

# 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 National Agriculture Day was celebrated on March 21.

**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% of the world's cotton production and 13% 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% use a computer, 87.4% own a cellular telephone, 51.3% communicate by fax, 72.2% have access to the Internet and 24.5% 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.

# Farm tractor safety class to be held on May 5

In 1970, the U.S. Department of Labor declared agricultural tasks as hazardous for children under the age of 16. With certain exemptions, this law made employment of youth under the age of 16 at these jobs illegal for anyone other than their parent or legal guardian.

The long standing tradition of youth finding summer employment on local farms prompted the development of the Hazardous Occupations Training (Tractor Safety) program to train and certify youth 14 and 15 years of age to work in agricultural jobs for someone other than their parents.

With the summer season right around the corner, you may be planning on working on a farm or, if you are a producer, possibly you are planning on hiring a 14 or 15 year old youth.

Youth that are now 13 and will be turning 14 this summer or fall can also take the course, but cannot be issued the certificate until their 14th birthday. According to the laws set forth by the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, he or she is required to take a farm/tractor safety training.

K-State Research and Extension councils from this area are combining efforts and hosting a Tractor Safety Training which will be held in Hill City on Saturday, May 5 at the Graham County 4-H Building. Registration needs to be into the Norton County Extension Office no later than April 30.

The cost of the course will be \$12 which will cover materials and supplies and refreshments. Pre-registration is requested to distribute the manual prior to the course so reading and completion of the homework can be done be-

fore coming to the training. If you are interested in taking the course, call the Norton County Extension Office before April 30 at 785-877-5755. The youth will need to bring a sack lunch for the program.

Recent interpretations of the Hazardous Occupation Training (HOT) law indicate that there are several instances where this training is required even though the youth is working on their "family's farm".

Specifically:

- The farm is a partnership with the youth's parents being one of the partners. Technically, the youth is working for the partnership and not the parents.
- The farm is incorporated. Here again, the corporation is the em-

ployer, not the parents.

- The youth is working on a grandparent's farm. Exemptions for the HOT exist only for the youth employed by their parents or legal guardian.

Youth that are 13 years of age are welcome also, but cannot be given the actual certificate until they turn 14 years old. Older youth and parents are welcome and encouraged to attend the training.

Information presented should benefit all farm residents and workers who have not previously attended these sessions. However, youth 16 and over are not required by law to take the training, but are highly encouraged to participate in the course if they have not taken it before.



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# Managing farm stress will help keep you safe

MANHATTAN — Kansas farmers cope with more job stress than the average worker. In fact, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) reports that farming is one of the 10 most stressful occupations and one of the most dangerous occupations - with an accident rate second only to mining.

"The combination of stress and daily work around powerful machinery and/or large animals in varying and unpredictable situations can lead to accidents," says John Slocombe, K-State Research and Extension Farm Safety Specialist. Slocombe adds, "The most effective way to counter farm stress is to recognize that some events can be stressful and to plan ways to deal with those stressors effectively - before symptoms become severe."

Stress can manifest itself as physical symptoms such as headaches or stomach problems, or as emotional symptoms through angry outbursts or depression. In most people, stress affects relationships with others and is often first noticed by someone other than the person experiencing it. Stress can also lead to action or behavior that results in a farm accident.

Research shows that even under similar circumstances, farmers react differently to the amount of stress they experience, Slocombe said. This is because some farmers develop more effective coping strategies than others.

With an extended dry weather pattern over much of the state again this year, stress levels among Kansas farmers may be reaching a critical level and so, too, the po-

tential for an increase in farm accidents. Slocombe recommends the following tips for managing stress:

- Recognize your personal symptoms and make a conscious decision to do something about them.
- Eat nutritious foods daily. Just as machinery needs quality fuel, our bodies need nutritious food to function properly.
- Keep machinery and equipment in good working condition. Eliminating potential breakdowns

can minimize stressful events.

- Talk about your stress with family or a close friend. If you have no one to turn to, call the Kansas Rural Family Helpline at 1-866-327-6578 for help and understanding.

- \* Do something relaxing every day - even if it's just for a few minutes.

- Exercise. Farmers get a lot of exercise, but it's not always vigorous enough. Try to do some type of aerobic exercise at least three times a week.

## Conservation taking tree orders

Norton County Conservation District is taking orders for trees until April 2. Supplies for weed barriers and drip systems are also available. For more infor-

mation about the trees or other supplies call the office at 877-2623 or stop by the office at 11640 Pineview Drive, Norton.

# Rules need to be followed when using ATVs

MANHATTAN — All-terrain vehicles, also known as ATVs, are popular across Kansas and the nation.

Their popularity is especially strong on farms and ranches where they are used more and more for daily work chores, said K-State Research and Extension farm safety specialist John Slocombe. With this rapid expansion of popularity, however, has come a significant increase in serious, disabling injuries among ATV users and riders.

Much of this increase can be attributed to children and youth operating ATVs designed for adults,

and the failure of ATV riders to wear personal protective gear. Many serious or even fatal injuries to ATV operators and riders could be prevented if certain rules were followed:

- Never allow younger children and youth to operate ATVs designed for adult-use only. The industry recommended "rule of thumb" is that no one under the age of 6 should operate any ATV, no matter what its specified ATV engine size. And, no one under age 16 should operate an adult-sized ATV. Age levels and engine size recommendations for ATV use are: Ages six and older engine size

under 70cc; ages 12 and older engine size 70-90cc; age 16 and older engine size over 90cc.

- Keep in mind that the industry's rider age and engine size recommendations are to be used as broad guidelines only. The real test of the appropriate age of an operator and size of machine is the youngster's strength, skills and judgment. Parents must take a significant supervisory role in making the final determination.

- One seat means one rider; just as on a tractor. ATVs are rider active, meaning the operator needs the full use of the seat to safely maneuver the machine. Extra rid-

ers make up a significant portion of victims in ATV injury incidents.

- All ATV operators should always wear an approved safety helmet and protective eyewear. In addition, operation of ATVs in rugged use areas or during competitive events may require the use of durable gloves and protective clothing to cover the arms, legs and feet.

Information on the location and availability of ATV safety training programs is available by calling the ATV Safety Institute at (800) 887-2887, or by contacting an ATV dealer.

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