

## America's Farmers and Ranchers Depend on Natural Resources

The steps America's cattle farmers and ranchers take to improve the environment aren't new; like Earth Day, they have been around for many decades. In fact, as long as cattle have been raised on their land, the families that raise beef have worked to protect and enhance our environment.

**Farm facts:** More than 97 percent of U.S. beef cattle farms and ranches are classified as family farms. Approximately two-thirds have been under the same family ownership for two generations or more.

## Conservation is an Important Part of Farm Life

For the American families that raise cattle, sustainability means ensuring that the land will provide for the next generation by focusing on the well-being of their animals and maintaining the natural resources on their land. Farmers and ranchers employ a variety of environmentally friendly practices that often are as unique as the area where they raise their cattle.

**Cattle ranches support a lot more than just cattle.** The same land that provides food and open space for raising cattle also offers a home for many types of wildlife, including threatened and endangered species of fish, mammals, birds and plants. Farmers and ranchers help wildlife by providing feed, delaying hay harvest until after nesting season and maintaining or restoring native plants and grasses.

*For many years, the Brophy family, which runs a large ranch in Arizona, has cooperated in research programs by the National Audubon Society. Dedicated to protecting endangered species, the Brophys are working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop a complex plan to save the Gila Chub, an Arizona threatened fish species located on their land.*

**Water is a source of life for everyone on the farm, including the cattle, the wildlife and the families that raise and protect them.** Water, whether drinking water for people, cattle and wildlife or irrigation water for crops, is essential for maintaining farm life. Beef producers' everyday water conservation efforts include conducting water quality tests, fencing off streams to protect the fish and waterways and creating man-made irrigation ponds.

*The Stone family raises cattle on its ranch in Northern California. The ranch doesn't get much rain, so water conservation is essential. The Stones recycle water from a tomato cannery up the road and use a solar power to pump drinking water for cattle across their property.*

**Farm families across the country always practice responsible land management. If you take care of the land—it will take care of you.** Land preservation is essential for maintaining America's open spaces. Cattle grazing stabilizes the soil and promotes growth of beneficial grasses while protecting against erosion and forest fires. Erosion control practices, including rotational grazing, brush control management and no-till farming, protects this fragile ecosystem.

*The Yon family has been raising cattle in South Carolina for more than a decade. They protect the land by planting crops using a no-till method to improve soil fertility and reduce erosion. They also rotate their cattle across their grazing land to ensure no pasture is overworked.*

## Everyday Practices, Rural and Right Up Your Street

Cattle ranching and farming families walk the same land, breathe the same air and drink the same water as the families who consume the beef they raise. These farming and ranching families take their commitment to protect and improve these natural resources seriously, and they take many of the same everyday actions to protect the environment as people living in towns and cities.

**Conserving energy**—In a recent survey, 80 percent of beef farmers and ranchers said they use compact florescent bulbs and energy-efficient appliances in their homes. Many said they also are adjusting their thermostats to use less energy and washing their clothes in cold water.

**Alternative Energy**—In the same survey, many beef producers also indicated they are embracing alternative energy sources, including solar, wind and biofuels, to meet the energy needs on their farms and ranches.

**Creating compost piles**—Just like a home compost pile, nearly all beef producers use manure to recycle nutrients back into the land, according to the survey of beef producers.

## The Everyday Benefits of Cattle Farms and Nutritious Beef

Today's farmers and ranchers are using fewer natural resources to produce a more abundant and affordable supply of great-tasting, nutrient rich beef. Celebrate Earth Day with beef, a nutritious part an environmentally responsible diet.

### Farm facts:

*Farmers and ranchers who raise cattle are doing their part to protect the environment while providing food for a growing planet.*

*Today's American farmer feeds about 144 people worldwide.*

*Grazing animals on land not suitable for producing crops more than doubles the land area that can be used to produce food. If 1955 technology were used to produce the amount of beef raised today, 165 million more acres of land would be needed—that's about the size of Texas!*

*Cattle serve a valuable role in the ecosystem by converting plants humans cannot consume into a nutrient-dense food. Iron deficiency is the most common nutritional deficiency worldwide. Beef provides the most readily available and easily absorbed source of iron. In fact, just one 3-ounce serving of beef supplies 51 percent of the Daily Value (DV) for protein, 38 percent of the DV for zinc and 14 percent of the DV for iron.*