

Volume 61 | Number 1

SEE INSIDE >

- 4 Helping Meat Processors Grow
- 6 Serving All 99 Counties
- 8 Turning Waste into Opportunity



Country Maid Boosts Leadership Alignment and Production Efficiency

Continued on page 2



1805 Collaboration Place, Suite 2300
Ames, Iowa 50010-9166

Phone: 515-294-3420 | ciras@iastate.edu
www.ciras.iastate.edu

At CIRAS, we help Iowa businesses grow by offering expertise and resources—so our clients can connect to a variety of services designed to help them succeed.

CIRAS PARTNERS

- Iowa State University
 - Center for Crops Utilization Research
 - Center for Nondestructive Evaluation
 - College of Engineering
 - Department of Environmental Health and Safety
 - Engineering Career Services
 - Extension and Outreach
 - Iowa Grain Quality Initiative
 - Ivy College of Business
 - Meat Science Extension
 - Polymer and Food Protection Consortium
 - Structural Engineering Research Laboratory
- Alliant Energy
- Community Colleges for Iowa
- Iowa Area Development Group
- Iowa Association of Business and Industry
- Iowa Department of Transportation
- Iowa Economic Development Authority
- Iowa Farm Bureau
- Quad Cities Chamber

CIRAS is supported in part by the DoC/NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership, the DoD/OSBP APEX Accelerator, the DOT Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Support Services Program, the State of Iowa Economic Growth Committee appropriation for the CIRAS Technology Assistance Program, and the DOE State Manufacturing Leadership Program.

CIRAS News is published semiannually by the Center for Industrial Research and Service and edited by the CIRAS publications team. Design and production is by Hobbs Designs, LLC. Please send questions, comments, or address changes to ciras.news@iastate.edu.—February 2026 HD25080

Articles may be republished with the following credit line: "Republished from *CIRAS News*, Vol. 61, No. 1, a publication of Iowa State University Center for Industrial Research and Service." Please send a copy of the reprint to *CIRAS News*, 1805 Collaboration Place, Suite 2300, Ames, Iowa 50010-9166 or email the URL to ciras.news@iastate.edu.

Iowa State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, ethnicity, religion, national origin, pregnancy, sexual orientation, genetic information, sex, marital status, disability, or status as a U.S. Veteran. Inquiries regarding non-discrimination policies may be directed to Office of Equal Opportunity, 2680 Beardshear Hall, 515 Morrill Road, Ames, Iowa 50011, Tel. 515-294-7612, email eooffice@iastate.edu.



Printed on
Recycled Paper

On the Cover: Country Maid employees work along the production line making cake rolls.

Country Maid *continued from page 1*

For more than 30 years, Country Maid has embodied Iowa's entrepreneurial spirit. From Ken and Marlene Banwart's family basement operation in West Bend to a modern facility with 125 employees distributing frozen pastries and cake rolls nationwide, the company has remained grounded in its mission: Helping Others Help Each Other.

When production efficiency began to decline, Country Maid leadership took the same proactive, people-first approach of communication, alignment, and leadership structure that had fueled their success from the start.

"We knew something needed to change in our production process, but we needed an outside perspective to really understand what was happening," said Darin Massner, CEO of Country Maid. "CIRAS was the right partner to help us identify the root causes and develop a clear path forward."

Assessing the Challenge

Massner connected with CIRAS Strategic Advisor Derek Thompson to take a fresh look at Country Maid's operations. The CIRAS team observed production lines, reviewed metrics, and interviewed staff across departments to pinpoint where breakdowns were occurring—not just in the process, but across leadership and communication systems.

To support implementation, Joy Donald, CIRAS project manager, connected Country Maid with Scott Post of

S Post Consulting, a longtime leadership development partner, to define the root causes of inefficiencies and create a tailored improvement plan. The collaboration provided targeted expertise that allowed Country Maid to accelerate improvements and strengthen team alignment.

Creating a Road Map for Sustainable Improvement

The result: a clear, phased road map to improve leadership alignment, streamline communication, and boost production flow—without overwhelming the organization.

"CIRAS helped us to lead better and work smarter," said Massner. "They gave us a road map that connected leadership strategy with operational performance."

The road map's multiphase structure helped the company prioritize its most urgent needs, while laying the groundwork for long-term results.

