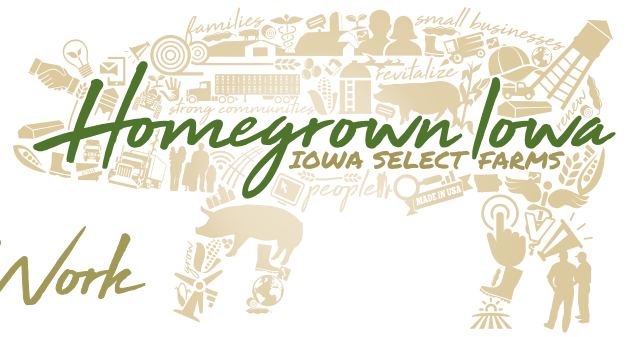


# Survey Shows People Find Caring for Livestock Meaningful Work



“Being involved in agriculture, people have a special connection with that. It’s honorable, and many of us grew up on farms to know the character and drive it takes.”

—AN EMPLOYEE IN SOWS



From the outside looking in, farming can appear messy, dirty, stinky and oftentimes downright hard. It’s one of the reasons less than two percent of Iowans are directly involved in food production. For someone searching for career opportunities, pig farming doesn’t always make the top of the prospect list.

But listening to those who show up to the barns bright and early to put in a full day of feeding, choring, breeding, farrowing, weaning, moving, sorting and loading pigs, you might hear the most unexpected words — *fulfilling, honorable, opportunity, potential, rewarding and pride.*

A recent report published by the National Pork Board showed pig farmers of all sizes—particularly the larger “systems”—are able to provide competitive compensation, family benefits, retirement and investment plans, vacation, sick day and holiday time off and quarterly or annual bonus packages.

And while pay and compensation are the foundation of employee satisfaction, there is overwhelming evidence that people value their sense of connection and belongingness with their work family—feeling respected, cared about, and recognized by others.

People also put a high value on their purpose. Feeling that they are making meaningful impact, identifying with the organization’s mission, and believing their work does some good in the world. It’s a source of pride.

For three years, Iowa Select Farms has been measuring these very things by partnering with a third party research firm to hear and measure how our employees think and feel about working for Iowa Select Farms.

The effort is part of the Top Workplace ranking, which takes the results of the participating companies in Iowa and determines a ranking based on numerical scores. The survey also provides the average score of 6,000 other similar-sized and structured companies across the nation which allows for some comparison.

## HIGHEST SCORES AND STATEMENTS FOR 2018

A comparison of Iowa Select Farms 2018 results versus the average scores of other Iowa companies in the “large employer” category.

- Iowa Select Farms does things efficiently and well— **23% above average**
- My manager makes it easier to do my job well— **18% above average**
- Iowa Select Farms is going in the right direction— **10% above average**
- Iowa Select Farms operates with strong values— **8% above average**

## MOST IMPROVED STATEMENTS FROM 2017

A comparison of Iowa Select Farms’ 2017 and 2018 results

- My job makes me feel like I am part of something meaningful— **7% increase**
- My manager makes it easier to do my job well— **6% increase**
- This job has met or exceeded my expectations I had when I started— **5% increase**
- There is good interdepartmental cooperation at Iowa Select Farms— **4% increase**

## CUMULATIVE IMPROVEMENTS OVER THREE YEARS

Percent increases in Iowa Select Farms’ scores since 2016

- My job makes me feel like I am part of something meaningful— **11% increase**
- Iowa Select Farms encourages different points of view— **11% increase**
- At Iowa Select Farms, we do things efficiently and well— **12% increase**
- There is good inter-departmental cooperation at Iowa Select Farms— **12% increase**
- New ideas are encouraged at Iowa Select Farms— **9% increase**
- Iowa Select Farms enables me to work at my full potential— **10% increase**
- Iowa Select Farms operates by strong values— **8% increase**
- Iowa Select Farms is going in the right direction— **5% increase**



## EMPLOYEES FIND ANIMAL CARE MEANINGFUL

"Now with three years of metrics, we all work together to keep improving on our scores and finding new and better ways to support our people," said Kerry Sweeney, director of human resources for Iowa Select Farms. "We know Iowa has a low unemployment rate, paired with the fact that our farms are in rural communities where there are fewer people to do the job."

The leading score was in response to "My job makes me feel like I am part of something meaningful" leaping up seven percentage points compared to 2017 results, and coming in a whopping 16 percent above the average of similar-sized companies.

Many comments—that are anonymous—shed light on why employees agree so strongly. "People have a special connection with farming and agriculture. It's honorable, and many of us grew up on farms to know the character and drive it takes."

