

# *Nebraska Agricultural Education & FFA Career Handbook*



# What is agricultural education?



*Agricultural education is a school-based program that prepares you for careers in agriculture, food and natural resources.*

*The three components of agricultural education tell our story.*



## **INSTRUCTION**

The lead circle and base foundation in the agricultural education system is formal classroom and laboratory instruction in over 30 available courses.

Agriculture teachers work hard to make these classes experience based and relevant to careers in the agriculture industry.



## **SUPERVISED AGRICULTURAL EXPERIENCE**

Agricultural education students are guided in developing a Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) to develop skills and gain knowledge of the agriculture industry.

Student SAEs include research projects, job shadowing experiences, jobs held or businesses started by students. All SAEs relate directly to agriculture.



## **FFA**

FFA is the organization for students enrolled in agricultural education and seeks to benefit students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

FFA allows students to compete, participate, and receive recognition in agricultural career skills development and leadership programs.



## What happens in the classroom?

Agricultural education instruction is taught by a certified agriculture teacher who holds a degree in agricultural education from a college or university. They are dedicated to professional development and staying up-to-date on the rapidly changing global agriculture industry.

You will learn about the Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources career pathways in your introductory course. You'll then continue on to intermediate and capstone level courses, building upon what you learned the previous year. The pathways provide a guide for you to follow what interests you most! Your agriculture teacher will also integrate FFA and Supervised Agricultural Experience concepts and principles into your classes.

## COURSE OPTIONS AND PROGRAMS OF STUDY

### Introduction to Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources

(introductory course taken by all agriculture education students)

• intermediate course    + capstone course

#### **ANIMAL SYSTEMS PATHWAY**

- Animal Biology
- + Large Animal Management
- + Companion Animals
- + Veterinary Science
- + Equine Science
- + Biotechnology

#### **POWER, STRUCTURE & TECHNICAL SYSTEMS PATHWAY**

- Power, Structure & Technical Systems Fundamentals
- Welding
- + Power & Technology
- + Structural Systems
- + Metals & Fabrication

#### **NATURAL RESOURCES SYSTEMS PATHWAY**

- Natural Resources
- + Advanced Natural Resources
- + Wildlife Management

#### **FOOD PRODUCTS & PROCESSING SYSTEMS PATHWAY**

- Food Science
- + Advanced Food Science

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICE SYSTEMS PATHWAY**

- Environmental Science
- + AP Environmental Science

#### **AGRIBUSINESS SYSTEMS PATHWAY**

- Agribusiness
- + Economics & Agribusiness Management
- + Agricultural Sales & Entrepreneurship
- + Leadership & Ethics in Agriculture

#### **PLANT SYSTEMS PATHWAY**

- Plant Science/Horticulture
- + Biotechnology
- + Agronomic Science
- + Plant Biology
- + Nursery & Landscape
- + Floriculture
- + Turf Management

# Where can your pathway lead you?

## AGRIBUSINESS SYSTEMS

Workers use technology to coordinate all activities that contribute to production, processing, marketing, distribution, financing and development of agricultural commodities.

### Career Ideas

Agricultural Loan Officer • Agribusiness Manager • International Ag Marketing Specialist • Marketing Communications Manager • Financial Manager



## ANIMAL SYSTEMS

Workers study genetics, nutrition, reproduction, growth and development of food and companion animals. They inspect and grade livestock food products, purchase livestock or work in sales or marketing.

### Career Ideas

Geneticist • Nutritionist • Physiologist • Biomaterials Engineering • Farm and Ranch Managers



## ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICE SYSTEMS

Workers are involved in pollution control, recycling, waste disposal and public health. They conduct hazardous waste management studies and analyze environmental research projects.

### Career Ideas

Environmental Engineer • Hazardous Materials Handler • Health and Safety Sanitarian • Toxicologist



## FOOD PRODUCTS AND PROCESSING SYSTEMS

Workers discover food sources and develop ways to process, preserve, package or store food. They create new food products and inspect food processing to ensure food safety.

### Career Ideas

Biochemist • Food Broker or Engineer • Food Science Technician • Quality Assurance Specialist





## NATURAL RESOURCES SYSTEMS

Workers develop, maintain and manage the forest and natural environment. Conservation scientists and water quality managers regulate, develop and help protect our natural resources.

