



Crossroads Resource Center

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Tools for Community Self-determination

Black Hawk County (Iowa) Region's Food & Farm Economy

Highlights of a presentation

by Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center (Minneapolis) for the
University of Northern Iowa (UNI) Local Foods Project Annual Meeting
November 15, 2005

Black Hawk County Region

8 Counties — *Benton, Black Hawk, Bremer, Buchanan, Butler, Fayette, Grundy, & Tama*

266,000 residents hold \$5 billion in annual purchasing power, and pay \$583 million in taxes.

The region's farm families

8,451 farm families, average farm size: 326 acres.

- 9 % of Iowa farms acreage
- 5 % of state's irrigated farmland
- 14 % of state's potatoes
- 14 % of dairy farms
- 13 % of broiler (chicken) operations
- 11 % of Iowa's soybeans
- 11 % of state vegetable farms
- 8 % of Iowa's orchards
- 7 % of state's livestock operations
- 43 farms (11 % of state) selling \$377,000 of organic products, 3 % of Iowa's production
- 274 farms sell \$1.1 million of food directly to consumers (40% increase from 1997 to 2002).

Region's farmers produce \$1.08 billion of food per year (1999-2003 average), yet spend \$1.14 billion to raise it, losing an average of \$62 million in production costs each year. This is a total loss of \$308 million over the last five years! 31 % of the region's farms suffered net losses in 2002. These losses are offset by an average of \$173 million of federal subsidies, and \$72 million of farm-related income, each year.

The region's consumers:

The region's consumers spend \$535 million buying food each year, an estimated \$400 million of this from outside the region, while farmers lose \$62 million each year selling commodities.

Farm and food economy summary:

Farmers lose \$62 million each year producing food commodities, and also spend \$500 million buying outside inputs, while consumers spend \$400 million buying food from outside. This is a total

Highlights of "Finding Food in Black Hawk County Region (Iowa)"

loss of \$962 million of potential wealth *each year*. This loss amounts to 90 % of the value of all food commodities raised in the region, and 180 % of the value of all food purchased by the region's residents.

Black Hawk County Region, Iowa: markets for food

| | <i>millions</i> |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs | \$ 72.8 |
| Fruits & vegetables | 50.6 |
| Cereals and bakery products | 44.9 |
| Dairy products | 33.0 |
| "Other," incl. sweets, fats, & oils | 101.2 |

Key data sources:

Bureau of Economic Analysis data on farm production balance

<http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/regional/reis/>

Food consumption estimates from Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey

<http://www.bls.gov/cex/home.htm>

U.S. Census of Agriculture

<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>

USDA/Economic Research Service food consumption data:

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/foodconsumption/>

USDA/ Economic Research Service farm income data:

<http://ers.usda.gov/Data/FarmIncome/finfidmu.htm>

For more information:

To see results from *Finding Food in Farm Country* studies in other regions of the U.S.:

<http://www.crcworks.org/fffc.pdf>.

To read the original *Finding Food in Farm Country* study from Southeast Minnesota (written for the Experiment in Rural Cooperation): <http://www.crcworks.org/ff.pdf>.

To view a PowerPoint presented by Ken Meter at a keynote appearance to the Minnesota Rural Partners Summit in July, 2005: <http://www.crcworks.org/metersummit05.pdf>.

To link to further analysis of farm and food economies in the U.S.:

<http://www.crcworks.org/rural.html>.

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