

The Land of the Free Because of the Brave: Why American Agriculture Matters

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On July 4, 2026, our country will celebrate its 250th birthday. On that day in 1776, the Declaration of Independence was adopted in Philadelphia, and over the next month, it was signed by 56 brave men. By signing this document, these men put their reputations, fortunes, and lives on the line. It was no foregone conclusion that the new country would survive the coming months, let alone 250 years. Skirmishes that started on April 19, 1775, had evolved into a running battle with the most powerful military in the world. Victories were few and far between, and even the most optimistic patriots had doubts. After the sacrifice of 27,000 (over 1% of the population), the Treaty of Paris was signed in 1784, and the United States of America was officially recognized as a free and independent nation by Great Britain and the entire world. The Constitution followed 3 years later. Since that time, another 1.5 million Americans have given the ultimate sacrifice for the rights and privileges we enjoy today. That doesn't count the numberless soldiers, sailors, and airmen who lived but were forever scarred physically and mentally. May we all remember those who gave so much every time you see our flag waving in the breeze. We owe a great debt of gratitude that can never be repaid.

As we celebrate the blessings and sacrifices that made this nation possible, I ask myself: "What have I done—and what am I doing—to honor and make the most of the great gift of liberty I have been given?" In light of all who have gone before, our individual contributions seem insignificant. However, this country is great and will continue to be great only through the individual and seemingly insignificant efforts of many people.

How can we honor our country and the sacrifices of those—past, present, and future—who safeguard our freedoms? First and foremost, I believe the most significant thing anyone can do is to teach a love for our creator and country to our children, grandchildren, and to any young person we come into contact with. Help them understand our history and our responsibility to make our future reflect the greatness of the past. That is not to suggest that our history does not contain many wrongs and injustices or that we have a perfect nation today. We do not. But our founding fathers created the framework to right the wrongs and to continue creating a nation where all men are indeed created equal. A nation where we all have the opportunity to succeed and fail and try again.

That brings me to the next point. We can honor our forebears by making the communities in which we live a better place. Be involved in activities and organizations that preserve the good of the past and promote change that brings us closer to the high ideals of our founding fathers. Be a good neighbor. Stand by principle and respect those who may think differently. Educate yourself on the issues and vote for candidates who uphold your values.

Lastly, I have found great satisfaction in my life's work, which involves the production of food, specifically the beef industry. The very foundation of our country is built upon our ability to provide an ample supply of nutritious and wholesome food. Closely related is our ability to produce energy that drives this great agricultural machine. Without abundant food and energy, we have no security. A country can never be truly free and strong if it relies on others for the most basic needs of life. The vast majority of Americans take this for granted, and I am grateful that they can.

Not only do we supply food for our own, but the United States exports approximately 20% of its food production every year. Food is a political bargaining chip on the world stage and a means of helping those in need. American agricultural ingenuity has continued to outpace world demand for food. For example, corn production per acre is 700% higher than it was 100 years ago! A dairy cow produces 2.4 times more milk today than in 1975. The cattle industry has increased the beef yield per cow by 40% in the last 50 years! We live in a great country that fosters innovation, hard work, and the ability to capitalize on the same.

God has truly blessed America for the last 250 years! May we all revel in this wonderful milestone and continue to build the foundation for the next 250 years.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions or comments.

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