

# Future Farmers

## The Career Outlook For Ag Graduates

BY RITA BRHEL  
P&D Correspondent

This month, thousands of graduates from two- and four-year programs across the nation are leaving college campuses with agricultural degrees in hand, full of hope for a job in their career of choice.

A new report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, in collaboration with Purdue University, shows that not only are there plenty of positions open for new graduates, but that agriculture is currently one of the strongest career fields.

"There is incredible opportunity for highly skilled jobs in agriculture," said U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack in Washington, D.C. "Those receiving degrees in agricultural fields can expect to have ample career opportunities."

The USDA report shows a demand for an estimated 57,900 job openings per year in the agricultural industry as well as the related fields of food, environment and natural resources, and renewable energy. There is currently a significant shortfall – 22,500 jobs, in fact – in available graduates to fill these positions, with an average of 35,400 new graduates with a bachelor degree or higher in an agricultural program. Overall, on average most years, only 60 percent of job openings in agriculture or related fields are actually filled by graduates in these areas.

As with many career fields, the report projects that job growth will remain uneven within the agriculture and related fields, with some areas to struggle to find enough qualified graduates to fill openings and other areas to find an oversupply of job seekers.

The report forecasts that nearly half of the job openings will be in management and business. Another nearly third of the job openings will be in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The remaining available jobs are predicted to be in food production, biomaterials production, education, communications and government services.

According to the report, job seekers should expect to see a strong employment market for e-commerce managers, marketing agents, ecosystem managers, production agriculture and agribusiness educators, crop advisors and pest control specialists. Other positions expected to grow – though not as quickly – include plant scientists, food scientists, sustainable biomaterials specialists, water resources scientists, agricultural engineers, precision agriculture specialists and veterinarians.

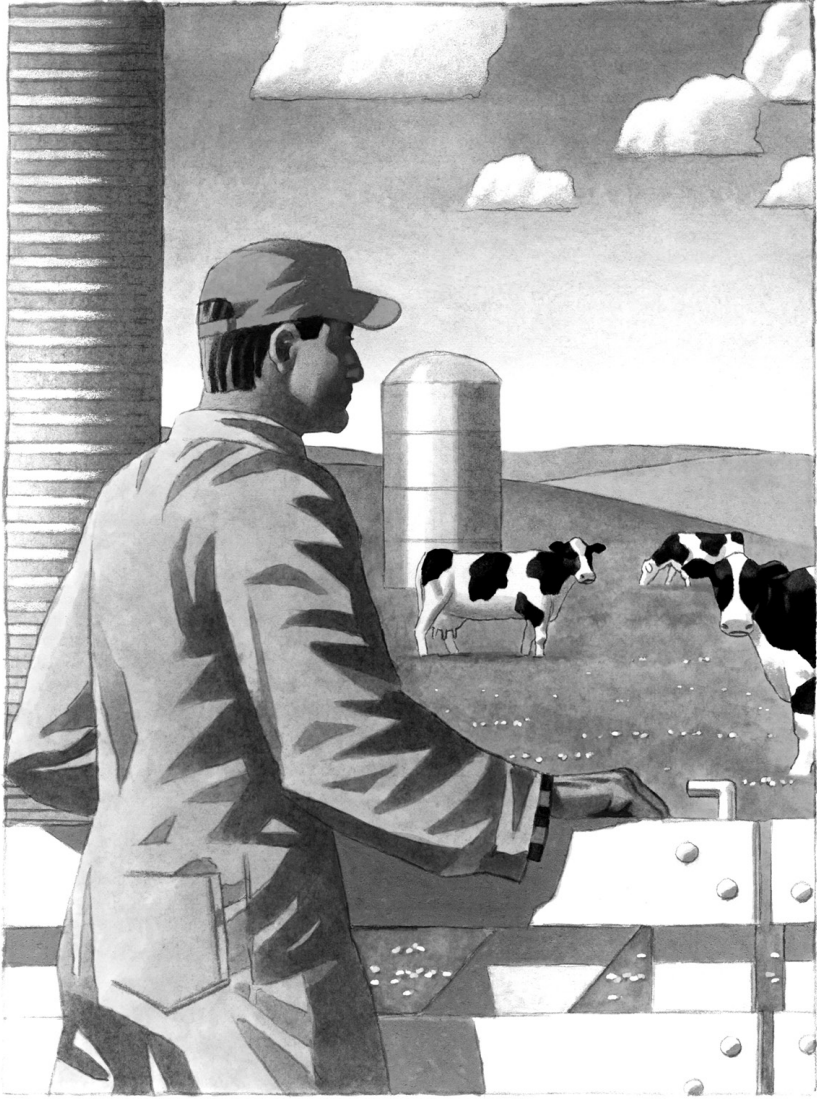


IMAGE: METRO GRAPHICS

Even as the U.S. economy continues to strengthen and the job market becomes increasingly competitive overall, the career outlook in the agriculture and related fields is expected to remain strong for the next five years, according to the report.

