



# NATIONAL AGRICULTURE WEEK

MARCH 22-28

## National Ag Day is March 24

### What Is Ag Day?

It's a day to recognize and celebrate the abundance provided by agriculture. Every year, producers, agricultural associations, corporations, universities, government agencies and countless others across America join together to recognize the contributions of agriculture.

### When Is Ag Day?

Ag Day is celebrated on March 24, 2020. National Ag Day falls during National Ag Week, March 22-28, 2020.

### Who Hosts Ag Day?

The Agriculture Council of America hosts the campaign on a national level. However, the awareness efforts in communities across America are as influential - if not more - than the broad-scale effort. Again this year, the Ag Day Planning Guide has been created to help communities and organizations more effectively host Ag Day events.

### What Is Ag

### Day All About?

Ag Day is about recog-

nizing - and celebrating - the contribution of agriculture in our everyday lives. The National Ag Day program encourages every American to:

- Understand how food and fiber products are produced.
- Value the essential role of agriculture in maintaining a strong economy.
- Appreciate the role agriculture plays in providing safe, abundant and affordable products.

### Why Celebrate Agriculture?

Agriculture provides almost everything we eat, use and wear on a daily basis. But too few people truly understand this contribution. This is particularly the case in our schools, where students may only be exposed to agriculture if they enroll in related vocational training.

By building awareness, the Agriculture Council of America is encouraging young people to consider career opportunities in agricul-

ture.

Each American farmer feeds more than 165 people ... a dramatic increase from 25 people in the 1960s. Quite simply, American agriculture is doing more - and doing it better. As the world population soars, there is an even greater demand for the food and fiber produced in the United States.

### What Can I Do to Help?

Put simply, get involved! Your participation in Ag Day is critical in helping us spread this positive message about agriculture. If you are interested in planning an event, download your Planning Guide today. Of course, there are other ways you can lend your support, including sending a letter to your local newspaper, calling your Congressional representatives or simply sharing information about agriculture with youngsters in your community.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

### State Senator Leising meets with Indiana Corn Growers Association

State Senator Jean Leising (R-Oldenburg, center) meets with members of the Indiana Corn Growers Association at the Statehouse. The Indiana Corn Growers Association represents Indiana corn farmers and advocates on their behalf at the local, state and federal level. The group discussed current agricultural trends and agricultural policies being considered by the General Assembly this session. Pictured from left: Alan Kemper, Roger Bommer, Leising, Mike Kohlsdorf and Julie Bommer.

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## Tips to successfully grow tomatoes

Slicing into the first tomato of the season is a much anticipated moment for gardeners. Tomatoes are among the most popular fruit or vegetable plants grown in home gardens. Much of that popularity may be credited to the fact that red, ripe tomatoes have a delicious, juicy flavor that serves as the basis for all sorts of recipes. And since tomatoes can just as easily be grown in a full backyard garden or in a container on a patio or balcony, tomatoes appeal to gardeners regardless of their living situations.

While tomatoes are relatively easy to grow, they are prone to certain problems and pests. Knowledge of what to expect when planting tomatoes and how to start off on the right footing can help produce a season's worth of delicious bounty.

- Wait until after the last average frost date. Tomatoes can be grown from seeds outdoors in warm areas, but tomato gardeners often find success starting seeds indoors six to eight weeks before the last frost date. Gradually introduce seedlings to the elements for a few hours each day, increasing the duration of time outside. Then they can be transplanted outdoors when temperatures are consistently over 60 F.
- Choose a sunny spot. Tomatoes love to soak up sunlight, according to The Home Depot. Place the plants in a sunny spot so they can thrive.

• Space out plants. The experts at Better Homes and

Gardens say to leave anywhere from 24 to 48 inches between plants to accommodate for growth and ensure the plants will not get stunted.

- Plant deeply. Tomatoes tend to root along their stems. If transplants are long and lean, dig a trench and lay the stem sideways in the dirt, and then bend the top of the plant upward. Snip off the lower branches and cover with soil up to the first set of leaves. This will produce extra root growth and stronger, more vital plants.

• Give the plants support. Tomato cages or stakes can help keep the leaves and fruit from touching the ground, which can cause rot and, eventually, death to the tomato plant.

• Lay down a layer of mulch. Tomatoes grow best when the soil is consistently moist. Mulch can help retain moisture from watering and rain. Mulch also will help prevent soil and soilborne diseases from splashing on the leaves and plants when it rains. While you amend the soil, make sure that it drains well and is slightly acidic.

• Prune away suckers. Tomatoes produce "suckers," which are leaves that shoot out from the main stem. Removing these leaves promotes air circulation and keeps the plant's energy focused on growing fruit.

Tomatoes are a rich addition to any garden. A few simple tricks can help even novice gardeners grow delicious tomatoes.

Tuesday, March 24, 2020

## Greg Pence announces formation of Sixth District Agriculture Advisory Board

U.S. Congressman Greg Pence (IN-06) announced the formation of the Sixth District Agriculture Advisory Board and hosted its first meeting in Columbus, IN. The board is comprised of agriculture leaders and innovators from across the district.

