The Iowa Pork Industry Center

Objectives
The Iowa Pork Industry Center (IPIC) was created in July 1994. Dedicated to serving the Iowa pork industry through educational programs and demonstrations of emerging production and marketing activities, the IPIC will:
- serve as the central access point for Iowa State University (ISU) programs related to the pork industry;
- integrate ISU resources that serve the pork industry by serving as an interdisciplinary catalyst;
- help members of the Iowa pork industry become efficient producers of high quality, value-added pork;
- coordinate ISU resources and programs with those of commodity, agricultural, and governmental organizations to maximize opportunities for the pork industry;
- anticipate and explore emerging technologies and issues that will affect the pork industry; and
- provide unbiased information to the industry on issues such as quality systems management, risk management, market access, meat quality, food safety and quality, odor mitigation, waste management, and the environment.

Leveraging the Advantages
The Iowa Pork Industry Center is a coordinated effort of the colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, and focuses on programs that are integral and complementary to work by ISU Extension and Outreach. Extensive use of traditional as well as emerging technologies from private and public partners enhances the organization and delivery of these programs and improves access to all Iowans.

The IPIC works closely with faculty having responsibilities for teaching, research, and extension in the departments of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering, Animal Science, and Economics within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and in the College of Veterinary Medicine. More than 25 extension program specialists in livestock, farm management, and agricultural engineering, and all county program and education directors work with the IPIC to provide program delivery.

The IPIC uses multidisciplinary expertise to secure external funding from a variety of sources, including the USDA, state, commodity, and industry organizations.

Priorities in 2011
The Iowa Pork Industry Center will focus on programs that assist producers in responding to areas of increased scrutiny. Some examples are the requirement from some harvest companies that their suppliers be trained in both Pork Quality Assurance (PQA) Plus® and Transport Quality Assurance, and that the sites that supply these companies be PQA Plus® and site-assessed. Specifically, the IPIC will:
- respond to the challenge of profitable pork production within the new bioeconomy;
- use field-collected data to help producers determine specific strengths and opportunities for improving their operations, and aggregate these data to develop decision aids for the Iowa pork industry;
- continue to work with industry representatives, commodity organizations, and producers to expand value-added markets for Iowa pork products;
- assist animal industry personnel in establishing and evaluating animal identification/traceability, pork quality, and swine well-being; and
- respond to industry critical challenges, such as animal care and well-being, food safety, and production profitability.
Accomplishments

The IPIC has worked with internal and external partners to provide assistance and resources in response to higher feed costs. Software programs to help producers lower their operation’s nonproductive sow days, improve herd health and make appropriate genetic decisions were created and provided. The sow longevity spreadsheet programs, available in English and metric measurement versions for farrow-to-finish and breed-to-wean operations, have been provided to users representing nearly 37 million sows from every continent except Antarctica. They’re currently available in four languages. Database programs to help manage and track sows and groups of sows were developed and are being tested in a variety of operations and systems. Also, a spreadsheet designed to help producers evaluate the economic impact of different weaning ages has been provided on request to users representing 7.7 million sows in the U.S., Canada and 10 other countries.

Several types of industry educational efforts are offered, organized and coordinated by IPIC. Two multistate distance education opportunities are the SowBridge and PorkBridge series. In its fourth year, SowBridge has participants from 10 states, three Canadian provinces, and Ireland; and in its sixth year, PorkBridge had participants from eight states, one Canadian province and Ireland. State level programs include the 11th annual Iowa Pork Regional Conferences held at four locations throughout the state, cooperative field day demonstrations, northwest and northeast Iowa area reproductive management seminars, and on-farm training and consultations.

The IPIC team of livestock field specialists led Iowa and the nation in providing Pork Quality Assurance Plus® and Transport Quality Assurance® certification to producers. Team members have conducted nearly 100 PQAPlus® group certification sessions reaching more than 1,300 individuals, more than 30 individual PQAPlus® site assessments, and more than 30 TQA® sessions with nearly 500 individuals. In addition to certifying and working with adults in these programs, team members also contributed time and resources to the Iowa 4-H Food Safety Quality Assurance (FSQA) program. Attendance at an FSQA training session or testing out of that specific material is required in Iowa for any 4-H'er who exhibits meat animals at the Iowa State Fair. A minimum of 1,700 youth attended one of these FSQA sessions, accompanied by about 240 adults.

Expected Outcomes

The IPIC will continue to address value-added marketing, animal behavior and welfare, intergenerational transfer, and agricultural quality systems by educating pork producers and other users and helping to implement these systems.

The IPIC will expand the applied research base of field and campus-based staff members and will continue its technology transfer efforts with a focus on current challenges for producers and other representatives of the pork industry.

The IPIC will continue to promote the use of its Group Tracker, Sow Tracker, Group Sow Tracker, Budget CashFlow, and Breeding and Farrowing Schedule software programs to help producers recognize the importance of treating their operation as a business by knowing costs of production and learning how to best use their financial and operational assets.

Through a variety of communication methods, the IPIC provides consistent and unbiased research-based information through appropriate formats to meet client needs.

Resources

IPIC is funded through ISU Extension, including the Extension 21 initiative, and the Iowa Agricultural and Home Economics Experiment Station. The IPIC also generates income from activities for the private good through cooperative programs and activities with the Iowa Pork Producers Association, the National Pork Board, and other agencies.