

“The Big Four: Are they playing fair with all other players in the economy?”



West Liberty FFA Chapter
310 West Maxson Avenue
West Liberty, Iowa 52776
319-627-2115
State Qualifying Date: April 9-11, 2023

ISSUE SUMMARY

List of course(s) in which instruction occurred.

- Introduction to Food, Fiber, and Natural Resources (112 students) – students were able to research the history of meat production in the United States and how it has changed through industrialization.
- Conservation (21 students) – students took an in-depth look at consumer purchasing decisions, how food demand has increased over time, and the cost of resources to meet that demand.
- Animal Science (89 students) – examined different government entities that oversee food safety/inspection such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS).
- Food Science and Technology (27 students) – studied the influential meat processors in the United States along with how the COVID 19 pandemic impacted production. Students also researched the advancements in the meatpacking industry such as packaging, preservation, and consumer options.
- Ag Leadership and College Career Prep (17 students) – evaluated the different strategies on how to engage in advocacy efforts in agriculture. During the business unit, students looked at foreign markets and how it impacts domestic production.
- Livestock Management (18 students) – studied each food animal species and their demand within the consumer market. Students were able to tour local livestock facilities, meat processing plants, and a local locker. A local producer presented the important contents within a livestock contract.

What is the nature of this issue and why is this issue important now?

The meat processing industry has made numerous advancements as the demand for food has increased with a growing population; product traceability, variety, automation, packaging innovation, and implementation of e-commerce for consumer purchasing are all major benefits (Uetz, 2021). Food safety and security, along with opportunities for stable employment, have also been added benefits from the industry (Mucklow & Cross, 2022). However, several concerns have surfaced in the agriculture industry and the public eye; consolidation, price fixing, and company outsourcing to foreign entities. The Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921 is the premise of the issue which was intended to keep consolidation of meat packing plants under 40% ownership in the entire market (National Agricultural Law Center, 2023). With parameters of the bill left unclear, and lack of oversight, companies like the Big Four (Tyson Foods, Cargill, JBS, and Mafrig) are now the middleman between producer and consumer for 55% - 85% of all beef, pork and poultry sold in the United States (Fisk, 2022). Approximately 83,000 feedlots and 75% independent cattle feeders have been lost over the past 25 years as a result of captive supply agreements with processors and more specifically with beef producers (Sutherland & Chakrabarti, 2022). Retail beef price spread has shrunken approximately 35% in the last 25 years and producers' return on consumer dollars spent on meat has decreased 40% (Casey, 2022). This means producers are losing profits at high rates while processors are seeing record profits. These Brazilian-owned companies now control two of the four meatpacking companies and process around 74% of all beef in the United States and are seeing profits triple within the past several years (Walljasper, 2019). Who is at fault for the rising cost of food at the counter? It is a complex issue involving inflation, COVID 19 supply, and lack of transparency practices.

Who is involved in the issue?

Beef Producers: They have seen declining profits through contracted sales of beef over several decades while also seeing an increase of input costs (Danner, 2023). **The Big Four:** Tyson Foods, Cargill, JBS, and Mafrig are all companies that control 85% of feedlot cattle contracts in the United States. These companies are also faced with post-COVID supply chain issues (Fu, 2022). **Consumers:** Consumers want a variety of options for their food however, meat prices are increasing at a rapid rate (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). **Meat Processing Companies:** Face major disadvantages in a monopolistic economy such as access to cattle markets. As new start-ups begin, long-term protections need to be in place (Clayton, 2023). **Legislators:** Focusing on new legislation to offset gaps in the Packers and Stockyards Act of 1921 to create transparency, competition, and new money for start-up facilities (Donnell, 2022). **Local Meat Lockers:** Businesses are seeing an increase in customers looking for processed meat as local purchasing options in the consumer market are on the rise (Vance, 2023). **United States Department of Agriculture:** Responsible for monitoring the safety of meat inspections and packaging in all U.S. meat processing facilities (USDA, 2023). **Transportation Entities:** With business consolidation, transportation of livestock to facilities becomes increasingly challenging. The Cooperative Interstate Shipment Program requires transportation of meat products across state lines and even international exporting (Food Safety Inspection Service, 2023).

How can this issue be defined?

Our forum falls under the topic area of “Agricultural Policy” as listed in the Focusing on Agricultural Issues instructional materials. This issue is defined as, “The Big Four: Are they playing fair with all players in the economy? As there are rising costs for inputs for livestock producers, they are seeing less profits in return through their contracts. Meanwhile, meat processing companies are combating rising labor costs, access to raw materials, and increased transportation costs by passing them onto the consumer. As a result, consumers are paying more at the store, but the Big Four continues to collect record profits.”

