

Reading 1: A Farm in Michigan

Have you ever driven a tractor? I started driving tractors when I was in elementary school. Driving a huge machine like a tractor may sound like fun to you, but it's part of the work on a farm. As a kid, I helped my parents work this farm, and it wasn't all fun. I also had to feed the animals and clean up the barns. That can be a smelly job!

Now, I run the farm where I grew up. Some day, I hope my children will own the farm. It's a big part of our family's heritage, and it's a great farm. The land in this part of Michigan is good for growing crops. Just reach down and take a pinch of this soil. You'll notice it sticks together. It is a sandy loam. Crops like this soil. They also like the 50 centimeters of rainfall Michigan gets every year.

I grow wheat, corn, and hay. I feed the corn and hay to my pigs, sheep, cattle, and horses. I sell the wheat and the animals. I work hard and feel good that I am helping feed my neighbors in Michigan. But I am not going to get rich being a farmer.

Sometimes I wonder if I should sell my land. Some people would like to buy it to build houses and apartments. Streets would cross the fields. People would drive cars where I drive my tractor now. They might make one of my fields into a golf course. I don't know if I would like that. But I would have a lot of money to send my children to college.

Some of my neighbors live in homes that were built where there used to be a farm. I wonder what they would say if I asked them why they moved to the country. Maybe they wanted lots of fresh air or more land for their families to enjoy. Maybe they were tired of crowded streets.

Michigan has a Commission to study the changes in farmland. It was started by the Governor. They say there is less and less farmland each year. Other people say we have plenty of farmland.

Kalamazoo, MI 2004