



Contention that Ag Degrees are “Useless” Not Planted with Facts

Like downed corn, a declaration by Yahoo! writer **Terrence Loose** that a degree in agriculture is the most useless college degree in America doesn't have roots to stand on. Statistics from many major land grant universities and a host of recent studies clearly show demand for agricultural graduates is actually quite strong.

With placement rates exceeding 90 percent at agricultural colleges including Iowa State University, Purdue University, University of Illinois and Ohio State University, it's obvious employers don't think agricultural degrees are useless.

The **University of Minnesota's College of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS)** has an 83 percent overall placement rate within six months of graduation. “We hear from industry all the time that we need more graduates trained in the agricultural sciences. They tell us there just aren't enough agronomists and people knowledgeable in various areas of production agriculture to meet the demand,” says **Al Levine**, Dean of CFANS.

The demand for two-year agriculture degrees is strong as well. “We have six to seven job openings for every agribusiness graduate,” says **Kim Lippert**, agriculture department chair for Ridgewater Community and Technical College in Willmar, MN. The college offers degrees in agribusiness, agronomy tech, dairy management, GPS/GIS technology and farm operations and management. “The demand is high in all areas, but agronomy sales and service jobs are very hot now,” she says. “High placement rates for agricultural graduates are not uncommon across the country. The agricultural economy is strong and that is being reflected by the job opportunities for graduates with two-year or four-year degrees in these areas.”

This is borne out by a Georgetown University study showing that recent college graduates with degrees in agriculture and natural resources were among those with the lowest unemployment rates in the nation at 7 percent, surpassed only by graduates with degrees in health (5.4 percent) and education (5.4 percent).

With more than 7,000 students enrolled in an ag major, the **Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MNS-CU)** system has the largest number of people enrolled in preparation to be employed in agriculture in the state, according to **Richard Joerger**, system director for agriculture. This number includes 2,900 farmers enrolled in continuing education. The most popular ag majors were (1) farm and ranch management, (2) veterinary/animal health technology, (3) landscape and groundskeeping, (4) ag production operations, (5) agribusiness/agricultural business operations.

“In my travels around the state, companies are telling me there is an impending shortfall of workers in traditional agriculture and emerging agricultural fields,” Joerger says. “We especially need more people with passion, preparation and aptitude in the area of agribusiness, plant science, animal science, mechanical systems and food design and processing.”

HEALTHY FUTURE FOR AG CAREERS ROOTED IN GROWING DEMAND

In 2010, the USDA estimated that the annual number of job openings requiring a college degree with expertise in agriculture, food and renewable energy and the environment will increase by 5 percent from 2010-2015 compared to 2005-2010. USDA also projected over 54,000 college graduates will be needed each year to meet this job demand, with 74

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES FOR COLLEGE MAJORS

MAJOR	UNEMPLOYMENT RATES		
	RECENT COLLEGE GRADUATE	EXPERIENCED COLLEGE GRADUATE	GRADUATE DEGREE HOLDER
AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES	7.0%	3.5%	2.4%
SCIENCE- LIFE/PHYSICAL	7.7%	4.7%	2.2%
ARCHITECTURE	13.9%	9.2%	7.7%
HUMANITIES AND LIBERAL ARTS	9.4%	6.1%	3.9%
COMMUNICATIONS, JOURNALISM	7.3%	6.0%	4.1%
COMPUTERS AND MATHEMATICS	8.2%	5.6%	4.1%
EDUCATION	5.4%	3.9%	1.9%
ENGINEERING	7.5%	4.9%	3.4%
LAW AND PUBLIC POLICY	8.1%	4.5%	3.5%
SOCIAL SCIENCE	8.9%	5.7%	4.1%
INDUSTRIAL ARTS	—	4.7%	—
HEALTH	5.4%	2.2%	1.9%
PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK	7.3%	5.9%	3.2%
RECREATION	8.3%	4.5%	2.0%
ARTS	11.1%	7.1%	6.2%
BUSINESS	7.4%	5.3%	4.4%

American Community Survey 2009-2010, pooled sample. Recent college graduates are 22-26 years of age, experienced workers are 30-54 years of age. Graduate degree holders are limited to 30-54 years of age. Percent unemployed are computed based on total employed and unemployed.

percent of these jobs being in business and science occupations. USDA estimates that only 49,000 qualified graduates will be available each year to meet this growing demand, with about 29,000 coming from agriculture, food and natural resources programs at colleges and universities, and the balance from other college majors.