ISSUE SUMMARY

Why is this issue important to Iowa?

Iowa has over 86,000 farms and is a national leader. Specifically for livestock, Iowa ranks number one in pork and egg production, and is top five for red meat production (Coalition to Support Iowa Farmers, 2023). Iowa has 271 licensed meat and poultry plants with a wide range of custom sale options (Iowa Department of Agriculture, 2023) and 17 participate in the Cooperative Interstate Shipment (CIS) program. This program promotes state-inspected plants to operate as a federally-inspected facility and they can ship inter-state and are able to export to foreign countries (Food Safety Inspection Service, 2023). As the issue of producer profit and the need for transparency unfolds, the focus in Iowa has transitioned to competition. U.S. Senator from Iowa, Chuck Grassley, has been pushing for legislation known as the Cattle Price Discovery and Transparency Act that provides transparency and forces meatpackers to buy a certain percentage of their cattle with cash bids, which promotes competitive prices (Strong, 2022). Packers have potentially colluded to restrict the number of cattle slaughtered in order to depress live cattle prices and force cattle producers into long-term contracts, similar to vertically integrated systems like poultry and pork (Kelloway, 2019). Companies that model a successful system to prevent this issue from extending to other commodities are West Liberty Foods; a turkey processing company ranked in the top 50 for protein processing in North America, located in our hometown of West Liberty, Iowa. The company is farmer-owned and vertically integrated, which provides outstanding returns to poultry producers for their product. (West Liberty Foods, 2023). President Joe Biden unveiled a \$1 billion plan to encourage start-up processing companies to increase competition in order to focus on boosting profits for livestock producers (Donnelle, 2022). As a result of this executive order, several start-up locations have begun in Iowa. Most notably, a \$150 million beef packing plant in western Iowa which will have a 2,000 head per day capacity (Clayton, 2023). As consumer prices such as beef prices have seen a 3-5% increase each year, post pandemic beef prices have increased almost 20% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). Iowa livestock producers are looking for similar returns.

What are the benefits?

Advocates for the Big Four in the economic climate claim they:

- Provide quality control practices that ensures a safe food supply and quality products for consumers.
- Create an efficient marketplace that allows consolidation of resources, labor stability, and product variety.
- Establish contracts for livestock producers to sell their finished product at quantities local auctions cannot.
- Offer international competitiveness by opening markets abroad.
- Minimizes labor issues and supply disruption by through employee benefits and market establishment.

What are the risks?

Critics of the Big Four in the economic climate claim they:

- Influence supply by processing a limited number of livestock to manufacture a lowered commodity price.
- Reduce profits for producers by offering contracts that aren't profitable based on their cost of production.
- Owned by foreign countries and have less priority to purchasing United States domestic livestock.
- Artificially increase costs in stores in order to obtain large profits for themselves.
- Not transparent with the public about their business practices.

What is the historical background of the issue and what caused it?

The meat processing industry served as a driving force in the rise of the railroads, the labor movement, and innovation in food preparation. Implementations such as mechanized refrigeration, assembly lines, and consolidation have galvanized and promoted efficiency in the industry. Important dates regarding legislation and the evolution of the meat industry are as follows;

