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March 20th Is Ag Day!

Although March 20th is Ag Day, a day to recognize the benefits people all over the world enjoy and benefit from agricultural production, American farmers are hard at work every day, 365 days each year producing for our benefit. Take the time during National Ag Week, March 16-22 this year to tell one farmer that you appreciate what they do!

Farmers are independent business people who provide for their families and the world by growing and producing food and fiber. They use modern techniques to produce the quality and quantity of food demanded by a growing world population. While in 1960 one American farmer produced enough food for almost 26 persons each year today, a single farmer supplies food to 144 people in the U.S. and beyond. Crop protection products have doubled the production of world food calories and tripled the output of food, like cooking oil, meat, fruits and vegetables since 1960.

World demand for American produced food is expected to grow. The world's population is at 6.2 billion today, and is expected to reach 7.5 billion by the year 2020. There will be millions of new mouths to feed, many of whom rely on United States food production to meet this need. Today, agriculture is one of a very few industries that produces a positive trade balance. The United States exports \$43.5 billion in agriculture products and imports \$26.4 billion in farm products, equaling a positive net trade balance of \$17.1 billion. Agriculture is America's #1 export, generating 20% of the U.S. Gross Domestic Product. Every hour, the U.S. exports \$6 million worth of agricultural products. This is accomplished while American consumers spend the lowest percentage of their annual income on food – just 9.3 percent.

Families own and operate almost 99% of all farms covering 41% of the total land area in the country. Agricultural land provides habitat for 75 percent of the nation's wildlife. In comparison, Jefferson County farm families operate 99.3% of the farms and 70% of the land area or 247,914 acres. Jefferson County agriculture accounts for \$1.51 Billion annually in economic activity, providing jobs for 10,850 county residents and 21.6% of the county's total income stream. Jefferson County agriculture pays over \$40 million in local and state taxes not accounting for all property taxes paid to local school systems.

Jefferson County agriculture is diverse. Dairy, grain, eggs, nursery stock, sod and vegetables are the main commodities. Dairy is the largest part of Jefferson County's agricultural production contributing \$43.1 million annually to the county's economy. One dairy cow generates almost \$2,000 in direct income to producers and between \$15,000 and \$17,000 of economic activity in the county.

So, while you ponder the benefits you enjoy each day from American agriculture and the 3 million people working on our nation's farms, take the time to recognize one or more local farmers who not only benefit you and your family but the county, country and the world as well.

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