

Spring 2023

# OFA Spirit

The Newsletter  
of the Outstanding Farmers of America

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[www.outstandingfarmers.com](http://www.outstandingfarmers.com)



**2023 NOYF WINNERS** - The four National Outstanding Young Farmers for 2023 are from left, Brad and Tara Peacock of Arkansas; Jon and Amy Hegeman of Alabama; Kyle and Rachel Zwieg of Wisconsin; and Carl and Betsy Long of Pennsylvania.



**2023 NOYF FINALISTS** - from left, Andrew and Brooke Birchen, Illinois; Jon and Amy Hegeman, Alabama; Ryan Imbach and Tracy Schohr, California; Brad and Tara Peacock, Arkansas; Kyle and Rachel Zwieg, Wisconsin; Micahel and Kassidy Carter, Georgia; Carl and Betsy Long, Pennsylvania; Mike and Halie Schultz of Michigan; Jake and Kyli Stevens of New York; and Mike Brooks of New Jersey.

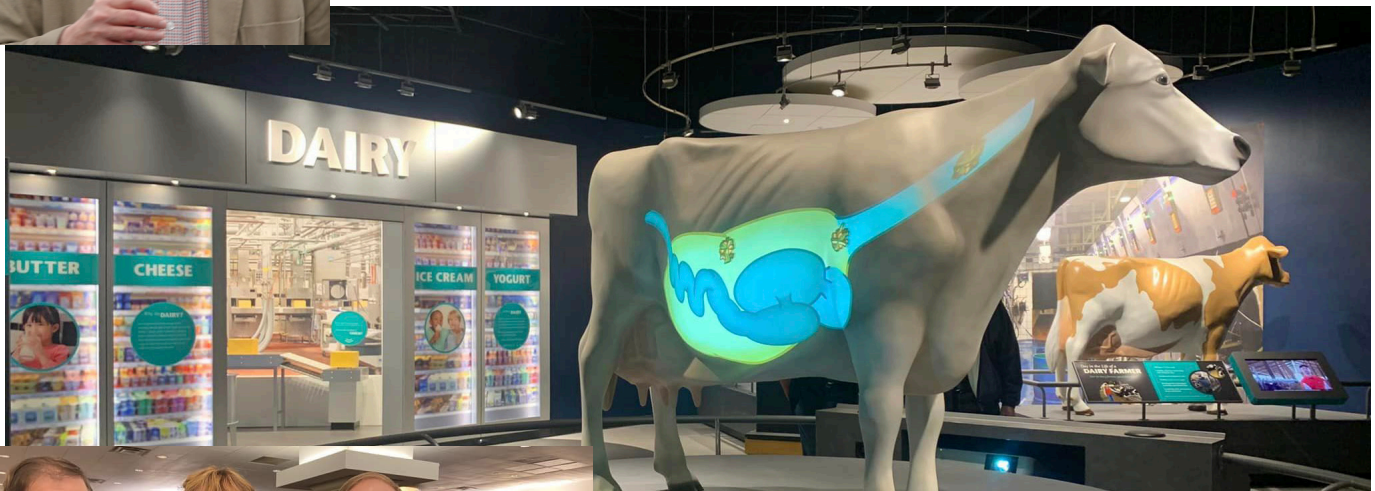
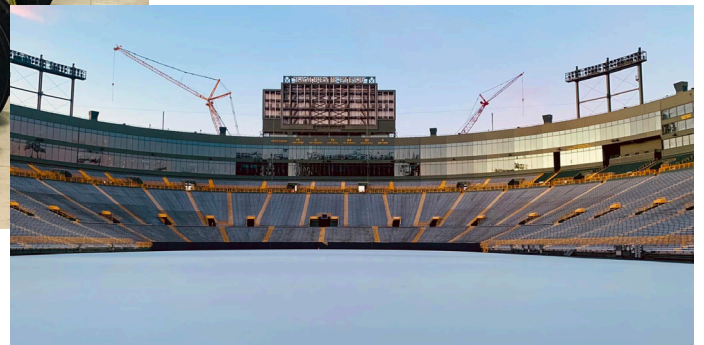




# NOYF

National Outstanding Young Farmers

# 2023 Awards Congress











## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Don and Cheryl Hartman (NM 2006)  
outstandingfarmers@gmail.com

# President looks forward to a busy year ahead with OFA

As incoming President of the National Outstanding Farmers of America Cheryl and I want to say thank you for allowing us to serve such a wonderful organization. We hope to continue the example of good work and progress that has proceeded us.

