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New Census of Agriculture reveals much about Iowa farms

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Every five years the U.S. Department of Agriculture carries out an extensive survey of farms and farmers all across the nation. The information that is collected and published serves a wide variety of purposes. One of the more important ones is to provide a snapshot of what farms and farmers at the national, state and county level look like, and how they are changing over time.

Number of farms
The long-term trend in Iowa as well as in most other states has been for the number of farms to decrease over time. The 2017 Census showed 86,104 farms in Iowa, a decrease of 2,533 from 2012, or almost 3%. However, these farms did not just disappear. Many small or mid-size farms were consolidated into larger units. The area of land in farms dropped just 0.2% over the same five-year period, while the number of harvested acres decreased by 0.7%. In other words, the amount of land in Iowa being farmed was essentially unchanged. The

average number of acres in each farm increased slightly, from 345 to 355.

Number of farmers
Sometimes there is confusion between the number of farms and the number of farmers. These are not the same. Most of the Census information is collected by farm, which is defined as any agricultural operation that sold or could have sold at least \$1,000 in production in the past year. Many small, part-time operations that do not fit the traditional “family farm” image are included, as well as some very large livestock and crop producers. Tracts of land owned by multiple landowners that are all being rented by the same operator count as one farm.

The number of farms represents the number of business units, but the number of people involved may be more important. The Census of Agriculture uses the term “producer” for anyone who takes an active decision-making role on a farm. Thus, each farm

has one or more producers. The Census collected data on up to five producers per farm. Many family farms count both spouses as producers. Family partnerships or corporations count as one farm, but usually include multiple
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Handbook updates

For those of you subscribing to the handbook, the following updates are included.

2018 Iowa Farm Costs and Returns – C1-10 (9 pages)

Iowa Corn Price Basis – A2-41 (12 pages)

Iowa Soybean Price Basis – A2-42 (12 pages)

Please add these files to your handbook and remove the out-of-date material.

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producers, who often are related to each other. In fact, in 2017 Iowa had a total of 143,447 farm producers, an average of 1.67 per farm. Moreover, 21% of farms shared net income among more than one household.

Prior to 2017, the Census of Agriculture identified farm “operators.” In the last Census, the term “producer” was used, a more inclusive concept. Thus, direct comparisons cannot be made between producers in 2017 and operators in 2012. In both years a “primary” producer or operator was identified for each farm. Some data relating to these primary producers or operators can be compared, however, and are shown in the table at the end of this article.

Farm employees

Besides farm producers, many people work on farms as hired employees. Should they be considered farmers? They perform farm work for a living, so perhaps they should be. The 2017 Census of Agriculture showed that there were 73,257 paid farm workers in Iowa. Adding the number of employees and producers together shows that 216,704 people were employed on farms in Iowa in 2017, or 2.5 persons per farm.

Many of the paid employees worked only part-time, but 25,910 of them worked at least 150 days out of the year on the farm. If we consider these “full-time” farm employees to also be farmers, and add them to the number of producers, we find that there were actually 171,342 “farmers” in Iowa by this definition, or an average of 2.0 per farm.

Off-farm employment

The average farm size of 355 acres would generally

not be large enough to support an individual or family, unless intensive crop or livestock production were being carried out. Not surprisingly, many farm producers work off the farm, as well. Census data reveal that just 41% of Iowa producers worked exclusively on the farm in 2017, while 19% reported part-time non-farm employment and 40% worked 200 days or more off the farm, essentially a full-time job. If we add just the producers who did not work off the farm to the number of paid workers with at least 150 days of farm work, we can estimate the number of “full-time” farmers in Iowa to be 85,335. Not surprisingly, producers on larger farms were less likely to have off-farm employment.

Female farmers

The latest Census also provides some details about the 49,065 female farm producers in Iowa. They accounted for 34% of all the farm producers in the state. Of these female producers, 17,280 were identified as the primary producer on the farm, accounting for 20% of all the primary producers.

Other characteristics

The average age of all producers was 57.4 years, a slight increase from 2012. Only 9% of the producers were under the age of 34. Sixty-seven percent of producers lived on the farm they operated, and 49% considered farming to be their primary occupation.

The full [2017 Census of Agriculture](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov) can be accessed online, www.agcensus.usda.gov. Data are available for all states, and for each county within a state.

Selected data from the 2017 Census of Agriculture

Category	U.S.	Iowa 2017			Iowa 2012
	All Producers	All Producers	Female Producers	Primary Producers	Principal Operators
Number	3,399,834	143,447	49,065	86,104	81,529
Female	36%	34%	---	20%	8%
Primary occupation is farming	42%	46%	16%	53%	59%
Residence is on the farm	74%	67%	70%	70%	72%
No days worked off the farm	39%	41%	39%	46%	43%
200 or more days worked off the farm	40%	40%	42%	36%	38%
Average age	57.5	57.4	58.2	58.0	57.1

Source: National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2017 Census of Agriculture.

