

Spring Farm & Ranch



Support School Agriculture

You don't have to own or manage a farm to be a contributor to its progression. Talk to your local schools about how you can get involved in their agricultural department or become a part of the cause to begin one if it isn't already established.

When building a platform to teach kids about the importance of farming, government assistance is available. Encourage local officials to participate in the National Farm to School Network, sponsored by the USDA. The program aims to improve awareness of farming by focusing on five principles.

- Assess where you are and where you'd like to be.
- Form a team and collaborate.
- Establish one or two attainable goals to get started
- Learn from others.
- Promote farm-to-school in your community.

Developing lessons based on these guidelines creates a sense of community amongst students and staff. If your local school already has an efficient agriculture program in place, consider these tips from the USDA to ensure it



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continues to grow.

PRACTICE CONSERVATION

Encourage the youth to conserve resources on non-agricultural land to increase food and shelter for wildlife in the neighborhood. These practices can be performed in suburban yards, city lots and rural areas.

Instruct your children to share their actions with their peers and teachers at school, so encourage them to follow a similar course. You can also

speak with the school board about incorporating conservation efforts on campus, like tree planting, composting and water conservation.

FFA ORGANIZATION

The National Future Farmers of American Organization was founded in 1928. Since its inception, the program has educated youths about aspects like production farming, agribusiness and forestry.

Nearly 700,710 students have been impacted by FFA

lessons that provide them with leadership to strengthen communities and respect American agriculture.

To start an FFA chapter in a local school, there must be an established agricultural education program. Before bringing your plans to the school board, the organization suggests considering these steps:

- Learn about agricultural education.
- Determine the philosophy of this lesson throughout your community.
- Consider interest between

the community and students.

- Gauge specific requirements for the local area.
- Create an outline and plan for action.
- Create a campaign with other interested parties.
- Organize a curriculum that educates about agriculture.

Whether you're a teacher or a community member with a passion for an FFA chapter, finding the right group of people to develop a plan can impact a school board's decision.

Bed and Breakfast on the Ranch



According to the Professional Association of Innkeepers International, the best and breakfast industry has an estimated worth of \$3.4 million. If your private ranch is struggling to bring in additional revenue, making it an attractive B&B can be a profitable venture.

People are drawn to the idea of bed and breakfasts because of its intimacy over traditional hotels. Owners of beautiful ranches have a unique advantage as interested occupiers may seek your residence for a new adventure in the country. Ensuring you offer a welcoming place to stay and entertainment value can create a positive experience and an exceptional reputation.

WELCOMING ATMOSPHERE

Just like you may have hesitations welcoming strangers into your ranch house, visitors may have the same apprehensions about visiting an unfamiliar home. Fortunately, there are numerous ways to create a welcoming atmosphere that can encourage a comfortable stay and encourage repeat visits.

In addition to using tasteful decorations, include items that guests rely on during their daily lives. Here are some ideas to consider.

- Clean bedding and fresh towels.
- Available dresser or closet space.
- Coffee and tea station.

Guests of bed and breakfast will appreciate the extra effort you made

to make their stay memorable.

CREATE AN EXPERIENCE

Your public ranch should take advantage of its natural surroundings and offer guests exciting ways to view the property. Activities like horseback riding on trails, rafting adventures or fishing excursions give guests an initiative to visit the ranch and spend money within your camp.

However, it is also a good idea to create maps and lists of popular outlets throughout your community in case visitors want to venture out. Consider locating public gyms, restaurants and entertainment venues.

INVITE THE PUBLIC

Once you're ready to open the residence to the public, it's essential to advertise the grand opening. Reach out to local radio for advertisement opportunities or post announcements for an open house. To paint your bed and breakfast in its best light, call in a professional photographer to take welcoming pictures by drone to showcase the property in images.

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Encourage a Safe Operation

In many regions, springtime opens the door to the busy farming season. Analyzing your property for potential hazards before accidents occur enhances how you operate safely and protect others who work on the farm.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration warns farm employees about the numerous safety issues that are common in the industry, including hazardous equipment and machinery; ladders and falls; respiratory diseases; and vehicle hazards.

To avoid a lost-time accident and, more importantly, a significant injury to yourself or others, learn the risks associated with agriculture operations from the USDA's National Agricultural Safety Database.

SAFETY AROUND MACHINERY

Farms require tremendous machines and innovative equipment to perform profitably and efficiently. However, these same components can be dangerous to the lives in charge of operations.