A Partnership Built on Practical Problem-Solving

"When we address leadership and operations together, companies can get to the real root of a problem," said Donald. "In this case, the production issues weren't just about equipment or throughput—they also involved leadership structure, communication, and clarity. When we address all those elements together, companies can achieve lasting results."

This project builds on a long relationship between Country Maid and CIRAS.

Below: Country Maid's modern facility in West Bend.



Throughout the years, the company has collaborated with CIRAS on supply-chain mapping, process improvement, leadership development initiatives, and peer learning programs through the Iowa Lean Consortium (ILC) and the Manufacturers HR Collaboration Cohort.

Each engagement reinforces the company's core belief: investing in people drives improvement at every level.

This approach reflects the CIRAS value proposition: helping Iowa businesses solve complex problems while providing expertise, connections, and the confidence to move forward.

Strengthening the Legacy of Helping Others

Since 1991, Country Maid's story is one of innovation, adaptability, and community impact. What started as a family recipe for braided pastries has grown into a nationally recognized brand producing pastries, cake rolls, and cookie dough. Country Maid has helped fundraising groups across 45 states raise more than \$360 million.

Even with this growth, Country Maid remains deeply connected to investing in its own people.

"Our success has always come from the dedication of our employees," said Massner. "Working with CIRAS is part of that commitment, giving our teams the tools and leadership support they need to keep improving every day."

A Model for Continuous Growth

Country Maid is now using its road map to implement new leadership systems, improve performance metrics, and strengthen workforce development. The changes are not just solving problems, they are setting the stage for future growth with continued support.

Contact Joy Donald at jdonald@iastate.edu to learn more.

COUNTRY MAID, INC.

FOUNDED: 1991

EMPLOYEES: 125

OVERVIEW: Country Maid partnered with CIRAS to improve leadership alignment and production efficiency, creating a long-term road map for sustainable growth centered on people.

IMPACT: Implemented a phased improvement plan that increased production efficiency and reduced downtime, resulting in stronger cross-departmental leadership alignment and a more resilient, growth-ready operation with an economic impact of \$22.5 million.



Left: Ken and Marlene Banwart, founders. **Below:** Country Maid employee programs equipment to prepare products.





Above left: Meat processors from across the state attend a short course at Iowa State's Meat Lab. **Above right:** The Tiefenthaler family's business is known for its skinless brats, which come in a variety of flavors.

A TRUSTED PARTNER

Helping Meat Processors Grow, Provide Quality Products

For Tiefenthaler Quality Meats, innovation has always been part of the recipe. What started more than 30 years ago as a small-town Iowa locker has grown into a thriving family business built on quality products, hard work, and a lasting partnership with Iowa State University and CIRAS.

Jordan Bremer, whose family owns the company in Holstein, flips through her notebook of ideas—some that have become customer favorites and others that didn't make it past the test kitchen. There's the "grand champion innovative beef" nacho patty introduced in 2018, a clear success, and the PB&J beef patty which earned a handwritten "NO!" For Bremer, the creative process is what keeps the business fresh.

"We try to come out with at least two new things every year, no matter what. We're always innovating."

"Iowa State gave me the push to want to do R&D," she said. "We try to come out with at least two new things every year, no matter what. We're always innovating."

The Tiefenthaler family's connection to Iowa State runs deep. Jordan's father, John Tiefenthaler, first attended the university's Meats Laboratory short courses in the 1990s. Years later, as the business expanded, he worked with CIRAS to develop a long-term succession plan that would ensure the company's continued success.

The university's Meats Laboratory has earned a global reputation for its short courses and technical training, helping meat processors of all sizes—from small-town lockers to national producers—improve operations and product quality. "The mission of the land-grant institution of extension is to take the information

to the people, and that's what we're doing day in and day out," said program specialist Matthew Wenger.

Over the years, these programs have provided Iowa's meat industry with more than just education. They've built a network of collaboration and innovation. Processors learn about new technologies, attend workshops, and exchange best practices. Iowa State also works with community colleges and industry associations to strengthen the state's meat-processing value chain, including support for the Iowa Meat Processors Association's annual convention.