Next, we would like to express our thanks to Andrew and Erin Kimmel and Rich and Debbie Norz for their many years of service to the NOYF. We certainly appreciate all you've done for the organization.

We would also like to thank everyone who had a hand in making the Appleton congress a huge success, the regional committee, Andrew and Erin Kimmel, Rich and Debbie Norz, Chris and Ginger Martin, Marlin and Mary Johnson, Erin Slivka, and Chris Wallace and his team, and everyone else who had a hand in it... we couldn't pull it off without all you hard-working people.

Speaking of Appleton, how about Thomas Thibodeau! Wow! He was a cool drink of water, wasn't he? Thomas sure had the attention of the room! His message of servitude not only humbled me, but I'm sure many of you as well. His message not only related to our daily walk in life but reminded me as an agriculturalist that the world depends on the selflessness of people in agriculture. We are prime examples how we feed the world with little thought from the consumer, and little praise... we just do what we do, being humble, and without really telling our story. We represent life, and without agriculture life would cease to exist.

As incoming president, we have a full schedule ahead of us for the couple months. Our next visit will be

to take finalists to Commodity Classic, meet up with Jon Ebert, and Jahrah Hauger both representing John Deere in Orlando Florida, then it's off to Bellingham Washington to meet the regional committee there and finalize the details for the 2024 congress, then finally we run up to Des Moines to meet with that regional

committee to do site visits and commence with plans for the 2025 congress. I hope with all our travels away from the farm we don't have a mutiny on our hands!

So, in closing, I hope to see you all in Bellingham WA next year. I think it's a beautiful place and we will have a big time!



## OFA COORDINATOR'S FAREWELL

Rich and Debbie Norz (NJ 2010)

We hope you are all doing well and getting ready for an abundant growing season in 2023! We have had the great pleasure of being involved with the National Outstanding Young Farmer Awards Program (NOYF) management in one form or another for the last 12 years. We started out as the NOYF Candidate Coordinators in 2012 under the tremendous leadership of Pat Barnes and then moved into the OFA Program Coordinators position in 2021 after the great mentoring of Sharon Page. It has all been a life altering experience for both of us to say the least!

As we all well know, there has been many so challenges and changes over the last 3 years in all of our lives, and we are no different. Because of changes on our farm and in our health because of related Co-Vid reasons, we have made the heavy hearted decision to step down from the program we love so much as OFA Executive Directors/Program Coordinators as of February 19, 2023.

With that being said, there are many people we would like to acknowledge and thank that have been part of our journey over the last 12

years. We would like to start off with Pat and Jerry Barnes with the mentoring at the start of our OFA journey. Erin Slivka and Chris Wallace for all the work we have done together making sure all the finalists look as great as they are. Sharon Page for her continued efforts making the NOYF program top notch. All the OFA officers over the past 13 years moving the NOYF program ever forward.

The memorable times and friendships we have had with all of our OFA family. And last but certainly not least, the NOYF Classes that have called Debbie and I, Mom and Dad, hopefully we have made a small impact on your lives and please know that you have made a huge impact in our lives.

Thank you to all of you for being part of our NOYF/OFA journey and looking forward to seeing you all in Bellingham, Washington in February 2024.







# NOYF COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Mary & Marlan Johnson (NE 1989)

noyfprogram@gmail.com

## Looking ahead to NOYF 2024

Thank you for your support! We cannot forget to thank our Media Coordinator, Erin Slivka! She does so much behind the scenes; what would we do without her?

If any of you know a young farmer-between the ages of 25 and not having reached age 41 by January 1, 2024—please consider talking with them about the NOYF program. We are always looking for potential candidates for the next class. Some areas to look for active membership in commodity groups, community service, farmers serving on county committees, young farmers active in the community, and farmers that you have noticed that are doing a great job with their operation. The deadline for nominations will be September 1, 2023 for the 2024 Congress. The Nomination Form can be downloaded from the OFA

website: [www.outstandingfarmers.com](http://www.outstandingfarmers.com)

Finally, we would like to thank Rich and Debbie Norz for their help transitioning Marlan and Me to the role of National Finalist Coordinator. There are many moving parts to this role, and the overall coordinator role. Thank you for helping us along the way. I am sure we will reach out with questions in the future.

