

Farming

The Foundation of My Life, and Society

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The early years in childhood are considered to be the most important phase of development in life. Therefore, experiences from this time period shape not just the individual person, but by consequence the society of tomorrow as well. My entire life has been spent on our family farm. As a result, the values I live by and the experiences I have grown through have been largely ascribable to a childhood in an agriculturally influenced community. And even more effectively by the individual people who fostered that growth. I think especially of my late grandfather, who began our dairy farm many years ago when he emigrated from the Netherlands. Though he retired from the more strenuous farmwork when I was young, he never stopped growing things. This is especially evident in the fact he helped grow a stable level of pride in me for being a farmer. There is the sense of achievement from realizing that your hard work is yielding what feeds and clothes entire communities, but it goes beyond even that. Farming is an endeavor that will make you confident of your abilities and proud of your achievements, yet at the same time it will keep you humble. Not everything will go to plan, and the weather can change at any time, but you have the grit to change what you can and the flexibility to go with what you cannot. That was my grandfather's perspective, and now it is mine.

The environment is a topic close to my heart. I have grown up watching the alfalfa fields we plant become nurseries in the spring and summer for the fawns of whitetail deer, hidden beneath the rolling, ocean-like waves of the tall green grass. When the alfalfa is cut down in the fall, the turkeys swoop in to scour for insects just beneath the topsoil. There is a certain intimacy seeing such life and biodiversity everywhere on your property, in the wild areas and the orderly fields. As a farmer, you take on a role as a steward of the earth. It is important to care for the land you own and strive to leave it better than you found it. In this time of climate crisis, everyone has a call to do their part for our planet, and farmers have many great opportunities to do so. Acting on plans or modified farming techniques that will improve the air, water, and soil quality around you, as well as encouraging wildlife biodiversity in the form of native trees and pollinators, and working towards clearing dead or invasive species will yield benefits for both the farmer and the environment.

Farming, in all forms, is difficult work. It requires teamwork, extensive knowledge, and careful effort. To run a farm correctly, it is essential to hire good people who can cooperate with fellow employees to do the best job they can. This effort to hire the right people would be in vain, however, if you were unable to keep them due to not ensuring their rights and well being were protected. Fair wages would ensure that the employees were being paid justly, based on their title and work, and not unequally due to a discriminatory factor. Harassment claims would not be swept under the rug, but taken care of swiftly and effectively. Paid maternity or paternity leave would be mandated. I would also ensure that thorough training programs would be regularly provided to be certain the employees were updated and educated.

In conclusion, growing up in a farming family has had a tremendous impact on how I view myself, other people, and the environment. It has equipped me with the skills to confidently continue through life and to not take the little things for granted. I feel very blessed, and proud, to be a farmer.