National Farm Safety and Health Week, September 16–20, 2019

The National Education Center for Agricultural Safety, 563-557-0354, neenand@nicc.edu

Each year since 1944, the third week of September has been recognized as National Farm Safety and Health Week. This recognition has been an annual promotion initiated by the National Safety Council and has been proclaimed as such by each sitting U.S. President since Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the first document. Over the years, the development and dissemination of National Farm Safety and Health Week materials has shifted to the National Education Center for Agricultural Safety. NECAS is the agricultural partner of the National Safety Council and has been serving families and businesses in agriculture since 1997.

The 2019 theme for National Farm Safety and Health Week is “Shift Farm Safety into High Gear”, with a special focus each day:

- **Monday** - Tractor Safety and Rural Roadway Safety
- **Tuesday** - Farmer Health and Opioid/Suicide Prevention
- **Wednesday** - Safety and Health for Youth in Agriculture
- **Thursday** - Confined Spaces in Agriculture
- **Friday** - Safety and Health for Women in Agriculture

The NECAS website, www.necasag.org has more information and links to daily webinars. It is everyone’s responsibility for safety both on the farm and the rural roadways of America. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows the agricultural sector is still the most dangerous in America with 581 fatalities in 2017 (a decrease from the previous year), which equals 23.0 deaths per 100,000 workers.

As we recognize National Farm Safety and Health Week this September, please join us in promoting safe and healthy practices on our farms and ranches across the U.S. and in our neighboring countries as producers enter the harvest season.

www.necasag.org

www.facebook.com/necasag

twitter.com/necasag



NATIONAL
 Farm Safety &
 Health Week
 September 15-21, 2019



Farm youth stress & challenges

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This is the sixth article in a series from the ISU Extension and Outreach Dairy Team on [Dealing with Farm Stress](#), www.extension.iastate.edu/dairyteam/familyfarm-stress.

Farm Youth have varying degrees of “mastery” to deal with the opportunities and stressors of life. Learning opportunities abound on the farm, but growing up on a farm can also bring challenges, and is this article’s focus.

Challenges are normal and can be healthy as they can push youth to do things that promote healthy growth. It is in the process of dealing with and overcoming challenges that can help provide deeper meaning in life and can help youth develop a life skill of “mastery” along the way.

Mastery is the ability to both conceptualize and actualize solving a problem, create a project, communicate an idea, achieve a life skill, or using a skill to deal with or better manage a situation or opportunity. The aim here is to better develop mastery over life’s more “down” times.

When Youth are Down with a:

Dent, Doubt, Damage, Demand, Denial, Departure, Disappointment, Discouragement, Delay, Debt, Danger, Deficit, Difficulty, Dispute, Disturbance, Division, Defeat, Depression, Destruction, Disaster, Disability, Disease, Divorce, or even Death....
What Do You Tell the Kids?

The power of positive reality is a mindset to help youth use the power of positive focus that hopefully leads to the power of positive definition of who they are that then leads to the power of positive reality in their lives. Relating the power of positive reality to farm child psychology is depicted in the next image. The goal of reality is to foster youth to positive actions, behaviors, habits, performance, decisions and thus positive reality on the right. But, in order to get youth there, we need to step back and help youth create or envision positive thoughts, images, ideas, perceptions, mission to help youth create a positive focus and a mindset to overcome negative stimuli.

Farm Youth Psychology 101:

The POWER of POSITIVE REALITY

Thoughts → Feelings → Actions
 Images → Attitudes → Behaviors
 Ideas → Values → Habits
 Perceptions → Principles → Performance
 Mission → Identity → Decisions

FOCUS → DEFINITION → REALITY

Positive thoughts are a precursor to positive feelings and thus, positive actions. A common parenting skill is to threaten youth to quit this action, behavior or habit or to perform a certain way or make this decision, maybe even harping on this daily to get this end-result or action. As children grow, they tend to acquire many deep-rooted pictures or images, ideas, perceptions from parents and peers, teachers and television, siblings and society that may or may not be healthy.

Trying to sway youth towards a healthy action that conflicts with their perception or mental image of what is the norm may mean a parent needs to go back and adjust the camera or brain lens to help youth understand why their image might need to be changed first for healthier decision-making. But, the reality of getting from picture to good decision has another step. Attached to the thoughts, pictures and perceptions are often feelings, attitudes, values and principles that often need changing to get at the desired action, behavior or habit. Bottom line is that positive thoughts or images are precursors to positive feelings or attitudes which are precursors to positive actions, habits or behaviors. Thus, the power of positive reality in youth development takes a multi-step approach.

Well-Adjusted youth tend to come from well-adjusted parents. Modeling healthy behavior is key. Witnessing unhealthy conflict due to farm or family can be harmful, a source of unhealthy pictures or perceptions that may get rooted in a child’s mind

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forever. Farm and family stress may cause youth to be anxious, scared or sleepless and may respond by acting out or turning inward, and having trouble interacting, concentrating and performing in school or elsewhere (NERMEN). All families have some conflict and challenges or they are not normal.

