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Online References

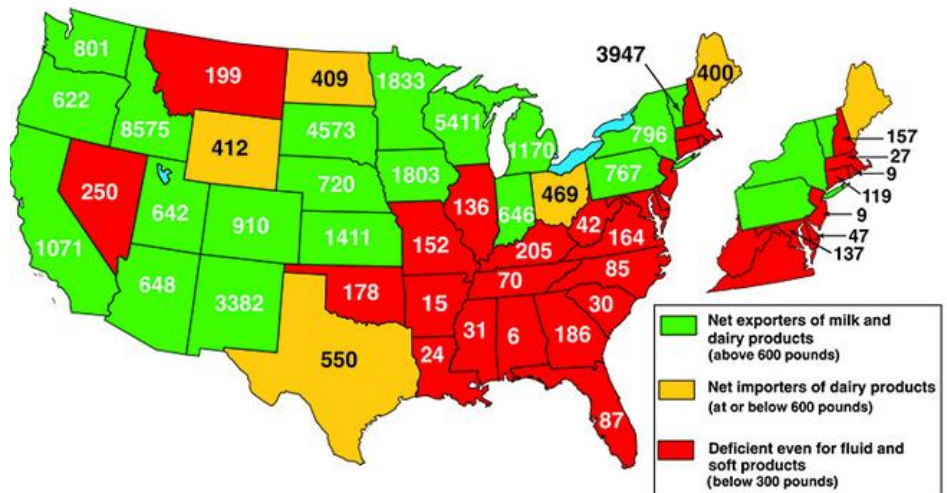
- Ag Decision Maker**
www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/
- Iowa Beef Center**
www.iowabeefcenter.org
- Manure Management Action Group**
www.agronext.iastate.edu
- Iowa Pork Industry Center**
www.ipic.iastate.edu/
- ISU Extension Dairy Team**
www.extension.iastate.edu/dairyteam
- Locate a County Office**
<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/countyservices/>

Numbers to Know

- AnswerLine** 800-262-3804
- Beginning Farmer Center** 877-BFC-1999
- Iowa 2-1-1** 211
- Iowa Concern** 800-447-1985
- Iowa Healthy Families** 800-369-2229
- Teen Line** 800-443-8336

Iowa Is A Net Exporter Of Milk

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When it comes to producing enough milk to meet the needs of citizens, 26 states fall short of even producing enough milk to fill beverage milk demand. Those states each produce less than 300 pounds of milk per person, which is the threshold for meeting fluid and soft dairy product needs. That green threshold is 600 pounds of dairy products per person, which makes the state a net dairy product exporter. Iowa is one of those states.

While total U.S. milk production crept forward by 0.1 percent, moving from 226.3 to 226.5 billion pounds, the top five dairy producing states (California, Wisconsin, Idaho, Texas and New York) grew milk output by 1.1 percent or 1.4 billion pounds. The remaining 45 states slid by minus 1.1 percent or negative 1.2 billion pounds.

Over the past decade, South Dakota more than doubled its milk output from 2 billion to 4.2 billion pounds of milk. At the start of that ascent, South Dakota ranked No. 21 among all dairy states. By the end of 2022, it had moved to No. 16. It ranked No. 2 in new milk this past year at 559 million pounds. That was double Iowa's third ranked growth in new milk. Most of Iowa's 232 million pounds of new milk came from its western region near I-29.

Milk production in Iowa during January 2023 totaled 506 million pounds, up 7 percent from the previous January according to the latest USDA Milk

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Iowa Is A Net Exporter Of Milk, *continued*

Production report. The average number of milk cows during January, at 241,000 head, was 2,000 above last month and up 16,000 from January 2022.

All this follows on 6.4 percent of all U.S. dairy farms leaving the business last year. Usually, high milk prices would stem the tide of dairy farmers exiting the dairy industry. However, not this time around. That's because high input costs climbed at the fastest rates since the early 1980s, and those inflationary pressures chipped away hard at net returns when it comes to producing milk.

Since 1992, the drop in licensed dairy farms with permits to sell milk to processing plants has declined from 131,509 to 27,932. That's a 79 percent drop during that time, with 103,577 fewer farms but nearly the same number of cows. In the past 31 years, the average herd size has grown by 357 percent. The Midwest shifted from 51 to 242 cows per herd (+374 percent) in the past 31 years.

Missouri was hit especially hard, losing 13.8 percent of its operations. Iowa lost 9.1 percent of its herds and Minnesota lost 8.1 percent. When I stated with the Iowa State University Extension Dairy Team just five years ago, we had over 1000 cow dairies in Iowa, today that number is around 758 and shrinking every week.

This slide also extended to Iowa's dairy goat herd. In early January of 2019 we had 225 licensed goat dairies, while in 2022 that number had seen a 31 percent loss, slipping to 177

Planting Soybeans Early: Risk vs. Reward

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Spring is right around the corner, and farmers across the Midwest are getting excited for planting season. When it comes to planting soybeans there are a few key things to remember to maximize yield potential.

Soybean yields are significantly impacted by the planting date. Iowa State University recommends planting soybeans early to maximize yield potential, but how early is too early? Based off years of research, we recommend May 1st for northern Iowa and April 25th for central and southern Iowa as the best early planting dates. Planting before this can put the soybeans at higher risk for frost damage, reduced plant populations and more.

