Deconstructing Iowa Agriculture and Reframing for a Brighter Future

Matt Russell
Resilient Agriculture Coordinator
Drake University Agricultural Law Center

Feeding the World: Challenges for Water Quality and Quantity
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Drake Ag Law Center

- Opportunities to study food and agriculture law: www.law.drake.edu/aglaw
- Outreach to the food and agriculture community: www.drakeaglaw.org
- My role: improving opportunities in Iowa's agricultural and rural economy
Coyote Run Farm
Lacona, Iowa  –  Marion Co

Founded in 2005, we’re restoring a 110 acre farm into a profit center through relational marketing and sustainable agriculture.

- Fruits, vegetables, cut flowers, plants
- Pasture poultry
- Specialty beef
- Hay, horses, mules
The Food and Agricultural Continuum

• Highly industrialized
• Global supply chains
• Specialization

• Growing own food
Vertically integrated

Farrow to finish with crop ground

Specialty production: hoop house, organic, “Niman Ranch”

Multi-livestock with crops

Retail agriculture

Grow your own

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The Food and Agricultural Continuum

Good

Bad
The Food and Agricultural Continuum

Bad

Good
The Food and Agricultural Continuum

This shapes the dialogue about Iowa agriculture

Polarized
Defensive
Passionate
Self confident
Self interested

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Better and worse is farm specific: externalized cost

- Air quality
- Nutrient loss
- Disease
- Soil erosion
- Pesticide drift
- Weed issues
- Water Quality
Diversity Tends to Improve Outcomes

Management Units

Year round production

Multi-purpose

Structures: fences ponds, waterways, buffers, trees
Solutions have costs

Internalizing the costs

Reducing the externalized costs
Who pays?

Private—land owners and farmers and consumers?
Public—USDA and IDALS and taxpayers?

Non-profits—INHF, Trees Forever, SILT
Huge Needs

- More practices
- Greater diversity
- More structures
- More dialogue
- Awesome individual success stories all along the continuum
- Iowa agriculture not such a great success story
Statewide, across all of agriculture

- We are not doing a good job of integrating:
  - Soil health
  - Nutrient cycling
  - Carbon cycling
  - Air quality
  - Pesticide use
  - Water quality
The Food and Agricultural Continuum

Good news: room for more Iowans to be involved

- Highly industrialized
- Global supply chains
- Specialization

Bad news:
- Defensive
- Polarized
- Passionate
- Self interested
- Self confident

- Monitoring
- Market development
- Product development
- Policy development
- Innovation

Growing own food