



### **Who We Are**

Iowa Sister States is a volunteer-driven non-profit organization based in Des Moines, Iowa. We strive to build sustainable international partnerships that connect Iowans to the world community. Iowa has a powerful history of citizen diplomacy, and our dedicated volunteers and staff are proud to continue this legacy.

### **What We Do**

We manage the State of Iowa's official relationships with our nine international partners:

- Cherkasy Oblast, Ukraine
- Hebei Province, China
- Kosovo
- Stavropol Krai, Russia
- Taiwan
- Terengganu, Malaysia
- Veneto Region, Italy
- Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan
- Yucatan, Mexico

### **Our Mission**

ISS is a volunteer driven organization dedicated to connecting Iowans within the world community. Our mission is to provide international programs that promote the interests of Iowans abroad. We do this by facilitating and hosting exchange programs between Iowa and our Sister States.

### **How We Benefit Iowa**

- We provide Iowans (in all sectors) with opportunities statewide to connect with the international community via the sister state relationships.
- We host themed programs in various areas including: agriculture, law, business, culture, education, and many others.
- We facilitate exchange programs to host incoming delegations, as well as out-bound.
- We facilitate specific scholarship opportunities for Iowans to study in Iowa's sister states, as well as host students to attend Iowa-based colleges and universities.
- We facilitate missions to our sister states that are open to all that support citizen diplomacy and are looking for new ways to engage the international community.
- And so much more!

## Iowa Sister States Agricultural Impact

Since its conception Iowa Sister States has had an impact in the agriculture sector. Many of our sister states are formed because of similarities between our two states and often this includes being an agricultural state. Below are many examples of how Iowa Sister States has had an impact in the agriculture sector both in Iowa and globally.

Iowa Sister States (ISS) oldest relationship with Yamanashi, Japan began in 1960. This relationship came out of a good will agricultural exchange. In 1959 Yamanashi experienced an extremely destructive typhoon. Sergeant Richard Thomas of Iowa heard the news of Yamanashi's plight and felt a strong reaction to the news. Sergeant Thomas had vacationed in Yamanashi and previously helped form a sister city relationship between Kofu and Des Moines. Sergeant Thomas organized a hog lift of 35 breeding hogs and 100,000 bushels of corn to send to Yamanashi as aid. The hogs that were sent to Yamanashi were bred with a breed in Yamanashi. Their offspring created a new pork company that is alive and thriving in Yamanashi to this day. This began a long history of exchanges over the years.

The history of the hog lift has had many lasting impacts even to this day. Currently Blue Ribbon Bacon Festival from Iowa has collaborated with Yamanashi to create a Japan Bacon Festival! This has allowed more Iowa pork products to come into the Yamanashi market and introduce the style of Iowa bacon and pork to Japan. The Japan Bacon Festival will be putting on its 3<sup>rd</sup> festival in November 2019.



*2017: 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Japan Bacon Festival*

Another famous agriculture delegation was the delegation from Hebei, China in 1985. The delegation in 1985 was like any normal ISS Agriculture delegation. The group consisted of various government officials from Hebei, China that were here to learn about Iowa and Iowa's agriculture. ISS took them on a tour of various farms, Sukup Manufacturing, visited local cities, and were home hosted for a portion of their time here. One difference was that later one of the delegates from the 1985 delegation would go on to become the President of China. President Xi Jinping will still talk of his time in Iowa and learning about our agriculture. This has led to continued exchanges and projects, especially in the agriculture sector.

This partnership helped to create the US- China Friendship Demonstration Farm. It exhibits Iowa's best crop varieties and agricultural technology and requires cooperation from both of our states to be successful. This farm signifies the leading role Iowa and Hebei have taken on in people-to-people diplomacy between China and the US. The U.S.-China Demo Farm is the very first farm of its kind in China due to its comprehensiveness. This farm project of 3,130 acres, or 19,000 Mu in the Chinese measurement, includes an Iowa-Kimberly Farm of 300 acres, a typical Iowa town square, a Kimberly farmstead, an ag equipment exhibition center, a museum to showcase the friendship history between the two states, a conference center, and a family-experience site.

Another project has been our collaboration with the World Food Prize Global Youth Institute. Since 2014, we have facilitated a relationship between Hebei high schools and the Global Youth Institute hosted annually in Des Moines where students discuss food security issues with each other and international experts. Bringing student delegates from Hebei gives a different perspective for Iowa students to hear and share our culture with the Chinese students.



*President Xi Jinping visiting Kimberley Farms*

Another sister state that has been active in the agricultural sector has been Kosovo. Kosovo is Iowa's newest sister state but has become one of the most active sister state relationships. Our cooperation with Kosovo is across many sectors but again one of our commonalities is agriculture.

One project that was very successful was our partnership with FFA, Iowa Farm Bureau, and Hawkeye Community College Global Agricultural Learning Center (GALC). We first partnered 5 FFA Chapters in Iowa with 5 vocational agricultural schools in Kosovo. In September of 2018 the 5 Iowa FFA chapters sent 1 student and 1 teacher to visit and study agriculture in Kosovo. After their visit the cooperation continued to grow monthly video calls with to speak about various areas of agricultural education. This also includes more discussion about agricultural practices and techniques. In April of 2019 the Kosovo schools were able to then visit their Iowa counterparts to continue learning from each other. The goal of this is to continue to educate and encourage youth in both Iowa and Kosovo to follow their passion in agriculture.



*Representatives from Iowa Farm Bureau, FFA, ISU, and GALC visiting a dairy farm in Kosovo*

Iowa Sister States has had a lasting impact in the agricultural sector as seen through the examples above but also through many other countless examples in our other sister states. We have done many exchanges with our sister state of Cherkasy, Ukraine, who has similar fertile geography that can efficiently cultivate crops such as corn and soybeans like Iowa. In our partnership with Stavropol, Russia we have had many agricultural exchanges over the years. Throughout the years Iowa Sister States has continued to encourage growth in the agricultural field both in Iowa and in our sister states.