

# Imperial County Farm Bureau

## Quick Facts About Imperial County Agriculture

### Imperial County's Importance

- In 2006, Imperial County farmers produced **1,870,000 tons of hay**, including alfalfa, Bermuda grass, Sudan grass and Klein grass hays, making the region a vital producer of food for the state's vast dairy industry. Dairy is the number one agricultural commodity in California, with 20% of the nation's dairy production.
- Imperial Valley is one of California's top five producers of spinach, potatoes, cauliflower, broccoli and onions.
- Imperial County is home to California's only **cheese processing plant** producing Swiss and Muenster cheeses.
- There are more beekeepers per capita in the Imperial County than anywhere else in the nation. One of our local beekeepers, Bryan Ashurst, was recently named **California's Young Beekeeper of the Year** by the California State Beekeeper's Association.
- Imperial County is California's number two producer of aquaculture, and is home to the **largest catfish farm west of the Mississippi**.
- **Imperial County Farm Bureau is celebrating 90 years as an integral part of Imperial Valley's rich agricultural heritage.**
- Imperial County is the nation's top sheep and lamb producing county. Approximately **200,000 sheep** pass through the county each year.

### Economic Impact

- California produces about 13% of the nation's total cash receipts from agriculture, but only receives about 4% of direct government payouts to agriculture. *(Note: This figure does fluctuate some from year to year.)*
- For every 100 jobs in agriculture and the food industry in California, an **additional 94 jobs** are generated throughout the state, and for every \$1000 of total gross value produced in agriculture in Imperial County, \$397 of personal income is generated in ag-related jobs.

### Feeding the World

- Americans are spending nearly twice as much on meals away from home than in 1970. Yet the total percent of income that is spent feeding our families has **continued to decline**. Americans spend about 10 percent of our income on food today, compared with about 14 percent in 1970 and about 23 percent in 1947. In comparison, Americans spend, on average, 35% of our income on taxes.
- With the increasing availability of affordable food produced by farmers and ranchers in the U.S., Americans are consuming **more fruits and vegetables**, more lower-fat milk, and leaner meat than we did 30 years ago.
- One acre of carrots can provide 320,000 people with a nutritious side dish. In 2006, enough carrots were grown in Imperial Valley to serve a 1/4-pound helping to 75% of the Earth's population – **nearly 5 billion people!**
- Imperial County is home to three dairies and a cheese plant. The average dairy cow in the United States produces about **16,000 glasses of milk** per year.

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- It would take a family of four ten years to go through the amount of bread produced with one acre of wheat.
- It is estimated that more than **2/3 of the vegetables consumed in the United States** during the winter months are grown here in the Imperial Valley.
- In 2006, Imperial County produced enough lettuce (including head lettuce, leaf lettuce and salad mix) to serve dinner salads to **2,352,000,000 people!**
- Each year, bees pollinate nearly 100 different types of crops in the United States worth an estimated \$10 billion. Insect pollinators make possible one-third of the world's diet.

## Water

- Imperial County agriculture uses an average of 5.6 acre-feet of water per acre per year. One acre-foot of water can supply the domestic needs (for dishwashing, laundry, showers, toilets, etc.) of two families of four for one year. Those eight people indirectly consume an average of 8 acre-feet of water per year through the food they eat. On average, **it takes more than 800 gallons of water to grow the food you consume in ONE DAY.**  
*(See the associated sheet for more detail.)*
- With every acre-foot of water that arrives in the Valley, one ton of salt is carried into the area. Using subsurface tile drainage systems, farmers are able to keep that salt from remaining in the soil, ensuring that our land remains highly productive. It would take 52,000 trucks to carry all the salt that is deposited into the Salton Sea every year.

## Agricultural Variety

- Local farmers produce more than 100 different commodities, including bamboo, sugar cane, flax, corn, artichokes, fish, goats, honey, cilantro, water lilies and more.
- Agriculture is about more than just food and clothing. Many products we use in our everyday lives come from plant and animal by-products produced by America's farmers and ranchers. For instance, many types of filters are created with cotton; **hypo-allergenic latex gloves** are produced from the guayule plant; many adhesives are created using proteins from milk, livestock by-products or soybeans; and even **inks** are made from soybean products.

## Environmental Stewardship

- The lush fields of Imperial County provide **habitat to hundreds of thousands of birds** every year. Of the 800 or so bird species found in the United States, over 400 have been spotted in the Imperial Valley.
- Over 70% of the state's burrowing owls reside in Imperial County. There are more owls per square mile here than anywhere else in the United States.
- The Imperial County TMDL program, administered by Imperial County Farm Bureau, has been recognized nationwide for its success in **reducing the amount of silt and minerals that enter our water drainage systems.** Simple solutions such as wider drainage channels or wheat strips planted in drainage channels help inhibit the flow of silt and minerals while allowing water to pass through.