## MANAGERS MENTOR AND SUPPORT TEAMS

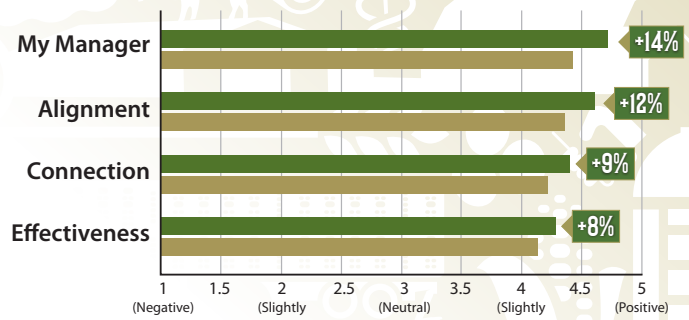
Another consistently strong category employees rating of their immediate managers. "This category is strong every year," said Sweeney.

Iowa Select Farms has 200 managers who are responsible for not only running the operations on over 800 boar studs, gilt developers, sow, nursery or finishing farms, but also for teaching, training and mentoring their caretaker teams.

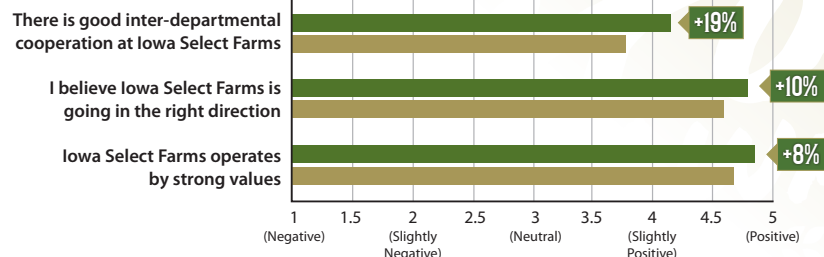
This year, employees responded with a six percent increase in agreement to the question, "My manager makes it easier to do my job well," citing specific increases in their manager's effort to listen to concerns, encourage development, provide training and be a helpful resource.

One employee said, "My manager is always helping me better understand the reason behind why we do what we do and how it works. She takes the time to show me different ways to make tasks easier."

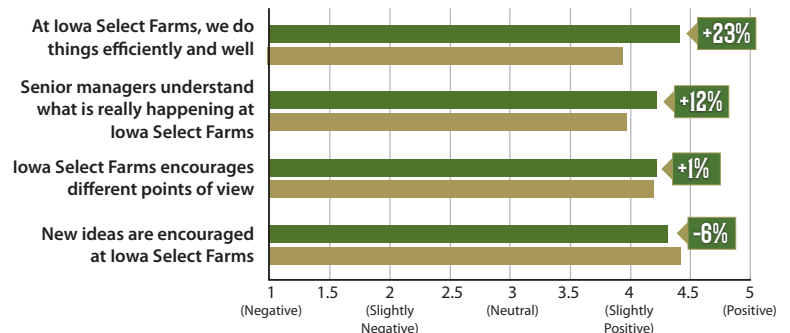
## ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH



