

Who is Major Ag?

Major Ag is a fictional character who stands for all the men and women who farm the land—producing the food and other farm products necessary for our survival. Major Ag also stands for the idea of stewardship—farmers and ranchers caring for the land and the animals in their trust.

In the United States we enjoy one of the safest and most abundant food supplies in the world. A longtime net exporter of food, U.S. agricultural output has steadily increased throughout our history, doubling since 1950. Safe, healthy food is so readily available that most of us don't give much thought to where our food comes from beyond the grocery store or restaurant.

Consider a typical fast food meal—bread, lettuce, tomato, onion, pickle, potato and beef—a burger and fries. All of these ingredients begin on the farm—soil, water and sunshine.

In Colorado, farmers and ranchers provide all of these ingredients, and livestock is Colorado's largest agricultural sector with more than \$3 billion in annual cash receipts.

The rancher is at the beginning of the process that brings beef to you. His or her job starts with caring for the land. Year-after-year, the ranch needs to produce the grass that the cattle graze. Damaged by drought or poor management, the land won't sustain as many animals.

Then there are the cattle themselves. Animal care and raising livestock go hand-in-hand. Producers know that giving animals the proper care, handling and nutrition they deserve is the right thing to do, plus it makes good busi-

ness sense. Farmers and ranchers across the United States stand strongly against any form of animal abuse or cruelty.

As cattle move from the ranch to feedyards to processing plants, animal care and food safety are of the utmost importance.

For the farmer who grows the wheat that becomes the bread or the cucumbers that become the pickles, the story is very similar. Year-in, year-out, they depend on the land, water and sunshine to grow food. If the land in their care is abused, their business suffers. As their products move from farm to plate, precautions must be taken to keep the food safe to eat.

Colorado: It's Agricultural

Colorado has a long and strong agricultural tradition. Currently, nearly half of the state is farms and ranches (30.7 million acres).

Overall, Colorado agriculture contributes more than 105,000 jobs and \$16 billion a year to the state's economy.

During 2005, Colorado farmers and ranchers exported more than \$675 million in products. Colorado ranks in the top 10 states for the production of 30 different agricultural products.

Livestock, corn, hay, dairy, greenhouse, and wheat are all large sectors, but only the beginning of the diversity of agricultural enterprises. Livestock producers raise everything from alligators and fish to llamas, ostriches and yaks. Colorado farmers grow ev-

erything from apples and Anasazi beans to onions and grapes for wine.

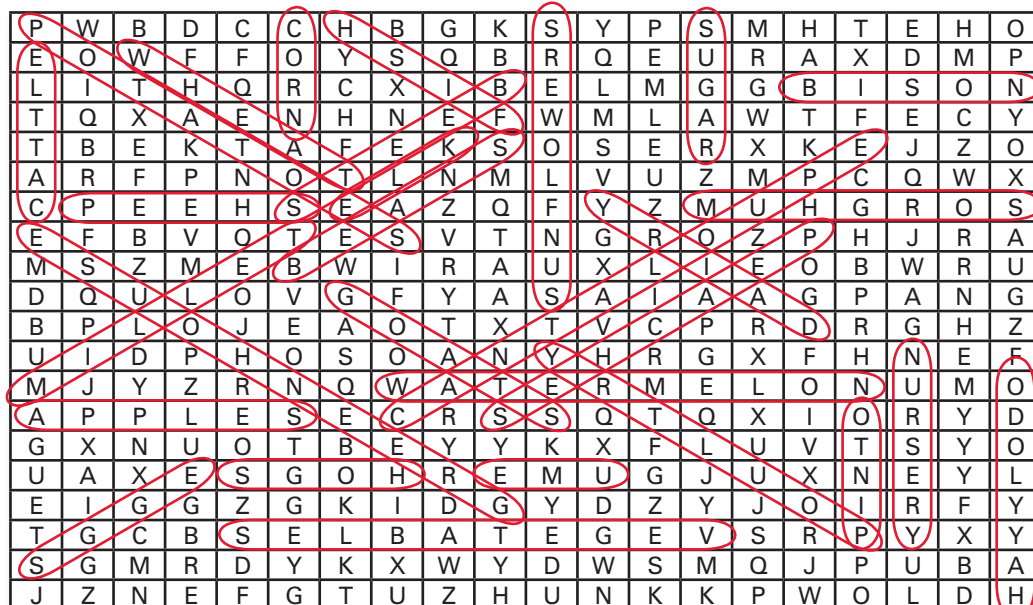
Colorado agricultural production also contributes to the creation of products related to manufacturing, health care, education, recreation, transportation, construction and personal care—that's everything from detergents, x-ray film, bandages, crayons, paper, piano keys, footballs, shoes, plastics, hydraulic brake fluid, ball bearings, tires, insulation, linoleum, soaps, cosmetics, shaving cream to perfume.

The next time you bite into a burger or munch a French fry, think about what it takes to feed Colorado everyday. That's breakfast, lunch, dinner and snacks for about 5 million people, 365 days a year.

"No big deal," you say? Let's imagine you're in charge of slicing the pickles to go on hamburgers for everyone in the state. Everyone is to get one slice that is 1/4" thick. To make your job easier, we'll line up your pickles end-to-end—a line that is nearly 20 miles long!

Slicing pickles may be a silly example, but farmers feed an ever-growing world population, which is serious business. To be healthy and do the things we like to do, we need a dependable supply of safe food products. While fewer than 1 in 100 children will grow up to be farmers or ranchers, it's important to remember the contribution agriculture makes in all of our lives. After all, no farms, no food (or those other farm products, either).

Colorado Agricultural Products Word Search



- | | | | | |
|------------|-------|------------|----------|------------|
| Apples | Corn | Goats | Peaches | Sugar |
| Beans | Dairy | Greenhouse | Pinto | Sunflowers |
| Beets | Eggs | Hay | Potatoes | Vegetables |
| Bison | Elk | Hogs | Poultry | Watermelon |
| Cantaloupe | Emu | Millet | Sheep | Wheat |
| Cattle | Fish | Nursery | Sorghum | |

Puzzle created with Puzzlemaker on DiscoveryEducation.com