- **1742** - Brighton Market in Boston, Massachusetts became the first meat auction in the United States (Lisa, 2020).
- **1867** - Railroad Revolution: Joseph McCoy, a Chicago livestock trader took the first cattle shipment by railroad, thus shortening the time for cattle to reach market versus the cattle drive lifestyle (Lisa, 2020).
- **1906** - The Federal Meat Inspection Act was signed by President Roosevelt which mandated sanitary conditions before, during, and after the slaughter of animals. USDA became in charge of inspections on domestic and imported meat (Lisa, 2020).
- **1921** - Packers and Stockyards Act – Established by congress to assure fair competition and fair trade practices for farmers and ranchers (United States Agriculture Marketing Service, 2023).
- **1971** - Chicago Stockyards officially closed which resulted in cattle being shipped all over and the start of more regionalized beef production (Lisa, 2020).
- **1980's** - Consolidation in the meat industry and commercialization of farms became the focus in the United States which resulted in decline in overall farms and ranches (Lisa, 2020)
- **2020** - COVID 19 exposed the meat industry as processing facilities were indoor/close quarters conditions resulting in limited production and additional consolidation (USDA Economic Research Service, 2023).
- **2022** - JBS settles to pay \$52.5 million lawsuit and Big Four CEOs address U.S. House Lawmakers in legislative session as they are targeted for price fixing and anti-competition violations (Hillstrom & Burns, 2022).
- **2023** - Biden Administration awards \$1 billion in grants to upgrade start-up meat and poultry facilities (Huffstutter, 2023).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bureau of Labor Statistics (2023). Average Retail and Energy Prices. Retrieved on May 1, 2023 from https://www.bls.gov/regions/mid-atlantic/data/averageretailfoodandenergyprices_usandmidwest_table.htm
- Casey, C. (2022). Food Dive – Meatpackers push back against lawmakers’ price-fixing charges. Retrieved on May 11, 2023 from <https://www.fooddive.com/news/meatpackers-push-back-against-lawmakers-price-fixing-charges/622930/#:~:text=At%20a%20Congressional%20hearing%20this,blame%20for%20higher%20meat%20prices.>
- Clayton, C. (2023). Cattle Packing Plant Projects Update. *Progressive Farmer*. Retrieved on August 10, 2023 from <https://www.dtnpf.com/agriculture/web/ag/news/business-inputs/article/2023/01/23/proposed-iowa-cattle-packing-plant>
- Coalition to Support Iowa Farmers. (2023). Iowa Ag Intel. Retrieved on May 11, 2023 from <https://www.supportfarmers.com/iowaagintel/#:~:text=Iowa%20continues%20to%20be%20a,total%20value%20of%20ag%20exports.>
- Danner, B. (2023, April 8). Diversified Livestock Producer. [personal communication]
- Donnelle, E. (2022). Biden unveils \$1 billion plan to increase meat packing competition, lower consumer prices. *Des Moines Register*. Retrieved on May 1, 2023 from <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/money/agriculture/2022/01/03/biden-administration-reveals-meat-processing-industry-expansion-plan-lower-prices-farming/9075325002>
- Food Safety Inspection Service (2023). Our History. Retrieved on July 20, 2023 from <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/about-fsis/history>
- Food Safety Inspection Service. (2023). Cooperative Interstate Shipping Program. Retrieved on May 11, 2023 from <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/inspection/state-inspection-programs/cooperative-interstate-shipping-program>
- Fisk, W. (2022). Big Four meatpackers are receiving record profits. Retrieved on May 20, 2023 from <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2022/jun/30/abigail-spanberger/big-four-meat-packers-are-seeing-record-profits-sp/#:~:text=All%20of%20them%20operate%20internationally.&text=JBS%20had%20a%20record%20net,over%20the%20previous%2012%20months.>
- Fu, J. (2022). The Counter: Can \$1 billion really fix a meat industry dominated by just four companies? Retrieved on July 20, 2023 from <https://thecounter.org/big-four-meatpackers-antitrust-consolidation/>
- Hillstrom, K. & Burns, T. (2022). Big four meatpackers deny price fixing amid record profits. Retrieved on July 2, 2023 from <https://thehill.com/business/3469128-big-four-meatpackers-deny-price-fixing-amid-record-profits/>
- Huffstutter, P.J. (2023). Small U.S. meat packers get \$12 million in grants from the Biden Administration. Retrieved on August 11, 2023 from <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/small-us-meatpackers-get-12-mln-grants-biden-administration-2023-01-09/>
- Iowa Department of Agriculture. (2023). Licensed Meat and Poultry Plants. Retrieved on May 10, 2023 from https://data.iowaagriculture.gov/licensing_lists/meatpoultry
- Kelloway, C. (2019). Food and Power – Ranchers Groups Sues Packers for Conspiracy to Decrease Cattle Prices. Retrieved on August 10, 2023 from <https://www.foodandpower.net/latest/2019/04/25/ranchers-group-sues-packers-for-conspiracy-to-decrease-cattle-prices>
- Lisa, A. (2020). History of America’s Meat Processing Industry. Retrieved on July 1, 2023 from <https://stacker.com/business-economy/history-americas-meat-processing-industry>
- Mucklow, R. & Cross R. (2022). Modern Meat Safety: A Technology Toolbox. Retrieved on March 1, 2023 from <https://www.food-safety.com/articles/4378-modern-meat-safety-a-technological-toolbox>
- National Agricultural Law Center (2023). The Packers and Stockyards Act: An Overview. Retrieved on February 18, 2023 on <https://nationalaglawcenter.org/overview/packers-and-stockyards/>
- Strong, J. (2022). Iowa Cattle Association Optimistic About the Transparency Bill Package. Retrieved May 2, 2023 from <https://iowacapitaldispatch.com/2022/06/23/iowa-cattle-association-optimistic-about-transparency-bill-passage/>
- Sutherland, P. & Chakrabarti, M. (2022). More than money: The monopoly on meat. Retrieved on May 2, 2023 from <https://www.wnyc.org/story/120c30900dc3f200f68f9308/>
- Uetz, M. (2021). Technologies that will impact the meat case in the next five years. Retrieved on March 6, 2021 from <https://midanmarketing.com/blog/>
- United States Agriculture Marketing Service. (2023). Packers and Stockyards Act. Retrieved on July 10, 2023 from <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/packers-and-stockyards-act>
- United States Department of Agriculture (2023). What we do. Retrieved on April 10, 2023 from <https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/about-usda>
- USDA Economic Research Service (2021). The Meatpacking Industry in Rural America during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Retrieved on April 11, 2023 from <https://www.ers.usda.gov/covid-19/rural-america/meatpacking-industry/>

