

Nora Faris

I'm a millennial. Like many of my peers, I'm tech-savvy, ambitious, and adaptable. But *unlike* many of them, I'm pursuing a career in agriculture.

My college peers are more interested in the fields of science, technology, and communication than in fields of corn, soybeans, and wheat. Business and finance majors are drawn to Wall Street, not Main Street. Political science students have their sights set on the White House, not a farmhouse. When thinking of career options, many college students don't spend long thinking about agriculture—if they think about it at all.

There are hundreds of studies out there claiming to know what millennials want in a job—things like career mobility, independence, fulfilling projects, or collaborative work environments.

To me, the answer is clear. Millennials want careers in agriculture. They just don't know it yet. Getting young people interested in agricultural careers may be as simple as getting them to *see* in agriculture what they *say* they want.

Millennials *say* they like a challenge. They want careers that test their problem-solving skills. Agriculture is a logistical puzzle filled with problems needing solutions and questions needing answers. How will we grow the food for our growing world? How can we use *less* water and land to produce *more* food? How can we engage consumers when American culture is becoming increasingly removed from agriculture? We can solve all of these “hows” with a “who”—the millennials and young people ready to take on new, exciting challenges in food production.

Millennials *say* they want jobs with international impact. When it comes to careers with global reach, there's no business like agribusiness. From Argentina to Zimbabwe, there are endless career *and* infrastructure development opportunities for students interested in building agricultural systems while having cultural experiences. Already, my college agriculture career has taken me to South American soybean fields, European dairies, Canadian hog farms, and bustling global cities like Buenos Aires and Brussels. For students who want to go farther in their career, agriculture is a natural choice.

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Millennials *say* they want creative, technology-driven careers. Advances in the fields of biology, technology, and engineering are rapidly revolutionizing the agriculture and food production sectors. Doing bigger things requires thinking deeper thoughts, setting higher goals, and exploring wider interests. The latest generation of students is equipped to think in these bigger ways, bringing creativity and insight to the agriculture industry.

Millennials *say* they don't just want to make money. They want to make a difference. By tackling the problems facing our global food production and distribution systems, they have the chance to put food on everyone's tables—not just their own. Agriculture is more than a career. It's a calling, and it offers that sense of fulfillment many young people are seeking, both in their work and in their personal lives.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, there are about 60,000 high-skilled agriculture job openings in the U.S. each year and only 25,000 agriculture graduates to fill them. These days, agriculture is far more than farming. It's accounting, marketing, engineering, research and development, technology, logistics, and a hundred other fields rolled into one. By engaging students from a broad range of academic and professional disciplines, the industry can attract the new talent and the diverse perspectives needed to grow a better future for agriculture and our world.

To increase interest in agricultural careers, the industry must listen to what young people are saying, then showcase the sides of agriculture that speak to them—the opportunities for problem-solving, global reach, creative thinking, and inspirational impact. A career in agriculture should already make for an appealing option to many young people, based on what they *say* they want. They just need an opportunity to see it and explore it, whether through an internship, their college studies, or social media. Millennials know that doing “just good enough” has never done the world enough good. Agriculture allows millennials to recognize their purpose, doing greater work for the greater good.