Events celebrate Hancock's agricultural heritage

Farmers have seen financial difficulties for the past five years. Low grain prices have been a recurring theme during these years. However, the average American consumer has more choices in foods at affordable prices than any other time in history.

The typical American spends about 10% of their total budget on food. Around 1900, it was 40% of the budget and in 1950, around 30%. For every dollar a consumer spends on food, the farmer receives only about 15 cents. The rest of the dollar covers processing, transportation, distribution, packaging and marketing costs.

Thirty-one years ago, the Findlay-Hancock Chamber of Commerce agribusiness committee started the annual Farmers' Share Breakfast to celebrate our agriculture heritage and to remind the public how little a farmer receives from every dollar spent on food.

This year the breakfast will be at the Hancock County Fairgrounds' Old Mill Stream Centre Thursday, March 12. A breakfast buffet starts at 7:30 a.m., followed by a short program generally ending before 9 a.m. As in the farm tradition, the breakfast is a hearty meal of meats, eggs, potatoes and breads.

For the program, the district FFA public speaking winner will deliver their winning agriculture speech, followed by an agriculture year in review and closing with the naming of the new inductees for the Hancock County Agriculture Hall of Fame.

The Hancock County Agriculture Hall of Fame recognizes individuals with ties to Hancock County who have made major contributions in agriculture, either as a farmer or in an agriculture-related field. Four individuals have been recognized annually since 2006.

A ticket is required to attend the Farmers' Share Breakfast. Tickets cost $5 and need to be purchased in advance. Tickets can be obtained at the Findlay Hancock Chamber of Commerce, 123 W. Main Cross St., or at the Hancock County Extension Office, 7868 Hancock County 140, Suite B. Tickets generally sell out quickly.

During the breakfast, individuals can also preorder whole pork sausage from the Findlay Hancock Chamber agribusiness committee. Funds raised from the sausage sales provide educational scholarships to Hancock County students pursuing degrees or training in an agriculture-related field.

Sausage is sold in 3-pound packages for $10. Preorders are requested. Sausage can be seasoned or unseasoned and picked up at the Legacy Lawn and Pet Center, 6566 Hancock County 236, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, April 18. Preorders can also be made by calling the Findlay Hancock Chamber of Commerce at 419-422-3313.

Other agricultural events that individuals may want to attend this spring include the Hancock County Cattlemen's beef banquet and the Hancock County Sheep Association's lamb banquet.

The beef banquet will be held at the Jenera Community Center, 18800 Ohio 698, Jenera, Saturday, March 14, at 6 p.m. Beef brisket will be the main part of the meal. Tickets, which are $10, must be purchased in advance and may be obtained from the Ohio State University Extension office. Contact Charlie Beagle for additional information at 419-722-1925.

The lamb banquet will be held at the St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church, 9340 Township Road 32, Jenera, Saturday, March 28, at 6:30 p.m. Lamb chops, roast lamb and lamb burgers will be part of the meal. Tickets, which are $15, must be purchased in advance and may be obtained at the Ohio State University Extension office. Contact Gary Wilson for additional information at 419-348-3500.

I close this week's column with some other agriculture facts provided by Farm Bureau:

- Farm and ranch families comprise less than 2% of the U.S. population.
- There are about 2.1 million farms in the U.S.
- 99% of U.S. farms are operated by families as individuals, family partnerships or family corporations.
- More than 20% of all farmers are beginning farmers, in business less than 10 years.
- Women make up 30% of the total number of U.S. farm operators.
- U.S. farmers annually feed 165 people. By 2050, world population is expected to increase to 9.7 billion, which means farmers will have to grow 70% more food than what is currently produced to meet demand.
- Pizza includes all the major farm products: grain (flour), vegetables, meat and dairy. Americans consume more than 3 billion pizzas annually; the average family eats pizza at home 30 times each year.
- Farming accounts for about 1% of the U.S. gross domestic production.
- U.S. exports more food and fiber than what is imported, creating a positive agriculture trade balance.
- Farm programs typically cost each American just pennies per meal and account for less than half of 1% of the total U.S. budget.

I would encourage people to take part in celebrating Hancock County's agricultural heritage at one of these programs. All of these events are open to the general public.

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