

ASSOCIATION OF IOWA FAIRS

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ECONOMIC IMPACT of COUNTY & REGIONAL FAIRS On the STATE of IOWA in 2016

Currently, there are 106 State, County and Regional Fairs in Iowa. 100 are actual "county fairs", 5 are community fairs and 4-H/FFA Achievement Shows, and one is the Iowa State Fair. (Note: this report does not include the Iowa State Fair, only county and regional fairs).

The primary focus of a Fair in Iowa revolves around the youth, furthering their education in their project areas, and providing an event that highlights the youth and their projects. Equally of importance is a Fair's focus on the history and culture of the community that the Fair serves. The following is taken from a mission statement of a county fair in Iowa. It summarizes the mission of all Iowa Fairs.

"The primary focus of the county fair is to, first and foremost, serve as a showcase of the talents of the youth of the community by providing a means of education, exhibit and competition of the various livestock and non-livestock projects the youth are involved in. The Society will also use the county fair to highlight the heritage of the community, and its ties to agriculture, industry, and businesses that are the backbone of the community."

While the focus of an Iowa Fair is the youth, all Fairs have a major economic impact on their community and the entire State of Iowa. For most all communities with Fairs, the Fair week is the largest activity of their community. A Fair can draw visitors from a wide area, bringing much needed tourism dollars into the communities.

- Total reported attendance at the 105 County and Regional Fairs in 2016 was **2,263,646 persons, on par with 2015.**
- Total statewide economic impact realized from the 105 County & Regional Fairs in 2016 was **\$284,941,377, up 3 ½ % over 2015.**
 - Not included in this figure economic impact realized from the sales of goods and services by local commercial exhibitors and businesses at the County Fairs. Most Fairs do not require this information from their commercial exhibitors, and therefore it is not available to the AIF.

4-H and FFA Youth involvement at County and Regional Fairs in 2016

- For livestock projects, 17,139 youth entered 70,311 livestock projects.
 - Youth livestock exhibitors were on par with 2015, and livestock exhibits were up 10% compared to 2015.
- For non-livestock projects, 14,885 youth entered 66,814 projects.
 - Youth non-livestock exhibitors were down 13% compared to 2015, and non-livestock exhibits were down 3% compared to 2015.
- A total of \$533,324 was paid to youth in premiums earned in 4-H/FFA competitions, up 13% compared to 2015.

Open Class involvement at County and Regional Fairs in 2016

- For livestock projects, 3,979 persons (down 13% compared to 2015) entered 9,718 livestock (down 20% compared to 2015) in open shows.
- For culinary, flowers, textiles, crafts, etc. areas, 13,530 persons (up 7% compared to 2015) entered 61,762 exhibits (up 1% compared to 2015).
- A total of \$369,121 was paid as premiums earned in open class competitions, on par with 2015.

Capital Improvements to County Fairgrounds

- In 2016 total state aid paid to all County and Regional Fairs totaled \$1,060,000 (or an average of \$10,095 per qualified Fair). A total of \$6,354,819 was spent by the Fairs for capital improvements on their fairgrounds in 2016.
- For every \$1 in state appropriation to the Fairs, an additional \$5.35 was invested in capital improvements by the Fairs.
- This results in another \$44,483,733 in state wide economic impact resulting from improvements to county fairgrounds, starting with the state investment of \$1,060,000 in the county fairgrounds for 2016.
- Capital improvements to county fairgrounds over the past 4 years totaled \$20,220,754. Total statewide economic impact over the past 4 years from capital improvements to county fairgrounds is \$141,545,278.

As seen by these figures, County and Regional Fairs are very much an important part of their communities and the State of Iowa. Not only do the Fairs serve the youth of Iowa, but also they have a significant economic impact on their communities and the State.

Another interesting fact regarding County Fairs is that volunteers play a major role in the operation of a County Fair, and the related non-fair activated held on the fairgrounds across Iowa. The reason the County and Regional Fairs in Iowa are so successful is a direct result of the efforts their volunteers, as the thousands of volunteer hours given to the Fairs in Iowa every year. In short, a Fair is a community coming together to provide their youth and their families with an event that highlights their community, which in turn has a significant economic impact on their community. Multiply this by the 105 County and Regional Fairs, and the State of Iowa itself benefits significantly from the success of its County Fairs.

*This report compiled from data included in the Yearly Summary Report that all Fairs are required to file with the Association, pursuant to the Code of Iowa.
Economic impact dollars are calculated according to accepted guidelines.*