

Thank a Farmer!

By Beth Beutler

¹ Farms are very important. What would we do without farms? We get a lot of food from farms. What kinds of foods can you think of? Here are some of my ideas:

Milk
Eggs
Wheat and grains
Vegetables
Fruit
Meats



Wow! It looks like nearly all the natural food we eat comes from a farm!

³ Farming is not easy. It takes many hours of work everyday to take care of the animals and raise crops. It was even harder in the old days. Farmers plowed fields with the help of horses and oxen. Today they have tractors that run on gas. Some have machines that can milk cows. Even so, farming can be challenging. Some farmers, particularly those in the Amish country, still use tools not powered by gasoline or electricity.

⁴ A farmer can only guess at the weather. A farmer cannot tell how well a crop will grow. Sometimes, a crop will produce, or "yield," a large amount of food. However, sometimes there are weather problems like storms or long periods without rain (called droughts). These can keep crops from growing a large amount of food. Every season's results can be different from the last. Sometimes, a crop will produce a huge amount of food. Other times, it will be less than expected or needed. Farmers sell food to other companies. They cannot always predict how much they will get paid.

⁵ Many farmers work from sun up to sun down, weeding, plowing, watering, and fertilizing (feeding plants with important nutrients). Those with animals have to clean stalls, milk cows, and gather eggs. They even have to care for sick animals. They have to keep their machines running. Farmers need to know how to do a variety of tasks.

⁶ Many of us have visited a farm for fun and enjoyed petting the animals. We may like to learn about the process of getting milk or growing corn. We might help pick some of the fruits or vegetables, a process called "harvesting." We may buy some fruits or vegetables that have already been picked. Perhaps the farm offers canned jams or jellies. Then, we tend to forget. We sit down to eat and don't think twice about the people who worked so hard to provide food for us.

Perhaps it would be good to read a story now and then about farms. Or,

maybe you could visit a farm every summer. When you see a farm stand, stop by to purchase some fruits or vegetables (called "produce"). Fresh produce is very healthy to eat. Plus, you'll be helping to support those whose work helps to feed us. When you sit down to a meal, think about where that type of food started. Did it start from seed? Is it an animal product? More than likely, it had a place at a farm somewhere. So, find a farm and thank a farmer!
