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Exhibitor Participation & Economic Impact of County Fairs in 2025

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 2025 was **2,229,629 people**.
- The total statewide economic impact realized from the 105 County & Regional Fairs in 2025 was **\$468,768,822**.
 - **Not included** in this figure is the economic impact realized by the sales of goods and services by fair vendors and businesses at the County Fairs, and the positive financial impact to the communities from motel stays, gas/fuel, restaurants and incidental purchases. 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 2025

- For livestock projects, 17,403 youth entered 66,948 livestock projects.
 - Youth livestock exhibitors were down 4% from 2024, and livestock exhibits were down 1% from 2024.
- For non-livestock projects, 12,959 youth entered 47,189 projects.
 - Youth non-livestock exhibitors were on par with 2024, and non-livestock exhibits were on par with 2024.
- A total of \$506,053 was paid to youth in premiums earned in 4-H/FFA competitions, up slightly from 2024.

Open Class Involvement at County Fairs in 2025

- For livestock projects, 3,458 people (down 12% from 2024) entered 11,538 livestock (down 21% from 2024) in open shows.
- For culinary, flowers, textiles, crafts, etc. areas, 11,223 persons (up slightly from 2024) entered 50,753 exhibits (on par with 2024).
- A total of \$319,818 was paid as premiums earned in open class competitions, down 9% from 2024.

Capital Improvements to County Fairgrounds

- In 2025 a total of \$11,919,030 was spent by the Fairs for capital improvements on their fairgrounds, starting with the state investment of \$1,060,000 for 2025.
- For every \$1 in state appropriation to the Fairs in 2025, an additional \$10.92 was invested in capital improvements by the Fairs.
- The state-wide economic impact resulting from improvements to county fairgrounds in 2025 totaled \$83,433,210.
- Capital improvements to county fairgrounds over the past 3 years totaled \$31,703,687. The total statewide economic impact over the past 3 years from capital improvements to county fairgrounds is \$221,925,809.

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.