

ILAFA Forefront Series

VISION for CHANGE | Conducted by WORKING GROUP

Topic – Workforce Development Issue – Perception & Awareness

GOAL: Map the system, identify core issues and needs, define sub-issues and intended goals

<p>Problem Statement What is the problem statement we seek to solve relative to the identified issue?</p>	<p>There is a disconnect between the multitude of careers that exist in the food and agriculture industry and the awareness and perception around these opportunities</p>
<p>Root Causes What factors are causing the issue?</p>	<p>From “11.30.2020 Survey Results”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of Understanding about Breadth of Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is a general lack of education and training regarding available opportunities. - Less than 5% of k-12 students are educated about food/ag in Illinois when direct food and agriculture jobs represents 15% of the workforce - People just don't know all the different areas of ag one could work - tech, accounting, marketing, insurance, sales, etc. - Overall unfamiliarity with the breadth of roles in agriculture if not already familiar with the industry. Coupled by those not familiar with agriculture do not aspire to work in or even consider the ag industry when making college/career decisions. - Awareness of agri-food careers is traditionally generational. Fewer and fewer people are directly connected to agriculture. 2. Lack of Understanding about Agri-Food System, and How it Relates <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A lack of awareness of how the food supply chain works (no one really learns this in school or in day-to-day life) - Lack of educational awareness of not just ag - but the complexity of economies and supply chains and what makes the world go around - Need to create more awareness of where food comes from 3. Stiff Competition with Alternative Choices + Uniqueness of Ag/Food <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There are competing career choices in STEM - Ag jobs tend to be unique and hard to find people for; sector transitional jobs are becoming more important (e.g. IT in Ag; Biotech in Ag; Pharma in Ag; etc. 4. Historical Perception Unsophisticated and/or Negative Public Image Lack of Connecting to Value and Values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Misunderstanding of ag and food and its place in modern economy - Too many people hear "agriculture" and think "tractor" and "farming." - We need to expand our search beyond traditional ag schools and tell our story to a wider audience.

- Many global, multi-million dollar companies are household names. Most food/ag companies that fit this description are not, unless it's for a negative reason
- Careers in food/ag are viewed as low-paying, unskilled, etc.
- Agri-food jobs may be seen as boring, dead-end, hard work, low-pay, not respected by society, or entry-level despite the fact that the sector creates careers that can span a lifetime
- A historical perception of what agriculture entails and lack of effective PR strategies for changing that perception. The ag community has been complacent about this. We complain that the food system is under appreciated and make people wrong for not understanding or valuing the industry, yet we struggle or are unwilling to tell a more compelling story about relevance that inspires young people in particular to see themselves in ag. We think we know what it will take to inspire the next generation to lean into ag but we don't based on results. Their voice should be leading these conversations. Let's ask them what it will take for them to get excited about being involved in the complex, challenging, innovative food system we love and fear will minimize as interest in keeping the work force vibrant wanes.
- Advertise the noble purpose of feeding the world - working for a good cause is more important than ever to workforce entrants.
- The industry as a whole is not linking opportunities to a compelling higher purpose as a gateway to attracting workers.

5. Lack of Understanding Pathways to Careers + Limited Exposure & Support

- Transparent educational and career pathways and mentorship programs are needed - must start early, be consistent in messaging and touch points, include mentors that the students can relate to and have jobs that the students want.
- Need better outreach and examples of people that have done well/had a great career in the sector.
- Ag Ed is taught as an elective or a separate pathway from STEM in most schools. We need Ag Ed to be incorporated into the required STEM courses with scientifically and socially relevant examples to ensure exposure to all students. This will not only expose more students to ag, but will highlight the necessity of STEM knowledge and skills in ag professions.
- superintendents, principals, counselors...unaware of careers in ag and food. Existing CTE programs are hesitant to make room for food/ag.

6. Lack of Focus on Urban Areas

- Agriculture and food career opportunities and education are not promoted to students and adults in urban areas of the state. Agriculture courses, a program, and a teacher are not established at urban high schools.
- severe lack of food/ag education in suburban and urban areas
- increased urbanization which is putting agriculture further out of view

7. Individualism vs. Collectivism

- Individual AFNR companies and organizations are individually tackling the issue vs. pooling resources together on a main project/event to achieve more and attain the goal of an increased number of quality individuals in the talent pipeline pool.

