Going to Work for Agriculture

Enhancing community vitality by helping livestock farmers grow and prosper

Coalition to Support Iowa’s Farmers
Megan Ritter
Feb. 23, 2008
Iowans prosper when livestock farmers have an opportunity to grow responsibly and successfully.
CSIF Launched

On May 11, 2004, six prominent Iowa farm organizations came together and unanimously approved moving forward with an effort to bolster animal agriculture in Iowa.
Founding Partners

– Iowa Cattlemen’s Association
– Iowa Corn Growers Association
– Iowa Farm Bureau
– Iowa Pork Producers Association
– Iowa Poultry Association
– Iowa Soybean Association
Mission

To enhance Iowa’s communities and quality of life one farmer and one neighbor at a time through the responsible growth of livestock farming.
The Coalition…

- Three-person staff
- Network of consultants
- 6-member board
- Commitment to get results
- A budget to get the job done

Megan Ritter (right) and Rex Hoppes (center) visit with Stan Pearson of Waukee.
The Coalition does not...

- Maintain a membership base.
- Lobby.
- Develop policy.
- Support growth at all costs.
- Defend those who are not committed to farming responsibly.
The Coalition does…

- Help farmers grow responsibly
- Enhance consumer awareness about livestock farming
- Empower farmers to be ambassadors for their way of life
- Monitor livestock activism in Iowa and clarify misleading information

Mark Stock, grain and livestock farmer, Waukon (Allamakee County)
Helping farmers do what’s right

CSIF helps farmers meet and exceed regulations, identify good locations for new livestock farms, be good neighbors and protect the environment.

Al Montag
Cattle and crop farmer
Granger, Iowa
Lending a hand

Have assisted over 800 farm families

– Hog farmers: 519
– Cattle farmers: 142
– Poultry-turkey: 19
– Site visits: 577
– General industry questions: 141
– Neighbor relations: 274

Susan Brozik
Crop and livestock farmer
Garner (Hancock County)
Farming Matters Forums

• Educational summits held near Iowa City, Cherokee and Mason City – nearly 300 farmers attended.
  – Cattle feedlot tours last August attract nearly 300 farmers!
  – Next seminar slated for Tuesday, March 25, 2008
What we know
“Even on a good day, the best reporters don’t write the truth, they write what people say is the truth.”

--Washington Post Editor
Uninformed public

Ninety-eight percent of the nation’s population – and 96 percent of Iowa’s population – does not farm.
What we Know

Nearly 98 percent of U.S. farms are family owned and managed enterprises.

The Klines, Prescott, Iowa
What we know

Eighty-six percent of U.S. farm products sold are produced on farms owned by individuals, family partnerships and family corporations.

Source: USDA's Economic Research Service

The Kinsellas Family, Adams County
What we know

In Iowa, nearly 90 percent of our land is used for agriculture – the highest percentage of any state in the nation.
What we know

People respect and value farmers but are not sure if the growth of livestock farming is a good thing... especially when it happens in their backyard.

Mike Schneider
West Bend (Palo Alto County)
What we know

In Iowa, \textbf{97 percent} of Iowans say ag is extremely or very important...
What we know

However, only **63 percent** say livestock farms have a positive impact on Iowa…
What we know

And just **57 percent** say they support the growth of a nearby livestock farm.
Framing the Issues

The words we use matter. “Farming,” “Grow,” “Farms” and “Farmers” generate a 20 percent more favorable opinion than “Production,” “Expansion” and “Producer.”

Paula Ellis (and pooch), Donnellson
Don’t know the families

People want to know that farm families are involved in raising livestock and growing crops.

Dave Nelson, crop & livestock farmer
Belmond, Iowa

Kevin & Julie Van Manen and family
Kellogg
Don’t know the realities

New buildings and new technology are foreign to them. They believe things are being “hidden.”
“Nothing is so simple that it can’t be misunderstood.”

--Freeman Teague Jr.
Stand up and be heard
(consumers want you to)
Zogby Survey of 4,500 adults nationwide in August 2007 found that **85 percent** of Americans want to know where their food comes from.
Who is better equipped to talk with the public about modern livestock farming?
If you don’t speak up on behalf of your business… trust me…

The activists WILL!
What’s in it for me?

People want to know “what’s in it for me?” They perceive modern farms as caring little about the well-being of the neighborhoods they locate in. This must change.
CSIF is here to help…

• Agriculture must work together
• And…. 

It starts with you
Questions
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