

National Agriculture Day

A Celebration of Agriculture

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March 19, 2010

Agriculture: Reasons to Celebrate

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 19.

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 "light-weights." 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 affects 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.

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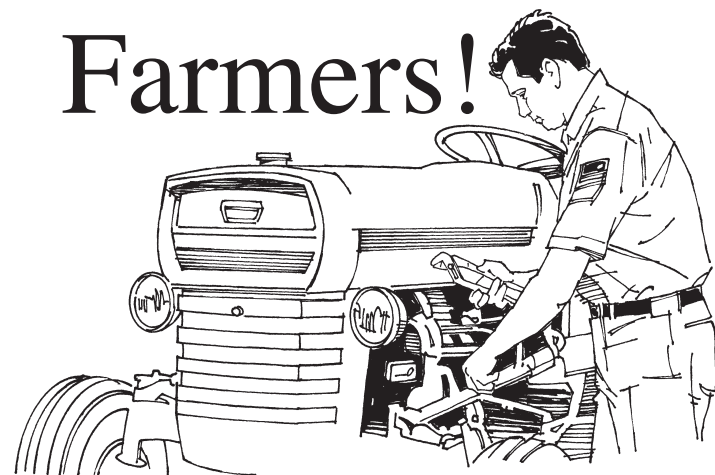
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