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Agriculture as a Career

Stop. Close your eyes and picture “American Agriculture.” What comes to mind? For most people it’s probably a small family farm, with cows, pigs, sheep, and a few chickens. This reality is a part of agriculture in the United States, but modern agriculture is so much more. With over 200 different careers in the agriculture industry, there is a job to fit almost anyone’s interests. With so many careers, you would think that high school and college graduates would be lining up to find jobs in the agriculture sector. So why aren’t they? It’s that picture of American agriculture. When people think of agriculture, they automatically think of farming. The steps it takes to get food from the field to our dinner table are often forgotten.

Because agriculture is a continuously changing industry, new jobs are always being added. From farmers to scientists, or journalists to salesmen there is a job for almost any interest area. The future of the agriculture industry is looking up, with more young people returning to farms. Hopefully other agricultural jobs will follow this trend once more people learn about the opportunities within this industry. As an agriculture education major, I am committed to helping young people explore the many different areas of agriculture. I know that not every student in my classes will plan on going into an agricultural field. However, according to the USDA one of every twelve jobs in the United States relates to agriculture. Many people may end up in a career that relates to agriculture, even if it is something they never imagined themselves doing. Because the world’s population is expected to grow to 9 billion people by 2050, we will have to produce more food than we ever have before. The need for people to work agricultural jobs is increasing every day.

So how do we draw people to agricultural careers? Education, promotion, and advertising are all ways that we can inform the public about the changing face of agriculture. Think about science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). Because STEM careers have been identified as high need, professionals in these industries have been doing everything possible to draw young people to these careers. Agriculture will also have a high demand for future employees, and can use strategies similar to STEM.

Education about STEM is being achieved in school systems through internships, specialized classes, and job shadowing. These same approaches could also be used to educate students about agriculture careers, especially in schools that already have agriculture education programs. STEM careers are also highly promoted through school counselors and summer career camps. Agriculture could also use these avenues of promotion. If counselors understand the importance of the

agriculture industry, more students may be encouraged to seek ag careers. Summer camps can also be used to increase awareness and help students explore ag careers. Finally, it seems like you can't turn on the TV without seeing a commercial encouraging you to get a degree in nursing or business. Agriculture could also benefit from this type of advertising.

As an agriculture education major, I am committed to helping young people explore the many different careers in agriculture. With over 22 million jobs, modern agriculture is so much more than small family farms. With so many options, agriculture is a viable career choice for many young people in the US, even if they didn't grow up on a farm.