Among the silos and through the amber waves of grain runs the track of America’s freight railroads. U.S. railroads and farmers have a relationship extending back nearly 200 years to when railroads became the critical link between rural farms and emerging urban centers in an increasingly industrialized country. Today, railroads are crucial to nearly every aspect of agriculture, from transporting farming equipment and fertilizers to delivering fresh produce and finished food products.

**Grain**

The United States is the [world’s largest grain producer](https://www.fas.usda.gov/). According to the USDA, railroads account for well over a third of U.S. grain export movements. Grains include corn, soybeans, oats, wheat, rice, sorghum and barley. We use grains for many purposes, from food to animal feed and ethanol production. To preserve the nation’s role as the world’s top grain exporter, railroads continually invest in their networks to meet grain customer needs, including purchasing high-capacity covered hoppers and “shuttle trains” that efficiently export U.S. corn, soybeans and wheat.

**Agriculture & Food Products**

Agricultural and food products include wheat, corn, soybeans, animal feed, beer, birdseed, canned produce, corn syrup, flour, frozen chickens, sugar, wine and countless other food products. Railroads are critical to the nation’s food security because they transport the feed for livestock and the food we eat. The U.S. agricultural sector is the most efficient in the world, and railroads’ scale helps make that possible. The freight rail network is deeply entrenched in a national supply chain. For example, one railcar can carry enough:

- Flour for approximately 258,000 loaves of bread.
- Corn for the lifetime feeding requirements of 37,000 chickens.
- Barley for around 94,000 gallons of beer.
- Soybeans for about 400,000 pounds of tofu.
Fertilizers

Railroads are the safest way to transport hazardous materials and are essential for moving the chemicals that produce fertilizers. Railroads move large amounts of anhydrous ammonia, potassium compounds, and urea. They also carry millions of tons of raw materials used to produce fertilizer each year, including phosphate rock, crude potash, and sulfur. One rail tank car of anhydrous ammonia carries around four tanker trucks, enough to fertilize 770 acres of corn.