

Farming has played a major role in defining my life, my family as a whole, and my entire community for as long as I can remember. Growing up on a farm, I've been showing cows ever since I could walk. My family milked around 70 registered Holsteins throughout my elementary and middle school years. Working on the farm from a young age, my parents instilled the values of hard work and responsibility from the start, while demonstrating the sacrifices that had to be made in order to keep the farm running smoothly. In the midst of middle school, my family made the difficult decision to sell our farm, move to a new house, and begin raising a small herd of show cattle. Instead of waking up at the crack of dawn each morning to milk cows, I would arrive home late from a basketball game to find that our 12 heifers in the backyard had to be taken care of. Just raising show cows as a teenager, I have been able to look at the dairy industry from a broader perspective. The amount of behind-the-scenes planning, coordinating, and problem solving that goes on in order to keep farms running is eye-opening, especially when considering careers within agriculture.

This is why agriculture is so important to the community; with over 10% of jobs involving agriculture in the United States alone, undeniably the basis of society. Even through difficult times, like a global pandemic, agriculture has not skipped a beat, and is indeed essential. Farmers also have unwavering responsibilities regarding the environment. Needing to work the land in order to feed their animals, farmers' care for the land extends beyond the current year's crop. Farmers must think ahead and plan for the future, because their own success depends on their ability to cultivate crops. Thus, good farmers are naturally upstanding stewards of the land, and all farmers have a responsibility environmentally.

Farmers protect the future generations' rights to clean air and water, just like their responsibility to ensure the safety of their workers, which is no easy task! In order to ensure that my workers' rights and well being are protected, I would first overview the legislation. For something to be guaranteed, it must first be put into law, and then acted upon. In the past, laws such as "The Right to Farm" and the Laborers Fair Labor Practices Act have provided farmers and their employees more freedom and fair treatment when working. If I didn't believe enough legislation was present to adequately protect my employees, I would organize, petition, and act upon what I believe would need to happen. I would also make sure the workplace is a safe environment, and put protocols into place that guaranteed my workers' safety and well-being. While I no longer live on a farm, I still show cattle (except this year) and work on several local dairy farms. Farming will always be an integral part of my identity.