

Myths & Facts About Animal Agriculture

Today, most Americans don't live on farms or have any connection to the modern farm. Consequently, people don't understand why farming has changed since the days of our grandparents.

MYTH: Corporate farms have taken over the family farm.

FACT: Farms today look different than they used to, but only the structure has changed. Families still remain the core of the new business structure. A corporate farm is not about size. It's about farmers setting up their business for tax and estate planning purposes. Indiana farms that have been operating for generations, regardless of size, can be corporations.

MYTH: Large farms are putting small farms out of business.

FACT: Like any business in the U.S., farms are getting larger because of economies of scale. However, Indiana has a mix of farms from small to large. And that's good for the state's economy. By creating and sustaining a positive environment for farmers at all levels, we can improve the economy for all rural communities.

MYTH: Large farms are bad for the community.

FACT: Agriculture is the economic engine that drives many of Indiana's counties. According to the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, 35-60 percent of tax revenue in our rural communities is generated from corn, soybeans, and the livestock that eats the grain. For many counties, developing their agriculture industry is the best way to increase economic activity and tax revenue.

MYTH: Confined livestock feeding operations are bad for the animals' well-being.

FACT: Livestock producers have always felt a strong moral obligation to provide good care for their animals. If livestock are stressed in their environment, they start to show it with loss of appetite, weight loss, and susceptibility to illness. That's why farmers have invested millions of dollars into research on the best way to raise livestock in a stress-free environment. Animal research shows that sheltered animals live a less stressful, healthier life than livestock that live outside, where they are constantly exposed to weather and predators.

MYTH: Today's farmers don't care about the environment.

FACT: Modern technology used by today's farmers better protects the environment than the methods used by their forefathers. It's important to understand that clean air, land, and water are crucial to the long-term success of the state's livestock industry. Both from a business and an ethical standpoint, livestock producers have every motivation to conserve and protect the natural resources they rely upon.

MYTH: Modern livestock farms produce huge amounts of waste that pollute our water.

FACT: In the old days of farming, with animals grazing out on the land, the manure was much more likely to run off into the state's water system. Today, all manure is required to be contained in approved engineered storage structures on the farm. Farmers are required to inspect the systems so that they don't leak or overflow. In Indiana, livestock farms are held to the highest environmental standards. Livestock producers are the only ones required

to have zero discharge into state waters.

MYTH: When farmers spread manure on the fields for fertilizer, it goes into our water supply.

FACT: With the use of modern technology and soil science, farmers can apply manure to the land as an organic fertilizer, thus the manure nutrients are absorbed by the soil and not the water. In addition, state and federal regulations mandate that livestock producers only apply manure at a rate that can be utilized by the growing crops. Farmers must have approved manure management application plans before applying manure to the soil.

MYTH: Livestock farms are not regulated like factories.

FACT: The livestock industry is highly regulated by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, the federal Environmental Protection Agency, the Office of the Indiana State Chemist, and the state Board of Animal Health. It's not uncommon for today's livestock farmer to hire staff whose sole job is to make certain the operation stays in compliance with state and federal regulations.

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