Tiefenthaler Quality Meats began in 1991 when John and his wife, Shelly, purchased a small custom-processing locker. As word spread about their smoked meats, sausages, and specialty products, demand grew rapidly. The couple expanded into retail and wholesale markets, and today the company's products can be found in about 90 Iowa grocery stores. A



DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Looking at 2026 and Beyond

The pace of disruption in industry hasn't slowed. Global trade structures are being challenged on multiple fronts as digital technologies and artificial intelligence rapidly mature.

Leaders are challenged like never before. Not because they don't have ideas, but because every decision now carries more trade-offs. Increasingly, the real need isn't an answer, but a partner who can help evaluate the full picture and support the next move.

As 2026 begins, we see five interdependent trends shaping manufacturing:

- Reducing costs by eliminating waste, not people.
- Solving continued technical workforce challenges.
- Creating supply chain solutions that flex with trade changes and meet cost objectives.
- Selecting and deploying the right technology to create business results.
- Serving emerging/re-emerging markets including mining, defense, and biotechnology.

While this issue of *CIRAS News* highlights how businesses addressed some of these trends in 2025, we're rapidly adapting our services as your needs change. As you read this, we're launching new hands-on AI training, expanding micro-internships, and creating more comprehensive support approaches.

As these trends converge, CIRAS remains a trusted partner in helping companies move forward with clarity and confidence.

Contact Mike O'Donnell at modonnll@iastate.edu to learn more.

Above: The next generation of Tiefenthaler Quality Meats. Jesse and Jordan Bremer and Austin and Courtney Tiefenthaler are ready to grow the family business.

2,000-square-foot addition and a staff of 20 employees have allowed the business to keep pace with growth while maintaining its commitment to quality and community.

The Tiefenthalers credit much of their success to their relationship with Iowa State and CIRAS. "We've learned so much from just little tidbits of information here and there—the knowledge that we gain, and then developing new products and trying to discover what tastes good and what works together," said John.

When it came time to think about the next generation, CIRAS provided the tools and guidance to help create a clear transition plan. "All the support and wisdom they gave us, we took it and we ran with it," said John. "Everything we've come up with out of all those meetings has resulted in 100 percent follow-through. It's happening."

For Jordan, the plan represents more than just a business hand off—it's a way to continue the family's legacy. "There's a lot of pride knowing that you were able to create something that everybody loves," she said. "It's just another way to prove to myself that I'm where I need to be and doing what I need to be doing."

Contact Derek Thompson at thompson@iastate.edu to learn more.

Reprinted with permission from Inside Iowa State at go.iastate.edu/O1AWMK.