It is more important to deal with a youth's thoughts than feelings (Rosemond) as often parents give overt attention to a child's feelings at the expense of well-adjusted thought processes to help them better deal with their feelings. It is more important to empathize with youth than to sympathize with them. The former tends to help with understanding their situation. The latter tends to help them feel sorry for themselves. But, in times of great grief, sympathy may be the needed form of compassion.

Acknowledge Thoughts...I understand...you're thinking...
Empathize with Feelings...I sense...you must feel...

Communicating with youth under stress is not an easy task! Its success is a product of good relations. Success of relations is a product of good communication! Thus, it's a "Catch 22" situation needing a "TALK" plan!

Talk Meaning—help youth see and appreciate the "meaning" of small, good things in their lives, starting early on. They find greater happiness and satisfaction, even amidst difficulty, and help understand the bigger "meaning" of other things.

Talk Definition—help youth "define" who they are in their strengths and abilities, not just athletic or musical talents, for example. Call attention to their goodness, kindness and sensitivity and "encourage each other (them) daily while it is still today" (Hebrews 3:13) with positives points mentioned much more than negative ones.

Talk Positive Reality—help youth "realize" that if they want to feel good about themselves they need to "think" good about themselves. Do they see themselves as weak and down in a hole or strong, sitting on top of the world? Both *humility* and *confidence* need to be learned in their internal reality. Focus on the positive and learn from the rest as youth are as happy as they decide to be.

Talk Relative—help youth relativize, not magnetize problems. Often farm youth don't have all the things others do. Talking through the previous topics of meaning, definition and reality, can help youth realize how blessed they may be without things or in comparison with other youth around the world.

Talk Respect—help youth develop humility and thus develop a sense of respect for others and the world around them. Understanding that respect for parents, teachers, coaches and other role models, barring any wrongdoing, creates a value of humility within oneself towards others. Humility is often a more important interpersonal value than pride, for communication skills later in life.

Talk Joy—help youth experience joy in relationships by:

- Being genuinely interested/concerned using eye contact and focus, which means not letting cell phones get in the way!
- Being appreciative with an attitude of gratitude.
- Being accepting, yet disciplined in righteousness.
- Being joyful, looking at blessings even in sorrow and joking around as appropriate.
- Being affectionate and empathetic which means using a tender touch. (adapted from NERMEN)

Talk Their Level—Adults can be intimidating to youth often simply because height is associated with power. Sitting or kneeling to get closer to their level can often improve communication response with a simple gesture for more level "eye to eye" contact.

Talk in Their Time—Youth often are not as talkative when their minds are occupied elsewhere. Meal times, car ride time, family game time and/or lying in bed/prayer time are often more responsive times when youth "might" talk.

Talk Their Talk—Use words and examples they can relate to and create "word pictures" connected to their interests to give better meaning. Youth tend not to be proactive in talking so, like boating, if just left to natural currents, busyness and competing interests will drift people away. It takes time and energy to keep youth on course with purpose.

Talk Their Walk—youth are growing up in an environment today much different than parents. Farm and family stress might pale in comparison to bullying and social challenges brought on by

Farm youth stress & challenges, continued from page 5

technology and social media, which have made it ever so difficult to walk a mile in their shoes. When their “walk” is less than good, youth need support, security and safety measure, knowing they are not alone and that family is their safe haven where boundaries and the “fundamentals” of life are found. Youth need safety and boundaries, but help them see the fun or meaning in the mental challenge of “thinking” through life.

So, what do you tell the kids?

Farm youth, when times are tough, can often rise to the occasion, and even help deal with the fire or problem, if supported with clear and caring communication. Protecting loved ones from bad news is not always best, as often, kids may be aware of something, feeling emotional charges. Mistrust can develop if not told the truth. If age appropriate, give youth the opportunity to appreciate the real concerns of the family, it can teach youth to deal with difficulty, and can help build resiliency in your children.

Bring youth along in the discussions rather than just announce the bottom line plan. Let them know they are loved and did not cause the issue at hand, as they often blame themselves. Listen to them without criticizing their worries. Check their level of understanding and know a one minute chat, a gentle hug or a reassuring word may be the best way to communicate with youth under stress.

When Youth Turn to You, do you?

- a) *Turn away*—ignoring bid for connection and continuing what you were doing....
- b) *Turn against*— can’t you see I’m busy...why do you want to waste your money....where’d you get that crazy idea....
- c) *Turn toward*—well that sounds like fun...I’m happy you shared with me...that is interesting.... but... (adapted from NERMEN)

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Internet Updates

The following Information Files have been updated on www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm.

How Patronage from Selling Grain to a Cooperative Affects Your Net Marketing Price– A2-80 (1 page)

The Non-Price Risks of Credit Sale Contracts: Know Your Grain Buyer – A2-81 (1 page)

The Section 199A Deduction: Potential Impacts on Farm Prices and Income – A2-82 (2 pages)

Current Profitability

The following tools have been updated on www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/info/outlook.html.

Corn Profitability – A1-85

Soybean Profitability – A1-86

Iowa Cash Corn and Soybean Prices – A2-11

Season Average Price Calculator – A2-15

Ethanol Profitability – D1-10

Biodiesel Profitability – D1-15

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