

## Future Is Still Rosy For Most Ag Graduates

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) - For those about to enter college, choosing the right educational path to prepare for employment in the 21st century can be a challenge.

The average worker is likely to change careers at least three times during his or her lifetime, and many industries that appear to be thriving today could be downsizing or filing for bankruptcy tomorrow. Graduates in the agricultural sciences, however, have reason to be optimistic about job prospects.

A report compiled every five years by Purdue University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that nearly 48,000 jobs in the food, agriculture, and natural resources system will open yearly into the 21st century, while universities will produce only about 45,600 qualified graduates. This five percent shortfall translates into employment opportunity for those majoring in agricultural sciences.

Strong career fields include marketing, merchandising and sales. In addition, food processors and forest product firms seek graduates with scientific and technical expertise in product development. Experts in managing water, land and other natural resources can expect strong demand for their services as well.

While not every graduate can immediately trade their cap and gown for a suit and tie, Penn State's 1994-1995 placement statistics for the College of Agricultural Sciences show that two-thirds of its graduates had

secured jobs in fields related to their majors three months after graduation. Those with master's and doctoral degrees have even higher placement rates. Average starting salaries for agricultural careers range from \$21,000 for those with bachelor's degrees to \$27,000 for graduate degrees. Within certain industries, starting salaries can be much higher. For example, the average starting salary for food science baccalaureate graduates is more than \$30,000.

Industries within the U.S. food, agricultural and natural resource system have not been affected by recent economic trends. Food-related companies continue to consolidate, forcing smaller, less efficient competitors out of the business. Companies that restructure may need fewer workers, but those that are hired must be well educated.

Certain sectors of the agricultural job market will be particularly strong over the next five years. About 30 percent of the available jobs for agricultural graduates will be in marketing and sales, which is likely to have an 11 percent employment deficit—the largest shortfall. The social services will face a six percent shortfall in qualified graduates.

Nearly two-thirds of the job openings will be for dietitians and nutritionists. A 4.5 percent deficit is expected in the science and engineering sector, where demand will be strongest for food scientists, food process engineers, forest product engineers, and food quality control specialists. Managers and

financial specialists will see a tighter job market, but opportunities will still exceed graduates by about 2.5 percent.

Sectors of the job market that will be much more competitive include communication and edu-

cation, which will have a four percent surplus of graduates, and agricultural production (farming, aquaculture, etc.) with a nearly seven percent surplus. While the national trend toward reducing the size of federal and state government will mean

fewer opportunities for graduates seeking traditional careers with public agencies, many smaller private-sector businesses are expected to provide some of the services once offered by governmental agencies.

## Contest Makes A Better Cup Of Cider

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The 9th Annual Apple Cider Quality Contest will help Ohio's apple growers make better cider, said Winston Bash, director of Ohio State University's Food Industry Center and the contest's coordinator.

The contest, conducted by the Ohio Fruit Growers Society, will take place Feb. 4-6 at the 1998 Ohio Fruit and Vegetable Growers Congress in Toledo.

All 145 cider producers in the state can enter up to three samples in the contest.

"Anyone, whether they're a large producer or they produce cider only for their own consumption, can enter the contest," Bash said.

Each entry must be submitted with detailed information about how it was produced, such as production equipment used, apple varieties blended, cider storage methods, use of apples dropped on the ground, type of washing system, cider pasteurization, and use of preservatives. The samples are then judged for taste and quality by a panel of four to five industry experts and invited guests, Bash said.

Once the samples are judged and ranked, the production techniques of the top five samples are sent to growers, along with the

production information of the other samples, to help suggest what produces high-quality cider.

Production techniques can really change the way cider tastes, Bash said. It is usually better to store apples that produce cider in a controlled atmosphere rather than in a cooler. Apples used in production that are too mature or too immature impact flavor.

"It's also a good idea to blend the flavor of three to five different apple varieties together to give cider a well-rounded, sweet-and-sour taste," he said.

Using apples that fall on the ground is discouraged because E. coli bacteria can contaminate the dropped apples. The cider industry is working to eliminate any possible bacterial outbreaks.

"The cider contest is a way to further promote cider consumption and raise cider quality in Ohio," Bash said.

There is a \$10 entry fee for each submitted sample. All cider must

be delivered to the Congress registration desk between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 4. Preferred samples are one-half gallon of thawed or fresh cider in a plastic container. Usually about 50 samples are entered in the contest, Bash said.

The Gold and Silver Award winning cider will be available for tasting Friday afternoon Feb. 6 at the Congress. The winners will receive plaques.

A contest application and copy of the rules can be obtained from Diane Miller, horticulturist at Ohio State's Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster, (330) 263-3824, or from the Ohio Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, (614) 249-2424.

The 1998 Fruit and Vegetable Growers Congress is being held at the Toledo SeaGate Centre in conjunction with the Roadside Marketing Conference and, for the first time, with the Ohio Grape-Wine Short Course.

## Students Learn to Build A Future Through FFA

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — "Agriculture offers tremendous opportunities for young people," said National FFA Adviser Larry D. Case, "and FFA helps them find direction and purpose. Even if they decide not to pursue one of the 2000 careers in the business, science and technology of agriculture, they will benefit from the public speaking skills, career experience, and leadership skills they gain from the FFA."

FFA members across the United States, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands will organize events and activities to build awareness of agricultural education and support for FFA

during National FFA Week, Feb. 21-28. National FFA Week is held each year during the week of George Washington's birthday to recognize his leadership and commitment to American agriculture.

This year's theme, "FFA—Building the Future," promoted through communities nationwide, emphasizes how FFA enables students to develop leadership skills, confidence, and the values that have made America strong. They possess the knowledge and career experience to make valuable contributions that will carry the agricultural industry and the nation into the next millennium.

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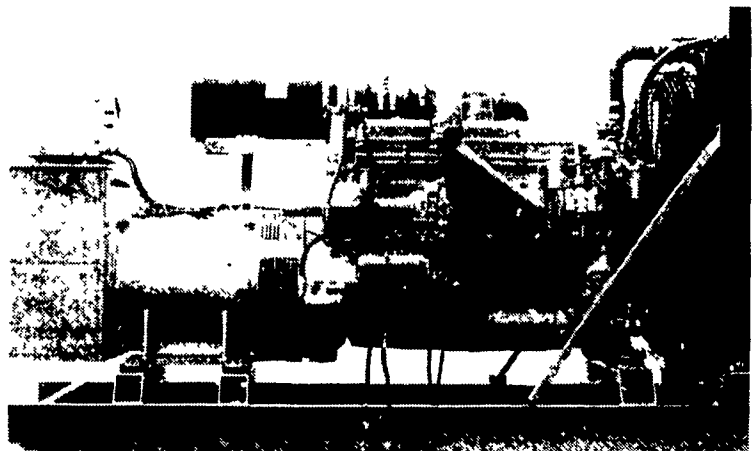
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