



Ag Education as a Profession



To Teach or Not to Teach...

So, you're trying to decide if you want to take the leap and become an agriculture teacher. Hey, this is a good place to start...Making a career decision is difficult. It should be approached with an open mind but at the same time, you should be careful to gather all of the information necessary to make an informed decision. Although you can expect a slightly biased opinion here, we promise to give you some of the negatives to consider too. So, read on and see some of the frequently asked questions about teaching agriculture as well as the positive and some of the negative answers...

- I've heard that teachers don't make much money. Is that true?
 - Agriculture teachers typically make a very comfortable living. They receive a teacher's salary and often have supplemental contracts to cover FFA advisement, summer programs and management of school facilities. In many cases, agriculture teachers in rural communities earn very competitive salaries compared to the careers available in the area.
- There is so much to know about agriculture. Would I be expected to be an expert in all areas of Ag?
 - That is a very common concern of future teachers! There is much to know, it is constantly changing information, and knowledge continues to grow at an exponential rate. The truth is no one person can know everything about agriculture, even in a small community. Your job is to know the basics and to facilitate learning. If you would be interested in continuing to learn, working with others to share their knowledge, and directing the learning experiences of others, this could be the job for you!
- I am not that familiar with FFA since I was not a member myself. Is being an FFA member a requirement for teaching agriculture?
 - Although it would have been helpful for you to be an FFA member, it is not necessary to have that experience to become a teacher. Choose a good teacher education program in agriculture and you will learn what you need to get started as an FFA advisor.
- What does a typical day look like for an agriculture teacher?
 - This is one of the areas that can be an exciting positive for some and a big negative for others. Typical days are few and far between for active agriculture teachers. There are some things you can count on like teaching classes, advising students and teacher duties that are shared among the faculty in the school (lunch duty for example). You may also throw in practices for career development events, fair board meetings, advisory committee meetings, parent-teacher conferences, county fairs, livestock shows and many other activities that fill your calendar.
- So, what is the time commitment for agriculture teachers?
 - This is an excellent question! Fortunately, the time commitment is an area that you do have some control over. Good teachers are good time managers. They know how to prioritize and get the important things in life done (work, family, personal). The many "opportunities" in agricultural education can overwhelm you if you are not watchful of your commitments.
- How would you describe the quality of life for agriculture teachers?
 - Agriculture teachers enjoy many professional perks from strong community ties, to grateful students, to a life lived in service to the agricultural industry and educating others. There are few careers where you can see the impact of your efforts in the lives of your students. Knowing you made someone's life better is a very gratifying feeling.

Hopefully these questions and answers have spurred your interest in teaching agriculture. We would encourage you to continue your data gathering by trying some of the suggestions below:

- Shadow an agriculture teacher
- Volunteer to help in an agriculture class
- Talk to an agriculture teacher educator in your state
- Talk with FFA members about their experience
- Interview a few agriculture teachers about their job