Vance, S. (2023, April 2). Meat Locker Owner. [personal communication]

Walljasper, C. (2019). More Foreign Ownership of U.S. Beef Processors Raises Food Safety Concerns. Retrieved on April 10, 2023 from <https://investigatemitmidwest.org/2019/12/18/more-foreign-ownership-of-u-s-beef-processors-raises-food-safety-concerns/>

West Liberty Foods. (2023). About Us. Retrieved on August 20, 2023 from <https://www.wlfoods.com/about-us/>

LOCAL FORUM PRESENTATIONS

WHEN	WHERE	TO WHOM	# PRESENT
February 10, 2023 (6:00 pm)	Muscatine, Iowa	Muscatine County Farm Bureau	8
February 14, 2023 (7:00pm)	West Liberty, Iowa	Muscatine County Fair Board Meeting	46
February 16, 2023 (12:00pm)	Ames, Iowa	Iowa Meat Processors Association	16
February 20, 2023 (5:00pm)	West Liberty, Iowa	Danner Farms Incorporated	11
February 21, 2023 (5:00pm)	Hills, Iowa	Stutsman Agriculture Products and Service	23
March 1, 2023 (12:00pm)	West Liberty, Iowa	We Lead Economic Development	14
March 6, 2023 (6:00pm)	West Liberty, Iowa	Muscatine County Cattleman	128
March 20, 2023 (7:00pm)	Ames, Iowa	NAMA—Iowa State Chapter	32
March 31, 2023 (12:00pm)	West Liberty, Iowa	West Liberty LDE Showcase Night	86
April 3, 2023 (1:00pm)	West Liberty, Iowa	West Liberty Foods	18
April 4, 2023 (6:00pm)	West Liberty, Iowa	West Liberty Lions Club	22
April 5, 2023 (5:00pm)	West Liberty, Iowa	West Liberty Rotary Club	14
April 10, 2023 (6:00pm)	West Liberty, Iowa	West Liberty School Board	19
April 11, 2023 (10:00am)	Des Moines, Iowa	Iowa Department of Agriculture	15
April 13, 2023 (12:00pm)	West Liberty, Iowa	West Liberty Chamber of Commerce	45

Muscatine County Farm Bureau

Farm Bureau Office, Muscatine
Date: February 10, 2023 Time: 6:00pm
Attendance: 8



To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to write a letter for the West Liberty Iowa Ag Issues and Perceptions team. They presented to the Muscatine County Farm Bureau Board in Muscatine on February 10, 2023 at 6:00pm. The West Liberty FFA has shown immense success in this event over the years and we truly appreciate them advocating and bring important issues to the forefront.

This team presented the issue title "The Big Four: Are they playing fair with all players in the economy? Farm Bureau takes provide in supporting Iowa Farmers, and topic has an impact on producers in Iowa and across the county.

Our members were extremely impressed with their conversation, the overview of controversial pros and cons, but most of all the solutions and content they gave in their question session. I have no concerns about the upward potential of this team and the talent they have as future leaders.

Sincerely,

Jerry Anderson

Jerry Anderson
Iowa Farm Bureau Federation Regional Manager

The Muscatine County Farm Bureau is of a strong network that lobbies for farmers across the state. We were able to learn about the recent legislation affecting farmers in processing.



Muscatine County Fair Board

Muscatine County Fairgrounds, West Liberty
Date: February 14, 2023 Time: 7:00 pm
Attendance: 46



RE: West Liberty Ag Issues Presentation

February 15, 2023

The West Liberty FFA Chapter provided an outstanding presentation regarding their Ag Issues Topic at our fair board meeting on February 14, 2023 at 7:00pm at the Muscatine County Fairgrounds. The past few years we have closely worked with youth in community service projects as well as involving them in our student board.

The West Liberty FFA Ag Issues Team presented the topic "The Big Four: Are they playing fair with all players in the economy?" We had several influential farmers and industry representatives on our board that play a key role in our local agricultural economy. The following individuals were present: Troy Schlappkohl (President), Steve Alt (1st Vice-President), Adam Maurer (2nd Vice-President), Tim Nichols (Treasurer), Andy Carter (Past President), Kelsey Meyers (Fair Manager) and 40 others guests in attendance.

