

Down-to-earth people

Why does a farmer farm? Planting a seed every spring takes a bit of optimism – hoping the seed will grow and mature, that there will be enough rain but not a storm to wipe out the crop, that there will be enough warm days but not so much heat that it stifles the crop. Corn markets move up and down, seemingly at a whim. It's quite a life.

Yet, it's a life farmers wouldn't trade for anything.

Why? The reasons are as varied as the farmers themselves. Some feel called to do the work they do, working with land and watching a crop grow and mature. They love the lifestyle and living in a rural community. They are proud of producing grain that feeds animals and people and helps fuel a nation. They appreciate the opportunity to work in a multi-generational business. They love to watch their kids grow up learning to appreciate hard work and stewardship. They take great pride in their work, while caring for the land and water, so their farm can be passed along to the next generation.

Of course, these are generalizations, and while true for many farmers, they may not tell the whole story for others. Thanks to new technology, however, it is easier for anyone to reach out to a farmer and ask a question.

Get to know a farmer

The opportunity to talk directly to a farmer is due, in large part, to new communication tools, including smart phones. They allow farmers to be online where they are accessible to others – from Facebook to Twitter to blogs.

More and more farmers understand that they need to tell their story – how they farm and why – so people have a better understanding. Social media and its related tools make that easier, especially since a growing number of farmers utilize smart phones to post photos and videos while commenting on what they are doing or answering questions.



Stirling family | Martinton, Illinois

Scott Stirling, his wife Connie and his son Andy of Martinton, Illinois, are a prime example of a multi-generational, family owned and operated corn farm. Together they work and manage their farm with an eye toward the future. "We strive to do the best job we can on every row every year" Scott said. "That means caring for the soil, minimizing crop inputs and learning from others. We want our farm to be successful on many levels, so we can continue to enjoy it now and future generations can live off this land, too."