### Career Ideas

Conservation Officer • Water Quality Manager • Forestry Scientist • Fisheries Scientist • Wildlife Manager



## POWER, STRUCTURAL AND TECHNICAL SYSTEMS

Workers apply knowledge of engineering, power hydraulics, pneumatics, electronics, structures and controls to agriculture, and develop ways to improve the processing of agricultural products.

### Career Ideas

Agricultural Engineer • Diesel Mechanic • Welder Farm Equipment Mechanic • Global Positioning Technician



## PLANT SYSTEMS

Workers develop ways to improve the nutritional and aesthetic value of plants and quality of seeds.

### Career Ideas

Agronomist • Entomologist • Plant Scientist • Golf Course Superintendent • Landscape Architect

## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:



Holden Stengel, member of Shickley FFA and state star in placement winner, works on his family farm for his SAE, which includes; corn and soybean production, a feedlot and seed corn dealership. He learned the importance of equipment maintenance and balancing feed rations. Holden is responsible for setting up and using precision technology on the farm.

## Why are careers in agriculture so important?

Our population is growing like never before. There are 7 billion mouths to feed and our population is expected to grow to 9 billion people by 2050. Jobs and careers in all sectors of agriculture will be vital to keeping up with the global demand for agricultural and food production.

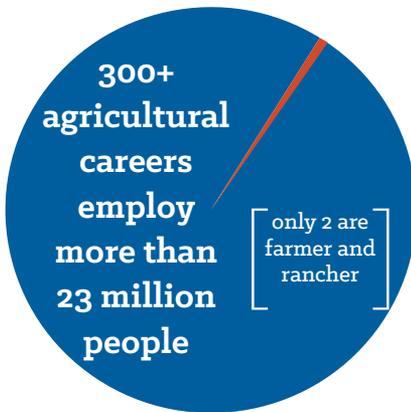
**To feed everyone, we'll need to produce as much food in the next 50 years as we have produced the last 10,000 years.**

**PAST 10,000 YEARS**

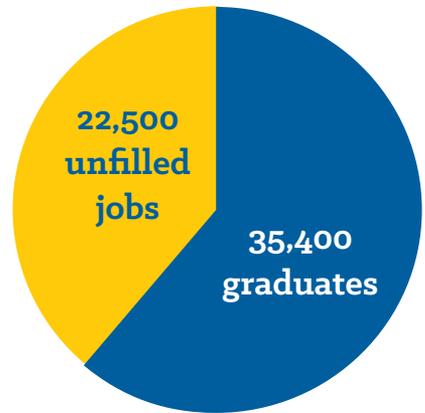
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**NEXT 50 YEARS**

**In the U.S., one part of this challenge is finding enough workers to fill more than 20 million agricultural jobs.**



**AMERICAN AGRICULTURE IS COMPOSED OF MORE THAN 300 CAREERS RELATED TO THE PRODUCTION OF FOOD. OF THESE, ONLY TWO ARE "FARMER AND RANCHER".**



**OUT OF 57,900 AVERAGE JOB OPENINGS PER YEAR FOR AGRICULTURALLY-BASED 4-YEAR COLLEGE GRADUATES, ONLY 35,400 GRADUATES ARE EXPECTED, RESULTING IN A 39% GAP IN THE LABOR SUPPLY.**

## What do former FFA members have to say?

Michelle (Pavelka) Weber was active in the Blue Hill FFA Chapter, serving as chapter president and participating in nearly every event from meats and land judging to public speaking and national convention band. Writing an essay about her farm fresh turkey SAE won her a trip with her ag advisor to Washington DC, where she then aspired to work.

After earning an animal science degree and law degree from the University of Nebraska, she worked in the Nebraska Attorney General's Office on ag and environmental issues. She then moved to DC and worked for six years as a congressional policy staffer for two Nebraska Senators and the House Committee on Agriculture. Michelle returned to Nebraska and now is partner in a lobbying firm, Zulkoski Weber. She now focuses her passion for agriculture and parliamentary procedure skills to represent clients before the Nebraska Legislature. She credits her FFA experiences for inspiring her interest in ag policy and giving her the career skills needed to grow her own business.



**MICHELLE WEBER**  
Zulkoski Weber  
Government Relations



**BEN BECKMAN**  
Beef Systems  
Extension Educator

Find your niche is Ben Beckman's advice to becoming successful in FFA.