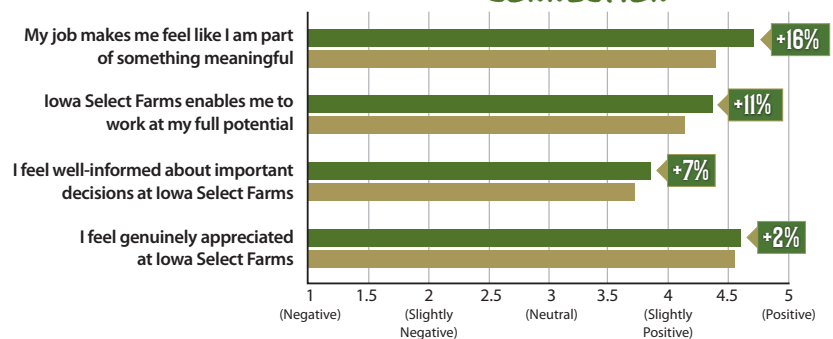
## ALIGNMENT



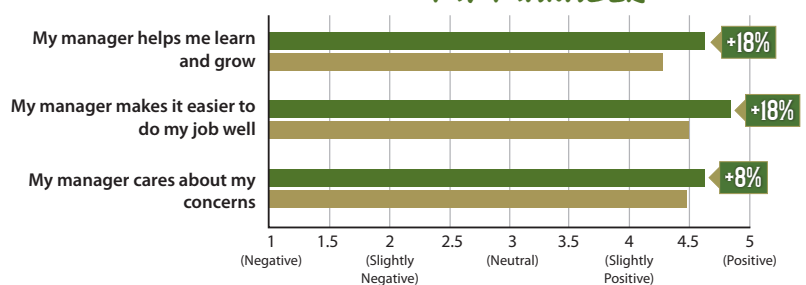
## EFFECTIVENESS



## CONNECTION



## MY MANAGER



Iowa Select Farms Manufacturing: Food/Beverages - 2018



## AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT

“One of the biggest reasons we do the survey is to get feedback to identify areas in which we can improve,” said Sweeney. “Unfortunately, we saw decreased scores in an area that is very important to us—communicating to our farm teams and explaining the reasons behind decisions that impact their farms.”

With 1,200 employees spread across 800 farms in 57 counties, employers with a high number of regional locations are often at a disadvantage when communicating with employees.

**1,200** People **57** Counties **800** Different Jobs Sites

While Iowa Select Farms still scored seven percent higher than the “large employer” average, the answer to the question, “I feel well-informed about decisions,” dropped two percentage points compared to 2017 results. “With 63 percent of survey responses coming from our on-farm caregivers, this is a group we really want to keep informed about where the company is headed,” said Dan Dean, director of sow production. “We’ll be working on finding ways to better inform employees of changes and the reasoning behind them. Our managers are crucial in making this happen.”

A second area where Dean identified as needing improvement is how employees feel about the receptivity of their ideas. While the score improved two percent over last year, it still landed below the average. “This feedback stresses the importance of taking the time to engage our employees in changes and let them help us make things better,” said Dean. “Some of our best improvements as a company started as someone’s idea at a farm.”

### TOP 25 LARGE EMPLOYERS

Rank	Company	Sector	Employees	Regional Locations
1	Edward Jones	Financial Services & Insurance	632	270
2	Van Meter Inc.	Distribution, Logistics, & Freight	516	14
3	Veridian Credit Union	Financial Services & Insurance	715	28
4	Kwik Trip Inc.	Retail	2,169	80
5	Grant Wood Area Education Agency	Education	512	3
6	American Equity Investment Life Insurance Company	Financial Services & Insurance	526	1
7	Cambridge Investment Research	Financial Services & Insurance	684	1
8	Baker Group	Construction	612	4
9	Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company	Financial Services & Insurance	660	2
10	US Cellular	Utilities & Telecommunications	754	1
11	Honkamp Krueger & Co PC	Financial Services & Insurance	500	4
12	UFG Insurance	Financial Services & Insurance	590	1
13	ChildServe	Non-profit	751	15
14	EMC Insurance Companies	Financial Services & Insurance	1,295	15
15	Athene	Financial Services & Insurance	1,056	2
16	Aldi	Retail	592	16
<b>17</b>	<b>Iowa Select Farms</b>	<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>1075</b>	<b>800</b>
18	Western Home Communities	Healthcare	621	3
19	Nationwide	Advertising & Marketing	4,364	3
20	Kirkwood Community College	Education	1,211	14
21	Principal Financial Group	Financial Services & Insurance	7,400	9
22	Great River Health Systems	Healthcare	2,125	6
23	Optimae LifeServices, Inc.	Healthcare	1,537	30
24	Goodwill of the Heartland	Non-profit	616	21
25	Southeast Polk Community Schools	Education	962	1



### ABOUT THE SURVEY

The Des Moines Register, and its research partner, Energage, surveyed the employees of Iowa Select Farms. The survey had 716 responders (67 percent response rate) and generated 1,835 comments.

### The Top Workplace Survey measures—

- **Alignment\***—where the company is headed, its values, cooperation
- **Effectiveness**—doing things well, sharing different viewpoints, encouraging new ideas
- **Connection\***—employees feel appreciated, their work is meaningful
- **My manager**—cares about my concerns, helps employees learn and grow
- **Employee engagement**—motivation, retention and referral
- **Leadership**—confidence in company leadership, ethics and values
- **The basics**—pay, benefits, training, expectations

\*Statements relating to “Connection” and “Alignment” are consistently rated most important to employees.







"Opportunity"



"Fullfilling"



"Pride in our company"



"Love baby piglets!"



"Feels like a family"



"Rooted in agriculture"



"Gives back"



"Teamwork"



"Takes care of people"

# Iowa Select Farms



641-648-4479

[www.iowaselect.com](http://www.iowaselect.com)



## Homegrown Iowa Editor

Jen Sorenson

[jsorenson@iowaselect.com](mailto:jsorenson@iowaselect.com) • 641-373-3276