

DID YOU KNOW...

AG FACTS

Below are some interesting facts about agriculture today. These points just scratch the surface of the advancements being made in agriculture on a daily basis. All Americans are asked to enjoy and admire the wonders of American agriculture as National Agriculture Day is celebrated on March 20.

General statistics:

- Today's average farm is 441 acres compared to 147 acres in 1900.
 - Today's farmer feeds about 144 people in the United States and abroad. In 1960 that number was 46.
 - 41 percent of U.S. total land area is farmland.
 - U.S. Farmers account for 46 percent of the world's soybean production, 41 percent of the world's corn production, 20.5 percent of the world's cotton production and 13 percent of the world's wheat production.
 - Almost 99 percent of U.S. farms are operated by individuals or family corporations.
 - Nearly 22 million people are employed in farm or farm-related jobs.
 - U.S. consumers spend roughly 10 percent of their income on food compared with 22 percent in the United Kingdom, 26 percent in Japan, 28 percent in South Africa and 51 percent in India.
 - Farmers and ranchers provide food and habitat for 75 percent of the nation's wildlife.
- Production Improvements:**
- Farmers and ranchers are producing meat lower in fat and

cholesterol. This has resulted in retail cuts that are 15 percent leaner, giving consumers better value for their dollar. For example, a pork tenderloin now has only one more gram of fat than a skinless chicken breast, one of the true fat "lightweights." Also, much leaner beef cuts are being produced than 20 years ago, resulting in 27 percent less fat reaching the retail case than in 1985.

- Biotechnology has resulted in better tasting fruits and vegetables that stay fresh longer and are naturally resistant to insects.

- Plant breeding has resulted in crops better able to handle the environmental effects of drought and disease and insect infestations resulting in higher yields at harvest and lower costs to the consumer.

Technology/Equipment Advancements:

- As the amount of mechanization and horsepower in farm machinery has increased, the time needed to complete tasks has decreased. Combines, huge machines used to harvest grains such as corn, soybeans and wheat, have dramatically changed agriculture. In the 1930s, before the machines were available, a farmer could harvest an average of 100 bushels of corn by hand in a nine-hour day. Today's combines can harvest 900 bushels of corn per hour—or 100 bushels of corn in under seven minutes!

- Precision farming using satellite maps and computer models enables farmers to use less production inputs to produce a higher

quality, higher yielding crop.

- Technology products improve farming efficiency, reduce operator fatigue and help keep the cost of food down for U.S. consumers.

- A growing number of farmers and ranchers are using computers and modern technology; 90.7 percent use a computer, 87.4 percent own a cellular telephone, 51.3 percent communicate by fax, 72.2 percent have access to the Internet and 24.5 percent make online purchases using e-commerce.

New Uses

- Ethanol accounts for the largest industrial use of any commodity crop.

- With a record production of 2.81 billion gallons of ethanol in 2003, 1 billion bushels of corn and 12 percent of the grain sorghum crop were used to produce fuel for our vehicles. In 2003, 73 ethanol plants were in operation in the United States, with 14 new plants under construction.

- Biodiesel made from soybeans is one of many renewable fuels. Renewable fuels contribute to a cleaner environment, reduce pollution and reliance on foreign oil, and contribute to the stability of the rural farm economy by creating commercial markets for crops.

- Some crops are being bred specifically for use in pharmaceutical production.

- Soybeans are used in the five major markets currently dependent on petroleum products including: plastics, coatings and ink, adhesives, lubricants and solvents.

- Corn also is used in place of certain petroleum-based products in industrial applications.

Cherrific!
The same chemicals that give tart cherries their color may relieve pain better than aspirin and ibuprofen in humans.

Eating about 20 tart cherries a day could reduce inflammatory pain and headache pain.

There are about 7,000 cherries on an average tart cherry tree (the number varies depending on the age of the tree, weather and growing conditions). It takes about 250 cherries to make a cherry pie, so each tree could produce enough cherries for 28 pies!

Today, in Michigan, there are almost 4 million cherry trees which annually produce 150 to 200 pounds of tart cherries.

Head Strong

Lettuce is a member of the sunflower family.

Darker Green lettuce leaves are more nutritious than lighter green leaves.

Americans eat about 30 pounds of lettuce every year. That's about five times more than what we ate in the early 1900s.

In the United States, lettuce is the second most popular fresh vegetable.

Almost all lettuce is packed right in the field.

About 25 percent of all iceberg lettuce is made into fresh cut salads.

What's up Doc?

The plant pigment that gives carrots and other vegetables their vivid orange color is Beta-Carotene. Fruits and Vegetables that are yellow/orange in color contain Beta-Carotene and carrots are one of the richest in this nutrient. Our bodies convert Beta-Carotene into Vitamin A.

The bright orange color of carrots

tells you they're an excellent source of Vitamin A which is important for good eyesight, especially at night. Vitamin A helps your body fight infection, and keeps your skin and hair healthy!

Berry, Berry Good for You!

Blueberries are the second most popular berry in the United States.

Michigan and New Jersey produce 66 percent of all the blueberries in the United States, followed by North Carolina, Oregon and Washington.

Over 200 million pounds of blueberries are grown every year in North America.

Blueberries are first picked by hand to gather the best of the early fruit. Later, if the fruit is to be mechanically harvested, a harvesting machine goes through the field and gently shakes each bush so only the ripe blueberries drop off.

Blueberries are a good source of Vitamin C and fiber.

Cracking Up

In the U.S. in 1998, hens produced 6,657,000,000 dozen eggs - that's 6.657 billion dozen! After these eggs were laid, about two-thirds were sold in the shell and one third of them were broken - not by accident, but on purpose. Because after the eggs are broken out of their shells, they can be made into liquid, frozen, dried and specialty egg products.

The egg shell may have as many as 17,000 tiny pores over its surface. Through them, the egg can absorb flavors and odors. Storing them in their cartons helps keep them fresh!

Eggs age more in one day at room temperature than in one week in the refrigerator.

Occasionally, a hen will produce double-yolked eggs throughout her

egg-laying career. It is rare, but not unusual, for a young hen to produce an egg with no yolk at all.

It takes 24 to 26 hours for a hen to produce an egg; there is 30 minutes between each egg-producing cycle.

About 240 million laying hens produce about 5.5 billion dozen eggs per year in the United States.

Egg yolks are one of the few foods that naturally contain Vitamin D.

Going Bananas!

There are over 500 different types of bananas. That means if you ate a different kind of banana everyday, it would take almost a year and a half to eat every one!

Although generally regarded as a tree, this large tropical plant is really an herb. That means it does not have a woody trunk like a tree. The stalk is composed of leaf sheaths that overlap each other and grow from an underground stem called a rhizome.

The banana plant can grow as high as 20 feet tall. That's as big as a two-story house!

Bananas' are about 99.5 percent fat free.

Bananas are a great source of potassium. Potassium helps build muscle power and keeps your body fluids in balance.

Banana's are most likely the first fruit ever to be grown on a farm.

Pretty Peachy

Peaches are a good source of Vitamin C.

The United States provides about one-fourth (25 percent) of the world's total supply of fresh peaches.

The peach is a member of the rose family and will have a sweet fragrance when ripe.

Most peaches that are imported to the United States during winter months come from Chile.

Peaches are the third most popular fruit grown in America.

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