

# AGRICULTURE: FOOD FOR LIFE

Essay Winner: 7th – 9th Grade

By Audrey Teaster

Farmers feed the world. It is safe to say that farming is one of the most important jobs on the planet. Farmers provide products that all humans need and benefit from. However, most of us take farmers and agriculture for granted. If we stop and take a minute, it wouldn't take long to realize the lasting effects and many advantages of modern farmers and farming. We would see that agriculture is food for life.

Agriculture is defined as the science or practice of cultivating the soil, producing crops, and raising livestock. Farms provide homes and food for all kinds of animals and creatures. Farmers make it possible for these animals to have their young in a safe environment, ensuring successful future generations. Farms also encourage growth of flowers, trees and other plants.

Farmers also make other successful careers possible. Not long ago, strict rural lifestyles were common. People owned and worked on farms that provided their families with food. It took a lot of manual labor to feed even a single family. Today, modern machines and technology allow for more output. Without the need for constant manual labor on the farm, farmers and their families are able to seek out other careers and activities. They are able to go to college, study anything they want, and get other jobs because they don't have to worry about working the land.

Furthermore, farmers who come back to the farm after getting their college degrees bring back with them new knowledge to apply to the agricultural lifestyle. They have a greater understanding of the soil, the livestock, trees

and plants of the area, and the machines that cultivate the land. They are able to apply this newfound knowledge to make the farm bigger and better than it was before.

Many times, people forget how much of the daily lives include aspects of agriculture. Not only do farmers grow the crops we need for survival, they supply us with things that make our everyday life more enjoyable. Cotton farmers provide the cotton that is used in the durable clothes we wear, the comfortable blankets we use when we sleep, and the soft linens we use after we shower. Coffee, tea and sugarcane farmers provide products that are used across the United States every day. Tree farmers provide the timber that makes the paper products we use on a daily basis and the houses we live in. Also, the replacement trees that the farmers plant assist in reducing the dreaded greenhouse effect because they absorb carbon dioxide.

When we think about the word life, we usually think about the time from birth to death. Webster's Dictionary gives another definition to the word, "a way or manner of living." Agriculture is without a doubt connected to our manner of living, in ways most of us take for granted. Not only does agriculture provide necessary food for our body, it improves almost every other aspect of our lives. Agriculture is the foundation of our civilization, and is ever present. It is these things that certainly make agriculture food for life.

# AGRICULTURE: FOOD FOR LIFE

## Essay Winner: 10th – 12th Grade

By Lauren Garlits

Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States and the author of the Declaration of Independence, once stated, "Agriculture is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals, and happiness." Agriculture is important because it affects every area of our lives. The production of food is the most vital part of agriculture, because if farmers do not have successful crops then we don't eat. Because agriculture, specifically food production, is so essential to our lives, we should understand the effect that it has on our economy and the need to educate for the success of future generations.

Agriculture is the base of our economy and plays a big part in helping our economy grow. The United States exported \$129.7 billion of agricultural products in 2016, according to the USDA. Agriculture is a livelihood for many families, employing 21 million people in agriculture and food sector industries in 2015, as stated by the USDA. That is a big number, but in the 2008 census less than 2% of the population was directly employed in agriculture. Can you believe that in 1870, 50% of Americans were farmers?

The percentage has dropped mostly because of advances in technology. Today's technology has improved agriculture so much that better quality and larger quantities of food can be produced with very little manual labor. Many crops are now disease and drought resistant and can be planted, cared for, and harvested by modern equipment. Technology has allowed farmers to think "outside of the field" to discover the science of other food production methods, like aquaculture, hydroponics, and aeroponics.

In the relatively short amount of time that the United States of America has existed, our farmers have made our nation one of the most productive in the world.

George Washington Carver is known for his ingenious inventions made to benefit farmers and for his curiosity about God's creation. He said, "I wanted to know the name of every stone and flower and insect and bird and beast. I wanted to know where it got its color, where it got its life – but there was no one to tell me." People should be educated about how their food is grown or produced and how to be good stewards of our world. My generation and generations to follow are the future caretakers of our planet. "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest" was the very accurate statement by one of our wisest founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin. In 2012 one-third of American farmers were over 65 years old. Teaching younger people and children about all the fascinating aspects of agriculture will make them excited to become the next farmers in our county and to become full time stewards of our beautiful land. Take Benjamin Franklin's advice and invest your time and energy into securing the future of agriculture by educating the next generation.

By understanding the effect that agriculture has on our economy and the need for education we can ensure success for future generations. We should appreciate the hard work and dedication of our farmers. Like President Dwight D. Eisenhower stated, "Farming looks mighty easy when your plow is a pencil and you're a thousand miles from the corn field." So, the next time that you see a farmer, make sure to thank them.