The report also details that women make up more than half of the graduates in the United States with degrees in agriculture or related fields, with 52 percent of bachelor degrees, 55 percent of master degrees and 48 percent of doctorate degrees. Women are significantly outpacing men with veterinary degrees as well as animal science, botany and plant pathology, conservation biology, entomology, environmental science, food science, nutrition science, sustainability studies and wildlife biology. Agriculture and related fields are unique among

science, technology, engineering and mathematics areas in that it does attract more women than men, according to the report.

Finally, the report advises that new graduates with the best opportunities for landing their dream job to be those with work experience in the field they are heading into as well as those who are willing to relocate to other states or even countries.

"Not only will those who study agriculture be likely to get well-paying jobs upon graduation, they will also have the satisfaction of working in a field that addresses some of the world's most pressing challenges," Secretary Vilsack said. "These jobs will only become more important as we continue to develop solutions to feed more than 9 billion people by 2050."

from a rural area, especially a school with a strong FFA chapter or a county with a strong 4-H program. And through the years, it's evident that college graduates from agricultural majors are able to find jobs, and good-paying jobs, in the agricultural field.

Now, how many of our area graduates are planning to return

to the area in time?

This is a bit harder to quantify, because many students who leave home for college to study agriculture, especially, do plan to return home in time or at least live in another rural area of the Midwest. And while not all agriculture-related careers are found in more rural areas, these are the jobs most likely to be located here.

Certainly other career paths may lead back home or to another rural area. Kids who grew up in rural areas, especially on the farm or ranch, may be more inclined to come back home or to a similar small town, even if they don't live on the farm. If there are within driving distance of a larger community, they could work in nearly any job. Even if they wanted to stay more local, there are still many jobs in education and health care, for example, in many of even the smallest of rural communities.

And finally, how many of our area

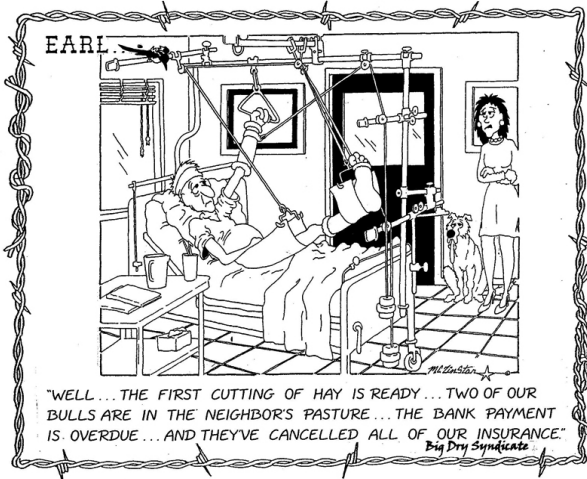
graduates are planning to join the family farming operation, right away or in time? Or, if that's not possible, how many are planning to start a farm, even if just the proverbial acreage?

It's important not to discourage any of our younger generation who does want to farm, whether going straight into farming after high school graduation and skipping college or returning to the farm after college graduation or even working for a decade to save up money to buy a plot of land and build up from there.

Some parents inadvertently discourage their children from farming when they talk about the financial aspect of the family business. It can be hard to balance debt, inputs and not-always-consistent income. But it can be had with even a very steady, W-2 job to manage finances, depending on the person's money skills.

What may be a better approach is not to talk about the hard realities of farming as if they are too much for a young person, but rather teach how that young person can better manage those realities. It may be way different than almost any other job your area graduate can get, but financial stability can be found in almost every job. Enjoyment in what you're doing, cannot.

I think it's important that everyone takes a part in not only supporting our area graduates to follow their career goals and life dreams, but to also remind them that one of the options is to come back to their hometown or another rural area, to live and possibly to farm if that's what they feel called to do.



