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Agriculture as a Career

One of the most vivid memories I have from when I was a young boy was working with my grandfather in the mountains of Puerto Rico in his plantain farm. He once told me "Ricardo, sometimes you would need a lawyer, sometimes a doctor, professors, but three times in a day you will need a farmer". Since then, I understood the importance of the people that work in agriculture. We are the fuel of the world, without us they cannot fulfill their role in this society. For some people agriculture has acquired a romantic sense, nostalgic feeling, a job from the past that right now has lost its importance, it has been relegated, but the truth is now we have become more important than we were in the past. It is extremely vital for the adults of the present to teach young kids that are the future, about the importance agriculture plays in the society. Teach them to embrace it, work with it, to love and live their profession, because food, crops, and livestock will never lose their importance.

Sometimes people think that agriculture is just raising crops and animals. Embracing agriculture as a career makes students and professionals open to do research and investigations, study the behaviors of live organisms, help establish better farming operations, conserve soils and natural ecosystems, product marketing, and improve agricultural businesses with strategic operations. Studying Agri Business was the correct path for me, because every day I do things that I love like, developing social relations with customers and practicing animal husbandry. As soon as I started in the University, I became a rancher in my mother's farm. It helped me learn that theory is important, but you also need exposure and practice in a farm so you could develop all your skills. This made me desire more exposure in the agriculture, so I applied for an internship with the Hispanics Association of College and Universities and was selected in the summer of 2011 for an USDA internship in Girdwood, Alaska. This past summer, I applied and was selected to be an intern with the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Survey doing preparatory work for the upcoming 2013 Agricultural Census in Puerto Rico. I learned firsthand that with the USDA, students have a lot of opportunities to get valuable lifetime experiences doing internships. Although, most of the students don't know about these opportunities so I started helping in USDA Info-Sections so more Hispanic minority students get the same opportunities I had.

In Puerto Rico, we are facing a big problem, food importations make 85% of the product consumptions and only 15% is produced locally. Things look different depending on the side through which you look at it. This scarce production makes Agri-Business students become future leaders in the food industry here because we have a lot of opportunities to develop a successful and profitable farm; we have a chance to become the fuel of Puerto Rico society. For students to be transformed into leaders, we need tools and experiences that make us valuable for our own business and for helping other farmers. The USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum is one of those valuable experiences that make Agri Business students grow as a better person and professional. For a person as passionate as I am for agriculture, having the opportunity to participate in this Forum is very important, it will help me understand the current situation of agriculture in the United States of America, and the problems we farmers and agronomists would face in the future. I believe that this Agricultural Forum is a lifetime experience that I will remember and cherish all my life. I have worked hard in these past years in College and in my farm to have an opportunity like this one, and I believe I am an excellent candidate for this learning experience. All the knowledge I will acquire in the Forum will not only help me, but also other students to learn how great it is to focus in a career in the agriculture field.