Although planting early can bring risks, there are things we can do to mitigate those risks:

- Planting into a good seedbed is critical for early planting success. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth should be 50° F and rising.
- Avoid planting when rain is forecasted in the next 24 hours. This can cause crusting of the soil surface or imbibitional chilling.
- Increasing seeding rate 10-20% can help ensure you hit your target population. Planting into colder soils increases the risk of seedling mortality.
- In addition to always looking for high-yielding varieties, choose a variety with resistance to SCN and good early season vigor.
- Adding a fungicide seed treatment effective against seedling diseases like Fusarium, Pythium, Phytophthora, and Rhizoctonia species can help protect the seed from disease pressure that comes from wet and cool soils. While planting early can come with risks, planting late comes with risks as well. Yield potential begins to fall with losses of approximately 0.62% per day after May 20th. Higher yielding environments will see bigger yield losses with delayed planting.

One tool growers can use to determine their best planting dates is the Soybean Planting Decision Tool found at: <https://go.iastate.edu/EGOW70>. The soybean planting decision tool can help growers determine which date is best for them based on location, maturity group and planting date.

In summary, planting soybeans early maximizes yield potential with more vegetative nodes, more seeds per pod, earlier flowering, shorter plants, less lodging, and potentially earlier harvest. The risks of planting early are crusting of the soil surface, damping off, frost damage and exposure to early diseases and insects. If a grower does their best to mitigate the risks, planting early, but not too early, will help them gain yield in most growing seasons.

Pork Producers Meet the Challenge

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Today's swine industry is arguably the most difficult time in recent history. Low market price, high feed prices and production limiting disease outbreaks have always been a source of stress; not different today as profits are as low as we have seen in the last couple decades. Beyond the usual, pork producers are also thinking about a foreign animal disease and a possible market disruption from California prop 12 implementation. There is an ever-looming threat of African swine fever or foot & mouth disease. The introduction of a foreign disease would stop exports and potentially cost the industry billions. While if prop 12 is implemented, non-compliant pork would be severely discounted. Smaller operations in NW Iowa have not been able to make the large investment to become prop 12 compliant, they are hoping the court will rule prop 12 unconstitutional.

In the face of the uncertainty, swine producers are committed to six ethical principles to produce safe, nutritious food in a responsible and sustainable manner. The issues that pork producers are addressing include food safety, animal well-being, environment, public health, the people caring for swine, and community.

To keep pork safe, producers have committed to a program called pork quality assurance. This is a major commitment including certification workshops, passing a test, site assessments and audits. Thanks to their efforts we can enjoy the safest pork in the world. Animal well-being is also address with same commitment. Employees are trained with knowledge and skill to provide quality care to pigs.

The environment is important to swine producers, progress has been made over the last 50 years. Today's producers use 75.9% less land, 25.1% less water, 7% less energy and 7.7% lower carbon emissions. Efforts continue to become more efficient at utilizing manure as fertilizer by using soil fertility sampling, nutrient plans, and other tools to meet crop needs with manure. Additionally, technology continues to improve matching pig nutrient needs while reducing manure output.

Public health efforts go beyond food safety. Today's management of disease, manure, and air quality has reduced potential health impacts while providing a healthful pork product for consumers. All employees are trained and certified for practices that promote health and safety. Antibiotic usage on farms has been reduced. These training certifications help keep both the people and pigs healthy and injury free.

Finally, pork producers are committed to be caring neighbors and responsible citizens. For example, you will commonly find producers actively serving in community leadership roles, donating pork, or grilling meat for the community. In 2018, 3.2 million servings of food were donated, and 54,000 hours of volunteer hours were contributed. To learn more details about the efforts of pork producers visit porkcares.org

Making the Best of a Thin Situation

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The dry conditions in parts of the state in 2022 put extra stress on pastures. Additionally, nitrogen prices continue to rise as well as all costs associated with pasture management. As we head into the 2023 season, here are some considerations to help improve over-grazed and thin pastures and help to manage pasture management costs.

For pasture stands that are on the thinner side, frost seeding or interseeding this spring can help to thicken stands and be a longer-term solution to increase productivity. Now, not every pasture is ready for frost seeding or interseeding as its important to consider things like previous herbicide use, soil fertility and soil pH. Early March can be a great time for frost seeding, whereas interseeding, is typically done sometime between mid-March and early May. Read more on frost seeding and interseeding in the ICM Blog "Frost Seeding and Interseeding Considerations for Pastures This Spring."

Frost seeding or interseeding with a legume can not only help to thicken a pasture stand, but can also help lessen the amount of nitrogen that needs to be applied to the pasture. Nitrogen fixing legumes should include alfalfa, birdsfoot trefoil, and clover species. Keep in mind with legumes in a pasture, a soil pH above six is best and for alfalfa a soil pH of 6.9. When it comes to seeding, a drill is the preferred method for most legumes to provide good seed to soil contact. If broadcasting, try rolling or frost seed prior to a snow event to help the seed stick to the soil surface. After frost seeding or interseeding, do not allow competitive grass species to grow over 4 inches and shade out legumes as the legumes are getting established. Once the legumes catch up in size to the grass, then we can allow more grazing. After last season this year may be a good time to consider interseeding legumes on those overgrazed fall pastures this spring.