TIEFENTHALER QUALITY MEATS

FOUNDED: 1991

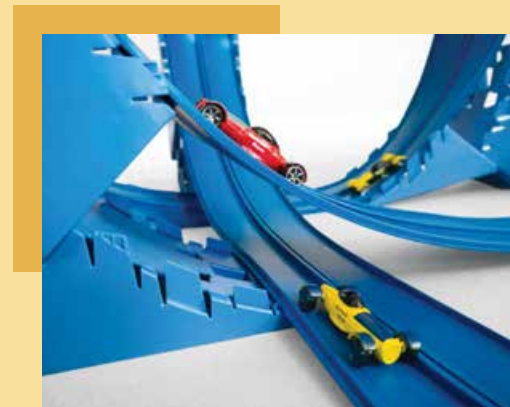
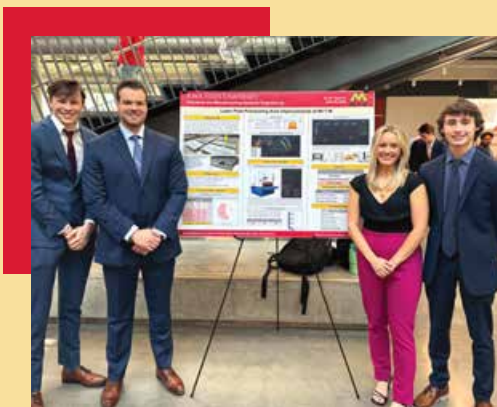
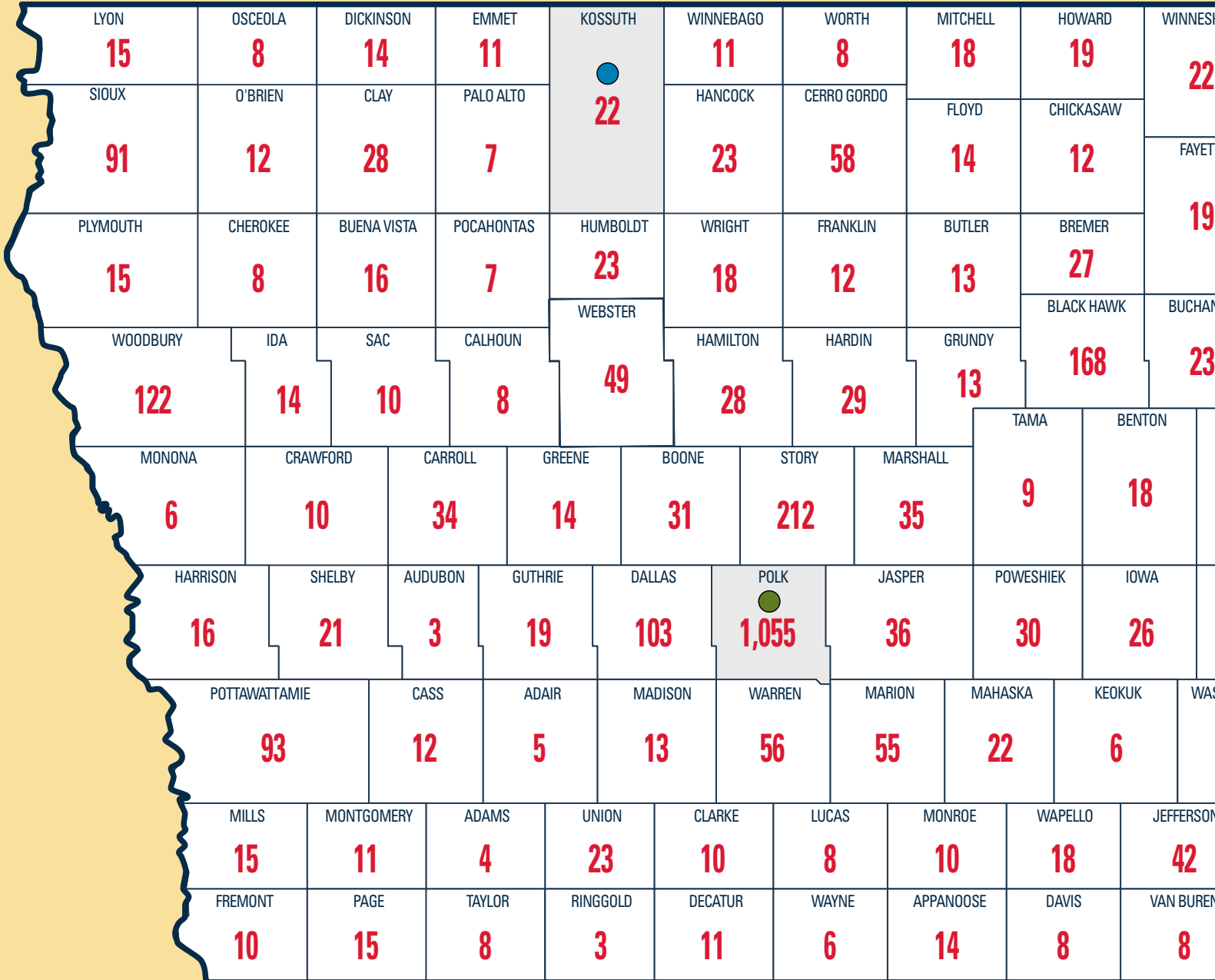
EMPLOYEES: 22

OVERVIEW: Family-owned meat processor and retailer in Holstein specializing in smoked meats, sausages, and custom processing for grocery stores and local customers.