Wishing you the best in your family farming operation in the future! We welcome Joe & Ida DeFrancesco to their new role as Coordinators. We look forward to working with you!

Thank you everyone for your support of the program—keep sending in nominations! I have already received several to start the 2024 search! And—I will be reaching out to many of you for new nominees! Have a SAFE Spring!

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

Tor and Nicole Anderson (NJ 2017)

andersenfarmsllc@gmail.com



## Secretary excited to serve

We are Tor and Nicole Andersen, Class of 2017, from New Jersey! We are excited to be taking on the roll as secretary and looking forward to traveling to Washington this month to help make plans for next year's conference!

For those of you who don't know us.... We are blessed to be first generation vegetable growers from the tippy top of NJ. We grow corn, soy beans, hay, pumpkins, a wide variety of vegetables, melons, berries, and flowers. We own and operate a retail garden center and two farm market locations. We have something in the works for every season! In addition to growing produce, row crops, and flowers... we also sell Christmas trees, make our own maple syrup, offer our community an 18 week CSA,

make our own ice cream, and provide delicious "farm to table" catering. New this year, we will be starting our own egg production and we are looking forward to picking our first apples from our newly planted apple orchard!

On top of all of that our most precious blessing of all are our four daughters, Anya, Greta, Elsa, and Elin! You can only imagine how much we have going on with our sweet girls and community involvement, so much!!! But when we were asked to add being board members, we couldn't pass it up! We just love the being apart of the NOYFA community. We cherish the friendships we've made and are humbled and eager to serve!

Greetings from Eastern Nebraska!! The geese have been flying north, the robins have been on the lawn, there are dead skunks on the road (yes, that is a sign of spring)! It has been a marathon since we returned from Appleton, Wisconsin—removing trees, meetings, paying cash rents, and paying taxes. I took the opportunity to attend some seminars to receive CEU's for my Certification as a Crop Advisor also. Then we were on to planting corn and soybeans!

How about that Congress in Appleton??? WOW! We had (10) FANTASTIC FINALISTS, the tours were OUTSTANDING, and the speaker, Thomas Thibodeau, had everyone's attention! One of the BEST speakers I have heard in a long time. Very relevant, and words to live by! A HUGE THANK YOU to the Regional Committee for putting this together. The time went quickly, and it always ends too soon!

CONGRATULATIONS to the FINALISTS and the (4) National Winners! You are now all members of the Outstanding Farmers of America Fraternity. We hope you had a Great Experience, and will tell other young Agriculturalists what the weekend was like. I am sure you have made lifelong friends, and we look forward to seeing you at future Congresses! Each of you had a "compelling story" about your farm, your family, and your visions in Agriculture. Marlan and I thoroughly enjoyed working with all of you these past few months. I always learn something from the finalists each year!

A Big "Thank you" to John Deere for their Sponsorship, the NACAA for their support, the judges—consisting of officers and external judges. You help make this program SUCCESSFUL with your support. Judging this group of young individuals could not have been an easy task! With these finalists, the future of Agriculture looks great! A "shout out" to Amber Yutzy and the NACAA. You have helped tremendously with nominations!



# OFA WINNER'S SPOTLIGHT

## Brad and Tara Peacock (AR 2023)

Brad and Tara Peacock farm 1,500 acres of rice, soybeans and corn in White County, Arkansas. Brad also helps manage an additional 2,000 acres of the family farm. He's the fifth generation to farm in his family. He graduated with Bachelors in Ag Business from AR Tech University in 2009. Shortly after, he met his wife, Tara, and the two married in 2012. Tara is the Art Director at Think Idea Studio in Searcy. The Peacocks have a four

year old son, Silas.

"We're very thankful we were able to participate and meet so many people at NOYF who we foresee will be lifelong friends. I said it many times during our time in Appleton, but we didn't feel like this was a competition. It was an opportunity to connect with like-minded people across agriculture. We learned, we laughed and we ate more cheese than we've ever had in our lives! Now we get to

go back to our communities across the US inspired and proud of what we accomplish together."





