



Agriculture Enterprise Area

Preserve farmland. Protect the environment. Grow the economy.

SNAPSHOT

Friends in Agriculture

Clark County Agriculture Economics*:

#1 for dairy in state;

7,083 residents employed

\$2.5B contributed

98% of farms

#18 in the nation

in agriculture

in economic activity

are family farms

-----*University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension 2017 Clark County agriculture impact report -----

Through a petition supported by 35 landowners, the Friends in Agriculture agricultural enterprise area (AEA) was designated in 2015 in the towns of Freemont and Lynn in Clark County. The area has had a rich history of agricultural production since the late 1800s that has shaped the county into the state's top dairy producer. Landowners within this AEA are driven to continue the agricultural way of life and to ensure that future generations can continue to farm the land. In order to preserve agricultural land for future use, the goals of the AEA include:

- Develop and implement strategies to minimize land use conflicts by addressing development in outlying areas.
- Promote nutrient management planning and best management practices to preserve and maintain natural resources.
- Provide farmers with access to technical assistance to implement soil and water conservation goals.
- Promote new agricultural technologies that provide economic benefits for producers.
- Facilitate economic certainty for farms and agribusinesses to build production and processing capacity.



Known for a prosperous dairy industry, Clark County also supports a variety of traditional and niche agricultural operations. This includes selling fruit and vegetables at local fresh markets and regional grocers; local greenhouses supplying residents with plants and garden transplants; and shipping grains and dairy throughout North America. At the time of the AEA petition, local food sales in Clark County totaled \$622,000 annually. By 2019, that number increased by 28% to \$795,000. Based on current data, agriculture contributes \$2.5 billion in economic activity and employs more than 7,000 people in Clark County. The agricultural community has grown to be the number one dairy producing county in the state and the number one butter-producing county in the nation. These types of agricultural sales are supporting the local and state economy, as well as driving agricultural enterprises to grow and thrive.



3
LOCAL GOVERNMENTS



35
PRODUCERS & LANDOWNERS




County: **Clark**
Municipalities: **Freemont, Lynn**
Acres: **16,705**
AEA Designation: **2015**

This AEA is supported and surrounded by the following ag enterprises, businesses, non-profits, and institutions:



Milk producers



Dairy and whey processing plants



Largest dairy-producing county in state



Home to the nation's largest butter producer



Milk equipment dealers



Cheese, butter production, milk drying



Grain producers: corn, soybeans, small grains, hay



Feed suppliers



Seed and fertilizer suppliers



Grain storage



Fruit producers: orchards, berry farms



Horticulture: greenhouses, on-farm retail



Ag equipment and service dealers



Ag commodities transport

“Many of these farms are multi-generation farms,” stated Fred Subke, Clark County’s agronomist and a fourth generation resident of Clark County. Based on current data, 98% of farms in the county are family owned. The strength of family is evident by a large community of Amish and Mennonite families who are actively reinvesting and rehabilitating old farmsteads, along with the environmental stewardship from producers who are cultivating a strong foundation for their families to continue to farm. The landowners in this AEA have demonstrated their commitment to agriculture prior to the AEA designation, and the designation serves as a tool to help them further their commitment through conservation.

Landowners within the AEA have the opportunity to sign a farmland preservation agreement. These are 15-year agreements where a landowner agrees to commit all or a portion of their farm to agricultural use and maintain state soil and water conservation standards. In return, they may be eligible to claim the farmland preservation tax credit. Over 6,400 acres (38%) of the Friends in Agriculture AEA are enrolled in farmland preservation agreements, meaning these landowners have committed to preserve and implement conservation practices on over one-third of the agricultural lands within the boundary.

The Clark County Land Conservation Department (LCD) works with operators in the Friends of Agriculture AEA to ensure that conservation practices are implemented and maintained. The LCD helps farmers as well as renters of land within the AEA to implement nutrient management plans. Nutrient management plans help ensure that crops get the right amount of nutrients, nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium at the right time and place. This benefits farmers by improving crop yields and reducing input costs, while also benefiting the environment by keeping nutrients on fields and not in streams or groundwater. Clark County has funding to support the development of nutrient management plans, which include a one-time \$40 per acre reimbursement of lands not previously in a plan. The LCD also offers new and refresher training courses for nutrient management. The course provides information how nutrient management works on the conservation side and as a business smart tool for agriculture. The LCD can also help landowners and agricultural land renters implement their plan by assisting with manure storage expansions or closures, addressing soil loss and field erosion, and other issues to achieve conservation goals.

Over the last few years, many local operators have expressed an interest in implementing cover crops into their rotation. In an effort to provide access to tools for operators to implement these soil health practices, the LCD purchased a no-till drill which is available to rent. In addition, the LCD has set up demonstration plots to showcase the benefits of cover crops in local soils and farming systems.

“Our goal is to show that by doing cover crops, you will not have a significant yield decrease. But by doing cover crops, you will build soil health,” explained Subke. “Any cover crops are better than no cover crops, as we are trying to get multiple types of roots in the soil to aerate, prevent erosion, runoff, and build soil health.”

The no-till drill is available to rent throughout the growing season and field days are held at the demonstration plots through the crop year. If you are interested in learning more about the demonstration plots field days, rent the no-till drill, learn more about cover crops, or nutrient management planning class, contact the Clark County LCD at (715)-743-5102 or email fred.subke@co.clark.wi.us. The LCD can also let you know if your farmland is located in the Friends in Agriculture AEA, help you understand if a farmland preservation agreement is right for you, or to learn more about conservation initiatives or resources in Clark County

Preserving Local Agriculture



Retain and enhance agriculture-related businesses and jobs



Pursue and encourage new technologies



Provide and promote strategies to address non-farm and farmland use

Protecting Natural Resources



Technical assistance to implement conservation practices



County assistance with:

- Nutrient management planning
- No-till drill rental
- Preventing erosion and promoting soil health

To learn more about AEA's and the Farmland Preservation Program, visit https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/AgriculturalEnterpriseAreas.aspx. To start or join a current AEA, contact the county land conservation department in the county where your land is located.