Before opening for the season, ensure your tools are in good working order, according to the manufacturer's instructions. Power tools should have proper grounds in place and guards and shields must be installed correctly.

Don't forget to stock your farmhouse and equipment with appropriate safety

gear like gloves, safety glasses and respirators; clothing should also be tight-fitting to avoid being caught in farming machines.

PESTICIDES AND CHEMICALS

Employees who apply, mix or load pesticides are at risk of developing illnesses. These dangerous chemicals can cause harm when workers re-enter a sprayed field, working without appropriate PPE equipment and eating with contaminated hands. The Environmental Protection Agency oversees the Worker Protection Standard which contains requirements for:

- Safety training and restricted-entry intervals after pesticide application.
- The use of personal protective equipment and notification of pesticides.

- Decontamination supplies and available emergency-medical assistance.

When using pesticides on the property, it's crucial to be proactive in protecting everyone in the area.

VEHICLES

Ensure the numerous vehicles used around the farm are well-maintained and operating correctly. Include tractors, trucks, combines, ATVs and UTVs. When using the equipment, utilize a system of hand signals to communicate with your team when noise levels are high.

Encourage peers to learn a standardized method developed by the American Society of Agricultural Engineers so everyone is on the same page, even visitors.

Go Solar on Farm Buildings

Most farms and ranches rely on electricity to operate essential equipment like pumps, lighting and electrical outlets.

Removing your power hub from the grid by installing solar panels develops an efficient system that can create a return on investment in the future.

According to the organization Solar United Neighbors, farmers have two options to pay for an innovative solar system.

Direct ownership: Expenses are the responsibility of the farm or ranch owner, but results in ownership of all electrical output. The plan provides numerous incentives like federal tax credits and additional refunds.

Third-party ownership: While only available in some states, systems are purchased by a separate entity such as a group of community investors. Farm owners are responsible for paying the owners for the produced electricity, while also missing out on energy credits.

Is solar the right option for your operation? Here are some considerations you should make before going off the grid.



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IS IT WORTH THE COST?

According to the experts at Home Advisor, installing a solar panel system to residential homes costs between \$16,467-\$30,559. Of course, the size of farm buildings can vary dramatically, reducing or increasing the national average.

To gain a valuable perspective of what you should expect to pay, call a few local solar installers to offer you accurate

quotes. Ask them how much energy you should expect to create and determine if the cost of installation is feasible when considering the savings. Another factor to remember is that if the system is beneficial, you can use it as a selling perk if the time comes to sell the farm.

TAX INCENTIVES

According to the Solar

Energy Industries Association, the Investment Tax Credit is a 30% federal tax credit claimed against the tax liability of both residential and commercial property.

The dollar-for-dollar deduction can be significant for large-scale installations and construction. Check with a tax expert in your area to ensure you qualify for these substantial savings.

CREATE AN ENERGY BANK

Going solar is not only a great way to lessen your carbon footprint that impacts the environment, but it's also beneficial in lowering utility bills.

Farm operations benefit from solar power throughout the day when the sun is high, creating a bank of stored energy to be relied on during nighttime hours.

American Farming: By the Numbers

Did you know that two million farms are operated in America's rural landscape?

According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, 98% are powered by families — individuals, family partnerships and family corporations.

Without their hard work and dedication, the grocery stores we're used to would look much different. Fortunately, there are many ways to get involved with making your local farmers feel appreciated.

You can strive to use more locally grown ingredients in your cooking. This can include local grass-fed beef or locally sourced fruits and vegetables. You can also support your local farmers markets, where you can meet and greet farmers from your area to learn their story and support their businesses.

Sharing your love for local ingredients, farmers markets and farmers themselves is a great way to drive more attention to the farming businesses in your region. Use your voice and your platforms to make a difference for those who feed us.

If you haven't thanked a farmer recently, check out these inspiring facts from the Farm Bureau to recognize their



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significance in the progression of our country.

- About 11% of United States farmers are serving or have previously served in the military.
- 25% of farmers are considered beginners, in business for less than 10 years.
- Only one acre of land can grow 50,000 pounds of straw-

berries and 2,784 pounds of wheat. In 2018, \$139.6 billion worth of American agricultural products were exported across the world. Over half of America's farm operations provide habitat for wildlife like deer, moose and fowl.

- Women make up 36% of U.S. farms; 56% of all farm operations have at least one

female in charge of decision making.

