

# Career Opportunities in Agricultural Business

## Lesson 2: Career Opportunities in Agricultural Business

This lesson focuses on career opportunities in agricultural business: the types of careers available, the educational requirements, and benefits available in agricultural business. This lesson also investigates the means and opportunities for succeeding in agricultural business.

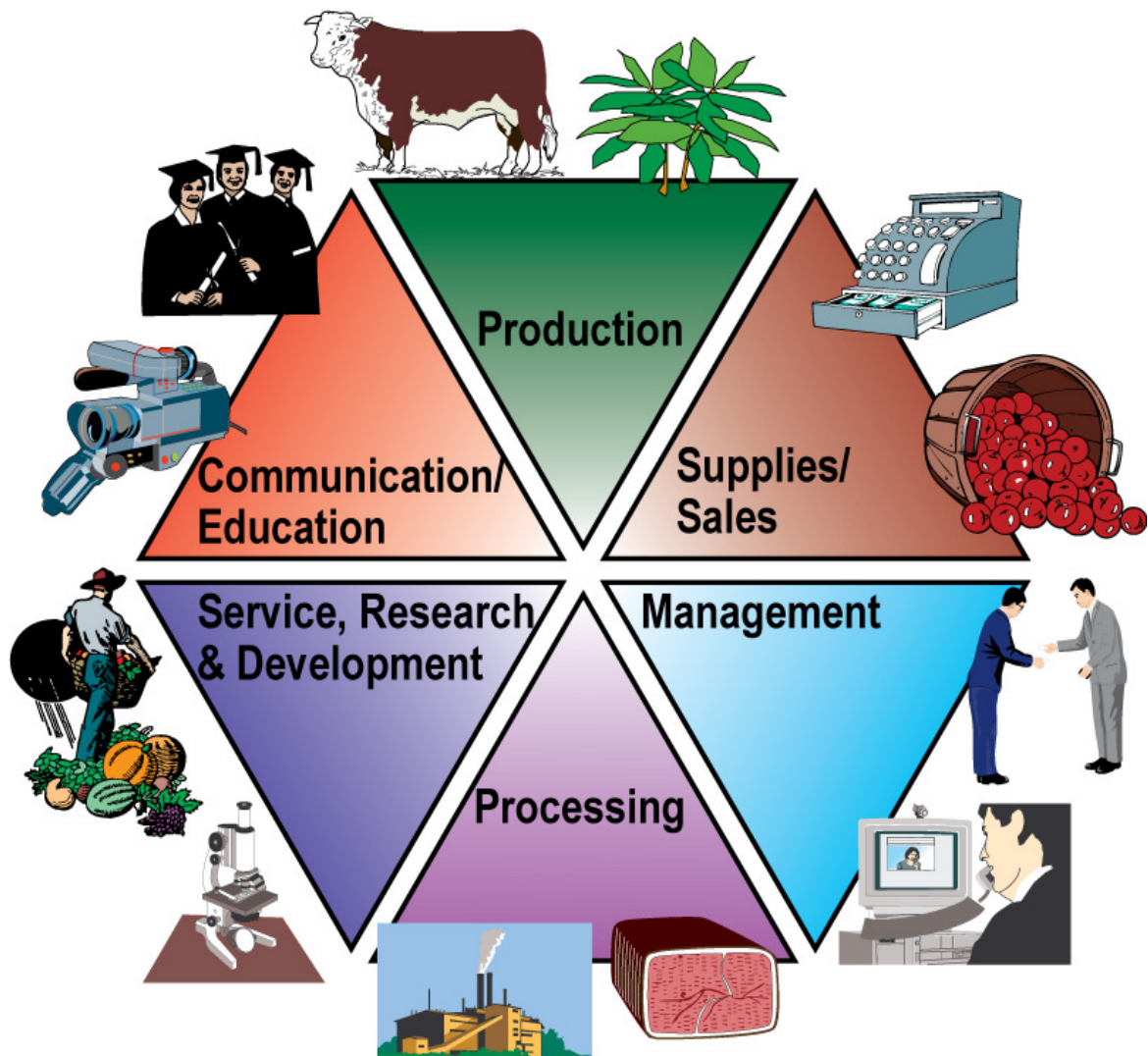
### Careers in Agricultural Businesses

The careers available in agricultural business are so numerous and diverse, it would be impossible to list them all. This lesson has divided these occupations into the following categories: production, supplies/sales, management, processing, service/ research and development, and communication and education.

