

# I Spy a Caring Farmer

- I. Introduce yourself and give background information about your farming operation.
- II. **Ask the class** – “How many of you live on a farm?” How many of you have a family member that has a farm?
- III. Ask students – what percent of American people farm (tell them to guess until someone gets it right)?  
(less than 2 percent – give an example of how many is 2 percent of the class)
  - a. Now, what do you picture when you think of a farmer? (pitchfork, overalls, pigs, Old McDonald, etc.)
  - b. Today we are going to talk about farmers, what they do for you and why they care.
- IV. **Can you tell me what it means to be a caring farmer?** (care of animals, land, etc.)
- V. **How do farmers care for their plants and animals?** Before we can answer that question, let’s explore the needs of living things! Every living thing, including you and me, dogs and cats, pigs and horses, and even plants, have needs that have to be met in order to survive. **What are these needs?** (*Create a list on the board of student responses to this question. Targeted student responses are air, water, food, shelter, and care.*)
- VI. Since we have now discovered what an animal needs to survive: (air, water, food, shelter and care), let’s talk about how that might differ from a plant? From the list we made, **what needs do animals have that a plant does not?** *Shelter* – Though some of our plants need protection during the winter months, farmers plant crops during what we call a growing season – **What is a growing season?** It is the number of months the outside temperature and weather conditions allow plants to grow. In Michigan we have covered or glass growing houses for plants to grow during cold months – **what are these called?** Greenhouses - flowers, fruits and vegetables are grown in greenhouses so we can enjoy these foods and flowers all year long. **What makes Michigan unique compared to other states?** Our state is known as a peninsula. **What makes Michigan a peninsula?** A peninsula is a narrow piece of land that juts out from the mainland into an area of water – in Michigan that would be the Great Lakes that surround our state. The lakes make a unique micro-climate that allows Michigan farmers to grow over 200 different crops. **Can you name a few?**
- VII. Let’s complete an activity called a “Farm Charm” as we talk more about the needs of plants and animals and how farmers care for them.
  - **Plastic bag (Jewelry bag size):** Place each of the following in your bag:
  - **Coffee:** which represents soil. Soil is needed to plant the seeds and grow plants. Farmers care for the soil by using methods such as limited- tillage and planting grass waterways to reduce soil run-off

- **Confetti Trees:** which represents plants. Plants provide food for animals and us. Farmers carefully manage all the plants they grow from greenhouse plants we talked about earlier to other plants we eat like soybeans, vegetables and fruit. All plants require food and farmers ensure the plant has the proper nutrients (food) to grow and provide you with delicious safe food.
- **Corn:** used as food for animals and us. Farmers carefully choose the correct grains and other feedstuffs for specific animals based on the protein and nutrient content needed. Different ages of the same animal require different amounts and types of food just like we do! For example, babies drink only milk and as we grow, we add solid foods to our diet. Some animals on the farm are given hay as a part of their diet. What are some examples of foods that are made from corn?
- **Soybeans:** used as food for animals and us and also used as fuel. Just like with corn and plants, farmers take care of the soil where soybeans grow and provide the plant with nutrients to provide you with safe food. What are some examples of foods that are made from soybeans?
- **Animals:** provide food and clothing for us. Animals need air to breathe just like you! Farmers are certain the animals not only have enough food like we discussed earlier but also enough fresh air. This is done by providing pasture to graze on, by opening windows in barns and by using fans and ventilation systems in barns – providing animal's shelter.
- **Blue Confetti:** which represents water – we all need water to survive. Animals on a farm drink lots of water. Farmers provide clean water by using automatic waterers, tanks or other sources to ensure animals have constant access to fresh water.
- **Gold Confetti:** which represents the sun – we need sun for warmth and plants depend on the sun to grow.
- **Heart Confetti:** which represents how much farmers care for their plants and animals. Daily care provided by the farmers and veterinarians or doctors educated to treat animals play a role in maintaining healthy animals. Agronomists are trained to understand the needs of soil and plants. Farmers use these specialists to ensure healthy plants and soil, taking care of the environment and providing you with safe food.
- Be sure to close the bag, punch a hole in the top and run a piece of yarn through the hole and tie a knot.

VIII. Conclusion: Let's review what we have learned: What is the percentage of farmers in Michigan? What are the needs of all living things? How do farmers care for plants and animals? What do plants and animals provide you? That's

why farmers care – they want to provide you with safe food and take care of the environment.

**Note:** A Captain Food Fabulous book will be added to this lesson in the future. This lesson will be expanded and featured at the 2010 Project TEAM Conference.

**Additional Resources:**

- Farmers Care Brochure #288/ \$.10 per brochure - Great for teachers and parents
- Farmers Care Bookmark #289/\$.04 each in quantities of 100
- Michigan Treasures Placemat #207 \$.15 each

**This lesson meets the following Grade Level Content Expectations (Learning Standards):**

Earth Science – Earth Systems

***K-7 Standard E.ES:** Develop an understanding of the warming of the Earth by the sun as the major source of energy for phenomenon on Earth and how the sun's warming relates to weather, climate, seasons, and the water cycle. Understand how human interaction and use of natural resources affects the environment.*

**E.ES.E.4 Natural Resources – the supply of many natural resources is limited. Humans have devised methods for extending their use of natural resources through recycling, reuse and renewal.**

**E.ES.03.43:** Describe ways humans are protecting, extending and restoring resources (recycle, reuse, reduce, renewal).

**E.ES.E.5 Human Impact – Humans depend on their natural and constructed environment. Humans change environments in ways that are helpful and harmful for themselves and other organisms.**

**E.ES.03.51:** Describe helpful or harmful effects of humans on the environment (garbage, habitat destruction, land management, renewable and non-renewable resources).

Dear (Third Grade Teacher):

We invite students in your classroom to participate in the Seventh Annual Poster Contest for National Agriculture Week.

This year the theme is "I Spy a Caring Farmer." We would encourage you to prepare the students in the class by discussing how farmers help provide food and products for the students each day as well as discussion about the food pyramid and how that helps make healthy bodies.

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We are attaching a "Treasures of Michigan" placemat as well as a lesson plan that might help you teach lessons around the poster theme. We would like to volunteer to conduct an Ag-in-the-Classroom lesson that might help the students decide how they would like to depict the theme.

I have worked with (name) in planning and conducting Ag-in-the-Classroom projects in the past. If you have any questions on this activity feel free to ask (name) or contact me at \_\_\_\_\_.

Sincerely,

(Name)

Poster Contest Chairman

**RELEASE**

I am the parent or guardian of \_\_\_\_\_,

who is submitting a drawing for the 2010 “(I Spy a CARING Farmer)” Ag Week Poster Contest. On behalf of my child, I agree that submitted entries become the property of Michigan Farm Bureau and will not be returned and that Michigan Farm Bureau may use and publish the drawing done by my child in any print media, electronic media or visual media and may display the drawing anywhere Michigan Farm Bureau deems appropriate.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name