

ASSOCIATION OF IOWA FAIRS

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Exhibitor Participation & Economic Impact of County Fairs in 2020

Currently, the AIF has 106 member fairs. 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.

NOTE: Exhibitor participation and economic impact was negatively impacted in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. 84 Fairs canceled or greatly reduced their event in 2020. However, most all of these Fairs held a modified judging event for the youth projects.

- Total reported attendance at the 105 County and Regional Fairs in 2020 was **252,128 persons, down 89% from 2019.**
- Total statewide economic impact realized from the 105 County & Regional Fairs in 2020 was **\$166,890,164, down 49% from 2019.**
 - 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 Fairs in 2020

- For livestock projects, 11,978 youth entered 51,485 livestock projects.
 - Youth livestock exhibitors were down 41% from 2019, and livestock exhibits were down 29% from 2019.
- For non-livestock projects, 6,776 youth entered 24,289 projects.
 - Youth non-livestock exhibitors were down 57% from 2019, and non-livestock exhibits were down 61% from 2019.
- A total of \$313,814 was paid to youth in premiums earned in 4-H/FFA competitions, down 36% from 2019.

Open Class Involvement at County Fairs in 2020

- For livestock projects, 1,415 persons (down 61% from 2019) entered 2,902 livestock (down 72% from 2019) in open shows.
- For culinary, flowers, textiles, crafts, etc. areas, 1,179 persons (down 91% from 2019) entered 4,526 exhibits (down 91% from 2019).
- A total of \$63,874 was paid as premiums earned in open class competitions, down 82% from 2019.

Capital Improvements to County Fairgrounds

- In 2020 total state funding paid to all County and Regional Fairs totaled \$1,060,851 (average of \$10,103 per qualified Fair). A total of \$5,014,437 was spent by the Fairs for capital improvements on their fairgrounds in 2020.
- For every \$1 in state appropriation to the Fairs, an additional \$4.01 was invested in capital improvements by the Fairs.
- This results in another \$35,101,059 in state-wide economic impact resulting from improvements to county fairgrounds, starting with the state investment of \$1,060,000 for 2020.
- Capital improvements to county fairgrounds over the past 3 years totaled \$18,927,245. Total statewide economic impact over the past 3 years from capital improvements to county fairgrounds is \$132,490,715.

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.