The presentation gave important pros and cons that face livestock producers and their ability to profit on farms. Having a local meat processing plant in town they provided their perspective as well to the role they play in the industry. We spent time asking them questions about their topic and their responses were detailed and they cited sources. We enjoyed it and are looking forward to seeing other teams in the future.

Sincerely,

Kelsey Morris
Fair Board Manager
P.O. Box 261
West Liberty, Iowa 52776

The Muscatine County Fair Board is composed of many local producers and agriculture industry representatives. We took questions on how the future of processing will change with various groups pushing for alternative food options.



Iowa Meat Processors Association

Gateway Hotel, Ames
Date: February 16, 2023 Time: 12:00pm
Attendance: 16



February 16, 2023

We had the pleasure of hearing the West Liberty FFA Ag Issues Team at our annual convention. Their presentation was on "The Big Four: Are they playing fair with other players in the economy?" Our board was able to hear perspectives of the pros and cons of an issue that involves livestock producers and processors in Iowa and across the country.

As an organization we fight for customers to get the highest quality products, at an affordable price, and that they are easily accessible. We challenged the members on the positives that meat processing companies provide in order to stabilize the food demands of our nation. In attendance we had our 11 board members who thoroughly enjoyed listening in. Following the presentation members enjoyed a tour of a local locker.

Good luck to these members at their district and state convention!

Sincerely,

Ken and Marcia Richmann, Executive Directors
PO Box 334
Clarence, Iowa 52216

The Iowa Meat Processors includes slaughterers, packers, locker operators, butcher shops and retail operations. We were able to have discussions on local consumer purchasing and how its impact on processors and toured a local facility.



Danner Farms Incorporated

West Liberty High School, West Liberty
Date: February 20, 2023 Time: 5:00pm
Attendance: 11



Plant, Nurture and Harvest, with Integrity, Innovation and Excellence
Address: 1719 155th Street - West Liberty, Iowa 52776
Phone: (319) 430-9525

February 20, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

Having youth at the table in agriculture issues is critical. I recently had the privilege of enjoying a presentation by the West Liberty Ag Issues Team along with 10 members the high school on February 20, 2023 at my farm office. It was clearly evident these students had studied this topic very well and had put a lot of time and effort into their presentation. The students had assembled a very good presentation, hitting on the many different aspects and how they are affected, both pros and cons. The students were very engaged in their parts and listed to diverse viewpoints. I especially liked the fact that they searched for the best solutions in our discussion after the presentation. I asked some very hard, thought provoking questions and the students handled them like professionals.

The Ag Issues team spoke clearly and intelligently about their topic, "The Big Four: Are they playing fair with all other players in the economy?" As a livestock and crop producers I am involved in many aspects of their topic. As a beef and swine producer finding a buyer for my products at a price that is going to be profitable is important. As a local farmer in the community, I am very proud of our FFA program, our instructors, and the administration. The West Liberty Ag Issues Team should do very well at the state competition.

Sincerely,

Billie Danner
Owner - Danner Farms

Danner Farms is a local producer for both cattle and swine. We discussed the practices on his farming operation as well as the processes conduct for marketing locally.



Stutsman's Ag Products and Service

Stutsman's Lobby, Hills
Date: February 21, 2023 Time: 5:00 pm
Attendance: 23



ELDON C. STUTSMAN, INCORPORATED

P.O. BOX 250
HILLS, IOWA 52235
Nationwide Wats Number: 800-669-2281 • Local: 319-679-2281 • Fax: 319-679-2900
e-mail: info@stutsmans.com • website: www.stutsmans.com

Stutsman's is a major leader in livestock feeds in our area. We discussed how good livestock nutrition leads to healthier consumer products and increased producer profit.

February 21, 2023

Dear West Liberty FFA Ag Issues Team,

Thank you for coming over to Hills and presenting "The Big Four: Are they playing fair with all players in the economy?". We enjoyed the presentation and appreciate you answering our questions.

The following main office employees representing Eldon C. Stutsman, Inc. were in attendance along with 17 other guests:

- John Yoder, Vice President of Manure Equipment
- Amber Stutsman, Director of Marketing
- Amber Harner, Marketing Specialist
- Jenny Lichty, Marketing Specialist
- Brooke Sieren, Marketing Specialist

Thanks again for coming to Hills and sharing your presentation. We wish you the best at the state competition and look forward to future opportunities to work together.

