

## 2020 Women Impacting Ag Honoree Emily Boettcher

A rare set of male beef calf triplets, Huey, Dewy and Louie, were born on Boettcher Farms last spring. Emily Boettcher enjoys showing the calves off to farm visitors while educating families about the challenges and successes of raising cattle near Iowa's Great Lakes. "I especially like to share the beef industry with my softball buddies and their children. My friends love my cows too," said Boettcher. As the next generation on her family farm in Dickinson County, Iowa, Emily earned the ISU Extension and Outreach 2020 Woman Impacting Agriculture honor. She was nominated for the award by Gary Wright, ISU Extension and Outreach Farm Management Field Specialist. "Emily is a major player in her family farm, both in the management decisions and sharing labor with her father. She has a long-term agriculture sustainability perspective," Wright stated.



Sharing agriculture with others is important to Emily. The Dickinson County Farm Bureau, where she serves as Treasurer, gives her opportunities to talk about legislation, water conservation, careers in agriculture and more. "These are great people to work with. The hard thing is there is not a lot of young people. I'm more comfortable talking to them now; I realize they want to know my generation's thoughts," Boettcher related.

"On the Dickinson County Cattlemen's side of things, those guys are like fathers to me," shared Boettcher. "We have one rule – no pork on our grill," she laughs. The group grills for 10 to 30 events each year. Emily feels good the cattle producers are recognized in the community. The money earned from larger events like Pioneer Days goes to scholarships and other local support.

Dickinson County is home to over 15,000 acres of water. The annual Blue Water Festival lets Emily talk to families from all over the state. "Our farm is part of the Big Spirit Lake watershed. People want to know if farmers are causing high nitrate levels in the lake," explained Boettcher. She is proud her father began strip-till and no-till 20 years ago. Over the past six years, Emily has helped expand cover crop use to nearly all of the family's crop ground.

Spirit Lake High School has a January J-Term that offers students hands-on learning and field trips to local businesses to see careers in action. "It was really cool I got the call to be a driver. I got others on board at Farm Bureau to help, too," said Boettcher. She enjoys teaching students they don't have to be a farmer to have a successful career in agriculture.

Her own career took a unique twist. "Criminal justice was my dream, but now it's hard to leave my cows," shared Boettcher. She earned a B.S. in Sociology and Criminal Justice from Northwestern College in 2009. Jobs nearby were hard to come by. As luck would have it, her Dad's hired man retired. Emily stepped up to the plate and has been farming in partnership with her family ever since. Her father's Northwest Seed business. "In farming, you need to have your hand in three or four things or you're not going to make it," shared Boettcher.

Northwest Seed sells Asgrow, Dekalb, and new this year, Millborn cover crop seed. Emily does the paperwork for the seed business and assists her father with sales. Not all farmers are comfortable buying seed from Emily. “Some seed customers do not want to work with a girl, I just continue to show them my experience.”



“I run the seed treater; that is my baby. Dad can run it, but not like I can,” laughs Boettcher. She adds, “I get certified through ISU Extension. Betsy Buffington does the class every year on changes in how to calibrate the mixes and new types of seed treatments coming out.” Emily explained farmers can sometimes save money on seed treatments, depending on weather and other conditions, so she does not treat any seed until a customer requests it. To serve customers in a timely manner, she and her dad bred the heifers to calve in March, rather than April, giving them more time for seed treatments. “Dad and

I found we can do a lot of this ourselves if the timing is right, but weather is always a factor,” says Boettcher.

Emily enjoys fishing trips with her father and going to Mexico with her parents and older brother. Emily’s grandfather died from cancer when her father was a young man. “Then Dad got cancer in ‘09 when I started working here; he couldn’t work,” stated Boettcher. In 2014, Emily was diagnosed with chronic Lyme’s Disease and could not work for six months. “We’ve been blessed. We have learned that vacation time is important; we’re a tight-knit group,” shares Boettcher.

Her mother gets a lot of credit for the farm’s success even though she does not work with cows or drive tractors. “Mom is the one who feeds us and keeps us going,” says Boettcher. Emily further explains, “She is the in-between if my Dad and I are butting heads, she’s the mediator that brings us back to reality.”

In a year filled with a global pandemic and other stressors, Emily prioritized spending time with her friends in state slow-pitch softball. “I hit a homerun to help win the championship game. My whole team freaked out, the fence was 300 feet, it was the highlight of my year,” shared Boettcher.

Emily has one piece of winning advice for other women in agriculture. “If you find something you love to do, don’t let anyone tell you that you can’t do it,” stated Boettcher.