

Setting the PACE

by Susan Waters, director of communications and public relations



Help us celebrate National Ag Day March 20

This month people across the United States will be celebrating National Ag Day on Monday, March 20. Students, farmers, ranchers, and local and national media all will take a moment to salute agriculture on this special day. Ag Day is part of National Ag Week, which is March 19-25.

As producers of the No. 1 protein source in the world, cattlemen play an important role in the world of agriculture. The cooperation and support of all agricultural producers, no matter what they produce or where they produce it, is necessary to ensure a bright future for agriculture.

This month, I challenge everyone to take the initiative to explore the world of agriculture and to educate those around them about agriculture's contributions to the economy and to our daily lives. Angus breeders need to set the PACE not only for the beef industry, but for all of agriculture.

In 1999 National Ag Day introduced a new campaign, "America's Largest Classroom on Agriculture," designed to reach the general public and to provide the opportunity for year-round visibility for both National Ag Day and American agriculture.

This program takes agriculture's positive message into the classroom by providing information, educational materials and ideas to both elementary- and secondary-school teachers. Based

on the idea that informed consumers make informed choices, the campaign recognizes today's students as tomorrow's consumers.

The program sets an example for all segments of agriculture. Educating young people about the healthfulness and safety of their food supply, and the contributions to consumers in the form of agricultural byproducts, is fundamental.

Become a spokesman

It's easy for you to become a spokesman for the beef industry and agriculture on National Ag Day.

- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper; express your appreciation for America's farmers and ranchers and the products they provide to consumers.
- Encourage your child to give a presentation about National Ag Day at school, or take in an agricultural product from your farm for show-and-tell.
- Help your local 4-H club or FFA chapter with special projects or events.
- Contact a local civic or social organization about providing a program to their group during National Ag Week.

However you choose to participate, raising awareness of National Ag Day and the people involved in agriculture will send a positive message to consumers.

Read through the information I've provided in this column in honor of National Ag Day. You'll not only find information about beef, but also a few fascinating facts about other ag products, too.

Don't forget ... National Ag Day is March 20. Go out and tell our story to the world!

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Agriculture in today's world

Nearly 2 million people farm or ranch in the United States. Almost 90% of U.S. farms are operated by individuals or family corporations. More than 15% of the U.S. population is employed in farm or farm-related jobs, including production agriculture, farm inputs, processing and marketing, and wholesale and retail sales.

■ According to the 1992 Census of Agriculture, 47% of farmers were 55 years of age or older, which was up only 2% from 1987. During the same period, there were 2% fewer farmers under the age of 45.

■ Today, 42% of total U.S. land area is farmland (945.5 million acres). In 1900 the average farm size was 147 acres, compared to 491 acres today.

■ The top five agricultural commodities include cattle and calves, dairy products, corn, soybeans and hogs. U.S. farmers account for 42.7% of the world's production of soybeans and 34.4% of the world's corn.

■ In the 1960s one farmer supplied 25.8 people in the U.S. and abroad with food and fiber. In 1994 one farmer supplied the same products for 129 people.

■ The efficiency of U.S. farmers benefits the U.S. consumer's pocketbook. U.S. consumers spend approximately 9% of their income on food, compared with 11% in the United Kingdom, 17% in Japan, 27% in South Africa and 53% in India.

Fun & fascinating ag facts

■ In 1996 each American consumed an average of 77 pounds (lb.) more of commercially grown vegetables than in 1970, 63 lb. more grain products, 54 lb. more fruits, 32 lb. more poultry, 10 gallons (gal.) more milk lower in fat than whole milk, 20.5 lb. less red meat, 73 fewer eggs and 17 gal. less whole milk.

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- Americans eat about 125 lb. of potatoes a year, about half from fresh potatoes and half in processed foods.
- It takes just 40 days for most Americans to earn enough money to pay for their food supply for the entire year. Compare that to the 129 days it takes the average American to earn enough money to pay federal, state and local taxes for the year.
- More than 96 billion lb. of edible "surplus" food is thrown away in the United States each year. It is estimated that almost 27% of our food supply is wasted.
- Farmers grow corn on every continent except Antarctica.
- Americans are eating about 14 lb. of turkey per person each year, more than double the rate 20 years ago.
- Farmers and ranchers provide food and habitat for 75% of the nation's wildlife.

■ There are 914 different breeds of sheep in the world, but only 35 of them can be found in the United States.

■ Hamburger meat from a single steer will make about 720 quarter-pound hamburger patties. That's enough for a family of four to enjoy hamburgers each day for nearly six months.

■ Straight from the cow, the temperature of milk is about 97° F.

■ Cattle outnumber humans in nine states, including Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oklahoma and Wyoming.

■ A cow spends six hours eating and eight hours chewing her cud each day.

■ More than 100 medicines used by humans come from cattle.

■ One cowhide can produce enough leather to make 20 footballs.

■ In one day, a honey bee can fly 12 miles and pollinate up to 10,000 flowers.

■ Products we use in our everyday lives come from plant and animal byproducts produced by America's farmers and ranchers, including ...

Health care/pharmaceuticals: surgical sutures, ointments, latex gloves, X-ray film, gelatin for capsules and heart valves.

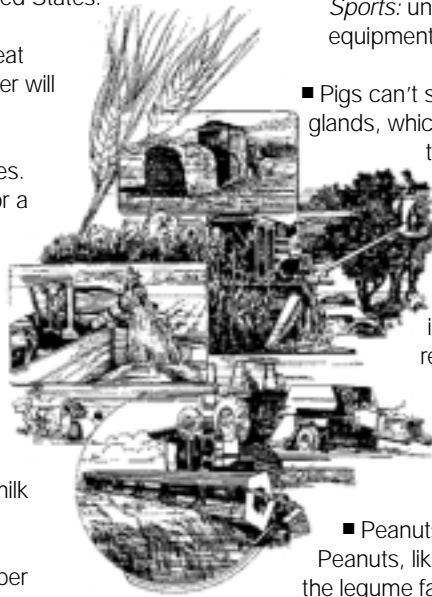
Construction/lumber: paints, brushes, tar paper, drywall, and tool handles.

Transportation: fuel, lubricants, antifreeze, tires and upholstery.

Manufacturing: adhesives, solvents and detergents.

Printing: paper, ink and film.

Personal care products: shampoo, cosmetics, lotions, fingernail polish and toothpaste.



Education: crayons, textbooks, chalk, desks, pencils and paper.

Sports: uniforms, baseball bats, leather equipment and shoes.

■ Pigs can't sweat. Pigs have no sweat glands, which is why they roll around in the mud to cool.

■ Genetic engineering with plants and animals has resulted in new antibodies for immunizations. Other research has developed surgical techniques and pharmaceuticals from agriculture that help save lives.

■ Peanuts are not actually nuts. Peanuts, like soybeans, are members of the legume family.

■ It takes approximately 1.4 gal. of milk to make 1 gal. of ice cream.

■ Grapes are one of the oldest cultivated fruits in the world. They have been around for more than 8,000 years.

■ Egg yolks are one of the few foods that naturally contain vitamin D.

■ One bushel of corn will sweeten more than 400 cans of pop.

■ Each American consumes, on average, 53 lb. of bread per year.

■ A pig can run a seven-minute mile.

For more information about National Ag Day, contact the Agriculture Council of America, 11020 King Street, Suite 201, Overland Park, KS 66210, telephone (913) 491-1895, fax (913) 491-6502, or e-mail info@agday.org. 

The Last WORD...

As you go through life, you learn that if you don't paddle your own canoe, you don't move.

— Katharine Hepburn