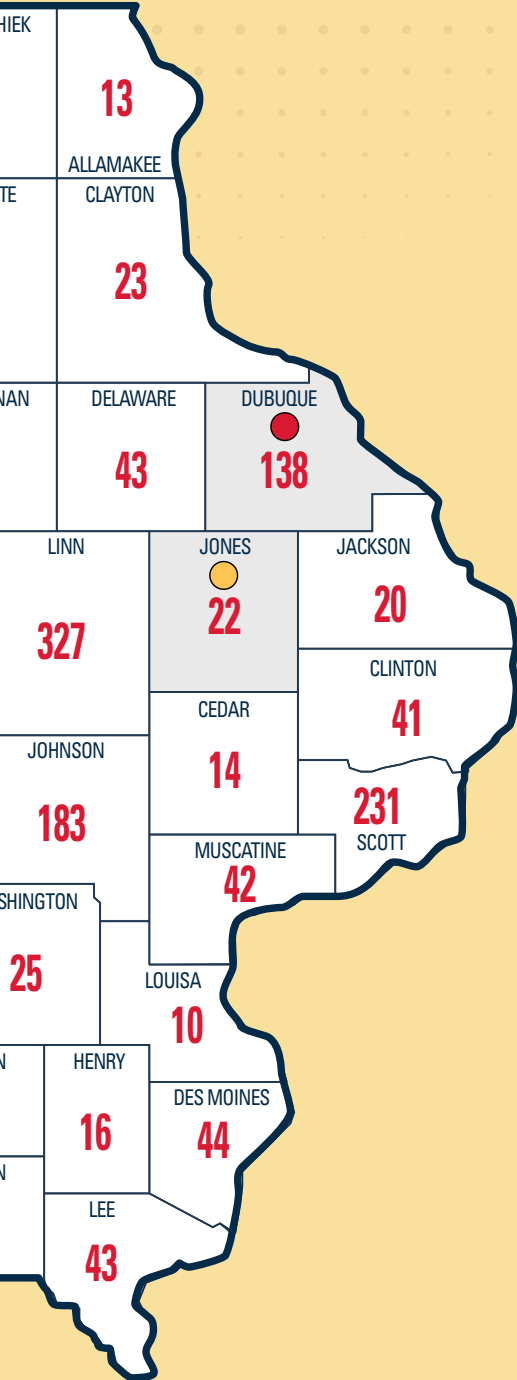
IMPACT: Expanded its operations, strengthened product development, and established a long-term succession plan to sustain growth and innovation.

CIRAS Serves Iowa: 2021–2025

Distinct Clients Served



Serving All 99 Counties



Iowa State Capstone Project Helps Manufacturer with Key Production Decision

Mi-T-M Corporation in Peosta partnered with Iowa State University industrial engineering students through a CIRAS-supported capstone project to evaluate an automated deburring machine. The team’s analysis showed the system could boost laser-bed throughput by 79 percent, exceeding Mi-T-M’s 70 percent goal. Encouraged by the results, the company is adding a custom machine to further improve efficiency. “Our collaboration with Iowa State students provided valuable insights that confirmed the benefits of investing in automation,” said Dennis Hoffman, director of fabrication.

IMPACT
More than \$2.7 billion

CONNECTIONS
More than 4,400 distinct Iowa clients served by CIRAS and our partners

JOB
More than 29,000 jobs created or retained

Planning a New Facility Layout for Kinetic Technologies

Kinetic Technologies in Algona partnered with CIRAS to design an efficient layout for its new 12,000-square-foot facility. Using data-driven analysis and 3D modeling, CIRAS helped improve production flow, safety, and flexibility. The project will create 12 new jobs, retain 14 positions, and save an estimated \$104,000 annually while supporting \$1.2 million in capital investment. “We really appreciate the work CIRAS has done; we now have a map for our new facility,” said Betsy Barglof of Kinetic Technologies.

DICA: Growing in the Federal Marketplace

DICA, a family-owned Urbandale manufacturer of outrigger pads and crane accessories, earned a \$95,000 General Services Administration (GSA) contract with help from the CIRAS APEX Accelerator. CIRAS reviewed DICA’s bid, clarified compliance requirements, and guided onboarding in the GSA vendor portal. “Working with CIRAS and Kelly Freel has been a game changer for us,” said DICA’s Kelly Koberg. “Their hands-on support made real progress possible.” The contract expands DICA’s federal presence and supports continued growth.

Blu Track Boosts Sales Through CIRAS-led Marketing Strategy

Blu Track, a maker of STEM-focused toy racetracks in Anamosa, partnered with CIRAS to strengthen its marketing strategy through targeted email, social media, and website improvements. CIRAS connected the company with Double You Marketing and Running Robots to execute the plan, driving \$210,000 in new sales and creating one job while retaining two. Blu Track has renewed its partnership for a third year. “We’re very pleased with the great work from the team,” said owner Amy Fuller.