- One U.S. farm feeds 166 people annually.
- The top three farm products in the country are cattle, corn and soybeans.
- 87% of U.S. agricultural products are produced on family-operated farms or ranches.
- About 1% of the U.S. gross

domestic product is attributed to farming.

- Approximately 8% of U.S. farm markets operate locally, through direct-to-consumer or intermediate sales.
- One day of production for a quality dairy cow creates 4.8 pounds of butter, 8.7 gallons of ice cream or 10.5 pounds of cheese.

Find a Trustworthy Banker

Since the farming industry features unique tax models, incentives and regulations, finding an expert who is familiar with agriculture is crucial to maintaining a solvent operation.

The stability of farms can vary due to inclement weather, machine breakdowns and changes in land values. Building a close relationship with a banker can lead to a helping hand that farmers rely on in both good and bad times.

A credible banking professional provides more than financial support. Farm and ranch owners are offered knowledgeable advice, treasury management and problem-solving skills.

Whether you require assistance to get an operation organized or need help with an established farm, working with a banker who is well-fluent in farming can open the doors to new opportunities.

CONSCIENTIOUS SPENDING

An advantage of having a qualified banker in your corner is receiving financial advice before making a large investment. When a farmer's operation is thriving, it's common for capital to be used toward purchasing new



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equipment, funding construction for buildings or excavating land to extend crop space.

In advance of these significant expenses, make an appointment with your financial manager and discuss your plans. They can analyze the integrity of your finances and advise you into making a beneficial decision that is advantageous to the farm or equipment.

TIMES OF STRUGGLE

The agriculture industry commonly faces both high and low cycles which makes planning and saving crucial to staying afloat during troubling times. Fortunately, expert farmers and farmland banking experts understand these trends by analyzing predicted forecasts.

However, if you're new to the field, acquiring an expert with a grasp on projected

price increases for machinery, land costs and crop inputs may lead to invaluable advice. During stressful times, a banker can assist in foreseeing difficult farming conditions, and set you up with an affordable loan to provide relief until the market upswings.

BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP

Working with a banker who is dedicated to serving you

and protecting your most valuable assets, expect a valuable relationship to form.

Discussing your financial situation and the management of an operation can be incredibly personal so make sure you feel comfortable with the expert in charge of your account. Keeping in close contact during both high and low cycles, builds trust between both parties in a farmer-banker relationship.

Take a Dude Ranch Vacation

If you're planning on a luxurious family vacation this spring, consider supporting a cause that benefits hardworking ranchers in America.

Many times, ranch owners supplement their income by opening their doors to the public to experience life on the land and get a perspective of its operation.

This year, forego the beach and discover nature at one of these impressive dude ranches, as suggested by the Travel Channel.

TANQUE VERDE RANCH, ARIZONA

Activities for children are separated into appropriate age groups and include nature walks, swimming pools and horseback riding lessons. Parents can relax while their children are in capable hands at an on-site spa, immersive hiking or mountain bike trails and learn about riding and caring for horses. Make sure to schedule a reservation in advance as this over 150-year-old resort is a popular experience for weddings and family vacations.

AVERILL'S FLATHEAD LAKE LODGE, MONTANA

A beautiful ranch set against a vast lake provides numerous vacation ideas.



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Spend the day kayaking, sailing or paddleboarding on Flathead Lake or enjoy campfires and a family rodeo on land. Plan to stay mid-week as Wednesdays are known for the large bonfire and live music show for the whole family. After taking in the sights and sounds of the sounds, the famous Glacier National Park is only an hour away.

TRIPLE R RANCH, SOUTH DAKOTA

Triple R is known for its scenic horseback riding trails, which offers paths alongside Mount Rushmore and the Badlands. Equines are hand-selected by experts to accommodate riders who are beginners or advanced.

This wildlife dense ranch offers exceptional nighttime views like the Mount

Rushmore Lighting Ceremony and breathtaking South Dakota sky featuring millions of stars.

CROSSED SABRES RANCH, WYOMING

Cody, Wyoming, plays host to this ranch that is all about unplugging from your devices and getting to know nature. Check out fun activities like archery, fly fishing, rafting

and more amongst a backdrop of 2.5 million acres of national forests.

Only eight miles away from Yellowstone National Park, families are offered a guided tour to explore famous geysers, bubbling mud pots and hot springs. Another bonus is the Cody Night Rodeo which occurs weekly and showcases real-life cowboys and cowgirls.