# NOYF WINNER'S SPOTLIGHT

## Carl and Betsy Long (PA 2023)

Carl and Betsy Long of Coudersport, Penn., are first generation farmers. Along with their children, Mark (14), Emmett (12), and Colette (8), they own and operate a 2,600-acre grain and vegetable farm. Carl's interest in agriculture started with an opportunity to work on his science teacher's dairy farm. His involvement in 4H and FFA helped grow his passion for farming. While in high school, Carl obtained a FSA youth loan and started his farming career. Immediately after high school, Carl was able to secure a processing sweet corn contract to grow 90 acres on rented land. The following year Carl connected with a farmer that wanted to retire and was able to assume his processing green bean contract, rent his ground, and purchase some of his equipment. In 2006, Carl purchased this farm. The next year he married Betsy. She has assumed most of the record keeping for the farm: payroll, food safety plan, and worker protection standard. Betsy keeps track of the miles and gallons to prepare the IFTA, HUT, and KYU for the farms three semis.

After tough weather years and changes in markets, the Longs decided to try growing potatoes. They found them to be an excellent fit for their climate/soils and began to focus on potatoes. They currently raise 415 acres

of potatoes for chipping and sell them to 11 different potato chip factories. The Longs worked with Penn State and PA Cooperative Potato Growers to host variety research plots on the farm. This resulted in them finding a russet variety that was well suited for their farm, and are continuing to develop this russet market. In addition to potatoes, the Longs also raise processing green beans, winter wheat, seed oats, clover, timothy, and corn. They follow conservation plans on all their farms and no-till all of their winter wheat into green bean stubble. Due to the hilly terrain that they farm, much of their ground is farmed in 120 foot wide contour strips.

The Longs credit much of their success to the relationships that they have built. Long Farms is truly blessed to have the support of family, friends, employees, landowners, and our community. They have received so much help from the people they do business with: from the people they buy fertilizer, chemicals, seed, and parts from to



the brokers that work tirelessly to sell their crops.

We were very humbled and honored to be nominated as National Outstanding Young Farmers. During our first Zoom meeting, we were told we would make new lifelong friends. It was hard to believe until we arrived in Appleton. The family of the OFA was apparent from the time we landed and continues as we write this. The quality of the entire NOYF Class of 2023 was amazing! Each one has a passion for agriculture, and is doing great things for their communities. We are very fortunate to have found these new friends. We left Appleton and returned to the farm rejuvenated and inspired by spending our time with such an amazing group of people.

We would like to thank John Deere, OFA officers, OFA coordinators, NOYF coordinators Mary & Marlin Johnson, and our Extension Agent for this life changing opportunity!

See you in Ferndale, Washington!





# NOYF MEMBER'S SPOTLIGHT

## Nate & Brooke Youngquist (WA 2016)

We are excited to host the OFA in Washington in 2024, the congress hasn't been held in our state, ever! We don't have many OFA members in Washington and are grateful to have the support and assistance of John and Morgan Morrison to help in preparations and hosting. We enjoyed getting to know John and Morgan at the 2023 congress and are looking forward to this once in a lifetime opportunity to host you all in our backyard.

Since our NOYF congress in 2016, Nate's business has transitioned from a retail and wholesale berry operation to farming 800 acres of ornamental gourds, pumpkins and organic hard squash. This winter Nate has been busy updating the warehouse with state-of-the-art equipment to automate washing and painting lines, as well

as processing and packing to help automate and increase production. In addition to warehouse updates, he has been busy adding a few new team members to his growing business in the areas of Finance and Operations.

We are quickly approaching planting season where 25 different varieties of gourds, pumpkins and squash will be planted for an August and September harvest. Beginning the harvest as early as possible in August allows for the product to be washed and painted (if applicable) and to be packed and shipped nationwide to retail chains across the country to have it on store shelves in September and October. Be sure to look out for the label Bay Baby Produce this fall.

While Nate farms on the commercial



scale, Brooke has stayed busy taking over their yard with her small-scale seasonal flower farm specializing in dahlias and other cut flowers grown from seed. Since she also works remotely in Human Resources, Mountain View Blooms has grown slowly primarily selling directly to local florists and flower shops for weddings and events throughout the summer. She is excited for the day when her kids can assist with her veggie and flower production.

After an unusually cold and wet spring in 2022 we are hopeful for a more normal spring planting season. The spring and summer months are always a busy time for all of us in Ag, and our family is no different. Adding even more to our plates this year we are eager to welcome baby number 2 in June.

We are hoping to see you in Washington next February to share a bit more about what we are up to and to highlight our corner of the world in the Pacific Northwest.





# OFA SPIRIT OF GIVING



OFA is a 501(c) 3 Tax Deductible Non-Profit Organization.