Figure 2.1 illustrates six major career clusters in agricultural business.

Some examples of careers in production are crop producer, livestock producer, vegetable/fruit producer, aquaculturist, greenhouse grower, and farm laborer. A few of the occupations dealing with supplies/sales could involve selling seed, feed, equipment, or pesticides. Examples of management jobs are human resources, plant manager, and sales/marketing. Those who work in the processing category may be millers (soy flour, rice, wheat, etc.), canners, and those employed in ethanol plants and the meat processing industry, to name a few. Service and research and development positions include such jobs as veterinarian, fertilizer and seed applicators, custom baler, lawn and landscaping. Other

Figure 2.1 - Agricultural Business Career Clusters



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positions within this category include agricultural scientist, agricultural engineer, and agronomist.

The communication and education field includes careers in agricultural journalism, human resources, public relations, and advertising. Education in industry (training and development), teaching, and other education-related careers are also available in agriculture, such as university extension specialist and 4-H youth specialist. Other job opportunities may be found in agricultural company-sponsored in-services and training and adult education.

### Educational Requirements for Careers in Agricultural Businesses

Educational requirements differ for the various careers within agricultural business. Also, each company may have its own minimum qualifications for the same type of job. Here are a few examples of agriculture-related jobs and the typical level of education required for obtaining them.

For professional careers a bachelor's degree, master's, or a Ph.D. (also called "doctor of philosophy," or "a doctorate," which is the highest academic level) is usually required. Examples include agronomist, agricultural chemist, conservationist, veterinarian, and agriculture teacher.

Experience in a specific area is required for management positions, depending on the business and its policies. Most management positions require a bachelor's degree. However, some companies offer a manager-in-training program that prepares the employee for the position so prior education is not necessarily required. Examples include agricultural sales manager, fertilizer plant manager, and farm machinery shop supervisor.

A vocational school usually offers the education needed to attain technical positions because the curriculum focuses on job-related skills. Some examples of technical occupations are florist, surveyor, and livestock manager, and farm machinery mechanic.

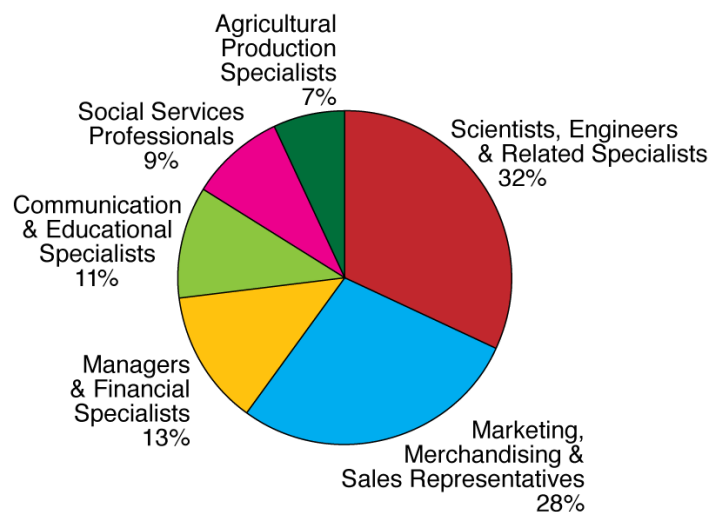
On-the-job training may be sufficient to perform in skilled positions. Some examples of jobs that require a specific skill include butcher, welder, and machine operator.

Unskilled jobs require no specialized training, education, or experience. The ability to perform these jobs can usually be achieved in a short period of time. Some examples are fruit picker, feed delivery helper, corn detassler, and greenhouse attendant.