	<p>8. Lack of Focus on Future Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not putting more focus on technology and its current and future applications. - A lack of commitment from companies to increase skills training for potential and current employees. <p>9. Lack of Awareness among Youth, Minority, and Non-Traditional Groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing awareness (particularly for young people) regarding the wide range of career options is vital to growing the workforce. The face of the workforce is also changing. Potential employees in the Ag industry can no longer solely emerge from farm families or those regions where agriculture is traditionally understood. - I wonder about making more scholarships available to non-ag students to attract them to the field. Students generally choose their college major with limited knowledge of the industry they are pursuing, yet for some reason it seems that few without ag familiarity choose ag as a major. It is still one major that tends to attract students already familiar with it. How do we attract non-ag students to the major when making college decisions? - Minority youth do not receive the requisite knowledge or experiences necessary to develop positive attitudes toward food and ag careers. The lack of exposure creates a disconnect that prevents students from considering such related careers. - Furthermore, cultural implications within the black community and other minority/marginalized populations, like the Latinx community, create barriers to entering the agri-food sector, which must be understood and addressed. 	
<p>Key Needs Are there critical questions, insight, or data needed to better understand the problem?</p>	<p>1. How does a student’s background, race, geography affect one’s exposure to or view of workforce opportunity in food and agriculture?</p>	
<p>Methods What methods should be utilized to address needs?</p>	<p>Qualitative stakeholder interviews? Surveys? Dept. of Labor data?</p>	
<p>Target Audience What entities and people are most directly related to and impacted by the problem?</p>	<p>Related to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K-12 students • High school graduates • College and post-graduate students • Collegiate graduates • Transitioning adults • Minority populations • Non-target populations 	<p>Impacted by</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Job seekers 2. K-12 schools 3. 2-year, 4-year colleges/universities 4. Technical/vocational schools and training programs 5. Businesses

<p>Impacts What efforts are already underway to address the problem relative to the target audience(s)? How can they be maximized?</p>	<p>IN ILLINOIS</p> <p>Academia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Schools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ CHSAS ○ Kane County – Macon County High School programs • Community Colleges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Richland ○ Heartland ○ Parkland ○ Etc. • University AFNR Colleges (ISU, UIUC, SIUC, WIU) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Uol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MetroFEST ▪ Computer Science + Crop Science ▪ Computer Science + Animal Science ○ SIU's Edwardsville Digital Badging Program ○ Uol Extension, Uol Summer Academy ○ Ag Ambassador programs @ 2-year and 4-year colleges/universities • Research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ DPI / College of ACES City Scholars program – Spring 2021 <p>NGO/Associations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FFA • 4-H Food Action Academy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ FCAE - High School ag teachers/programs (ie CHSAS) ○ Illinois Leadership Council for Agricultural Education ○ Illinois Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers ○ Illinois Association of Community College Agriculture Instructors • Illinois Farm Bureau <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Illinois Ag In The Classroom ○ Collegiate Farm Bureau • Chicagoland Food and Beverage Network <p>Industry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce Training Programs that connect to food/ag (Growing Home) • Transitional retraining programs • Company promotion + partnerships • Company training + retraining programs • Company internship/externship/apprentice programs <p>OUTSIDE ILLINOIS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MANRRS - GreenSeam (based in MN) - National Ag in the Classroom (might be useful) - California schools with AFNR programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ My understanding is that California has well developed food/Ag programs in middle schools and high schools with fairly high minority
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	<p>enrollment. However, I am not familiar with any particular schools or programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wisconsin farmer transition program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Wisconsin has a program to help farmers transition to new non-ag careers. There could be a solution that can bridge the issue of farmers leaving ag with the labor shortage. - Wageningen University, Netherlands <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Wageningen University. The University's and regional (EU) educational pipeline programs result in an excess of highly qualified student applicants. Even if you take into consideration the number of differences between our early educational programs, Wageningen and the EU region still highlights ag in ways that we don't. They focus on the food and the consumer and then educate students using a backwards design of the systems that are required to get the food that the consumer wants. We tend to start at the farm and educate students in silos about the rest of the food supply chain without a consistency in the messaging. This was highlighted at a panel discussion on education at the last IFT annual meeting. - University of Michigan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o University of Michigan has a project started with MANRRS, Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences, National FFA - Together We Grow <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Together We Grow is casting a wide net and is seeking diversity in the agrifood industry. It is being led by Kristen Kirkpatrick at Colorado State University.
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<p>Opportunities Are there gaps or areas of risk not being adequately addressed relative to the target audience(s)?</p>	<p>The first step to growing a future workforce is to increase knowledge of the sector among those outside of it. Increasing positive perceptions and awareness of the industry can lead to a thriving workforce pipeline. This includes growing awareness from an early age, highlighting diversity, and showing the possible career arcs within the sector</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Urban/Suburban Focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The ag education gap in suburban/urban Illinois is enormous. - We have to establish AFNR courses at middle schools, high schools, and colleges in urban parts of the state. Some students will move out of their comfort zone to attend 'downstate' universities with AFNR programs though a majority will pursue a non-AFNR degree in their respective urban part of the state. This 3 circle AFNR model has worked in rural parts of the state, we haven't taken this model to our urban parts of the state. 2. Messaging + Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotional press releases, flyers, career brochures, etc. can be developed, shared, and published and is important though not sustainable in achieving the goal. - We are entrenching a cultural urban/rural divide that is increasingly focused on what farmers are "doing wrong/bad". - We are not always delicate enough when we talk about disruptive innovation and it may generate fear that we're trying to give their jobs to robots. There is
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an opportunity to find ways to get farmers exposure to new technologies and invite them to participate more in the evolution of farming so that this innovation is more aligned with their needs.