Ben started his FFA career in a junior high exploratory class at Elgin High School. From that point he was hooked on FFA competing in range judging and many other contests. The FFA range judging competition showed him the grazing aspect of cattle production, which he now focuses on as an Extension Educator in Cedar county.

FFA also taught him the leadership aspect on how to properly conduct a meeting and present a presentation. Ben served as a State Officer in 2007-08.

FFA shaped his life in so many ways, and he wants others to have the opportunities he had through FFA.



# What is a Supervised Agricultural Experience?



*A Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) is an experience-based program in which you gain “real world” experiences and develop skills in agriculturally related career areas that interests you.*

There are two key steps to getting started:

**STEP 1.** visit with your agriculture teacher about you career interests.

**STEP 2.** create a program that develops your skills in your areas of interest.

**SAEs are categorized as one of the following four types:**

## **ENTREPRENEURSHIP:**

An entrepreneur is someone who owns and operates a business. Many FFA members actually own agriculture-related businesses. You could become an entrepreneur by starting a landscaping business, raising crops or livestock, or providing a needed service in your community.

## **EXPLORATORY:**

This area is great if you are a beginning agriculture student or are simply aren't sure about your career interest. You can job shadow, or research a specific career and produce a multimedia report on that topic.

## **RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENTATION:**

Students plan and conduct research using the scientific process. The topic is up to you. Past students have done research in food science, water science, fertilizer application and livestock feed.

## **PLACEMENT:**

Students involved in a placement SAE work in an agriculture-related business, but do not own the business. If you work for an agricultural supply store, a farm or ranch, a veterinarian or a zoo, you fit in this category.



## FFA – What's it all about?



### THE MISSION:

The National FFA Organization is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

### THE MOTTO:

Learning to Do, Doing to Learn, Earning to Live, Living to Serve.

### THE COLORS:

In 1929, at the second National FFA Convention, the delegates adopted National Blue and Corn Gold as the official colors of the FFA. This became the colors of one of the most recognizable symbols of FFA, the blue corduroy jacket.

### THE EMBLEM:

The FFA Emblem was designed and adopted in 1933 as part of the official jacket. The emblem itself carries much meaning to those involved in agricultural education.



*Nebraska has  
8,400+ FFA members  
in 185 chapters*

**FFA was started in 1928 when 33 ag students gathered in Kansas City to solidify support for agricultural education.**

**FFA has grown to 649,355 members in 7,859 chapters in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands.**

## Statewide FFA Leadership Opportunities

*FFA offers exciting opportunities to gain leadership and career skills while making new friends from around the state. Leadership conferences combined with competitive activities take place throughout the year.*



### **PATHWAYS TO CAREERS CONFERENCE**

Each fall, Nebraska FFA members are invited to attend a high-energy conference with industry representatives. Students get the opportunity to engage with industry professionals from the seven agriculture, food and natural resource career pathways. Industry professionals lead hands-on, interactive workshops and develop relationships with future employees.

### **CHAPTER OFFICER LEADERSHIP TRAINING (COLT)**

COLT is for FFA chapter officers to learn how to effectively serve their chapters. Conferences are held throughout May. The focus is on individual leadership skills as well as how to work as a chapter officer team. Officers engage in experience-based leadership activities, share and learn great ideas and create an action plan for their year of service.

### **ENGAGING DISTRICTS FOR GROWTH AND EXCELLENCE (EDGE)**

EDGE is a statewide leadership conference hosted at the district level for students just beginning their agricultural education experience. Participants get to know other new students and begin understanding what is possible in agricultural education and FFA.

### **212/360**

This conference prepares leaders to be advocated of the chapter for current and potential members, as well as community stakeholders. The two-day conference is held in Kearney in mid-March.

# FFA Competitive Events, Degrees and Awards

Can you think of another program where students can develop essential leadership, life and career skills, earn money and be recognized on local, district, state and national levels for these efforts? FFA has it!

## FFA DEGREE PROGRAM

FFA members can earn degrees as they progress through the phases of their leadership, academic and career skills development. Each degree advancement has specific requirements that must be achieved.

There are five degree levels:

1. *Discovery Degree*
2. *Greenhand Degree*
3. *Chapter FFA Degree*
4. *State FFA Degree*
5. *American FFA Degree*

## PROFICIENCY AWARDS

Agricultural proficiency awards honor FFA members who, through their SAEs, have developed specialized skills that they can apply toward their future careers. Students can compete for awards in areas covering everything from Agricultural Communications to Wildlife Management. For more information on these degrees, a full listing of Proficiency Award categories and Career Development Events, visit [www.neagad.org](http://www.neagad.org).



## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:

Abby Miller, member of Mead FFA, has established an SAE that focuses around managing the Blooming Smiles community service project. Their mission is to increase happiness and well-being by creating bouquets out of donated flowers. She also runs the social media account and meets with potential donors.

# FFA Competitive Events, Degrees and Awards

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

Nebraska Career Development Events (CDEs) help students develop abilities to think critically, communicate clearly and develop skills for a competitive job market. Some of the CDEs state-winning individuals and teams will move onto National Convention.



## STATE AND AMERICAN STAR PROGRAM

The State and American Star awards represent the best of the best among thousands of State and American FFA Degree recipients. Finalists for the award have mastered skills in production, finance, management and/or research. State and American Star award areas include: Star Farmer, Star in Agribusiness, Star in Agricultural Placement and Star in Agriscience.



## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:

Grady Johnson, from the Holdrege FFA Chapter, was named the 2018 State Star in Ag Production. His SAEs included starting and managing his breeding and market sheep herd. He developed skills in ration development, financial analysis and breeding management. His SAE in crop production involved 155 acres of irrigated corn production where he gained skills in risk management and implemented precision agriculture strategies from planting to irrigation to harvest operations.

## *FFA Competitive Events, Degrees and Awards*



### **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT EVENTS**

Nebraska Leadership Development Events (LDEs) provide FFA members with experience in the practice of influencing others through speaking and parliamentary procedure competitions. For some LDEs, the state-winning individual or team will represent Nebraska at National FFA Convention.



## FFA Program of Activities

*All well-run organizations have a plan for activities. FFA chapters develop a Program of Activities (POA) as a way to set goals for the chapter and outline the steps needed to meet those goals.*

A well-planned POA will ensure chapter activities meet the needs of its members, provide direction from year to year, lead to a workable budget, provide experience in planning and serve as a reference point throughout the year. A POA also helps chapters communicate their goals with administrators, parents, advisory committees and their community.

By engaging in the development and delivery of a quality POA, students develop leadership and planning skills which are essential in all careers.

Chapters can earn national recognition for their POA. Each year, there are 10 chapters identified as a National FFA Premier Chapter in each of the three focus areas.

In addition, another 10 high school chapters will also be chosen as National FFA Models of Excellence award winners. These chapters exhibit excellence in all three categories of the Program of Activities. This award program recognizes chapters who successfully complete an annual Program of Activities designed to encourage members to work as part of a team, to serve others and to grow as individuals.

### THE CHAPTER POA HAS THREE FOCUS AREAS:

#### Building Communities

#### Strengthening Agriculture

#### Growing Leaders



## CHAPTER SPOTLIGHTS:

### MCCOOL JUNCTION FFA & JOHNSON-BROCK FFA

The McCool Junction agricultural education program constructed the “Clay Real Livin’ the Dream Live Animal Barn” with support from community members, students and the *I Believe in the Future of Ag* program. The barn houses a variety of animals from chickens to cattle and a variety of companion animals throughout the year.



*“The barn gives our students an opportunity to teach their peers, younger students and the community about animals, animal care and where their food comes from. And to just continue living Clay’s dream.”*

*-Dana Hall, agriculture teacher*

Johnson-Brock High School previously had students participate in agricultural education and FFA through distance learning, but very few took advantage of that opportunity. This fall was the first year the school had their own program. They now have more than triple the number of students taking part. In addition, Johnson-Brock agricultural education was chosen as the recipient of the Nebraska FFA Foundation’s local grant program to rebuild a greenhouse.