### Extension Wheat Walks Begin May 26

BROOKINGS — The 2015 SDSU Extension Wheat Walks begin May 26 near Fort Pierre in the morning and near Wall in the afternoon. They will continue on May 27 near Winner in the morning and at 4 p.m. at Agland Cooperative near Delmont.

"The Wheat Walks provide an opportunity for wheat producers to interact with South Dakota State University Extension Specialists with regards to wheat production issues," said Emmanuel Byamukama, SDSU Extension Plant Pathologist.

During the Wheat Walks, producers will receive current information on soil fertility, pest management and agronomy. The schedule allows for plenty of time for small group/one-on-one interaction with specialists. There will be no charge to attend the events, thanks to sponsorship by the South Dakota Wheat Commission and South Dakota Wheat Inc. as well as local cooperatives. A meal and refreshments will be available at each location.

#### WHEAT WALK DETAILS

- **MAY 26** — 10 a.m.-noon: Morning Wheat Walk: Directions: Stanley County — From Fort Pierre go 5 miles west on S.D. Hwy 14 & 34, go north on Cut Across Rd until intersection with S.D. Hwy 1806. Take a left on 1806 and travel 5 miles. Look for the sign Kesslers Ranch and turn left onto that gravel road. The field is immediately to north side of the gravel road.

- **MAY 26** — 4-6 p.m. Afternoon Wheat Walk: Directions: Pennington County — From Wall go west on I-90 to Exit 107. Go north on Cedar Butte Road about 4-5 miles. Turn left on to gravel at 228th Street. Drive west on gravel (about 2 miles). Plots are on the north side of the road.

- **MAY 27** — 10 a.m.-noon: Morning Wheat Walk: Directions: Tripp County — From Winner, go 9 miles west on S.D. Hwy 18, 4 miles north of S.D. Hwy 183, and 1 mile west on S.D. Hwy 44/53.

- **MAY 27** — 4-6 p.m. Afternoon Wheat Walk: Directions: Douglas County — Meet at Agland Cooperative, 39833 U.S. Hwy 18, Delmont.

### Youth Dairy Cattle Judging Schools Set

BROOKINGS — SDSU Extension hosts Regional youth Dairy Cattle Judging Schools throughout the state beginning May 27 for youth looking to sharpen their skills in Dairy Judging.

Participants at these schools will learn to identify basic dairy cattle parts and correct structure, evaluate and rank cattle based on the Dairy Cow Unified Scorecard and will learn skills used such as decision making, note taking and delivering oral reasons, explained, Tracey Erickson, SDSU Extension Dairy Field Specialist.

Erickson will lead the educational sessions. Regional schools include:

- June 4: School will be held at 1:45 p.m. at Central Plains Holstein Show-Dairy Fest at the Swiftel Center (824 32nd Ave., Brookings) Driving Directions: Take exit 132 off of I-29, go east to 32nd Ave, then 1 Block north on 32nd avenue. Located on the north end of the Swiftel Arena.

- June 16: School will be held at 1 p.m. at Loren & Jackie Sprik's dairy (27984 372nd Ave., Geddes) Driving Directions: 4 miles south on Hwy 44/50 junction and 2 miles west on north side of road. Whisper -N-Creek Dairy Goats will also provide two classes of dairy goats to judge. Prizes will be awarded to judges.

### Farmer, Homemaker Award Noms Sought

BROOKINGS — The Eminent Farmer/Rancher and Homemaker Committee seeks nominations for the 2015 South Dakota State University Eminent Farmer/Rancher and Homemaker Award Program.

This year marks the 88th anniversary of the program which was founded in 1927. The intent of this program is to recognize citizens for a lifetime of leadership and service.

The nominees should have made significant contributions to their community, state and SDSU, and should be known for giving unselfishly of their talent, time and leadership. There is no age requirement, but the nominees must be living at the time honorees are notified. Nominations are confidential therefore nominees are not to be interviewed.

Husband and wife combinations may be nominated, but a separate nomination form is needed for each individual. If nominees were previously employed by SDSU, employment cannot have been within the last five years. Up to five letters of reference are also invited.

#### HOW TO NOMINATE

Official Eminent Farmer/Rancher and Homemaker brochures detailing the selection process and criteria and official nomination forms are available online at sdstate.edu/abs/honors/eminent. These forms are the basis for the selection process. To request a hard copy of the brochure and nomination form, contact Angela Loftesness at 605-688-6732 or angela.loftesness@sdstate.edu.