Far from being useless, ag degrees are in high demand at **Monsanto Company**, according to **Rodd Whitney**, a Monsanto training specialist and university recruiter.

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Member In Focus

Company: Faegre Baker Daniels • **Website:** www.faegrebd.com

Locations: Offices in Boulder, CO; Denver, CO; Washington D.C.; Chicago, IL; Fort Wayne, IN; Indianapolis, IN; South Bend, IN; Des Moines, IA; Minneapolis, MN; Beijing and Shanghai, China; and London, UK.

On January 1, 2012, Faegre & Benson, Baker & Daniels and B&D Consulting officially combined to become one firm with 12 locations and more than 800 lawyers and consultants serving the business and legal needs of clients worldwide.

**FAEGRE BAKER
DANIELS**

Our commitment to the Minnesota Agri-Growth Council:

We were one of the first law firms to become members of Agri-Growth and highly value our relationship with **Daryn McBeth** and his staff. We are committed to partnering with this very important industry advocate to accomplish the goals of the agribusiness companies in Minnesota.

Washington, D.C. - Public Affairs Resources

FaegreBD Consulting, our national advisory and advocacy firm, is based in Washington, D.C. and continues to serve clients across key sectors of the U.S. economy, including food and agriculture, government, health and life sciences, energy and environment, education, and financial services.

Your Business Is Our Business

The Faegre Baker Daniels industry team is organized in the way you organize your business. Our lawyers are designated as leaders of business segment areas and their primary role is to be deeply entrenched in your industry. In organizing our teams as you organize your business, we are much more effective and knowledgeable, and we can more quickly assist you with your legal needs. Our combination allows us to continue providing the highest quality of services and expertise required by our clients. The size and added capabilities of Faegre Baker Daniels give us the ability to devote more resources to larger projects, bring deeper and broader experience to complex matters and transactions, and provide greater expertise in certain niche areas. The combination also allows us to attract and retain the highest caliber of national legal talent. Ultimately, that helps us deliver better value to our clients.



Q & A with Kim Walker, head of the Food & Agriculture Industry Group: What does the merger mean for the food and agriculture industry in Minnesota?

Faegre Baker Daniels has been representing food and agriculture companies since 1912. We have over 150 lawyers serving clients in these industries. Our clients include many members of the Minnesota Agri-Growth Council. Our combination expands our national and international reach and enhances our capabilities in all of our core areas, as well as reinforces our heartland presence.

In what areas does Faegre Baker Daniels serve the industry and what are the supporting practices?

We offer a range of services with lawyers who truly understand both the legal and business landscape.

We serve the following industry segments:

- Food processing and technologies
- Food distribution
- Crop protection products
- Hospitality
- Agricultural retail and distribution
- Protein production and processing
- Grain products
- Seed products
- Agricultural finance
- Animal health products
- Beverage products

Supporting practice areas include:

- Food Litigation/Regulatory
- Agriculture Litigation
- Finance/Workout Bankruptcy
- Environmental
- Real Estate
- Employment
- Intellectual Property
- Immigration
- Appellate
- Corporate
- International
- Antitrust/PSA
- Franchise/Supply Chain



The Minnesota Agri-Growth Council is an advocate for the state's food and agriculture industry. Founded in 1968, the Council is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that represents the shared interests of its 200-plus members, which include food and agriculture businesses, organizations and producers, as well as the service industries that support them.

