

President's Letter
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A Big Thank You to American Family Farm and Farm Families

As a group, there are 2.2 million farms in the U.S. and 98% of those are family farms meaning they are owned and operated by farm families as individuals, family farm partnerships or family LLC's or corporations.

According to American Farm Bureau Federation's website, only 2% of the American population are engaged in production agriculture as a business and as a lifestyle yet directly and indirectly we employ 24 million workers (17% of the workforce) in producing, handling, processing and marketing our products. Fortunately 100% of Americans benefit from the safest and most abundant food supply in the world. In addition, many people in other countries benefit as well. While in the USA we spend an average of 10% of our disposable income on food both at home and away from home, we are exporting nearly 1/3 of all food produced in this country. This makes life much better for people in other countries as well as so that we can all devote more time to other productive pursuits instead of working most of the day trying to procure food for ourselves and our families.

Today's American farmers produce 262% more food with 2% less inputs than they used 50 years ago. Each farmer currently feeds well over 150 people; in 1960 this number was 25. How did this great increase in American agriculture productivity and efficiency come to pass? Three words...American Farm Families.

In their pursuit of their version of the American Dream, American Farm Families work with a dedication and determination that shows results in the well being of their family today and will show up for years and hopefully generations to come.

Most often "Mom" and "Dad" work together for a common goal and the children begin to contribute to the family farm effort at a very young age. I've seen the same dedication on nearly every dairy farm I've ever seen from the 20-cow Amish herds in Ohio with 8 children hand milking the cows to small dairy farms of 35-60 cows in Ohio and Wisconsin where the family and maybe 1 or 2 hired part-time school kids do everything including raising all the feed and showing cows at the county fair. As the size of the operations increase, so does the ingenuity and complexity of the farm family interactions. Even on large dairies, key workers and managers still answer to the family farm owners, the people who are responsible and pay all the bills.

Today we see larger family owned farms with more efficiencies built in and many more employees. Some families control several large dairies; some families raise alfalfa for us on their family alfalfa farms; some families farm tens of thousands of acres producing our grains. Most farmers are just using bigger equipment, more technology and as few outside the family workers as they can justify.

The 40 hour work week has very little meaning for the farm families running America's farms. The old quote "Make hay while the sun shines" certainly emanates from the family farmer mentality that if you do not do something when Mother Nature allows you to, quite often you will not get another chance for a while. 24/7/365 is more the numbers that family farmers are used to. The key is that the teamwork on a family farm is paramount to their ultimate success. If it takes a few more hours to complete an essential task, it will get done.

We know that NON FAMILY owned farms in Russia, China and Cuba failed miserably over the past 60 years, leaving their citizens hungry all too often. Things only turned around in these countries when people and families were allowed to reap what they sowed.

Everyone around the world owes a debt of gratitude to the hard working American Farm and Ranch Families.

Thanks to Bev, Kaye and Susan for all their hard work on our behalf. Also, thanks to Robert Hagevoort for the tremendous turnout for the Animal Handling trainings that were just completed.

Congratulations to Bev & Dougie Idsinga on their newest addition, Douglas III!