

Exploring Opportunities: A Conference for Aspiring Pork Producers

State of the Industry, Opportunities & Sustainability

Dr. John Lawrence is an extension livestock economist, professor in the department of economics at Iowa State University (ISU) and director of ISU's Iowa Beef Center.

He leads a dynamic program focused on cost of production, marketing strategies and quality management schemes, and will look at the relevance of the pork industry in Iowa. The state has tremendous assets, and many synergies exist that will keep Iowa as the leading long-term pork producer in the world. He will examine how even in the presence of ethanol, Iowa will remain successful at pork production and why investing a career in pigs is a good thing. He also will examine the economic contributions of the industry to the state economy and rural infrastructure.

Assessing Contract Finishing

Gary Thome is a farm business management instructor at Riverland Community College in Austin, Minn.

In addition to working with students, he leads an active role in continuing education and consultation to young farmers throughout south central Minnesota. Gary and his sons also own and operate a 600 sow breed to finish farm. He will address these common questions: what are the payments, what are the variables (labor & utilities); what is the anticipated manure value, and what is the impact of the down payment. Through interactive cashflow examples, Gary will examine the ins and outs of contract finishing and facilitate a discovery into where it might fit your operation.

Niche Production: Pitfalls & Windfalls

David Stender is an ISU Extension swine field specialist based in Cherokee.

Gary Huber is the niche pork coordinator for Practical Farmers of Iowa.

A recent project of the Pork Niche Market Working Group through ISU reveals a great deal of information on the cost of production in niche market systems. Many variables exist that influence these costs. Dave will address the issues of controlling labor, feed, facility and other input costs, and will highlight the keys to production success. While producing at least cost is key, there are great market opportunities. Gary will provide information about the available markets.

Beginning Farmer Center

Dr. Michael Duffy is an extension economist, professor and director of the Beginning Farmer Center (BFC) at ISU.

The BFC serves as a great resource for the next generation of farmers. Its staff members serve as effective liaisons for beginning farmer issues of tax programs, succession planning, and FINPACK analysis. The BFC annually coordinates several successful programs such as Ag-Link, Farm On, and the Iowa Land Value Survey.

Obtaining Capital

Jeff Ward is executive director of the Iowa Agricultural Development Authority (IADA).

Brian Gossling is the farm loan program director with the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Jason Demaray is a financial officer with Farm Credit Service of America (FCSA).

Many options exist for obtaining financing for startup or growth of existing operations. Beginning farmers especially have several programs catered to their circumstances. These three participants in the lending arena will discuss available programs, their interactions and application procedures. There will be time for questions, as well as discussion on how these options can be implemented with the local lender. The FSA provides financing for operating, machinery, livestock purchases, building, and land ownership to assist beginning farmers in establishing their operations. The IADA provides the Beginning Farmer Loan Program and the Livestock Water Quality Facilities Program. FCSA offers a Young and Beginning Program designed for producers age 35 or younger, or with 10 or fewer years of experience.

Regulations and Neighbor Relations

Gene Tinker is the coordinator of animal feeding operations for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Rex Hoppes serves as organization director for the Coalition to Support Iowa's Farmers.

Gene's role involves implementation of regulations and permits pertaining to the operation of livestock and poultry farms, especially in relation to manure management and environmental compliance. He will provide an overview of the requirements for construction of various sizes and the routine requirements for operation. Rex will share experiences in communicating construction plans and farm operations with neighbors, and other considerations within the local community.

Mapping Your Future: Transitioning Ownership

A panel of experienced producers looking at the next generation of management and ownership will provide insight on their consideration for succession planning. Several questions will be addressed, such as "What is expected of the next generation of pork producers and where are the opportunities for me?" and "How do I prepare to transition from employee to partner or owner?" Some examples involve family members, while others do not. Bring the questions you've been waiting to ask your own family or other farm stakeholders. Farmers are aging and opportunities do exist, but how do you begin that discussion? We'll wrap up the conference by exploring ways to consider the transfer of pork industry assets.