With the rapid growth of technology and increased competition in the workplace, it becomes increasingly imperative to sustain an interest in lifelong learning. Keeping up with technological advances, such as updated software programs, enables a person to adjust to the unique needs within the workplace. Opportunities for learning are everywhere: on-the-job training, classroom, instruction, or in collaboration with coworkers. Agricultural journals, county cooperative extension agencies, and various professional organizations provide up-to-date information concerning agricultural business.

There is a direct connection between the level of education a person earns and the availability and quality of employment he/she may obtain. According to a 1999 report from USDA and Purdue University, students with a background in science and marketing skills will be in demand the most for the next 5 years. (See Figure 2.2.) Employment in engineering, science,

Figure 2.2 - Future Demand for Agricultural Careers



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plus all the specialties of these disciplines, will account for 32% of the job opportunities. Merchandising, sales, and marketing will capture 28% of the available employment. Food scientists, landscape horticulturists, plant geneticists, and outdoor recreation specialists represent professions that are expected to be in demand as well. Each of these professions requires higher education or on-the-job training.

### Benefits in Agricultural Business Careers

Many agricultural businesses offer employees a wide variety of benefits, which are financial programs, additional opportunities, or incentives in addition to salary. However, the diversity of agricultural businesses means that benefits will vary from one job to the next. Most part-time positions offer little or no benefits. Table 2.1 lists some of the basic benefits every full-time employee needs to understand, as well as additional benefits that may be unique to a particular company. Once hired, each person should investigate how specific benefits apply to him or her.

Table 2.1 - Benefits Available in Agricultural Careers

General Benefits	Additional Benefits
Health Insurance	Outdoor Work
Dental Insurance	
Disability	Wellness Program
Sick Leave	
Family Leave	Opportunities to Travel
Periodic Pay Raises	
Profit Sharing	Career Development Programs
Paid Vacation/Holidays	
Family Benefits	Tuition Assistance
Training Opportunities	

Many agricultural businesses provide health-related benefits to employees. The employer may pay a portion of the employees' medical bills through health and dental insurance. If employees become disabled as a result of a work-related accident, the employer may pay for part of their care. In addition, employees may be granted a certain number of paid sick days per year. Family leave is granted to individuals who require time off to care for relatives.

Financial benefits are also available in many agricultural businesses. Periodically, the employer may review employees' performance and determine if a raise in salary is appropriate. In profit sharing, a portion of the company's profits is distributed among all employees. Some companies also pay employees for a certain number of vacation days per year and for designated holidays.

Some companies also offer benefits to family members, such as membership to a gym. Often, employers enable employees to take classes or other training opportunities to enrich their knowledge.

### Means and Opportunities for Advancement in Agricultural Business

Virtually every company offers different incentives and unique means to grow as an employee. Some offer a high starting salary with little opportunity for advancement; others start with a lower salary but have great opportunities for advancement. Several opportunities for advancement are available to employees, as described below.

While still in school, students who participate in a job shadowing program or work with a mentor in an agricultural business have the opportunity to explore the possibilities of working in that career. This exposure helps students determine if that occupation truly suits their interests and aptitude. As part of this experience, students typically learn how to develop a portfolio and résumé, which helps them identify specific skills required for the job.

Part-time jobs can help high school or college students gain experience in a field that interests them. These jobs may offer the opportunity to advance to full-time employment, and they can improve students' chances of getting better jobs at another company in the future.

Internships offer students an excellent opportunity to work alongside experts in the field and to learn more about a particular career or company. Internships may be paid or unpaid, and they offer the possibility of securing a job with the company in the future.

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Some companies offer on-the-job training that may lead to better, higher-paying positions that offer increased responsibility.

