

Ag Industry Is Fertile Ground For High-Skilled Positions

(NAPSA)—High school students interested in pursuing a career in agriculture will likely find job opportunities are ripe for the picking in the coming years.

According to a report from Purdue University, the U.S. will have nearly 58,000 high-skilled job openings per year in the food, agriculture, renewable natural resources and environmental fields between now and 2020. That compares to only about 35,000 U.S. students graduating with degrees in those fields per year for the same time.

One factor driving the demand for skilled workers is the diverse mix of challenges facing farmers. By 2050, U.S. farmers are expected to help increase global food production by 70 percent to feed a world population of 9 billion people. In the near term, farmers must also contend with lower commodity prices, cope with severe weather and labor shortages, and combat greater weed resistance and crop disease.

A new generation of skilled professionals is needed to help take farmers to 2050 and beyond. This includes not only the farm operators who will be expected to apply more sophisticated farming technologies and practices in the field, but the researchers, scientists and engineers who will shape the future of agriculture through research and innovations.

Another factor contributing to the robust job market is an aging workforce. According to a report from the STEM Food & Ag Council, nearly a quarter of industry professionals in advanced agriculture fields such as plant and soil science, food science and technology, and agricultural economics are age 55 or older. Meanwhile, more than 60 percent of principal farm operators are now age 55 or older, reports the USDA Census of Agriculture.

An influx of young talent will be needed in the next several years to replace these workers both in the field and in the lab.

So what can young people who are interested in agriculture do to prepare for an eventual career in the industry?

Find the Right Program: Students should be diligent in evaluating agriculture programs against their personal and career



Young people interested in agriculture are likely to find a surplus of job opportunities in the coming years.

interests. This means seeking out schools that not only offer the right degrees but also provide internship, student-involvement and research opportunities in areas relevant to them.

Get Support: The number of scholarships available to students from different organizations can be overwhelming. Ag-focused scholarships can be a good place to start, especially as companies seek to support more young people joining the industry. For example, BASF has partnered with the American Soybean Association, National Corn Growers Association and the National Wheat Foundation, some for as many as 10 years, to offer a variety of scholarships for students planning careers in agriculture.

“The agricultural industry can sustain success by investing in the future,” said Paul Rea, Senior Vice President, Agriculture Solutions, North America, BASF. “We are pleased to provide scholarships to bright, agriculture-passionate individuals to support their education and assure the sustainability of the industry in the years to come.”

These scholarships are available to college-bound children of the association farmer members. For more information and to apply, interested students should visit the association websites at <https://soygrowers.com/award-programs/soy-scholarship>, www.ncga.com/topics/education/college-scholarships and www.agrimarketing.com/s/100072.

The future of food security hinges on tomorrow’s ag workforce. Helping today’s students find their calling in the industry can improve the likelihood that key positions are filled—and ensure that a growing world is fed.