*“Students will be able to use the greenhouse for Plant Science and Nursery Landscape courses as well as potentially for agriscience projects and fundraising for the FFA chapter from plants grown”*

*-Dawn Metschke, agriculture teacher*

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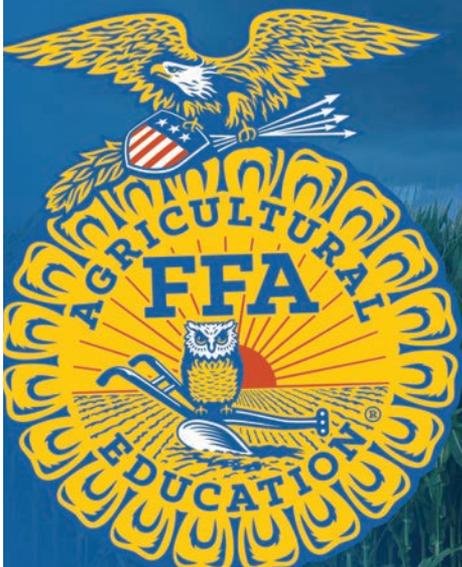


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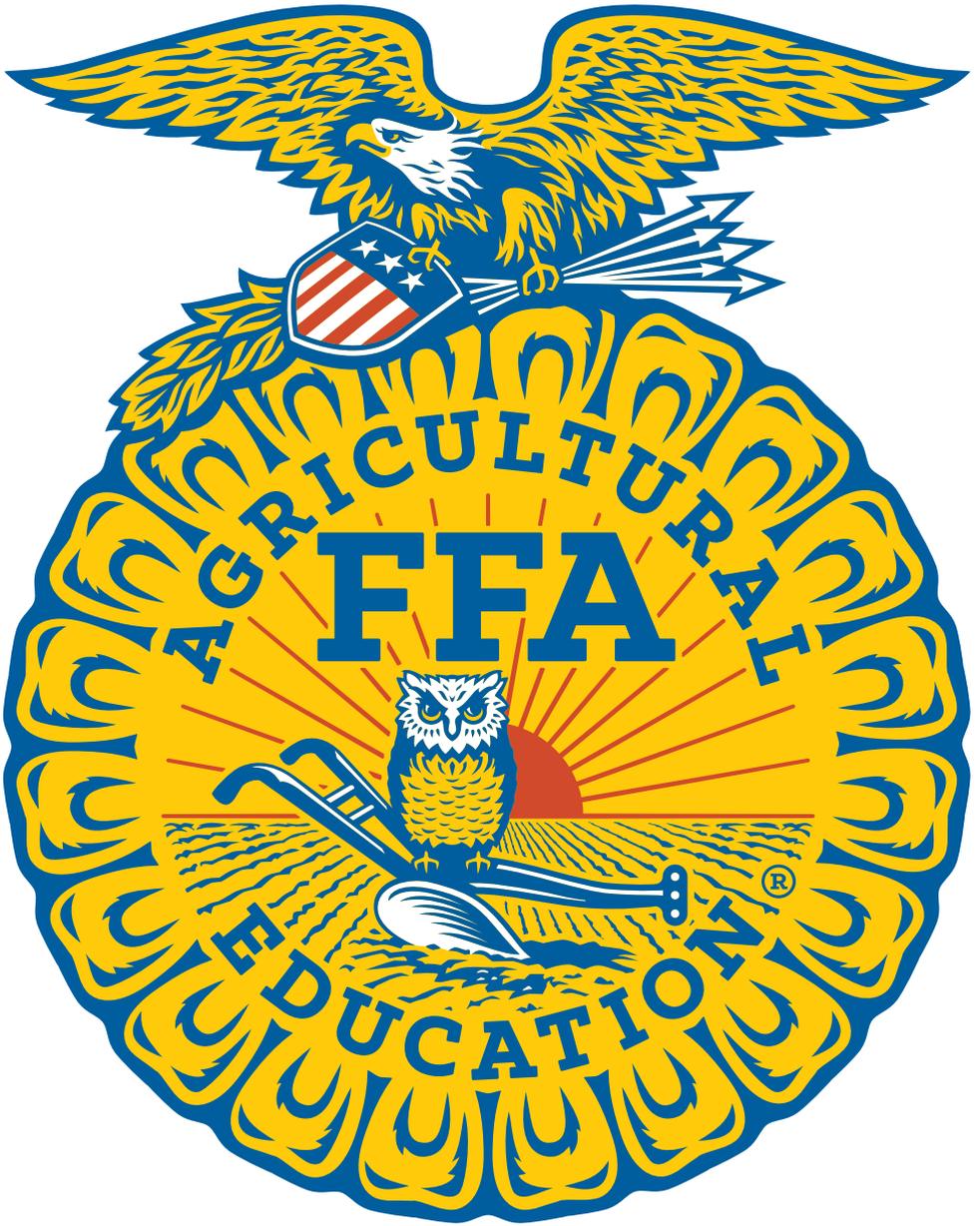
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