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In referring to the USDA study mentioned above, Whitney says, “The greatest asset we have is our people. When USDA reports there will be enough agricultural and natural resources graduates to fill only 54 percent of 54,400 open positions between 2010 and 2015, that really challenges major agricultural companies to find qualified workers. It means we have to go outside of our industry for talent.” He adds, “ Monsanto is all about feeding a hungry planet. Every night when you go to bed there are 210,000 more mouths to feed than when you got up. That’s a big challenge for agriculture to meet. How can feeding hungry people be useless?”

Steve Peterson, director of sourcing sustainability at **General Mills**, says the long-term trend at most retail food companies has been to become less ag centric and more consumer centric and that has meant fewer jobs for people with applied agronomic degrees. The pendulum may have swung too far, however. “Two trends – commodity inflation and sustainability – are awakening food companies like General Mills and others to say, ‘Hey, we need more people with a basic agricultural understanding,’” says Peterson. “Understanding how things are actually produced is increasingly relevant to companies because of the growing cost of commodities and the whole issue of sustainability and consumers wanting intimate knowledge of a product back to its source.”

While they account for a small portion of General Mills’ 35,000 employees worldwide, there are still significant opportunities for ag graduates in the areas of sourcing, ag research, food science, product development, quality assurance, health and nutrition, milling and dairy science.

MINNESOTA EMPLOYMENT PROJECTIONS BY AGRICULTURE-RELATED OCCUPATION			
Occupation	2009 Employment	2019 Employment	Growth Rate
Farmers and Ranchers	43,935	43,081	-1.9%
Agricultural Engineers	127	141	11.1%
Animal Scientists	139	156	12.2%
Food Scientists and Technologists	1,035	1,284	24.1%
Soil & Plant Scientists	619	638	3.1%
Foresters	701	736	5%
Agricultural and Food Science Technicians	890	917	3%
Agricultural Sciences Teachers, Postsecondary	215	247	14.9%
Farm & Home Mgmt. Advisors	69	82	18.8%
Supervisors of Landscaping Workers	2,164	2,569	18.7%
Pest Control Workers	367	423	15.3%
Landscaping & Groundskeeping Workers	14,747	16,996	15.3%
Pesticide Handlers Sprayers	1,118	1,205	7.8%
Tree Trimmers Pruners	490	588	20%
Supervisors of Farming, Fishing & Logging Workers	869	919	5.8%
Ag. Inspectors	295	328	11.2%
Animal Breeders	114	122	7%
Graders & Sorters, Agricultural Products	401	410	2.2%
Ag. Equip. Operators	633	704	11.2%
Farmworkers & Laborers- crops, etc.	7,783	8,244	5.9%
Farmworkers, Farm and Ranch Animals	4,057	4,057	0%
Ag. Workers, All Other	843	937	11.2%
Farm Equipment Mechanics	1,652	1,735	5%
Bakers	2,556	2,528	-1.1%
Butchers/Meat Cutters	2,572	2,591	0.7%
Meat, Poultry, and Fish Cutters	2,274	2,353	3.5%
Slaughterers and Meat Packers	5,321	5,471	2.8%
Food & Tobacco Roasting, Baking, & Drying Machine Operators	668	671	0.4%
Food Batchmakers	2,030	2,186	7.7%
Food Cooking Machine Operators and Tenders	552	551	-0.2%
Farmers and Ranchers	43,935	43,081	-1.9%

Source: Minnesota Dept. of Employment and Economic Development, 2009-19 Employment Projections

Kyle Uphoff, regional analysis and outreach manager for the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) describes agricultural careers opportunities in the state as steady. Minnesota employment projections for agriculture-related industries show an overall growth rate of 8.7 percent from 2009 to 2019. The table above shows the growth rate for various ag jobs in Minnesota.

“If you look at agriculture from a U.S. perspective, it is a relatively small industry, but that doesn’t mean it doesn’t have opportunities. Particularly, if you are located in an agricultural state,” says Uphoff. “The Yahoo! article took a myopic view of agriculture when in reality agriculture is very diverse. With an expanding world population and limited resources, people are expecting more from agricul-

ture than ever before and that will require more education than in the past.”