Preparing Iowa Businesses for Applied AI

CIRAS, ISU’s Translational AI Center (TrAC), and the University of Iowa’s Iowa Initiative for Artificial Intelligence (IIAI) are launching a statewide series of in-person artificial intelligence training courses in 2026. Designed for Iowa business professionals, these practical sessions will help participants better understand and use AI in everyday operations. Offered in communities across the state through local partners, the training reflects a shared commitment to expanding access to applied AI education and ensuring businesses have the tools to thrive in a changing world.

Left to right: Iowa State University students celebrate the success of their capstone project with Mi-T-M Corporation. DICA employees pose with product line. Sample of Blu Track toy racetrack products.

CIRAS Helps Two Companies Unlock the Value of Fertilizer Byproducts

What if waste wasn't waste at all?

That question led two Iowa companies—Ajinomoto and Valent BioSciences—to partner with Iowa State University to test whether industrial byproducts from their manufacturing operations could serve as effective alternatives to commercial fertilizers.

Through the CIRAS Technology Assistance Program (TAP), CIRAS co-invested state appropriations with the companies to collaborate with Iowa State agronomy and agricultural and biosystems engineering faculty to study the agronomic value of their byproducts. Field trials were conducted at Iowa State research farms in Boone and near Osage over multiple growing seasons.

Ajinomoto, which manufactures a high-value Omega-3 oil in Eddyville, needed to determine whether a new fermentation byproduct could replace synthetic fertilizer. Iowa State agronomy faculty, led by Assistant Professor Richard Roth, conducted a field trial that showed the product provided adequate nitrogen and improved soil sulfur levels—without harming plant health or grain quality.

The results from this trial demonstrated the agronomic value of the byproduct as a replacement for synthetic fertilizers.

“This application completes a biocycle wherein byproducts are returned to the soil from which our raw materials are sourced. The findings give us confidence that our byproduct can be part of a more sustainable and profitable process,” said Paul Summer, associate director of new product development at Ajinomoto. “Working with Iowa State gave us credible, science-backed data to move forward.”

“This project demonstrates how science can support sustainable agriculture and help Iowa companies use local resources more efficiently,” said Brian Muff, CIRAS project manager. “It’s a win for the environment and for the regional economy.”

Valent BioSciences, a global leader in microbial products, had been giving away a similar byproduct from its Osage facility. A three-year study led by Associate Professor Daniel Andersen from agricultural and biosystems engineering proved the product’s value as a fertilizer. The collaboration included undergraduate students and

demonstrated potential cost savings of up to \$400,000 annually.

“We’ve always known our byproduct had potential, but this partnership with Iowa State gave us the evidence to prove its value,” said Dan Shirley, maintenance manager at Valent BioSciences. “Now, instead of giving it away, we can offer it as a viable input for farmers.”

“We demonstrated that this byproduct was capable of supplying crop nitrogen, and typically improved crop performance into the next year, offering real, measurable agronomic value,” said Andersen. “I’m excited about this work as it demonstrated a chance for companies to change how they might think about byproducts from their bioprocessing process, and it demonstrated we can continue to innovate on how we make Iowa agriculture circular and sustainable.”

“We’ve always known our byproduct had potential, but this partnership with Iowa State gave us the evidence to prove its value. Now, instead of giving it away, we can offer it as a viable input for farmers.”

“We enjoy making the connections where faculty can use their science in practice while making companies better,” said Muff.

Contact Brian Muff at bmuff@iastate.edu to learn more.

AJINOMOTO HEALTH & NUTRITION NORTH AMERICA, INC.

FOUNDED: 1909 (parent); U.S. operations since the 1980s

EMPLOYEES: 250 in Eddyville

OVERVIEW: Global food and amino acid producer; expanding into Omega-3 oils.

IMPACT: Trial confirmed byproduct as viable fertilizer, supporting jobs and sustainability. An estimated \$800,000 annual value.

VALENT BIOSCIENCES LLC

FOUNDED: 2000; Osage facility opened in 2014

EMPLOYEES: 100+ in Osage

OVERVIEW: Produces microbial agricultural and public health products using local crops.