**America's corn farmers have cut soil erosion 44%
by using innovative conservation methods.**

Source: USDA



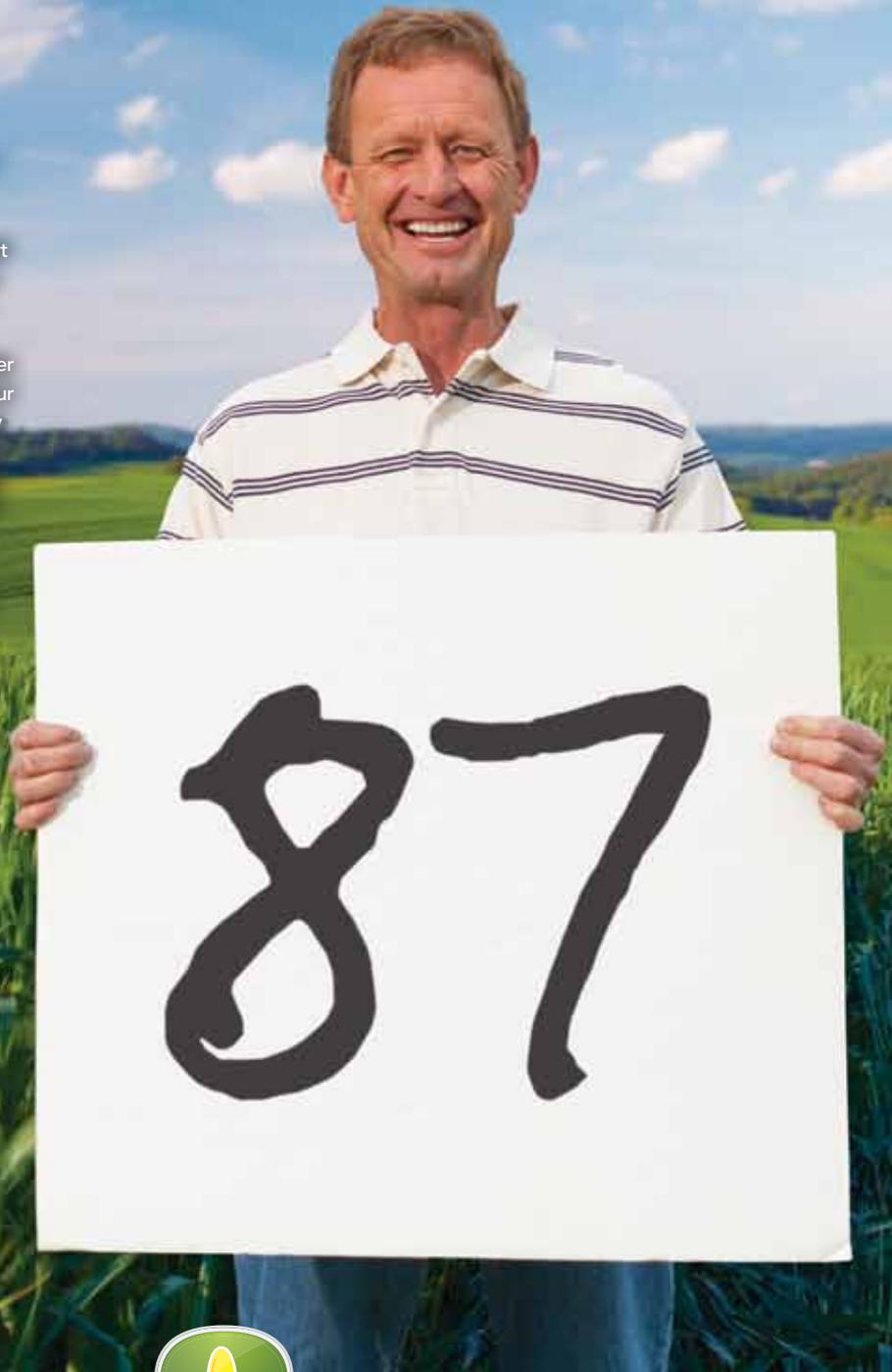
**CORN FARMERS
COALITION**

America's corn farmers grow 87% more corn per ounce of fertilizer applied thanks to innovative farming practices.

Source: USDA

Billy Thiel | Marshall, Missouri

Billy Thiel of Marshall, Missouri, understands that America's corn farmers are the most productive in the world – and are more efficient than ever. "We produce more corn per acre of land than any other country in the world, and we get better every year," Billy said. "We take advantage of our production knowledge and available technology to get the job done the right way, which means taking better care of the environment and using fewer crop inputs per bushel than just a decade ago. It's a tremendous success story." Billy is a third generation family farmer who supports his local community and is involved in livestock, conservation and civic organizations.



CORN FARMERS
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Those who have questions about farming can go online and search them out. On Twitter, a popular hashtag or word to search for is “#agchat.” Many farmers of all kinds follow that hashtag and would be able to help – or seek out the answer.

While there are more than 300 million Americans – and growing – less than 2 million are involved in farming and provide the basis for all the food we enjoy today. If broken down further, there are only about 316,000 corn farms in the United States and 95 percent of those – some 300,000 – are family farms, many of which are multi-generational.

“Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you’re a thousand miles from the corn field.”

– Dwight Eisenhower

That’s a small amount of the total population, but their output is staggering – they produce the corn that feeds livestock and poultry, provide the basis for beneficial ingredients in food and industrial applications, expand the opportunity to develop green solutions that are an alternative to petroleum and provide the feedstock for ethanol plants which in turn provide fuel and feed.

Farmers are experts at what they do, choosing to live a life that involves a tremendous risk in the markets and weather, because they love doing it. Yet they are often taken for granted and pushed to the side, because we’ve forgotten our roots – we’ve forgotten that farming and agriculture are the backbone of this nation and that without it, the civilized life we enjoy wouldn’t exist.

Agriculture – farming – and corn production are truly an American success story – but the story isn’t complete. In some ways, the best chapters are still to come.



Tom, Riley and John Tibbits | Minneapolis, Kansas

Telling the story one tweet at a time

When Tom Tibbits gets his corn in – or is battling the weather to manage his crops – chances are he’ll tweet about it.

Tom farms with his dad John and granddad Riley near Minneapolis, Kansas, and enjoys having conversations on Twitter (his handle is @ksfarmboy). He also takes the time to write a blog that includes a number of photos in addition to an explanation.

“Pictures give people a chance to see what’s happening instead of me just explaining it in words,” he said. “It really helps tell the story.”

Tom, who has three young kids with his wife Sandy, said he spent some time working away from the family farm in between stints at college. “I lived in a suburb for a while and got to see urban sprawl first hand,” he said. “After coming back to the farm, I saw a report about the great interest some people living in the city had about how wheat is grown. That got me thinking that I should try and share my own story of farming with anyone who would care to read about it.”

That’s how Tom’s blog got started – but after getting a new smart phone, he decided to give Twitter a try. “I thought Twitter was a neat tool and have enjoyed it,” he said. “It gives me a chance to be involved in a lot of conversations and help people to better understand what we do and why.”

He encouraged those who are interested or have questions about farming to go online and to talk to farmers. “There are a growing number of farmers out there who would appreciate being asked a question about what they do,” he said. “They are on Twitter, Facebook and blogging, it’s just a matter of looking.”

The Tibbits’ farm produces corn, wheat, sorghum, soybeans and sunflowers – all of which are tweeted about and included in Tom’s blog.



All facts in *The Corn Fact Book* and related communication efforts have been sourced from U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other organizations. For more information and details, please go to www.CornFarmersCoalition.org





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The Corn Farmers Coalition – an alliance of the National Corn Growers Association and 14 state corn associations – educates policy-makers in Washington about how innovative farmers are growing more corn every year with fewer resources while protecting the environment.

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*On the Cover:
Chris & Korene Flaming and Family
Elsie, Nebraska*