



Farmland

Farmland is an essential part of Iowa State University's agricultural programs. Land is a vital resource used by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences to fulfill its land-grant mission of research, extension and teaching including scholarships for students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

To conduct its agricultural programs, Iowa State University owns farms and operates others owned by associations or groups. The university owns 35 farms or parcels of land. Affiliated entities own 40 farms or parcels. In 2018, farmland owned or rented by ISU and affiliated groups totals 15,945 acres across Iowa. The total does not include lands such as campus and surrounding areas, the 4-H Camp and 4-H Foundation property, the Lakeside Laboratory and property owned by the Iowa State University Foundation but not managed by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Iowa State ranked sixth for agricultural land it and its affiliated groups owned or leased when compared to nine Midwestern land-grant universities in 2000.



Purposes for farmland owned or used by ISU

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences uses farmland in two ways. **Program farms** directly assist research, teaching and extension programs, and are intensively managed by faculty, staff and students. Program farms make up 62 percent of farmland owned or operated by ISU. **Production farms** produce commodity crops and livestock and often are farmed by renters or custom operators. They produce seed developed by ISU researchers so it can



be made available to the public. Production farms also provide grain and forage for Iowa State livestock units, and land to apply manure from livestock facilities or biomass research waste products. Production farms generate income that supports ISU's agricultural programs. As ISU's needs and resources change, program farms may become production farms, and vice versa.

Users of Iowa State farms

More than 130 Iowa State faculty members use the College's farmland for teaching, research and extension purposes. A similar number of staff members are involved as project leaders and workers. Each year about 2,000 students receive hands-on educational experiences at teaching farms, including a farm management course in which undergraduates manage a crop and livestock farm.



In 2017, more than 18,000 visitors were hosted by ISU's research and demonstration farms during field days or at other times. Local associations made up of farmers, business people and other citizens help direct and support the work at nine of the research farms. Extension field staff, community colleges, agricultural associations, community groups, FFA chapters, public schools, 4-H clubs and governmental and educational groups partner with the research and demonstration farms to deliver education, share research results and support work of local interest.

Many benefit from work on land

More than 650 projects are conducted on ISU’s agricultural farmland. Over the years, research and demonstration conducted at the farms have had significant impacts for Iowans, including:

- Development of commercially important inbred corn lines
- Establishment of integrated pest management thresholds for major crop pests
- Refinement of soil-conserving farming systems
- Research on remote sensing to characterize water status in soil
- Research the design and performance of harvest, storage and transportation equipment for biomass feedstock
- Field-scale precision agriculture trials to design machinery
- Studies on lessening the impact of agricultural practices on water quality
- Development of food-grade soybeans with significant export potential
- Breeding superior-performing dairy and beef cattle
- Testing alternative livestock production methods, such as raising pigs or beef cattle in bedded hoop barns



Management of farmland

Farmland is managed in a variety of ways. Some land is managed by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences’ Research and Demonstration Farms office (for example, outlying farms across the state). Some is managed by academic departments in the College (for example, the Animal Science Farms near Ames). Some is managed by students as part of their education. Some production farms are managed directly by the affiliated groups.

Acquisition of farmland

How land was acquired by ISU, its nonprofit affiliates or other groups, can be divided into four categories:

Purchases or trades	50 percent
Purchases combined with gifts	36 percent
Gifts	13 percent
Long-term ownership by ISU, or rented	1 percent

Ownership of farmland

Farmland owned or used by Iowa State University can be placed into three categories:

1. Farmland owned by ISU

There are 35 farms or parcels of land totaling 9,685 acres. Of these, 30 are program farms, five are production farms and two have non-agricultural uses.

2. Farmland owned by nonprofit organizations affiliated with ISU

• Research farms associations

Nine farms are managed as part of ISU’s outlying research and demonstration farms system, and are owned by local associations consisting of farmers, business people and citizens.

• Committee for Agricultural Development (CAD)

Since 1943, CAD has produced and distributed seed developed by ISU researchers. CAD also has purchased land on behalf of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences for research purposes, and has owned and managed these holdings. CAD owns 23 farms or parcels of land, mostly in Story and Boone counties. Eight of the farms are program farms (with research plots); the rest are production farms.

• Iowa State University Foundation (ISUF)

This private, nonprofit corporation is designated to secure and manage private gifts to benefit ISU. There are six ISUF-owned farms used

by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. All but one are in Story County. Five are program farms (with research plots), and one is a production farm.



3. Farmland owned by others

One parcel is owned by the City of Ames. ISU rents it because the land complements an adjacent university farm.

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Questions: If you have questions about Iowa State agricultural land and farms, contact:

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