Sincerely,

Jenny Lichty
Marketing Specialist



We Lead Economic Development

Community Center, West Liberty
Date: March 1, 2023 Time: 12:00 pm
Attendance: 14



We Lead
112 E 3rd
West Liberty, IA 52776
Tel 319-627-4045



March 1, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing today in support of the West Liberty FFA Ag Issues Team in West Liberty, Iowa who presented to us on March 1, 2023 at the West Liberty Community Center. I am writing as the Executive Director of We Lead, which promotes Economic Development in West Liberty. I was able to hear their extremely polished and overall professional presentation. I feel as if many of the individuals in attendance appreciated hearing about an issue that affects us directly.

The following members were in attendance;

Jerry Melick (Vice-President), Dana Nelson (Vice-President), Kurt Kirchner (Muscatine County Board of Supervisors), Melody Russell (Secretary), Jeff Schebler (Treasurer), Jerry Melick (Board Member), David Dvorak (Real Estate Developer), Tom Alberti (Industry Expert).

From the economic development standpoint, the Ag Issues Team really touched on an issue that impacts producers all across the state. The growing pressure on local farmers in our community along with other businesses to meet consumer demands is becoming a challenge. "The Big Four: Are they playing fair with all players in the economy?" Also, I appreciate the Ag Issues Team presenting the issue in a way which includes all sides. I am honored to write this letter of recommendation for the West Liberty Ag Issues Team.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Brooks
Executive Director | We Lead, Area Economic Development
Iowa State University Extension and Outreach | Community Economic Development
112 East Third St, West Liberty, IA 52776

We Lead Economic Development has been actively engaged with farmers in our community. Representatives discussed with students about the expansion of our hometown meat processing company and its local economic impact.



Muscatine County Cattleman

West Liberty Fair Grounds, West Liberty
Date: March 6, 2023 Time: 6:00pm
Attendance: 128



March 8, 2023

The Ag Issues Team from West Liberty presented at our Muscatine County Cattleman Dinner on March 6, 2023 in West Liberty, Iowa. There were 128 guests in attendance for the event.

This issue really hits home as there are a number of cattle producer in our county. The topic they presented was "The Big Four are they playing fair with all players in the economy?"

The team did an outstanding job presenting about the core issues we face as cattle producers every day but also presented the other side as well. We asked them a lot of important questions regarding the cattle market that impact us each day. We are excited to see how they do at state!

Sincerely,

Monica Danner
Muscatine County Cattleman President

Our topic surrounded the discussion of beef production in Iowa. Many cattleman were discussing local contracts and how there are issues with those contracts containing force majeure clauses, causing loss of profit at any point in time.



NAMA— Iowa State Chapter

Iowa State University, Ames
Date: March 20, 2023 Time: 7:00pm
Attendance: 32



April 20, 2023

The West Liberty Ag Issues team presented to the National Agri-Marketing Student Chapter of Iowa State on March 20th on Iowa State Campus. NAMA members present were; Carla Edelman (President), Breanna Selsor (Treasurer), Raegan Kime (Ag Council Rep), Reagan Dolan, Taylor Sublette, Amelia Klosterman, Britney Ford, Elisabeth Moser and other guests.

The presentation highlighted the topic "The Big Four: Are they playing fair with other players in the economy?" The presentation gave a solid overview of the pros and cons of the issue. As a team they expressed the emotions and concerns of all perspectives. We had conversations on how marketing impacts businesses in the consumer market. We discussed how their personal messaging is so important while also listening and finding compromise with others.

We wish them the best of luck at state competition!

Sincerely,

Carla Edleman
National Agri-Marketing Student Chapter – Iowa State
Member

Members of the NAMA chapter discuss the key components of a good marketing plan that can be applied from farmers to corporations. We discussed how media plays a major role in what messaging is getting to the public.



West Liberty LDE Showcase Night

West Liberty High School, West Liberty
Date: March 31, 2023 Time: 12:00 pm
Attendance: 86



WEST LIBERTY FFA ALUMNI

March 31, 2023

The West Liberty FFA Alumni members and other community supporters had the opportunity to listen to the Ag Issues Team from West Liberty FFA. The forum was held for 126 people at the Career Development Showcase Night held on March 31st. This Showcase night is sponsored by the FFA Alumni every year to share with community members, administrators, and local business the CDE's going to state competition.