IMPACT: Iowa State trials proved byproduct value, enabling \$400,000 annual savings potential.

MOLDED PRODUCTS

FOUNDED: 1986 | **EMPLOYEES:** 65

OVERVIEW: Molded Products partnered with CIRAS to develop a pricing strategy for a new medical device. The engagement supported market analysis and preparation for product launch.

IMPACT: The project is expected to generate \$3.37 million in economic impact and add one job.



AI-generated image comparable to company product.

Leveraging Market Insights to Guide Strategic Pricing

When Molded Products, located in Harlan, began planning the launch of a new medical device, company leaders knew pricing would be critical to success. The product, developed through significant R&D investment, was expected to replace a legacy offering and compete directly with other devices on the market.

To guide its strategy, Molded Products contacted its long-standing partner, CIRAS.

“We’ve worked with CIRAS on many projects over the years,” said Sheri Tyrrel, vice president and chief administrative officer at Molded Products. “So when we needed to make informed pricing decisions for a complex market, we knew exactly who to call.”

CIRAS project manager CJ Osborn helped Molded Products define the project scope and then worked in conjunction with April Glosser of Thrive Market Intelligence to plan and launch the work in support of Molded Product’s needs and objectives. Together, they supported a deep dive into the market landscape, pricing opportunities, and customer expectations.

“CIRAS helped us think through our pricing strategy in a much deeper way,” said Tyrrel. “This project gave us insights that could lead to \$3 million or more in incremental revenue.”

“When we needed to make informed pricing decisions for a complex market, we knew exactly who to call.”

Although the product is still undergoing lab testing, with clinical trials and documentation ahead, the project has already produced broader value. Molded Products made strategic investments in blending equipment and biocapabilities and, with CIRAS support, identified a

more cost-effective 510(k) consultant to assist with FDA regulatory submission.

“This was about more than just setting a price,” said Tyrrel. “It helped us look at the bigger picture and prepare to launch successfully.”

Contact CJ Osborn at cjosborn@iastate.edu to learn more.



Quadyster Levels Up Cybersecurity to Power Federal Market Expansion

Quadyster, a technology solutions company based in Bettendorf, reached a major milestone by achieving Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) Level 2, strengthening its ability to handle controlled unclassified information and compete for more federal contracts.

Achieving CMMC Level 2 compliance requires extensive training, policy work, and technical changes. The company turned to CIRAS experts who partnered with Aspire Cyber to define the approach that worked for them and bring in the right support at the right time. "CIRAS provided invaluable early guidance that set us on the right path for the CMMC certification," said CBL Rao, chief operating officer of Quadyster. "Their encouragement and support, along with Aspire Cyber's expert training, were crucial to our success."

The certification boosts Quadyster's credibility, strengthens its standing in the defense market, and supports long-term growth. "This certification moves us to the next level," said President Hari Banda.

Contact Melissa Burant at mmburant@iastate.edu to learn more.

QUADYSTER

FOUNDED: 2006 | EMPLOYEES: 46

OVERVIEW: Bettendorf-based technology solutions company specializing in cybersecurity and federal contracting.

IMPACT: \$1.2 million in impact, including \$1 million in new and retained sales, 10 jobs created or retained, and \$100,000 in cost savings.

Navigating Supply Chain and Tariff Challenges

CIRAS continues to help Iowa companies manage ongoing supply chain disruptions and navigate the challenges of changing tariffs. Through a growing library of webinars and resources, now totaling 11 sessions with more than 1,000 views, manufacturers have access to timely and easy-to-understand guidance.

This work is part of the CIRAS "Managing your supply chain during trade uncertainty" resource page. The page offers webinars, presentations, and service descriptions to help companies respond to shifting tariffs, trade agreements, freight networks, and sourcing trends.

This year, more than 350 people participated in tariff-related content. In addition, CIRAS conducted eight in-depth projects with Iowa manufacturers to solve their specific challenges.

Companies like Geater Machining and Manufacturing Co. in Independence say it's making a difference.

