



CELEBRATE NATIONAL EGG MONTH IN MAY

By Kevin Stiles

URBANDALE, IOWA (May 9, 2017) - Perhaps it is part of our "Iowa Niceness," but we who are involved in agriculture here don't often take time to celebrate and reflect on our successes. National Egg Month in May offers a time to celebrate our innovative and dedicated Iowa egg farmers, businesses, and the egg community.

Iowa is the No. 1 egg producing state in the country and has been for more than 15 years. Iowa's egg farming families committed to raising healthy flocks, producing safe, healthy, affordable eggs and protecting the environment for future generations.

Egg farming has a major impact on Iowa's economy. According to recent research from Iowa State University, the industry contributes about \$2.36 billion in total sales, creates more than 8,800 jobs and provides \$500 million in personal income each year. Iowa's egg industry uses 61.6 million bushels of corn and 566,700 tons of soybean meal annually.

Iowa's egg farmers produce the least expensive source of high-quality protein available for families near and far. Eggs are trending right now, as individuals and groups embrace the egg's versatility and amazing health benefits. Per capita egg consumption has grown in the U.S. from 248 per person per year to 268 over about the past five years. At the Iowa Egg Council and at the American Egg Board, that in itself has been reason to celebrate.

Eggs are being featured increasingly and in innovative ways at restaurants and schools. All-day breakfast at McDonald's and new egg-inspired foodservice offerings will continue to help increase egg consumption. Iowa schools have joined educational institutions across the country to significantly increase eggs on breakfast and lunch menus, encouraging students become life-long egg consumers.

All of those who work on our state's farms and in egg processing facilities share in our success. We appreciate the companies, too, that support our industry by producing innovative products and technologies to help enhance efficiency, build productivity and increase sustainability.

The Iowa egg community is grateful for our many strong, vibrant statewide and nationwide partnerships. Our connection with Iowa State University includes the Egg Industry Center at the Animal Science Department and the College of Veterinary Medicine and Veterinary Diagnostics Laboratory. This partnership has fueled vital research in egg and poultry production, disease control, and even egg products, which has helped increase egg consumption by using eggs in new ways.

Through the American Egg Board, the Iowa Egg Council accesses funds and resources from the national checkoff program to help increase awareness among Iowa's health professionals and consumers about egg nutrition. We also have partnered with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Iowa Department of Ag and Land Stewardship (IDALS) to promote animal health and biosecurity on Iowa's egg farms.

All these players have worked diligently with the Iowa Poultry Association, egg farmers and the allied egg industry to improve biosecurity, mitigate disease risk and prepare should an outbreak occur. We are so much better prepared should there be an outbreak than we were for the Avian Influenza outbreak in 2015. Our commercial egg farmers have greatly improved biosecurity practices on their farms, and egg processors have stepped up protocols to guard against any major spread of the disease should it again come to Iowa.

I hope you will join me this National Egg Month - and all year long - in celebrating our industry, our families, our partners and, most importantly, our product.

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