Notable members in attendance were;
Robynn Anderson – Muscatine County Ag in the Classroom Representative
Brenda Arthur-Miller – West Liberty High School Principal
Tim Nichols – Muscatine County Fair Board Member
Matt Daufeldt – Muscatine County Fair Board Member
Kory Kaalberg – Local Farmer and Alumni Member
Mike Meyers – Local Farmer and Alumni Member
Andy Buysse – ASAP Agriservice West Liberty
Jeremy Marston – J.J. Nicting Company

During this time we also took the time to ask them challenging questions on their material and it was obvious that they did their homework. Their topic was "The Big Four: Are they playing fair with all players in the economy?". We were greatly impressed. This group showed an incredible amount of confidence using data and references to support their answers. I highly recommend the Ag Issues team to give presentations to other Ag industry representatives in the future.

Sincerely,

Pam Meyers

Pam Meyers
West Liberty FFA Alumni Secretary

Our chapter showcase invites parents and community members from West Liberty to witness skills and talents of the FFA. We received several questions on global trade and how it impacts our local processing facilities.



West Liberty Foods

West Liberty Foods Main Office, West Liberty
Date: April 3, 2023 Time: 1:00pm
Attendance: 18



April 3, 2023

Mr. Zach Morris,

Thank you for the opportunity to partner with your FFA Team and we look forward to new opportunities to support the students at West Liberty High School now and in the future. Several of our leaders at West Liberty Foods had the privilege of attending a forum to listen to the Ag Issues team present their topic on "The Big Four: Are they playing fair with all players in the economy?". They conducted this forum on Monday, April 3, 2023.

This team did a phenomenal job of presenting both sides of the issue. We are certainly proud they are representing our industry to help solve an issue that impacts us locally, as a state, and most certainly as a nation. During the presentation they outlined accurately the pros and cons of the issue and provided the necessary statistics that are important to the issue. The following key members were in attendance for their forum.

Mindy Heick - Director of HR	Liz Johnson - Director of Health & Safety
Erin Ronzheimer - Director of Marketing	Edgar Arceo - Corporate Recruiting Manager
Bowe Boecker - Operations Superintendent	Chad Schnepfer - Operations Manager
Brian Ralston - Operations Manager	Mira Zamudio - HR Manager
Joe Swanson - Complex Manager	Shawna Laughlin - Procurement Manager

We were able to provide the team feedback on similarities and differences between beef and turkey in particular. We also provided them a little bit more information about West Liberty Foods in general for future reference.

As they prepare for state competition I am sure this team will continue to improve and do their research on the topic. Best of luck to them at the state competition!

Sincerely,

Mindy Heick

Mindy Heick
Director of HR
WLF

Two current licensed veterinarians on the Lions Club invited our members to discuss, in detail, the PRRS virus, animal health issues, preventative care, and swine facility improvements. We enjoyed the challenging questions.



West Liberty Lions Club

West Liberty Country Club, West Liberty
Date: April 4, 2023 Time: 6:00pm
Attendance: 22



**WEST LIBERTY
Lions Club**
West Liberty, Iowa

April 4, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

I along with 18 other Lions Club members had the pleasure of hearing the West Liberty Ag Issues team at the West Liberty Country Club on April 4th, 2023. The topic "The Big Four: Are they playing fair with other players in the economy" was very informative.

As local veterinarian in West Liberty I invited the group to speak about an important topic that impacts farmers in our area both crop and livestock. Over the past two decades I have worked proactively with producers on incorporating the newest innovations and technologies for them to monitor livestock health and improve profitability.

They also received many questions in about a 20 minute period. They did a fantastic job of answering the questions with facts but also did a great job of defending their opinion.

It was a great pleasure listening to them and they will do a fantastic job at state.

Sincerely,

Dr. Leon Larson D.V.M
West Liberty Veterinary Clinic
Lions Club Member

We were invited by our local veterinarian to have discussions on how producers provide high quality products for the consumer. We entertained questions and discussion on the meat inspection process.



West Liberty Rotary Club

West Liberty Country Club, West Liberty
Date: April 5, 2023 Time: 5:00pm
Attendance: 14



Rotary Club of West Liberty, Iowa
PO Box 301
West Liberty, IA 52776
April 5, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

The West Liberty High School FFA Ag Issues team made a presentation to the Rotary Club of West Liberty on April 5, 2023. We conducted an in-meeting which included 15 Rotary members. The students were well prepared; their presentation was very engaging. The team met their goal with respect to the time limit, and it was obvious they had spent significant time rehearsing their lines. All spoke very clearly, and they did not need a microphone. The slides projected on the screen greatly enhanced their presentation.

The topic (Beef Producer Profit with Meat Packaging Companies) was relevant, especially given the agriculture impact in our community and the state. The students showed that they understand the importance of hearing all voices as they delve into an issue and search for solutions. It is great to see that they are learning how to listen respectfully to all points of view surrounding an issue. Our Rotary club members enjoyed this presentation and asked some good questions afterwards. We have extended the invitation to the WLHS FFA to return and present other topics at future Rotary meetings.