Opportunities for advancement also come to those who pay attention to their job performance. Employees who do a good job and prove themselves to be responsible and capable are more likely to be offered promotions than those who do not. Individuals in the sales/services sector receive higher pay and advancement if their sales records are high. If a salesperson advances, he or she may then target corporate clients. To attract higher-paying clients, the salesperson must exhibit effective sales skills, work hard, and demonstrate a commitment to the company.

The following examples illustrate how an employee might be promoted in three different agricultural businesses.

While studying horticulture at a local community college, Logan also worked part time at Jackson's Nursery and Landscaping Services. This job has given him the opportunity to learn more about working with plants than he might have learned in school. Logan's combination of job experience and education has made him a valuable employee, and the company has offered a full-time position when he graduates.

Katie became particularly interested in agronomy while taking a plant science course at a university. After a little research, she learned that Crop Quest offers summer internships that would allow her to work side-by-side with agronomists and gain hands-on experience scouting fields. She discovered Crop Quest's web site and learned that if she becomes an intern she will learn to write field reports and recommend such things as seed, fertilizer, and agricultural chemicals. Katie applied for the internship and was accepted. Crop Quest was impressed by her knowledge and her eagerness to learn. After the internship, Crop Quest encouraged Katie to apply for a full-time agronomist position once she graduates from college.

After working at Premium Standard Farms for 2 years, Joe has proven himself to be a reliable, capable worker. He would like to be promoted to a manager position,

but first he must complete the company's on-the-job training program for managers. As a manager trainee Joe must complete 6 weeks of training in each of the following production areas: nursery, farrowing, breeding, and gestation. These sessions do not have to be completed in any specific order, but a checklist must be filled in for the skills and knowledge Joe has gained in each area. After each of the four areas has been completed, the manager-in-training must spend 3 weeks as an assistant to the manager. At this time Joe would be responsible for filling out forms and completing the manager's daily activities under the manager's supervision. After 3 weeks of assisting the manager, Joe finally became eligible to apply for a manager position. If a position becomes available, Joe may interview for the job.

Rick has had various jobs, all of which have helped him develop his sales skills. After being dissatisfied with his previous job, Rick decided to apply for some sales positions at different food production companies. Hormel Foods was impressed by his résumé and hired Rick as a salesperson. Rick worked very hard, and with his help, the department's sales team increased its sales records dramatically. Because his pay was based partially on commission, Rick was soon making more money than he was when he started. Hormel rewarded Rick by offering him larger sales accounts, including a few of Hormel's corporate clients. With this increased responsibility came even more opportunity for Rick to earn a higher commission.

### Summary

Careers in agricultural business are generally divided into six basic categories: production, supplies/sales, management, processing, service/research and development, and communication and education. Educational requirements vary according to each career. Sustaining educational growth is well advised in most agricultural businesses in order to succeed. Each occupation usually offers benefits. Some, such as dental and medical coverage, are typical; others are additional and unique to the career, such as working outdoors or traveling. The means and opportunities for advancement in agricultural business are as diverse as the careers in agricultural business.

## Career Opportunities in Agricultural Business

### Credits:

“Career Opportunities Abound in Agricultural Field.”  
<<http://www.ageducate.org/careers/>>  
(3-7-01)

“Crop Quest Agronomic Services.” <<http://www.cropquest.com/cbi.html>>  
(12-29-00)

“Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in the Food & Agricultural Sciences. United States, 2000-2005.” Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Purdue University School of Agriculture. 1999.  
<<http://www.agcom.purdue.edu/AgCom/homepages/jasmund/employ.pdf>> (3-7-01)

“Hormel Foods.” <<http://www.hormel.com/Hormel/career.nsf>> (12-29-00)

“Premium Standard Farms Employment Opportunities.”  
<[http://www.psfarms.com/employment\\_opportunities.html](http://www.psfarms.com/employment_opportunities.html)> (12-29-00)

Ricketts, Cliff and Omri Rawlins. Introduction to Agribusiness. Albany: Delmar Thomson Learning, 2001.

Smith, Marcella, Jean M. Underwood, and Mark Bultman. *Careers in Agribusiness and Industry*. Danville: Interstate Publishers, 1991.

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