A recent study conducted by the Battelle Institute found that agriculture and agbiosciences are generating vital economic growth and job creation, particularly in the North Central United States. Minnesota is part of this 12-state region where agriculture accounts for \$125 billion in economic activity and 2.4 million jobs. The report noted that ten of the top twenty-five U.S. food manufacturers, two of the top five seed companies, two of the world’s pre-eminent ag equipment manufacturers and many leading animal health companies are headquartered in the North Central Region. Further, it’s home to 89 percent of total ethanol production. The region is becoming the incubator for new “green” agriculture-related jobs in biobased food, health and energy products.

Quoting from the report, “Many of the greatest and most pressing challenges facing humankind have their solutions rooted in modern agriculture and agbioscience. There is no other arena of economic activity, or field of science and innovation, that so directly addresses human survival and quality of life, global economic development, and prospects for an environmentally sustainable future.”



So yes, graduates in agriculture are in demand and are desperately needed to find solutions to the key challenges facing our world. ●

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EVENT CALENDAR: 2012

APRIL

18: Policy Luncheon

19: Immigration Hiring & Compliance Training

NOVEMBER

13: Annual Meeting & Speakers Conference

Legislative Measures Affecting Food and Agriculture this Session at the State Capitol



AN UPDATE FROM AGRI-GROWTH PRESIDENT, DARYN MCBETH

The **Agri-Growth Council** has been busy this Legislative Session as several measures have arisen that would affect the food and agriculture industry. The largest bill is the Omnibus Agriculture Policy Bill that passed out of the House Agriculture Committee in early March

and is likely headed for an April conference committee with its companion bill from the Senate. The 60-plus page bill contains mostly technical changes requested by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, though legislators are adding additional policy provisions along the way.

The largest portion of the omnibus bill contains changes to enforcement authority of Minnesota's food safety laws. The measure would establish a new Chapter 34A with new consolidated definitions of "food," "frozen food," "readily perishable food" and descriptions of when those foods become "adulterated" or "misbranded," which can bring various enforcement actions from the Department of Agriculture. Specifically, the new language would allow the Department to apply civil penalties for certain violations, which is a new enforcement tool added to existing administrative and criminal enforcement authority.

While commercial feed provisions would not be completely unaffected by the new Chapter 34A, the bill would exempt current Chapter 25 (Commercial Feed) from the new enforcement and

civil penalty provisions. This has been the result of Agri-Growth Council efforts facilitating an industry working group in discussions with the Department of Agriculture and legislators over a two year period. Long standing precedent exists for keeping commercial feed measures and certain (human) food definitions separate, especially concerning the application of civil penalties and enforcement.

Other legislature measures the Agri-Growth Council is participating in include proposed changes to state livestock permit requirements to require the Pollution Control Agency to conform with federal Clean Water Act (NPDES permit) standards; extension of certain exemptions to the state biodiesel mandate and extension of the state renewable fuel (ethanol) mandate; environmental permit streamlining including authorization of new measures to expedite certain applications; proposed bans on antibiotics in animal feed and bisphenol-A in certain food containers; and proposed exemptions to state wetlands regulations for farmers complying with farm program conservation requirements.

The Agri-Growth Council is also engaged in discussions concerning the potential legislative or governor appointment of a **University of Minnesota** regent to fill the seat of former House Speaker **Steve Sviggum** who resigned in mid-March. Typically at least one of the 12 members of the Board of Regents has strong agriculture background. Presently this expertise is lacking on the Board due to the resignation of Sviggum and former Regent and farmer **Dallas Bohnsack**. Former Agri-Growth Council chair **Allen Anderson**, retired from **CHS Inc.**, was a finalist recommended by the Regent Candidate Advisory Committee last year and remains a viable candidate with Agri-Growth's strong support. ●