## OFA DONOR FUND

Buck Teeter	1975	TN
ONEOK	2017	ND
Jack & Mary Lou Thomson Foundation	1955	CA
In Memory of Buck Teeter		
James & Delores Brown	1965	FL
Wisner H. Buckbee	1965	NY
Jones Family Farms		

## PLATINUM (\$5,000+)

Joe Gambini & Lois Armstrong	1965	CA
Gerald Barnes & Neoma Loehr	1970	OR
Kevin & Sharon Page	1991	MI
Bill & Gracie Richards Trust		
In Memory of Dean Cortopassi	1970	CA

## DIAMOND (\$1,000+)

Joe & Ida DeFrancesco	2016	CT
Dana & Julie Stapleton	2002	SD
Marlan & Mary Johnson	1989	NE
Rich & Debbie Norz	2010	NJ
Bill Richards	1967	OH
Greg & Carmen Bendixson	2002	ND
Rod & Janelle Holth	Honary	ND
Russ & Marilyn Rosenboom	1972	IL
Dave & Jeanne Endres	2001	WI
Ben & Kathryn Littlepage	1965	LA
Tim & Sara Sullivan	2005	MN
Lloyd & Daphne Holterman	1994	WI
David & Bernie Shriver	1970	IL
John & Mary Shawhan	1977	OH
Ralph & Cleo Thompson	1970	ND
John & Marge Walchli	1969	OR
Andy & Hilde Burger	1966	DE
Ken & Audrey Mason	1970	SD
Robert & Roberta Call	1960	NY
Ken & Marilyn Bush	1966	IL
Robert Sakata	1956	CO
Bob & Ella Mae Wade	1969	KY
John & Gail Kautz	1966	CA
Dan & Sheila White	1970	TX
Kevin & Krissy Albert	2005	NE
Don & Cheryl Hartman	2006	NM
In Memory of Kenneth Bush		
Carrigan Farms LLC	1988	NC
Andrew & Erin Kimmel	2007	PA
Ben & Kate Sowers	2019	MD
Randy & Karen Sowers	1987	MD
Chris & Ginger Martin	2015	GA
Keith & Marian Bjerke	1975	ND

## GOLD (\$500+)

Joe Geremia	2011	CT
Rod & Mary Birchen	1993	IL
Scott & Peggy Hildebrant	2002	MN
Willard & Ruth Pederson	1967	ND
In Memory of Byron Keating		
Elaine Thomson	1981	CA
In Memory of Pat Barnes (Class of 07)	2007	
Willard & Pat Hennings	1965	WA
Eric & Marlene Haberer	1972	KS
Max & Connie Peterson	1974	IL
Bryce & Cheryl Chamberlain	1982	IL
Richard & Jauanalee Alder	1966	NE
Sandy & Peggy Luderman	1982	MN
Dale & Joanna Koester	1959	ID
Mike & Judy Hennenfent	1981	IL
Steve & Janeen Moest	1994	IL
Dennis & Doris Tubergen	1994	MI
Jay & Kristin Richardson	2004	WI
Mary Ann Brown	1965	GA
Steve & Dee Gordon	2012	OR
Glen & Angie Walters	2002	GA
Donald & Jeanette Reuvers	1967	MN
Earl & Sue Stanley	1974	VT
Weber S. Taylor	1965	VA

## SILVER

Deb & Bob Carpenter	1980	NY
In Memory of Dave Duncan		
Leo Sebek Memorial	2002	SD
Memorials (Dan & Sheila White)		
Ben Boyd		
Mark & Angie Ulness	2017	WI
Ken & Donna Dickneite	1996	MO
Rufus & Mary Sharard	1967	SC
Ruth Pederson Memorial(Uglen)	2012	ND
Mark & Trudy Peterson	2002	MO
Tor & Nicole Anderson		NJ
Karl Eby & Judy Erickson	1985	IA
Danny & Danette McAlhaney	2002	SC
Ned & Carol Berce	1987	ME
Ronald & Rene White	1977	MI
Chad & Ravelle Garone	2015	CA
Gwen & Ira Gunn	1977	AL
In Memory of Mike Hennenfent		
George Maxey	1965	CO
In Memory of Alton Minderman		



# NOYF Awards Congress 2024 set for Washington

Make plans to attend the 2024 NOYF Awards Congress in Ferndale, Washington! The dates for next year's event will be February 15-18.

