



## **Op-Ed: Celebrating the American Farmer**

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*by Julia Wickard, Indiana FSA State Executive Director*

I like to describe the American farmer as a true conservationist and an incredible ambassador for our country. One who cares for the land for this - and future generations. As farmers across the country are monitoring the progress of their 2022 crops, it's important that we pause for a moment and salute and thank the first conservationist - the American farmer! The men and women, here in Indiana, work day in and day out to conserve and protect the natural resources 365 days of the year to ensure the soil is ready for that next planting season. What a perfect time to celebrate Hoosier farmers than during the nation's birthday weekend!

As we reflect on the technological advances in agriculture, we have continually learned better ways to protect the land, water, and air we all depend on to live by using modern production tools such as global positioning satellites, biotechnology, conservation tillage and integrated pest management. American farmers daily live the message of "natural resource management" because they reside and work on the land.

America's agricultural producers sincerely depend on the earth's productivity to support their families and to provide food, feed, fiber, and fuel for the entire world. Farmers continually learn better ways to grow crops and seek improved methods for raising livestock. To assure an abundant food supply and a sustainable fuel and fiber industry, we all know we must first conserve natural resources. Farmers appreciate the fragility of natural resources and know it is important to safeguard the environment for the generations to come.

Having grown up on the farm and still living there today, I have a great passion for agriculture and the American farmer. And, as an employee of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency, I have an even deeper appreciation for those farmers who work closely with the Agency staff at the local level. A farmer's watchfulness and care of the natural resources and livestock that inhabit the earth, allows him to feed, clothe and provide the fuel, not only for America, but for the world. As we pause to thank the American farmer during this time of year, we are reminded that they are always looking for better, cleaner ways to care for the entire globe.

Farmers understand the day-to-day rhythms of the Earth because they spend each day in nature. In fact, agricultural land offers 75% of the nation's habitat. Decisions by the American farmer are based upon the weather, the soil, the grass, the wind, and the wildlife - and each of these is ever-changing.

Conservation tillage, a method of farming that reduces soil loss on cropland while using less energy, continues to grow across this country. As farmers increasingly integrate precision agriculture practices into their operations, we have seen farm productivity increase in the last 60 years while the use of resources, such as labor, seed, feed, and fertilizer, has declined; leading to a shrinking environmental footprint for food and fiber production in the United States. These are the reasons American agriculture is the envy of the world.

So, during this fourth of July weekend, as you partake in hometown parades, eat the delicious barbeque, ribeyes and watermelon, and celebrate all things red, white, and blue, remember to celebrate the Hoosier farmer for all they do for this country and world.

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