

AROUND THE COUNTRY

# Millennials will take Agriculture to the Next Level

## Millennials will change the farming industry.

Known for their entrepreneurial spirit and the passion they show for their beliefs, this group of self-starters has the technical knowledge and confidence to carry agribusiness into the future. They desire careers in fields that are more than just interesting to them; they want to make an impact while doing something they love. Drawing these bright young minds into agriculture is essential to help the world find solutions to the problems of food security and global hunger.

## Ag Careers: Growing Crops & Ideas

Countless millennials fail to realize an agricultural career can mean so much more than working on a farm. Of the approximately 22 million Americans who work in agriculture related fields, only 10 percent are involved in traditional farming.<sup>1</sup> From Agribusiness to Resource Development and



Management or Food Science, there is a wide variety of opportunity for anyone interested in a career in agriculture. The next generation of farmers will bring innovation, technology, increased income and well-being for farms and their communities.<sup>2</sup>

## Do it. Say it. Share it.

This social media-savvy group can share the message of agriculture better than any generation before it. Since Gen Y is rarely without their smart phone or tablet, they can easily distribute information about farming, healthy eating and new Ag technology. They are one click away from their entire friend list. If we can improve our ability to recruit millennials into our industry, we'll no doubt be able to share our story on a much-larger scale.

## Start Young

But how do we do it? Education. It's the key to getting (and keeping) our youth interested in agriculture and the difference they can make through a career in this field. Get involved with programs like the National Association of Agricultural Leaders, National FFA Organization, Sustainable Agriculture Education Association, or 4H and help the next generation learn what a career in agriculture can do for them and their society.

<sup>1</sup> (2012, July 12). Retrieved August 6, 2015, from <http://www.agday.org/education/careers.php>  
<sup>2</sup> Paveliuc Olariu, C. (2014, March 21). GFAR: Why Agriculture Needs Young People. Retrieved August 11, 2015, from <http://foodtank.com/news/2014/03/gfar-why-agriculture-needs-young-people>

# CSA Programs “Open the Farm Gate”

Two years ago, Greg & Mariah Anderson<sup>3</sup> decided to take a chance on a new venture. They own Triple M Farm: Mariah’s Mums & More. Their venture? They became the first farm in Dewitt County, IL to offer their own community supported agriculture (CSA) program.

Why create a CSA? Mariah says the creation of their program stemmed from their desire “to connect consumers with a local product and open their farm gate to the community.” Members purchase more than just produce from the Anderson’s; they buy a share in the farm.

Developing and supporting a CSA program was no easy task. During their first year, Greg and Mariah signed up 25 members. Today, that number is 75. The work is hard and the hours are long but the benefit of providing for the community is worth it, says Mariah. “It’s really about connecting with our customers. At the end of the day, when I see a member post a photo of our produce on social media, that’s exciting.”

If you’re looking to expand your business and secure product sales, it might be time to open your own “farm gate” to your community.

## Interested in starting your own CSA? Follow these steps to get started:

<b>Visit the U.S. Small Business Association website</b> ( <a href="https://www.sba.gov/">https://www.sba.gov/</a> )	Find courses, articles and tips for building and managing your business
<b>Contact your state’s specialty growers association</b>	Get answers to questions you may have
<b>Find a mentor</b>	Learn from someone who already runs a business

<sup>3</sup> Mariah Anderson is employed by Growmark.



# Keeping Your Food Safe from Farm to Table



You take pride in being a farmer. The long hours, early mornings, and intense labor are worth it when the food you provide shows up on your neighbor's dinner table. Whether you raise beef cattle in Illinois, produce peanuts in Georgia or own an orchard in Oregon, you strive to provide a high quality, safe product for your customer.

