

# Agriculture Beyond Farming

Today the meaning behind the word “Agriculture” varies from person to person. To some people, it may mean food or animals, but to others it may mean something deeper like culture or family.

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Round Barn at University of Illinois captured by Calyssa Richie.

Growing up I was surrounded by agriculture. I spent a lot of my days at my grandparent’s farm walking sheep and riding in tractors. I was also involved in different clubs such as FFA and 4H. It was all enjoyable, but I never really had a full understanding on what exactly agriculture really was beyond the farm. All I could relate the word to was livestock, food and tractors.

When I applied here, at the University of Illinois, I was hesitant on what I wanted to choose as my major. What was I passionate about? What did I appreciate? My great-great grandfather and more than 15 other family members from several generations graduated from the University of Illinois; the majority of my relatives graduated from the College of Ag (ACES). Members of my family have become teachers, farmers, physicians, genetic corn engineers, hotel managers, crop insurance representatives, all beginning with studies on the south side of the quad. Initially, I wasn’t sure if I would fit into this honored family tradition. Did I want to be involved in agriculture? However, I solidified any unnecessary doubt after a visit to the U of I. I met extraordinary faculty and saw the dedication and importance of the program.

When I discovered the Agricultural Communications (Ag Comm) Major in the College of ACES, it stood out to me. Did I really find a major that encompasses all of my favorite hobbies? Photography, graphic design, drawing, speaking, writing, traveling, studying nutrition and meeting new people are the top of my list of ‘Favorite Things to Do’. An Ag Comm degree has these savvy hobbies wrapped up into one profession. Becoming an expert in agricultural topics while advancing my skills in the fine arts and media makes an Ag Comm degree attractive.

Whenever I tell people what my major is Agricultural Communications they look confused and ask, “Oh do you talk to farm animals?” or “So, what do you plan on doing after college with that major?” At first, I did not know precisely how to explain it or what my future entailed. It made me realize how many people were uneducated about the full meaning of agriculture, including myself. That is when I decided to do research on agriculture today.

When I asked my roommate from Chicago, “What is agriculture?” her response was “I think agriculture includes farmers, farms, food and animals”. Today, it is common for one to associate agriculture with the production of basic food and crops. This is true, but as the

economic development as increased, there are more aspects of agriculture that people are not aware of. Farming may be the foundation, but agriculture includes more than farming. It includes things such as forestry, food, environment, travel, wineries, arbitrary, etc. It also includes techniques such as marketing, advertising, journalism, sales, and more. Agriculture is crucial in the life of an economy. It is the backbone of our nation. Not only does it provide food and raw material, but it also provides employment and large opportunities.



Image by Calyssa Richie

Agriculture supplies jobs and opportunities for people throughout the world. Besides farming, there are hundreds of other job opportunities within agriculture such as landscaping, advertising, sales, journalism, teaching, business, food and animal science, and more. The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture states, “Agriculture productions accounts for more than \$135 billion in total economic activity and nearly 580,000 jobs across the Commonwealth”. Agriculture provides so many different opportunities for careers and hobbies. It also educated people on important current news. Recently there has been a lot of news and talk about the combination of Monsanto and Bayer, GMOs, food labeling, 2018 Farm Bill and even harvest. Being educated about these topics through social media, tv or news helps the agricultural industry educate others on important information in the field. Agriculture also provides for our future. Without agriculture in the past, we would not be where we are today. There are many different ways whether it be through social media, advertising, news, family farms, it all plays a role in our nation.

With my major in Agricultural Communications, the opportunities are endless. Throughout my next few years here at U of I, I know I will learn so much more about the endless facts about agriculture that will help me educate others around the world whether it is through marketing, advertising, journalism or news broadcasting. Overall, despite what background you come from, whether you grew up on a farm or grew up in the city, agriculture is something that everyone is involved in. Little do you know, we are all surrounded by agriculture.

### Works Cited

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