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Exhibitor Participation & Economic Impact of County Fairs in 2024

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 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. 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 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 2024 was **2,251,340 people, on par with 2023.**
- The total statewide economic impact realized from the 105 County & Regional Fairs in 2024 was **\$448,761,131, up 6.25% from 2023.**
 - Not included in this figure is the economic impact realized by 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 2024

- For livestock projects, 18,091 youth entered 67,441 livestock projects.
 - Youth livestock exhibitors were up 7% from 2023, and livestock exhibits were on par with 2023.
- For non-livestock projects, 12,552 youth entered 47,165 projects.
 - Youth non-livestock exhibitors were down 5% from 2023, and non-livestock exhibits were up 5% from 2023.
- A total of \$505,508 was paid to youth in premiums earned in 4-H/FFA competitions, up 2.5% from 2023.

Open Class Involvement at County Fairs in 2024

- For livestock projects, 3,993 people (up 8.5% from 2023) entered 14,737 livestock (up 25% from 2023) in open shows.
- For culinary, flowers, textiles, crafts, etc. areas, 11,081 persons (up 3.5% from 2023) entered 50,906 exhibits (up 3.5% from 2023).
- A total of \$352,489 was paid as premiums earned in open class competitions, down 8% from 2023.

Capital Improvements to County Fairgrounds

- In 2024 a total of \$11,174,012 was spent by the Fairs for capital improvements on their fairgrounds in 2024, starting with the state investment of \$1,060,000 for 2024.
- For every \$1 in state appropriation to the Fairs in 2024, an additional \$10.64 was invested in capital improvements by the Fairs.
- The state-wide economic impact resulting from improvements to county fairgrounds in 2024 totaled \$78,218,084.
- Capital improvements to county fairgrounds over the past 3 years totaled \$28,559,997. The total statewide economic impact over the past 3 years from capital improvements to county fairgrounds is \$199,919,839.

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.