



Factory vs. Family Farms

The dramatic expansion of industrial agriculture (or factory farming) has made it increasingly difficult for small family farmers in the U.S to stay in business. Instead, the food industry has become dominated by a handful of giant corporations which benefit from government policies that favor large-scale production.

Family farmers are being forced out of business at an alarming rate. According to Farm Aid, every week 330 farmers leave their land. As a result, there are now nearly five million fewer farms in the U.S. than there were in the 1930's. Of the two million remaining farms, only 565,000 are family operations. As established family farms are shut down, they are not being replaced by new farms and young farmers. Very few young people become farmers today, and half of all U.S. farmers are between the ages of 45 and 65, while only 6% of all farmers are under the age of 35.

Some people ask whether these sorts of changes are inevitable; they wonder if family farming is simply out-of-date in today's global economy. Or they may think: if industrial agriculture can supply more food at a lower cost, doesn't that benefit consumers?

If food were like car parts or other consumer products, it might. But because our health, our environment and our communities are so greatly affected by food production, the way food is produced and shipped matters just as much as what's in the food. For many people, the connection between farm and fridge is vague at best. In an age where a handful of corporate food processors determine most of what we find in the supermarket, it is critical for consumers to learn about where their food comes from and make their own informed choices. (Source: www.sustainabletable.org)

The Northeast Iowa Food & Farm (NIFF) Coalition and the Food & Fitness Initiative are working together to create community environments that support access to fresh, locally grown, healthy, affordable food and safe environments for physical activity and play. More information about these programs can be found at www.niffcoalition.org.