"Through CIRAS, we have strengthened our supply chain and procurement process," said Buckley Necker, purchasing agent at Geater Machining and Manufacturing Co. "Both in-person and video presentations have helped us step up our game and stay out ahead of the ever-changing landscape that is supply chain. We look forward to continuing our work with CIRAS to develop new procedures and gain new insights about technologies and methods that are coming in the future."

To learn more, visit go.iastate.edu/BBN04L.



Contact Marc Schneider at maschn@iastate.edu to learn more.



Collaboration Cohort Equips HR Leaders to Drive Results

When Iowa manufacturers reported workforce challenges as a top concern in the most recent CIRAS Manufacturing Needs Assessment, one theme stood out: Companies need human resource professionals who are not just administrators but leaders. Yet for many manufacturers, HR staff is often a one-person team, with few opportunities to connect, share, and learn.

To address this gap, CIRAS partnered with the Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI) to launch the Manufacturers HR Collaboration Cohort in fall 2024. Designed as both a professional development forum and a peer-support network, the cohort helps HR professionals strengthen their leadership roles and drive meaningful results inside their organizations.

Over nine months, 13 HR practitioners met monthly for structured learning and peer problem-solving. Sessions combined networking with presentations on emerging HR issues and open discussions of real challenges brought by participants. The results were immediate. Members reported they returned to their companies with strategies to improve retention, reduce costs, and create better workdays for their teams.

The program also reflects the strength of collaboration between CIRAS and ABI. "This cohort is a great example of our commitment to supporting Iowa manufacturers—together, ABI and CIRAS are helping build stronger HR leadership that equips teams and strengthens companies across the state," said Meg Schneider, vice president of strategic initiatives at ABI.

Given the success of the pilot, CIRAS and ABI are now operating several cohorts using the model. For Iowa manufacturers, the effort represents a critical step toward ensuring leaders have the tools and networks they need to strengthen their organizations.

Contact Dawn Ealy at dawnealy@iastate.edu to learn more.

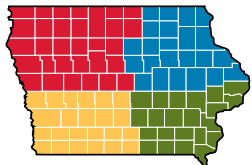
"For me, it's been a great opportunity to allow myself to think strategically and creatively in a safe environment. As a result, I have created solutions for my company from the opportunity to brainstorm and collaborate with CIRAS and the cohort. My time with the cohort has been extremely fulfilling, and, personally, I always look forward to visiting Ames and reconnecting with my alma mater!"

—Tony Buhr, Metalcraft

"It's great to be able to get together with other HR professionals and talk about issues. There is always someone in the room who has dealt with the same issue and can offer advice. It is a space where I can speak openly about issues I am having."

—Betsy Hansen, RCS Millwork

CIRAS CONTACT INFORMATION



Locate your county to find your best introduction to CIRAS.

Your strategic advisor can help connect you with the expertise you need for your business.



All staff information can be found at www.ciras.iastate.edu/staff-directory.

Derek Thompson
thompson@iastate.edu
515-419-2163

Jason Armstrong
jasona1@iastate.edu
515-686-0441

Tim Weiss
tweiss@iastate.edu
515-715-0992

William Zumdome
wzumdome@iastate.edu
515-291-2537

WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

Executive AI Strategy Turns Potential into Performance

Artificial intelligence isn't just the future—it's today's competitive edge.

Across industries, businesses are reimagining how they work, make decisions, and deliver value through AI. Yet for many Iowa companies, the first question isn't what to do with AI—it's where to start. That's where CIRAS comes in.

Executive AI Strategy, a new service designed to help Iowa manufacturers and business leaders confidently navigate their AI journey, starts from the top. The initiative recognizes that successful AI adoption begins with leadership. Without clear vision, alignment, and strategy that ties technology to business goals, AI risks becoming just another buzzword.

The program helps leaders identify where AI can make a meaningful impact in improving operations, enhancing customer experience, or driving growth. Through a structured process of stakeholder alignment, workshops, and implementation support, CIRAS guides executives in creating an actionable roadmap for responsible AI adoption.

For Iowa industry, the benefits are clear. Companies gain confidence to lead in an AI-powered economy, and CIRAS strengthens its role as a trusted partner helping clients innovate and thrive. As one of the state's foremost advocates for advanced technologies, CIRAS ensures that Iowa businesses don't just keep up with change—they help define it.

Contact Dawn Ealy at dawnealy@iastate.edu to learn more.