



We're Neighbors

Publication dedicated to promoting agriculture to our non-ag neighbors



Cook County Farm Facts

\$20B

Agriculture contributes nearly \$20 billion to the Cook County economy

4%

of the county's total workforce is employed in agricultural-related job

#2

Rank of Cook County in the state for equine production with a sales volume of over \$1.5 million

12,000

Number of farmland acres in Cook County



Major livestock:
Horses, bees and chickens

Specialty farmers raise:

Alpacas, bison, ducks, geese, goats, mink, mules and donkeys, ostriches, pheasants, pigeons, quail, and rabbits



Specialty growers grow :
Vegetables, flowers, trees, shrubs, and sod

Major crops:

Soybeans, corn, wheat and hay



Urban farmers use:

Outdoor and indoor vertical production, indoor warehouses, rooftop farms, hydroponic and aquaponic facilities to grow, process and distribute food in urban and suburban settings



Source is 2017 Census of Agriculture.



Animal Care

Farmers take great personal interest in the care of their animals. Depending on the type of livestock farmer they are, their animals may spend time on pasture, in large environmentally controlled barns, or a combination of both. Some, like this dry pack monoslope barn (pictured), are specially designed with the cow's comfort in mind. The roof is sloped to allow the maximum or minimum warmth from the sun (depending on the time of year). Other barns feature misting fans and floors covered with slotted rubber mats, allowing manure to pass through to a pit under the barn. The manure is then used as fertilizer on the fields.





Technology

While we all enjoy our technology, farmers have also found uses for them:

1. Tablets connect to the planter, collecting data to help make good agronomic decisions in the raising of this and future years' crops.
2. GPS radio-steering devices allow the tractor to precisely go through the field pretty much on its own. The farmer watches over the controls, noting weeds, drainage issues, and other problems. The physical and mental fatigue with long hours in the field is greatly reduced thanks to GPS.
3. Small propeller drones fly high-definition cameras over crops and are the farmer's eyes to help spot potential problems in the field; disease, wind damage, wild life damage, water damage, downed fences, livestock issues, etc. You can imagine what a time-saving device this is...like using a security camera at home.



Environment

Farmers take care of their land because that is what provides them with their livelihood.

They use only what is necessary to eliminate pests and help their crops grow. The farm is not only their lifestyle and their heritage, it is how they earn their money. To that end, they only spend money when necessary on inputs such as fertilizer or chemicals.

Here are some ways that farmers take care of their farms:

1. **Drainage**

a. **Tiling** is a way of draining (or removing) water from the subsurface of the soil. Too much subsurface water may prevent root development and inhibit the growth of crops.

Tile drainage is usually made of plastic tubing.

b. A **grass waterway** is a natural or manmade drainage ditch that is carefully shaped and planted with strong rooted grass to carry water across a farm or down a slope during heavy rain.

Using drainage practices can:

- * reduce soil erosion
- * serve as an outlet for hillside ditches, diversions and terraces
- * reduce and control flooding
- * keep water clean.

Proper drainage is also important so farmers can access their land. If there is too much water, farm equipment can tear up the wet ground and may get stuck in the mud. Because tractors and implements are needed to prepare the soil, plant, apply fertilizer and chemicals, field access is important.

2. **Irrigation** is the practice of adding additional water when the soil is naturally too dry.



Planting

In Illinois, the optimum planting window is April/May. Plants that are not in the ground by July 1st have a slim chance of success because they cannot complete their growing cycle by early September to mid-October, when harvest begins.

WHY DO FARMERS ALWAYS WATCH THE WEATHER?

The most critical part of what farmers do is getting the seeds in the ground and giving them a healthy start. A wet Spring may delay planting, which leads to lower yields. On the other hand, if farmers go into the field lacking ground moisture (caused by lack of snow or rain through the winter), there is a concern the seedlings will not produce uniform and optimum stands that are key to high yields.

Wet weather makes it difficult for a farmer to go through their fields. Wet soil will cause compaction and limit the roots to a shallow layer of nutrients and moisture. Also, the parts of the planter key to placing the seed properly in the soil will gum up with wet soils and mis-plant seeds, ultimately defeating the purpose of achieving a good stand.

A 2,000-acre farm (one acre = a football field, approximately) will take approximately two weeks (working 6 days a week, 10 to 12 hours a day) to plant, if the weather is right.





EQUIPMENT USED DURING PLANTING ARE:

Tractor Planter Sprayer

Seed bed tillage equipment...
disc, field cultivator, soil
finisher, etc.

SEED SELECTION

Farmers choose what kind of seed they want to plant; GMO or non-GMO. Just like your toothpaste or your shoes, there are hundreds of different seeds (and dozens of seed companies) from which to choose.

Seed selection is based on:

- soil type (soil types can vary many times across a single field)
- the number of days required for plants to mature
- drought tolerance
- insect and disease resistance
- herbicide tolerance
- COST! The more traits (drought tolerance, insect resistance, etc.) a seed has, the higher the cost.

THE GROWING SEASON

1. Preparing the soil
2. Planting
3. New growth begins to emerge within a few days
4. Spraying for weeds (which take nutrients from the soil) and insects (which eat plants)
5. Scouting fields for crop damage
6. Mowing ditches and waterways

Most farmers rotate crops, meaning one year they will plant corn in a field and the next year, soybeans. Experience and research shows that rotating is better for the soil and helps produce better yields.





Recipe

Strawberry Bread

Ingredients (serves 14)

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|------------------------------------|--|
| 1 cup fresh strawberries
mashed | ½ of 3 oz. package
sugar-free strawberry
gelatin |
| 2 eggs | 1-1/2 cup flour |
| ½ cup sugar-substitute | ½ tsp. baking soda |
| ½ cup sugar | ¾ tsp. cinnamon |
| ½ cup oil | |

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Lightly oil a loaf pan.
3. Beat eggs; add sugars and oil.
Beat until light and fluffy
4. Stir in gelatin and fresh mashed strawberries
5. In a bowl, combine flour, soda and
cinnamon, add to strawberry mixture.
6. Mix until just blended.
7. Bake approximately 50
minutes, test with toothpick
8. Cool 10 minutes remove
from loaf pan. (best when
made a day ahead).
9. Freezes well

*Nutrition Facts
per serving:*

114 calories
 9g Total Fat
 1g Saturated Fat
 0g Trans Fat
 23 mg Cholesterol
 18mg Sodium
 8g Carbohydrate
 1g Dietary Fiber
 2g Protein

Fun Facts

140%



Eight strawberries will provide 140% of the recommended daily intake of Vitamin C for kids. One cup of strawberry is only 55 calories.

HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT FARMING OR YOUR FOOD? Check out these resources:

- WatchUsGrow.org
- Bestfoodfacts.org
- Gmoanswers.com
- Usda.gov (specific sections: food safety, food and nutrition blogs)
- Fda.gov/Food/Resourcesforyou/consumers
- Fooddialogues.com/foodsource
- Nutrientsforlife.org
- Foodsafety.gov
- Farmflavor.com/us-ag/
- Eatright.org (Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics)
- Geneticliteracyproject.org
- Askthefarmers.com