All nominations must be received by June 1, 2015. Send nominations to: EFRH Nominations; ATTN: Angela Loftesness, Dean's Office, ABS College SDSU, Box 2207, Brookings, SD 57007. Or, they can be e-mailed to angela.loftesness@sdstate.edu.

The awards will be presented at SDSU on Sept. 18, 2015, by the College of Agriculture and Biological Sciences and the College of Education and Human Sciences.

If you have questions, contact Angela Loftesness at 605-688-6732.

### Chamber To Host 10th Annual Ag Gala

The Yankton Area Chamber of Commerce Agri-Business Committee is holding the 10th annual Ag Gala on June 30 at the Pine Acres Kiwanis/4H Ice Arena at 709 Whiting Drive.

The Farm Family of the Year Award will be announced along with the eight P.A.Y. Scholarship recipients for 2015 from Crofton, Gayville-Volin, Hartington, Irene/Wakonda, Menno and Yankton.

Lt. Gov. Matt Michels is the master of ceremonies and South Dakota Secretary of Agriculture Lucas Lentsch is a speaker.

The Ag Gala begins at 5 p.m. and features a social hour, a Prime Rib dinner catered by Rollin' Smoke BBQ, a raffle, and a musical program by Vern Kaul, the East River Cowboy.

Sponsorships for this event are still available.

To register for tickets and/or tables of eight or if you are interested in a sponsorship, contact Carmen Bodden at Chamber@yanktonsd.com or 665-3636.

### Commentary

## Graduates: Hope For Rural America

BY RITA BRHEL  
P&D Correspondent

It's the time of the year when our high school seniors announce their plans for after graduation. It's a time of perhaps a little apprehension, reflections from parents on their child's last 18 years and definitely excitement for what the future holds.

I remember back when I was graduating high school. Little did I know where my journey would lead and how my life would turn out? All for good, but wow, way different than I could've imagined.

How many of our area graduates are choosing to attend college? Probably more now than ever before, though joining the military is definitely a valid alternative.

Nearly everyone agrees that a college degree is needed to obtain a steady job with a livable wage, though the opinion in favor of a four-year degree over a two-year-degree is less now than it was 16 years ago when I was filling out college applications. In fact, there are many jobs that can be had with a two-year degree that pay as well as – or in some cases, better than – a four-year degree.

How many of our area graduates are planning to go into an agriculture-related career?

This number seems to vary every year. Health care, education and business professional plans continue all be popular choices among recent graduates, but agricultural college majors do tend to be consistently high in students coming



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## Rural Dakota Pride Awards Offered

HURON — Helping women in her community has been Cindy Wilk's calling for more than 30 years. It began when her mother, Jan Manolis, was among a group of women to open a domestic violence shelter in Huron.

"Domestic violence is something that is very dear to my heart. Years ago there was no place for women to go for help. If they didn't have help from family or friends, there was nothing — no shelters or no counseling," explains Wilk, who serves as a volunteer advocate.

Today, thanks to the Jan Manolis Family Safe Center and numerous volunteer

advocates, not only do victims and their children (the shelter also helps men who are abused) have a safe place to stay if they are in an abusive situation, but they also have an advocate to help them move forward. "We make sure they are not alone," Wilk says.

As an advocate, she carries a shelter cell phone for two weeks at a time, answering calls from victims and helping them with anything they need. "We are there to let them know we are on their side."

In 2014, Farmers Union recognized Wilk with the Dakota Rural Pride Award.

"Rural communities depend on these unsung

heroes. They are the people who do what needs to be done," says Karla Hofhenke, Executive Director of South Dakota Farmers Union.

Each year, the Rural Dakota Pride Award recognizes five individuals who give back to their rural communities.

As an organization which supports South Dakota farmers and ranchers, Hofhenke explains that Farmers Union understands the integral connection between those who work in South Dakota's number one industry and their rural communities.

"One survives with the other," she says. "Without thriving communities, it's difficult to encourage young

people to return to their family's farm or ranch. Rural communities are key to the future of South Dakota's agriculture industry; which is why we like to recognize those individuals who help them thrive."

The 2015 Rural Pride nominations are due July 1.

South Dakota Farmers Union is currently accepting nominations for the 2015 Rural Dakota Pride Awards. Nominations can be submitted via the Farmers Union website, www.sdfu.org, or by contacting Hofhenke at 605-352-6761 ext. 114. The five awards will be presented during Farmers Union Day at the 2015 South Dakota State Fair.