



# American agriculture is growing strong

Today marks National Agriculture Day, a time when producers, agricultural associations, corporations, universities, government agencies and countless others across America gather to recognize and celebrate the abundance provided by agriculture.

Why would individuals involved in agriculture volunteer time and energy to celebrate National Ag Day? If you're reading this, that question is probably moot! Like you, the Agriculture Council of America and its supporters are committed to increasing public awareness about American agriculture. As the world population soars, there is even greater demand for the food and fiber produced in the United States.

The National Ag Day program believes that every American should:

- understand how food, fiber and renewable resource products are produced.
- value the essential role of agriculture in maintaining a strong economy.
- appreciate the role agriculture plays in providing safe, abundant and affordable products.
- acknowledge and consider career opportunities in the agriculture, food, fiber and renewable resource industries.

### Why Celebrate Ag Day?

Americans need to understand the value of agriculture in their daily lives.

Here are just some of the key reasons why it's important to recognize - and celebrate - Ag Day each year:

- Increased knowledge of agriculture and nutrition allows individuals to make informed personal choices about diet and health.

- Informed citizens will be able to participate in establishing the policies that will support a competitive agricultural industry in this country and abroad.
- Employment opportunities exist across the board in agriculture. Career choices include:

- farm production
- agribusiness management and marketing
- agricultural research and engineering
- food science
- processing and retailing
- banking
- education
- landscape architecture
- urban planning
- energy
- and other fields.

- Beginning in kindergarten and continuing through 12th grade, all students should receive some systematic instruction about agriculture.

- Agriculture is too important a topic to be taught only to the small percentage of students considering careers in agriculture and pursuing vocational agricultural studies.

- Agricultural literacy includes an understanding of agriculture's history and current economic, social and environmental significance to all Americans. This understanding includes some knowledge of food and fiber production, processing and domestic and international marketing.

### Careers in Agriculture

The most obvious careers are directly related to the farm or ranch. But did you know that only 10 per-

cent of Americans are involved in traditional farming? If that is the case, then what other careers comprise the agricultural field? There are approximately 22 million people who work in agriculture related fields. Unlike agriculture of our grandparents' day, today's agriculture offers over 200 rewarding and challenging careers.

### Career Categories

Agricultural careers may be divided into various categories. These include: Agribusiness Management, Agricultural and Natural Resources Communications, Building Construction Management, Agriscience, Resource Development and Management, Parks, Recreations, and Tourism Resources, Packaging, Horticulture, Forestry, Food Science, and Fisheries/Wildlife.

### Growth Job Market

Today, there are 3.75 million Americans employed full- and part-time in agriculture, including forestry, fishing and other activities. In comparison, the tech sector supports 4.3 million jobs. If one were to look at food-related industries, the numbers jump way up. In fact, one in 12 American jobs is dependent on agriculture.

Looking ahead, the Bureau of Labor Statistics is predicting a 19 percent decline by the year 2022 in the number of farmers, ranchers and other agricultural managers. This compares with an 11 percent increase in jobs for all occupations. But the outlook for jobs in agriculture is more promising than it first appears. The projected decline in farmers points to the continuing

ability of the agriculture sector to produce more with fewer workers. By using drones, driverless tractors and other advanced technology, the farmer of the future will increasingly rely more on brains than brawn.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics notes an increasing number of small-scale farmers who have developed successful market niches that involve personalized, direct contact with consumers. The BLS also finds that completing a degree at a college of agriculture is becoming important for men and women who want to farm or work in a supporting role. What's most encouraging are prospects for good jobs in all of agriculture, from large, highly-capitalized operations to small farms that supply farmer's markets and local restaurants. This is confirmed in an Agriculture Department report that says college graduates will find good employment opportunities over the next five years in food, agriculture, renewable natural resources or the environment. Between now and 2020, USDA expects to see almost 58,000 average job openings per year for graduates with a bachelor's degree or higher in those areas.

The strongest job market is expected for plant scientists, food scientists, sustainable biomaterials specialists, water resources scientists and engineers, precision agriculture specialists, and farm-animal veterinarians. A strong market is expected for e-commerce managers and marketing agents, ecosystem managers, ag-science educators, crop advisors and pest control specialists.

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