- Ongoing discussions with employers on how/where to find high quality talent in college/tech programs as well as getting potential future candidates to think about and consider ag (even though their degree may not be in ag).

3. General Awareness, Particularly among Youth

- We need to address the perception that the ag field of work goes beyond what is perceived. There is a lack of awareness regarding available career opportunities at a lower, non collegiate level.
- As we know, there are fewer of students each year with ag familiarity and while they may have interest in the ag sector, keeping them engaged with it with all the other opportunities is a challenge - so fewer interested from the beginning and more being pulled into other industries is a huge challenge.
- It may already exist, but we have never encountered an Ag Careers workshop or presentation format through which we can bring in a speaker series to visit our high schools and talk about employment options directly after high school, following additional collegiate studies, potential salary ranges etc. Packaging a service like this may go a long way to encouraging our student population to consider the industry as a long-term choice.
- Many jobs available do not require 4-year degrees

4. Financial Resources for Students

- Industry supported full ride scholarships to support in state students with attending Illinois schools is a must. The lack of scholarship support is killing us in that tuition is high across the Illinois 4-year system, and other states provide more scholarships at lower tuition rates than we do. This is a major issue as far as ag students leaving the state is concerned.

5. Connecting to STEM

- A recognition that everything in Ag requires STEM knowledge and skills

6. Galvanizing the Full Food System

- Lack of representatives across on the food supply chain in this panel discussion

7. Bringing in Fresh Perspective

- A lack of representatives with a fresh perspective on successful educational pipeline programs from other fields

8. Competitive Wages for Sustainable Livelihood

- Bigger problem than this group can solve, but there are a lot of low paying jobs in the industry too. Food is cheap, which is great. However, it is difficult to pay competitive wages when farm income per unit is low. It can be difficult for us to compete with state jobs due to the pay and benefits offered at a similar skill level.

9. Traditional Operating Jobs

- Some of the more traditional operating jobs with ag retail are getting harder and harder to fill with qualified workers.

10. Job/Career Experience

- On farm experience. Cool, well designed on farm experience. All companies in ag or food want/need some farm/food experience. Where and how could aspirational ag careerists be able to spend 2 weeks or 2 months or 2 years of contributing to a farm. I think this can happen more in specialty crop and the ag managerial labor market is rich in California or Florida or Northeast - but is not really a thing in the Midwest.
- Studies have found that learning agriculture by doing, as opposed to simply being taught in the classroom, increases students' favorable view of agriculture.

11. Data management; IT in Food

- These are growing areas of need in Chicago

Additional Comments:

- I know FCAE has been working to address some of these issues for years. But they only have a staff of 5 or 6 people to cover the entire state.
- As we continue to have less future talent coming from the farm - we need to continue to have college programs and organizations connect into the talent pipeline proactively.
- We know what the problems are yet struggle to take action to address them. What is it going to take for industry to partner together to work with colleges to create a broad-based scholarship program to build a pipeline for the industry? We need to build trust and then create a pilot of some sort to see what we can do together. It is going to take a vibrant public-private partnership to move the needle from my view.
- In developing AFNR programs in urban parts of the state, we must then concurrently establish AFNR education degree programs to ensure that more students enter and graduate in this degree program to teach AFNR courses at these newly developed urban AFNR programs especially at middle schools and high schools.
- I think we are doing a better job highlighting agriculture, but could do better about getting a younger generation excited about working and being a part of it. We need to look at non-traditional avenues for future employees. For example, city and suburban schools.
- Many food & ag companies are run by individuals that did not receive ag education

Goals What high level goals will inflect the target audience(s)?	Example: An Illinois strategic awareness campaign targeted to youth, job-seekers, and underrepresented groups in urban and rural areas alike to promote agri-food as a cutting-edge sector and champion the diverse array of academic and professional opportunities
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