

In 2024, the Corridor commissioned a first-of-its-kind survey to measure how targeted stakeholders perceived key characteristics of Iowa's food and agriculture industry. The results show a largely positive view of the sector in Iowa, particularly in terms of its growth potential and how it compares to other markets.

METHODOLOGY

The Corridor's survey was distributed during July and early August 2024 to thousands of industry professionals familiar with Iowa's food and agriculture sector across various ages, levels of experience, professions and geographic locations. A total of 389 professionals responded to the survey, representing 27 states and 13 countries. Of these respondents, 175 indicated they either work or live in Iowa.



IOWA IS A STRONG FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INNOVATOR. WE HAVE GREAT PEOPLE WORKING ON OUR ADVANCEMENTS.”

- CORRIDOR SURVEY RESPONDENT

To fully understand the survey results, it is important to consider the broader economic and industry-specific conditions shaping Iowa's food and agriculture sector at the time of the survey.

Declining crop prices, reduced farm income, rising interest rates, elevated farm input costs and more created a challenging operating environment for farmers and agribusinesses in 2024. Additionally, the national job market began to soften, with job openings approaching pre-pandemic levels. Despite increases in the national unemployment rate, Iowa held strong at a 2.8% – the 8th lowest unemployment rate nationally.

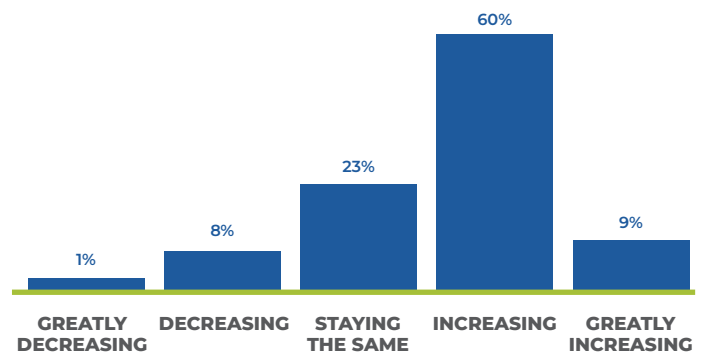
Amid this complex landscape, Iowa's food and agriculture sector has shown resilience and promise. As Iowa continues to navigate an evolving agricultural landscape, the insights from the Corridor study will guide strategic initiatives, fostering a stronger, more connected ecosystem that helps ensure lasting growth and innovation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

FUTURE OF INNOVATION

Most respondents believe the level of innovation in Iowa's food and agriculture sector is good or excellent (70%) and improving (69%). More than half (57%) say innovation is stronger or much stronger in Iowa. Leadership is noted as the most critical factor for driving innovation and, in terms of Iowa's performance, 57% of respondents say it is good or excellent in Iowa.

In your opinion, how is the level of innovation in Iowa's food and agriculture industry evolving?



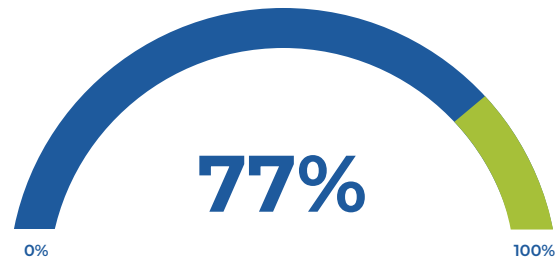
ABUNDANT MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

Those from inside and outside of Iowa say business opportunities in the state surpass those in other regions, with about half rating Iowa more strongly than elsewhere in the U.S. About two-thirds (64%) of survey respondents rate the current level of business opportunity in the state as good or excellent, and another 55% say the opportunities are increasing.

STEADY WORKFORCE OUTLOOK

About half rate Iowa's current food and agriculture jobs as good or excellent and most expect industry employment opportunities to increase or stay the same. Young professionals 18-34 are more optimistic, with 62% rating Iowa's industry much stronger. Additionally, 77% say they are likely to recommend working in Iowa's food and agriculture industry to a friend.

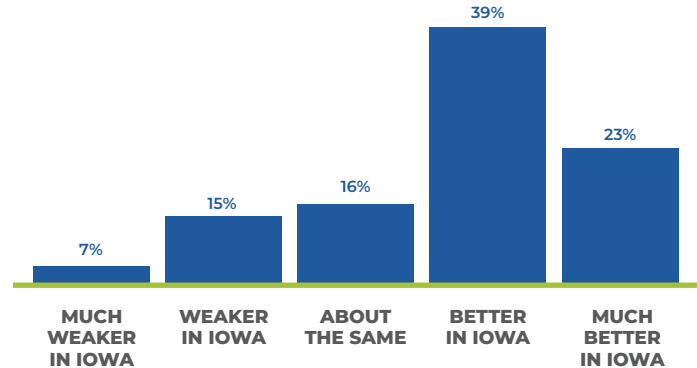
How likely are you to recommend working in the food and agriculture industry in Iowa to a friend or colleague?



FAVORABLE QUALITY OF LIFE

Nearly three-quarters rate Iowa's quality of life as good or excellent, and the majority would suggest Iowa as a place to live. In addition, 61% of Iowans perceive their quality of life as better than elsewhere in the U.S. The benefits of living in Iowa noted by respondents include the low cost of living, strong community values and sense of belonging.

How does Iowa's quality of life compare to that in the rest of the U.S.?



CONCLUSION

Organizations and professionals with ties to Iowa know it's a place for innovation and growing business opportunity. However, in some cases, those outside the country and state are more complementary of the industry, indicating a need to continue promoting Iowa's success stories to stakeholders inside the state. Perceptions related to workforce highlight opportunities to promote jobs in Iowa's industry as meaningful work that help solve global challenges and better connect industry professionals in the state, especially those in their mid-career. And finally, stakeholders involved in community placemaking may look to these results to further identify benefits associated with living in Iowa and the audiences most open to moving here.

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