## Starke County tidbit No. 35 ---- More on Agriculture.

Since I grew up on Grandpa's farm, I was destined to become a farmer, it seems. After college and the army, I joined up with Dad and we farmed the home place together for several years. I feel very lucky to have been born in Starke County, Indiana, to Russell and Edna Shilling. As I look back on those few years when Dad and I farmed together - wow. He allowed me to experiment with all sorts of innovative ideas and yet with a careful eye, guided my inexperience. There is nothing like "been there, done that". And he let me know it in his gentle way.

The changes that we have seen in Agriculture, just in my time, have been tremendous. There have been more changes in production agriculture during the last fifty years than the 10,000 years before that. During the great depression, the average farmer was selling enough farm produce to feed 3-4 other people. During the 1950s, the average farmer in the U.S. was feeding 50 people. A tremendous increase, in just a few years. Now, the average farmer is feeding 154 people. It is estimated that by 2030, farmers around the world will have to produce 4 **billion** tons of food for the growing population.

Starke County is doing its part. The average farm in Starke County is only 259 acres, but those acres produce more than 81 million dollars in income for Starke County each year. That's third, behind Manufacturing and Retail Sales. I haven't found all of the figures of the Ag-related retail, but I know that the Farm Bureau Coop has a gross sales of more than 59 million dollars in materials to farmers. When a farmer talks about a 1" rain as "a million dollar rain", it is more than a figure of speech. A 1" rain every week during June, July and August will add about 10 to 12 million dollars to the Starke County economy. Farmers are not only spending huge amounts of money on production inputs, such as implements, seed and fertilizer for their crops, but also adding to the economy by patronizing the local stores.

The next time you see a Starke County farmer, whether he farms 50 acres of vegetables or 5000 acres of corn, think about the food he helps grow and the part he plays in the local economy.

A good site to learn more about Indiana agriculture is: <a href="http://www.farmersfeedus.org/in/corn/10">http://www.farmersfeedus.org/in/corn/10</a>

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http://www.starkehistory.com http://www.scpl.lib.in.us/historical/

