This morning I was listening to Steve Forbes interview Lance Fritz, the CEO of Union Pacific. Amongst talk about innovation and shifting demands due to trade, the discussion turned to regulation. Fritz talked about some of the goals he shares with the Surface Transportation Board, the primary regulator of the railroad industry. “Railroads have to have the ability to generate an economic return, so that they can re-invest back into the infrastructure so that they are a strong, viable supporter of the US economy”.

Like the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA), Union Pacific was also founded by Abraham Lincoln. They both serve essential, legacy industries which have shaped America and are critical to our economy’s success. But most importantly, both industries, railroads and agriculture, rely on technology and innovation to pave the way forward into the future.

Continuity of the agricultural economy in the United States is reliant on innovation. Just like the railroad industry, our farmers and ranchers can only invest in innovation if they are successful businesses. When agriculture can invest in innovation, we can attract the top talent and incentivize problem-solvers.

Agricultural innovations are driven by people- people with careers in agriculture.

Solving agriculture’s problems through your career provides purpose and fulfillment. Agriculture problems are everyone’s problems; the industry impacts everyone who relies on it. Solving agriculture’s problems means feeding the world, fixing immigration, caring for the environment, earning an honest living, engaging in fair and reciprocal trade, and providing gainful employment, to name a few. Whether a member of the bureaucracy, an ag-tech start up, a 5th generation family farmer, a truck driver or railroad engineer, food engineer, economist, ag lawyer, or researcher- contributing as a member of team agriculture is contributing toward making the world a better place.

Part of agriculture’s strength and struggle is our diversity. Encompassing many steps along the value chain and spanning almost every sector of the economy, agriculture is inter-dependent and integral. Regardless of your passion, a career in agriculture provides an opportunity to advocate and get paid doing what you love. Whether it be immigration, monetary policy, trade, commerce, national security, sustainability, the environment, natural resources, food safety, or supply chain management (the list can go on forever!), everyone can find a place in agriculture where they can contribute to the success of the agriculture industry.

My future career is within the agriculture industry. As a mechanical engineering major who loves solving people problems, I hope that I can solve a problem facing the industry and make a career out of it. Whether in fintech or carbon sequestration, with a mission of feeding the world in the most affordable, safest, reliable manner, the quest for agricultural improvement and innovation is cornered around our values. A career in agriculture is more than a paycheck, it is a commitment toward making the world a better place. It is a promise towards stewardship of land and people, service to others, and values woven into the fabric of our nation. In return, a career in agriculture provides immense purpose and fulfillment, knowing that one is getting compensated for helping solve the most important ethical, environmental, and economic issue ever tackled by mankind.