We are confident the WLHS Ag Issues team will do very well at the state competition. We are proud of the students and their instructor.

In Service,

Sara Sedlacek, President 2023-2024
Rotary Club of West Liberty

Rotary Club involves many community volunteers and current/former business industry representatives. The primary discussion involved product labeling and the various ways processors meet consumer needs.



West Liberty School Board

West Liberty CSD Boardroom, West Liberty
Date: April 10, 2023 Time: 6:00pm
Attendance: 19



West Liberty CSD

111 W 7th Street, West Liberty, IA 52776-1225
Phone: 319-627-2116 • Fax: 319-627-2963
www.wl.k12.ia.us

April 10, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

The West Liberty High School FFA Ag Issues team made a presentation to the WLCSD school board and administrators on April 10, 2023. This was, by far, the best presentation by any FFA team during the past few years. The team completed their presentation in the allotted time. They knew their lines and they presented them with great confidence and credibility. The script was superbly written. The students were very convincing, which was a sign that they clearly understood what they were talking about. This was a hybrid meeting that reached out to over 750 views on our Facebook page.

The following members were present at the meeting:

Dr. Shaun Kruger (Superintendent of Schools)
Brenda Arthur Miller (High School Principal)
Kirk Ryan (Elementary Principal)
Vicki Vernon (Middle School Principal)
Abby Ortiz (Business Director)
5 School Board Members

The topic of beef producers profit in the supply chain is very important. I grew up on a family farm and this topic really hits home. The school board and administrators thoroughly enjoyed this excellent, high quality presentation. We believe the WLHS Ag Issues team will secure first place at the state competition. We are proud of the students and their instructor.

Sincerely,

Brenda Arthur-Miller, Principal

The West Liberty School Board is a great way to advocate the activities conducted by the FFA. Several board members had questions on how processing would effect our population given that our community is predominately Hispanic.



Iowa Department of Agriculture

Wallace Building, Des Moines
Date: April 10, 2023 Time: 10:00am
Attendance: 15



Wallace State Office Building • 502 E 9th St, Des Moines, IA 50319 • (515) 281-5321 • iowaagriculture.gov

Mike Naig
Secretary of Agriculture

April 11, 2023

West Liberty FFA Ag Issues Team,

We enjoyed your visit to the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship on April 11, 2023 to give your presentation regarding meat packaging companies and beef producer profit. Our team was thrilled to engage in discussion following your informative presentation.

The members of the team did an excellent job giving all perspectives of the issue, both pros and cons.

The experts from the Department in attendance included:

- Mike Naig, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture
- Grant Menke, Iowa Deputy Secretary of Agriculture
- Dr. Kathryn Polking, Meat & Poultry Inspection Bureau Chief
- Dr. Justin Glisan, State Climatologist
- Colin Tadlock, Chief of Staff
- Ben Boewkamp, Special Assistant
- Don McDowell, Director of Communications
- Alex Rausch, Digital and Visual Communications Manager
- Kelley Reece, Executive Secretary

Thank you again for making the trip and elaborating on an issue that is extremely prevalent in Iowa's economy and beef business. We wish you well at State Leadership Conference and in the future.

Sincerely,

Grant Menke

Meeting with top agriculture legislators and department leads for Iowa Agriculture was an important experience. We spent a time discussing the impact of consumer demand and legislation that would help with start-up processing facilities.



West Liberty Chamber of Commerce

Community Center, West Liberty
Date: April 13, 2023 Time: 12:00pm
Attendance: 45



West Liberty Chamber of Commerce
119 E. 3rd St. -West Liberty, IA 52776

To Whom It May Concern:

The West Liberty High School Ag Issues team presented to the West Liberty Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors at our lunch meeting on April 13, 2023. There were 15 guests in attendance which was composed of our chamber board and community members.

The Ag Issues team presented in a professional well versed manner and covered a topic that local citizens can relate to. They were very informative with their topic on meat processing industry and their impact on local livestock producers.

The team did a great job of setting up a forum as their presentation and it was conversational and filled with facts. In our community we have many livestock producers. It was very helpful as a chamber to determine how we could help producers.

Our board thoroughly enjoyed being a part of this project and giving the team an audience to practice. We wish them the best of luck and know they will represent West Liberty at Indianapolis with preparation and attention to detail.

Sincerely,

Stephanie L. Martin
West Liberty Chamber of Commerce
Chief Operating Director

West Liberty Chamber of Commerce has been actively engaged in growing small businesses in our community. We learned about the local resource and grants that are available to farmers and business along with marketing opportunities.

