

Survey Reveals Swine Industry Trends

By Robert Meinen
Penn State

A 10-year study conducted by the National Pork Producers Council, Iowa State University, and The University of Minnesota has shown an increase in swine industry wages of over 50 percent from 1990 through 1999.

The average industry wage for swine production workers at the end of the decade was \$29,726 and only three percent below the average U.S. civilian worker. In comparison, the average wage in 1990 was \$19,192 and 20 percent below the national average.

According to the study, the increase in farm size played a key role in driving these changes.

The percentage of farms with fewer than 3,000 animals dropped from 47.4 percent in 1990 to 11.2 percent in 1999, while the percentage of farms with greater than 10,000 pigs

grew from 22.2 percent to 71.4 percent over the same period.

Employee Base

As producers take advantage of unit cost reduction by increasing herd size, it is necessary to maintain a more advanced employee base.

Multiple-site production units, designed for each phase of production, are taking the place of older, single-site, farrow-to-finish operations. These new systems call for more employees and effective personnel management. In addition, employees must become specialized in a single phase of production, which requires a higher level of education.

The study showed that producers and employees with a four-year college degree rose from 24.1 percent to 35.7 percent in 1990 to 23.3 percent in 1999. Owners are finding that produc-

tivity increases when workers are offered a production bonus plan.

These incentive plans vary from producer to producer, but the percentage of employees eligible for these performance-based payment programs has increased by 9.5 percent over the 10-year period. Over 58 percent of employees currently receive incentive payments.

The study also documented a continuing challenge for the swine industry to attract and retain young employees. Workers below the age of 30 decreased from 45.2 percent to 34.8 percent over the time of the study, and the number of people entering the industry between the ages of 25 and 35 decreased by 10 percent.

Employee turnover is also on the decline — the average years spent in the industry decrease from 8.0 years to 6.4 years; however, the average longevity for all U.S. employees is only five years.

Employee Health Wages

Researchers also asked a series of health-related questions during the 10-year period, particularly in 1999. The current data show a heightened awareness of potential health risks and an increase in the quality of the work environment.

The risks include respiratory problems, skeletal muscular health, fatigue, and stress. The study revealed that both dust and gas levels are lower than ever. Employees who rated dust and gas levels as high dropped from 15.3 percent to 9.8 percent in 1990 to 6.3 percent to 3.9 percent in 1999.

Simmental Sire Summary Released

BOZEMAN, Mont. — The American Simmental Association (ASA) has released its Fall 2000 Sire Summary.

"This summary is based upon millions of performance records accumulated over more than 30 years," said ASA Executive Vice President Jerry Lipsey. "It is an up-to-date, highly accurate measurement of Simmental and Simbrah cattle."

In all, 102,535 bulls were evaluated by the ASA, working with the Animal Breeding Group at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York. The summary contains data and the corresponding Expected Progeny Differences (EPDs) published on 973 Simmental bulls and 40 Simbrah sires.

The Fall 2000 Sire Summary represents the seventh official run of the innovative Multiple-Breed International Cattle Evaluation (MB-ICE) system, which provides comparisons among all animals in the database, regardless of their fraction of Simmental breeding. Under this system,

the American and Canadian Simmental Associations are combined to produce a single international cattle evaluation, allowing animals in both herdbooks to be directly compared.

Traits evaluated include: calving ease, birth weight, weaning weight, yearling weight, maternal calving ease, maternal milk, maternal weaning weight, plus the carcass traits of: carcass weight, percent retail cuts and marbling.

The Fall 2000 Sire Summary is available on-line at <http://www.simmental.org>. To reserve a hard copy, please contact ASA at 1 Simmental Way, Bozeman, MT 59715, by telephone at (406) 587-4531, by fax at (406) 587-9301, or by e-mail at simmental@simmgene.com.

The ASA Sire Summary is published twice annually and is distributed as part of the spring and fall issues of either SimTalk or The Register, two of ASA's official publications. ASA, in 1971, was the first beef breed association to publish a sire summary.

This progress is complemented by the fact that 90 percent of producers now offer dust masks to their employees. However, only 25 percent of the industry employees say that they wear a mask on a consistent basis.

Salaries for swine production workers have increased in the past decade and are now only three percent below those of the average U.S. civilian worker.

Employees are more specialized and are more likely to have college degrees.

Today's employees have a heightened awareness of health-related issues, and the importance of having a clean working environment. Fortunately, steady improvements in air quality have also been noted.



Coming November 18, new category in Section B!
All about antique auctions, shops, collectibles,
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USDA Releases Report On Farm-To-School Alliances

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The USDA recently announced the release of an on-line publication summarizing the highlights of the USDA Small Farm/School Meals Initiative Southeast Regional Workshop May 1 in Georgetown, Ky.

The report, "How Local Farmers and School Food Service Buyers Are Building Alliances," can be viewed on USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Website at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/mta/publications.htm>.

"Ninety-four percent of all farms in the United States are small or limited-resource farms, grossing less than \$250,000 in annual receipts," said AMS Administrator Kathleen A. Merrigan. "To enhance the earning poten-

tial of these farm operations, AMS has assumed a prominent role in facilitating direct marketing initiatives between small and limited-resource agricultural producers and local school districts."

The workshop, aimed at boost-

ing the use of locally produced fresh food in school feeding programs, attracted more than 180 school food service directors, state and federal officials, extension agents, members of farm cooperatives, and agricultural marketing specialists.

PFB Discusses Concerns Regarding Importation

CAMP HILL (Cumberland Co.) — The Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, the state's largest general farming organization, expressed concern recently about safeguards to prevent the importation of large lots of diseased livestock into Pennsylvania.

At this meeting of the Pennsylvania Animal Health and Diagnostic Commission, Dr. John Enck, executive director of the commission, briefed members and other attendees on a nationwide effort to develop an emergency management system to respond to an outbreak of a foreign animal disease in the U.S.

"Farm Bureau applauds the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and others who are working to develop this important system," said Marel Raub, Farm Bureau's director of regulatory affairs. "However, in addition to procedures for responding to a disease crisis, we must not forget to do all we can to prevent a foreign animal disease from entering the country in the first place."

This discussion arose in response to requests made to the USDA about importing three lots of heifers, totaling 10,000 head, into the state from Uruguay. These applications have been suspended indefinitely, due to the detection of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in Uruguay.

The applications had been pending for several months, but were delayed because of investigations by USDA of Uruguay's disease status and control system and a lack of guidelines for importation of large numbers of animals. Such guidelines would have to be put in place before similar importations could occur from Uruguay or any other country in the future.

USDA has assured the agricultural community that no guidelines will be developed without input from the states and other interested parties. Farm Bureau requested that commission members begin to consider the special characteristics of the state and its animal agriculture industry so that when the opportunity arises to submit comments, Pennsylvania will have a strong voice.

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