



## News Release

For Immediate Release

Media Contact:  
Kerri McClimen; 773-746-7077  
kerri.mcclimen@nimanranch.com

### **Niman Ranch to Double Farmer Network in 10 Years**

#### **1500 Farmers and Ranchers to raise sustainable and humanely raised pork, beef and lamb by 2028**

*Gilt Stocking Program and 16 Reasons to Become a Niman Ranch Farmer Partner Kick Off the Recruitment Effort*

**Des Moines, IA.** (September 8, 2018) — Niman Ranch, a leader in sustainable agriculture and humane livestock practices, today celebrated the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Hog Farmer Appreciation Dinner in Des Moines by pledging to double their network and add more than 750 independent family farmers and ranchers in the next ten years. The company committed to supporting 1500 sustainable family farms in the next decade. The announcement will be followed by a recruitment effort to add additional farmers.

“It took us 20 years to get here and now we’ll double it in ten. We have the opportunity to break away from being captive to the commodity markets,” said Jeff Tripician, general manager, Niman Ranch. “We’ve always said, ‘One farmer at a time’ and that is and was a victory for every rural community. Now we’ll do more. The market is ready and there are farmers out there that are ready for the stability that a premium meat company like Niman Ranch can provide.”

As part of the announcement, Niman Ranch will begin a recruitment effort and unveiled a first of a kind Gilt and Boar Gift program for young farmers, recent college graduates and those that have served in the military. More than \$300,000 in sows have already been made available to qualifying individuals who are looking to get started in farming, grow their herds, improve their genetics and ultimately make more money. The Gilt Stocking Program was part of 16 reasons to Be a Niman Ranch Farmer Partner that was unveiled before the dinner. Niman Ranch is currently paying independent family farmers approximately double the market and promising to do much more in the decade to come.

“In a time of depressed hog prices, tariffs, trade wars, and a slow outlook for hog futures, we are going to grow,” said Tripician. “Our market is stronger than ever, our customers are more committed than they have ever been, and we must keep up with consumer demand.”

Niman Ranch began hog production in 1995 with one farmer, Paul Willis, from Thornton, IA. Since that time the company has expanded to 629 hog farmers in 12 states. Today, the Niman Ranch farmer is significantly younger than the national average. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that the average age of farmers has steadily increased to 58-years old over the last 30 years, contrary to the Niman Ranch farmer’s average age of 47.

Part of the ongoing partnership between Niman Ranch and the farmer is a yearly scholarship for farm families and their children to go to college without significant debt so they can return to the farm. This year the Next Generation Scholarship Fund became a formal 501C3 and raised more than \$150,000 from more than 60 donors –

giving out scholarship awards to more than 32 students. Two of the students received \$10,000 as part of a special Phyllis Willis Pioneer Award and the original Dave Serfling Scholarship.

“With student loan debt affecting two thirds of college graduates today, paying for college is a substantial barrier for young farmers and ranchers who face rising land costs. The number of beginning farmers in America fell by 20 percent between 2007 and 2012 alone. “Niman Ranch recognizes that combatting the burden of student loan debt is crucial to helping new farmers stay on the land,” said Jim Wallace, senior director of the live team operations.

“Niman Ranch remains committed to helping make small family farms viable and to supporting the communities in which they thrive,” said Paul Willis, founder of the Niman Ranch Pork Division. “We know we’re doing something right because more young people want to work with us. Our animals are raised with care and we care deeply about the farmer, the environment and the customer.”

Willis credited the success of Niman Ranch to the consistent commitment to the farmer, the animals and the land and the loyalty of customers. “Customers range from the busy shopper at a progressive grocery store in California, to colleges, hotels, fast casual restaurants, to a top chef in New York City and every state in between,” said Willis. “They honor the work we do as farmers by cooking with the most sustainable, humane and best tasting product.”

Niman Ranch pork is third-party certified under the Certified Humane® program and from hogs raised by a community of independent U.S. family hog farmers who adhere to some of the strictest animal welfare protocols in the industry, including:

- No antibiotics - EVER
- No gestation or farrowing crates
- Raised outside or deeply bedded pens
- Never fed animal by-products

Niman Ranch products are available nationally.

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*With nearly 40 years as an industry leader, Niman Ranch is a community of more than 720 independent family farmers and ranchers who raise livestock traditionally, humanely and sustainably to deliver the finest-tasting meat. All Niman Ranch pork, beef, lamb and prepared products are certified under the Certified Humane® program and available nationwide at both food service and retail locations.*