger."

Farmers across Iowa volunteer their time on school boards, church councils, county fair boards and rural fire departments. They donate to food pantries, coach youth sports, grill pork for community events and help out their neighbors.

"The Deb and Jeff Hansen Foundation also helps make life better for lowans around three areas close to our hearts," said Sorenson. "As farmers, seeing families and children go hungry is of critical concern, and we struggle to rest easy at night knowing one in five lowans is food insecure."

Other programs show gratitude for the sacrifices made by members of the Armed Forces and help support families impacted by childhood cancer.

"As long as we are producing pork, we will work tirelessly to continue giving back to our communities where our farmers live and work," said Sorenson.

4. WE LOVE TALKING ABOUT WHAT WE DO

"We take our food production responsibility seriously," said Dr. John Stinn of Webster City, Iowa. Dr. Stinn is an agricultural engineer who oversees ventilation and filtration for Iowa Select Farms. He's passionate about telling the story of how farmers utilize research and adopt new technologies to better their operations.

"We are committed to transparency about how we care for the animals and manage our barns, especially when it comes to our neighbors," said Dr. Stinn.

Iowa Select Farms opens their barn doors to host open houses, provide customer tours, posts stories on social media, creates videos, and shares the stories of our farmers every day. "We take our responsibility seriously and everyone is committed to producing safe, quality pork," said Dr. Stinn.

5. WE'RE INNOVATING AND ADAPTING

Ben Haberl says farmers keep pushing to do more with less and innovate to meet the food demands now and in the future. Ben lives near Roland, and oversees the nutrition and research division of Iowa Select Farms.

"American farmers are applauded for our highly productive food systems, but we need to keep adapting," said Haberl. "Much of that challenge rests on the shoulders of Iowa farmers."

Ben recently gathered the research and innovation team to finalize the plans for 2019, pouring over hundreds of new products, potential trials, and partnership opportunities to make our production better.

"Since 2016, we've increased productivity by 4 percent, weaning more pigs per sow per year and improving livability in our finishers," said Haberl. "This year we have a goal of producing 1.5 billion pound of pork; something we've never done before."

He said efforts like tightening biosecurity, adopting positive filtration to improve herd health, taking new approaches to caretaker training and having a culture for continuous improvement have pushed all areas of company forward.



6. WE CREATE OPPORTUNITY

"We hear it all the time—young people are leaving rural Iowa because there are no jobs—but not from my view," said Dana Spree, human resources supervisor for Iowa Select Farms. "Livestock is an open doorway for a young person to be involved in agriculture, especially here, where 456 of our employees are between the ages of 18 and 30." Add in young contracted farm managers, and that number grows to nearly 750.

According to ISU Economist Dr. Dermot Hayes, Iowa Select Farms is on track to employ 10,961 Iowans (direct, indirect and induced jobs) and generate a total annual economic output of \$1.5 billion by the end of 2019. "That means our suppliers, truck drivers, feed mills and the main street businesses we support can grow right along with us."

The entire pork industry is essential to the state's economy—through jobs, consumption of grain and value creation through the supply chain—to the tune of \$10.89 billion. It's something to celebrate!

7. WE WORK HARD AND HAVE HIGH STANDARDS

"We do 110 percent for the animals on our farms every day," said Josh Haidsiak of Clearfield, Iowa. Josh is supervisor for several pig nurseries in Clarke, Union, and Ringgold counties. His farm offices are squeaky clean and in perfect order, which, he believes, sets the tone for the rest of the barn.

Josh travels 70 miles each day visiting his farms and caretaker teams, jumping in to help them chore the barns, sort and move pigs, fix equipment and clean. "Farmers have to have a lot of personal accountability and responsibility to see things through to the end, whether it's plants or livestock. The work is hard and hours are long, and every detail matters."

8. WE BELIEVE IN DOING WHAT'S RIGHT

"I find it extremely rewarding to visit our farms and shower out at the end of the day knowing that I helped make a caretaker better and a farm stronger," said Jeff DeWeese, production well-being specialist for Iowa Select Farms from Hampton.

Jeff is part of a team of nine animal well-being specialists that rotate in and out farms, each visit unannounced, most of them all-day. This year Jeff and his team will do 1,284 production well-being and transportation assessments, load crew observations and biosecurity audits, all to ensure biosecurity compliance and proper care of our animals 365 days a year.

An outsider may say Jeff has an extreme ownership of his responsibilities; however, he says he fits right in with the culture at Iowa Select Farms. "When I walk into a farm, I might as well manage the place or have my name on the contract, as I feel as responsible for it as the manager or barn owner," said Jeff. "If we have a windstorm, I'll pick up the trash from the perimeter. If I am walking the hospital pen and an animal is not recovering, I'll personally review the treatment plan. We all go above and beyond to do the right thing."



families

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Homegrown Iowa

9. WE LEAVE THE SOIL BETTER THAN WE FOUND IT

"Swine manure has long been recognized by farmers for its ability to improve soil health and therefore boost crop yields," said Keith Kratchmer, Director of Nutrient Management. "As farmers focus more on nitrate reduction and improving water quality, manure is becoming more valuable than ever."

Twelve environmental service professionals, 65 manure application teams and 1,600 crop farmers work together at Iowa Select Farms to execute the 4R Nutrient Stewardship strategy—the right fertilizer, at the right rate, at the right time and in the right place.

As farm trends come and go, one thing has remained of constant focus: soil health. The premise is simple—the healthier the soil, the fewer the nutrients that will leave the soil and end up in rivers and streams.

10. FOOD SECURITY IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR STATE AND COUNTRY

The late, world-renowned hunger fighter, scientist, philanthropist, Iowa-born Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr. Norman Borlaug said, "Civilization as it is known today could not have evolved, nor can survive, without an adequate food supply."

The strong presence of agriculture in this state allows all Iowans the benefit of food security and provides a great sense of purpose to our caretakers. Thousands of Iowa livestock farmers care for the animals that feed us, and our farmers are no exception.

The bottom line is—pork powers the human body, is essential to Iowa's economy and we're proud to make a lot of pork here in Iowa.



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