



# Crossroads Resource Center

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***Tools for Community Self-determination***

## **Woodbury County (Iowa) Region's Food & Farm Economy**

*Highlights of a presentation*

by Ken Meter, Crossroads Resource Center (Minneapolis) for the  
**Woodbury County Organic Growers' Conference**  
November 9, 2005

### **Woodbury County, Iowa:**

*Sioux City is the county seat.*

104,000 residents hold \$2.5 billion in annual purchasing power, and pay \$111 million in taxes.

### **The region's farm families**

1,148 farm families, average farm size: 385 acres.

- 1 % of Iowa farms acreage
- 6 % of state's irrigated farmland
- Among the top 20 counties in Iowa producing: soybeans, corn, turkeys, cattle & calves, vegetables, and popcorn.
- 7 % of state vegetable farms
- 0.3 % of Iowa's orchards
- 3 farms (less than 1 % of state) sell organic products, sales data unavailable
- 28 farms sell \$ 200,000 of food directly to consumers (300% increase from 1997 to 2002).

Region's farmers produce \$154 million of food per year (1998-2003 average), yet spend \$178 million to raise it, losing an average of \$24 million in production costs each year. This is a total loss of \$145 million over the last six years! 34 % of the region's farms suffered net losses in 2002. These losses are offset by an average of \$23 million of federal subsidies, and \$12 million of farm-related income, each year.

### **The region's consumers:**

The region's consumers spend \$203 million buying food each year, an estimated \$150 million of this from outside the region, while farmers lose \$24 million each year selling commodities. The household food market in Woodbury County is larger than the market for farm commodities.

### **Farm and food economy summary:**

Farmers lose \$24 million each year producing food commodities, and also spend \$55 million buying outside inputs, while consumers spend \$170 million buying food from outside. This is a total loss of \$250 million of potential wealth *each year*. This loss amounts to 138 % of the value of all food

*Highlights of "Finding Food in Woodbury County (Iowa)"*

commodities raised in the region, and 125 % of the value of all food purchased by the region's residents.

**Woodbury County (Iowa): markets for food**

|                                     | <i>millions</i> |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Meats, poultry, fish, and eggs      | \$ 27.7         |
| Fruits & vegetables                 | 19.2            |
| Cereals and bakery products         | 17.1            |
| Dairy products                      | 12.6            |
| "Other," incl. sweets, fats, & oils | 38.5            |

**Key data sources:**

**Bureau of Economic Analysis data on farm production balance**

<http://www.bea.doc.gov/bea/regional/reis/>

**Food consumption estimates from Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Expenditure Survey**

<http://www.bls.gov/cex/home.htm>

**U.S. Census of Agriculture**

<http://www.nass.usda.gov/census/>

**USDA/Economic Research Service food consumption data:**

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/foodconsumption/>

**USDA/ Economic Research Service farm income data:**

<http://ers.usda.gov/Data/FarmIncome/finfidmu.htm>

**For more information:**

To see results from *Finding Food in Farm Country* studies in other regions of the U.S.:

<http://www.crcworks.org/fffc.pdf>.

To read the original *Finding Food in Farm Country* study from Southeast Minnesota (written for the Experiment in Rural Cooperation): <http://www.crcworks.org/ff.pdf>.

To view a PowerPoint presented by Ken Meter at a keynote appearance to the Minnesota Rural Partners Summit in July, 2005: <http://www.crcworks.org/metersummit05.pdf>.

To link to further analysis of farm and food economies in the U.S.:

<http://www.crcworks.org/rural.html>.

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