Silver Reef Casino Resort offers a fun and safe gaming and entertainment experience. With 206 guest rooms & suites, golf at the Loomis

Trail Golf Course, beautiful Mt. Baker views, oversize bathrooms, free Wi-Fi, in-room coffee makers, irons, hairdryers. Book a tee time at Loomis Trail Golf Course or a relaxing massage at The Spa or dine at one of our specialty restaurant options. Find out what other special events or promotions are hap-

silverreefcasino.com.

Call for hotel reservations Toll Free at (866) 383-0777 to book rooms. Make sure to mention Code 3714 to book at the NOYF Group Rate. The rate deadline is January 21, 2024.



## SILVER REEF



## CASINO RESORT

pening on the website at <https://www.silverreefcasino.com>.

## Birchens receive OFA Legacy Award

The OFA Legacy Award is given in honor of Pat and Jerry Barnes. This distinction is awarded to any OFA members who have shown exemplary involvement to the overall betterment of the OFA and its programs. Receiving the award this year were Rodney and Mary Birchen who were instrumental in the organization when OFA took over the ownership of the NOYF program. That unique, challenging, and demanding project laid the foundation for the program we have today.

Those that were present for the Saturday evening awards banquet may remember the emotional response from the

crowd after Rod and Mary's video played. In accepting the award, Mary said, "The most rewarding part is seeing the program still taking place and the new candidates that come every year. They can learn from each other and grow in their own farming practices."

"We made friendships from all over the country. Their struggles – we were having similar struggles of our own. You learn that life is sometimes not as bad as you think." Rod continued, "It was a life changing thing. We have friendships. We have resources. Things we never dreamed possible to have in our lives."

They had sat opposite candidates over and over as judges and heard stories that would bring tears to your eyes – stories of hardships and miracles. And then they would get to know these people on very personal level as part of this group.

"Life would be so different, I'm not sure we'd have taken a path in life where we are at today without the OFA. The OFA has exposed us to ways of thinking, ways of looking at business that provided us with business opportunities that I don't know if we would be here today



saying these things if we hadn't experienced OFA.

"We have been to weddings, funerals, we have cried on each other's shoulders. This group is there for you whether it is personal or it's business. We have had such a blessing it's almost indescribable."

Mary left us with, "OFA is like another family to us and it's very dear to my heart. On occasions, we have gone and helped out others as they have been ill or death in the family or whatever the case might be. We drop what we are doing and go support them. Unfortunately, it has happened a few times we would have to do that. But that is what you would do for your family, wouldn't you?"







# NOYF<sup>2024</sup> Awards Congress

National Outstanding Young Farmers

February 15-18, 2024 • Ferndale, Washington

**A look at Washington Agriculture - Come See What the Pacific Northwest is Growing!**

## Top Trading Partners

Source: WISER Trade, CY21

**CANADA - \$1.4B**

**TOP IMPORTS:**  
Seafood, Apples,  
Cherries

**JAPAN - \$1.2B**

Hay, French Fries, Seafood

**CHINA - \$994M**

Wheat, Hay, Beef

**SOUTH KOREA - \$541M**

Wheat, Hay,  
French Fries

**MEXICO - \$457M**

Apples, French Fries,  
Dairy

**10.2 billion**

Market value of  
crops and livestock

**300+**

Number of crops  
grown in Washington

**2.095 billion**

Dollar value of apples -  
state's top crop

**7.7 billion**

Value of food and ag products  
exported internationally

Source: WISER Trade, CY21

## Top 10 Commodities in Washington

2020

**1**



**APPLES**

\$2.095 billion

**2**



**MILK**

\$1.193 billion

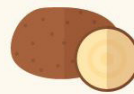
**3**



**WHEAT**

\$948.6 million

**4**



**POTATOES**

\$753.4 million

**5**



**CATTLE**

\$692.9 million

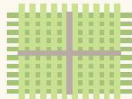
**6**



**CHERRIES**

\$561.7 million

**7**



**HAY**

\$500.7 million

**8**



**HOPS**

\$444.9 million

**9**



**GRAPES**

\$302.2 million

**10**



**EGGS**

\$220.2 million

**35,500**

Farms

95% family owned

Source: USDA NASS quick stats database 2021

## Top Export Products

Source: WISER Trade, CY21

**FISH & SEAFOOD - \$1.2B**

**TOP MARKETS:**

Canada, China, Japan

**WHEAT - \$962M**

China, Philippines, Japan





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