Each member on the board serves on a volunteer basis and provides relevant counsel to the Congressman on all matters relating to agriculture, including active legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives.

"The Hoosier state ranks fifth in the nation for corn and soybean production - consistently ranking in every category

of commodity and livestock production. I have called the Sixth District home my whole life, and I am fully committed to spearheading agriculture issues in Congress on behalf of the hard-working farmers that put food on our shelves every day," said Congressman Pence. "I thank each and every member of the Sixth District Agriculture Advisory Board for committing to serve and I look forward to working together to promote the agricultural industry."

Congressman Pence introduced the H.R. 2460, Modernizing Agriculture Transportation Act which would create a working group to study the impact of

Electronic Logging Device (ELD) and create changes for Hours of Service (HOS) rules.

Pence also authored legislation to increase funding for rural broadband programs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which passed the House overwhelmingly with bipartisan support in June.

In December, Congressman Pence secured over \$642 million to fund additional rural broadband programs, including \$555 million for the ReConnect pilot program designed to provide certain flexibilities to unserved and underserved areas.



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Learning about agriculture

Students in Mrs. Mathes kindergarten class at South Ripley Elementary School enjoyed learning about different types of animals, planting seeds, farming and tractors on a hands-on basis. These events were held in February this year.

# How farmers are using drones

The farmers of yesteryear might not be too familiar with their surroundings if they were to visit a modern farm. While the men and women who made their livings as farmers decades ago would no doubt still recognize certain farm features that have withstood the test of time, they might not understand the inner workings of the modern farm, particularly in regard to the role technology now plays within the agricultural sector. Technology has changed agriculture in myriad ways. The methods farmers employ to produce food and improve the efficiency of their operations has changed as technology has evolved. One of the more noticeable changes that’s hard to miss on mod-

ern farms is the use of agricultural drones. Drones have been around for decades. Sometimes referred to as “unmanned aerial vehicles,” or “UAVs,” drones can be utilized in ways that can save farmers money and protect the planet.

- Monitor crops: According to senseFly, the commercial drone subsidiary of Parrot Group, drones can help farmers effectively monitor their crops. With a drone flying overhead, farmers can spot and quickly identify issues affecting their crops before those issues escalate into something larger.
- Soil analysis: Another potential benefit of agricultural drones highlights their role in analyzing soil. Agri-

cultural drones utilize complex mapping functions to gather data about the soil, including areas where it might be stressed. That enables farmers to develop accurate soil samples that can be used to guide decisions in regard to irrigation and fertilization.

- Reduce waste: SenseFly notes that data gathered by drones can help farmers determine the vigor of their crops at various stages of growth. Such information can prevent overfertilization and overwatering, thereby reducing waste and runoff, benefitting the planet as a result.
- Planning: Drones can be used to collect data on crop growth and health at various times throughout the grow-



SUBMITTED PHOTO

How does this work?

Kindergarten students learned there’s more to agriculture than meets the eye! They intently watched as they learned from older students who are in the FFA Club at South Ripley. These students are in Mrs. Dicken’s class.

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Live animals makes learning fun!

Children from South Ripley Elementary School learned the ABC's of Ag Day. They particularly enjoyed the animals in this photo. The students peering into the llama's pen are from Mrs. Mathes classroom.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

You have my full attention!

Students from South Ripley Elementary School enjoyed learning about agriculture before school was out due to the coronavirus. FFA members taught kindergarten students about planting seeds, farming and more. Pictured are students from Mrs. Downey's classroom.

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# The role of technology in agriculture

Modern industry is driven by technology. Advancements in technology have changed how business is conducted, with some industries undergoing dramatic changes since the dawn of the 21st century.

While agriculture might not be the first industry people think of when reflecting on the changing nature of industry, The National Institute of Food and Agriculture notes that modern farms are vastly different than those from a few decades ago.

Farmers have long relied on technology to make their operations as efficient, productive and profitable as possible. Precision agriculture, which refers to technological advances designed to propel agriculture into the modern, computerized and information-based world, is helping the agricultural sector become more profitable and efficient while also improving safety and making agriculture more eco-friendly. In addition, the NIFA notes that the modern agricultural industry employs technology such as robots, temperature and moisture sensors, aerial images, and global positioning systems.

If it sounds complicated, that's

because it is. For example, modern sensors can detect soil conditions, potentially producing hundreds of readings per second. These sensors help farmers know the best possible time to plant seeds so they can reach their full potential. That improves both the efficiency of modern farms as well as their output.

The NIFA also notes that agricultural technology has reduced waste. For instance, thanks to agricultural technology, farmers no longer have to apply water, fertilizers and pesticides uniformly across entire fields. Technology has shown that farmers can simply target specific areas or even treat individual plants differently. That saves time and allows farmers to use only minimal quantities of water, fertilizer and pesticides. In addition, according to the NIFA, employing agricultural technology in this fashion leads to higher crop productivity and reduces runoff of chemicals into rivers and groundwater, thereby reducing the farm's impact on local ecosystems.

Modern farms are technological marvels where various technologies are being employed to produce crops more efficiently and safely than ever before.

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