The Beef Industry Food Safety Council (BIFSCo) formed in 1997. It brings together representatives from different areas of the beef industry. BIFSCo has two goals:

- *Recognize opportunities to keep food safe through every step of the production process*
- *Keep track of developing safety challenges and educate the industry as a whole about safety information and controls*

The beef industry contributes more than **\$550 million** to execute, preserve and confirm safety controls and handle product testing. BIFSCo has helped develop best practices for each part of the production process and holds annual Beef Safety Summits. The next summit will be held **March 1-3, 2016** in Austin, Texas.<sup>4</sup>

The U.S. peanut industry has worked with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control over the last two years to update their food safety practices. By adopting the USDA's voluntary code of Good Manufacturing Practices, the peanut industry now follows procedures specifically recommended for its processors, including regular sampling and testing for microbiological

contamination. The Peanut Foundation, the research arm of the American Peanut Council, works to:

- *Reduce production and processing costs*
- *Create a safe product*
- *Improve quality*
- *Educate consumers and the industry on their research<sup>5</sup>*

From the orchard to the packing house, the fresh produce supply chain contains many opportunities for contamination. The industry relies heavily on packing houses to preserve these goods and prepare them for distribution. Packing houses use process water to cool, clean and move products. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires these operations use potable water systems but to maintain potability, antimicrobials are added. Testing, sampling and temperature controls are additional steps used to prevent contamination of fresh produce but there are no definitive regulations on these steps today. The Hazardous Analysis and Critical Control Points ruling has been successful when used with other products, like red meat, and is slowly being adopted by the produce industry. Since the safety of produce is reliant on all steps in the supply chain, farmers and packing houses must work together to lower consumer risk.<sup>6</sup>

No matter what type of farm you run, food safety should always be at the top of your priority list. Build it into your routine so it's common practice instead of something you have to think about. That way, when your neighbors sit down to dinner, they have peace of mind knowing their food has been produced with quality and care.

<sup>4</sup> The Cattlemen's Stewardship Review: Connecting Our Vision and Values. (n.d.). Retrieved August 11, 2015, from <http://www.explorebeef.org/StewardshipReview.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> (n.d.). Retrieved August 12, 2015, from <https://www.peanutsusa.com/>

<sup>6</sup> Costa, R. (2015, March 18). The Packinghouse: Safety and Uses of Process-Water. Retrieved August 12, 2015, from <http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2015/03/the-packinghouse-safety-and-uses-of-process-water/#.VcuihrjVhBd>

# Pass it on Successfully, Part 2

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In our last issue, we provided you with tips on how to start your farm succession planning. **Lynn Barth** and his family recently worked their way through this process. His daughter, **Julie Walters**<sup>7</sup>, sat down with her father to ask him some questions about his experience.

## *What prompted you to start thinking about farm succession planning?*

I had been thinking about it for a while and had read articles regarding what can happen if you don't plan ahead. I am nearing retirement and started thinking about what would happen to the family farm if we didn't have a plan. I want to be able to transition the farm and ensure everything gets distributed as planned. No one in the family should have to go broke during that process.

## *What was the hardest part of the process?*

First, it was deciding that we needed to do something. Second, was trying to determine what was fair versus equitable having one child who is actively farming and another who works full time off of the farm but still has an interest in the continuation of the farm.

<sup>7</sup> Julie Walters is employed by the Illinois Farm Bureau.

## *How did you start the conversation with your family members?*

We have been talking about it for years but I eventually found a time when everyone was together and had a candid conversation regarding my succession goals and plan for the future.

## *Lead by example*

Julie says her family has been informally discussing farm succession for several years. Lynn looks to his father for inspiration. He discussed the succession of the farm early and often, which led Lynn to do the same with his children. These informal discussions helped lay the groundwork for the final decisions that were made. Julie and her brother are following suit and have already started talking about what the future of their farm will look like when they pass it on.

## *The takeaway?*

Start your conversations early. Remember, future generations will follow your example so the more prepared you are, the more prepared your successors will be when the time comes for them to start their own farm succession planning.

