

Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection: Agricultural education key to the industry's future workforce

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MADISON, Wis. – When adults think back to our formative years, we can likely pick out a teacher or two that fundamentally made a difference in our lives and influenced our future career paths. For many in the agriculture industry, that teacher was an agricultural teacher. Hundreds of agricultural instructors work day in and day out in the classroom, greenhouse, field, and community to educate our young people and build the industry's future workforce.

I recently had the opportunity to visit the Mount Horeb Area School District and DeForest Area High School to tour their agricultural spaces and meet their agricultural teachers. I also had the chance to travel to the Menominee High School to see their aquaponics and greenhouse. While the investments in their school facilities were impressive, what stood out most to me was the dedication and enthusiasm that the teachers and students have for agricultural education.

I believe that students understand the great career opportunities available in the agricultural industry, and that is why they are excited to learn as much as possible in their agricultural classes. Each month, I have the chance to meet virtually with the 15 high school seniors who are members of the Wisconsin Agriculture Youth Council. These students begin their sessions at 7:00 a.m., before school, to listen to presentations, ask questions, and participate in discussions to advance their knowledge and connections across the industry.

The state's agricultural teachers and students need support from all of us, and that

is why the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), Department of Public Instruction (DPI), and Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) have reinvigorated the Wisconsin Agricultural Education and Workforce Development Council (WAEWDC). This council has a dynamic membership and is committed to advancing its three goals to support agricultural educators, develop a statewide agriculture pathway, and promote agricultural careers. The council recently completed its annual report, and I am proud of what has been accomplished so far and what is to come.

I encourage all of us to do what we can to support agricultural education in Wisconsin. About one in nine people working in Wisconsin work in a job related to agriculture, and the students are our future. Stay up to date on the work of the WAEWDC by visiting <https://dwd.wi.gov/waewdc/>. Meet the members, read the annual report, and contact us if you have ideas on how we can advance our mission.

I also hope you encourage youth to continue their agricultural education and pursue a career related to agriculture. Share with these young people how valuable it is to become or stay involved in organizations such as 4-H and FFA. Spread the word about the Wisconsin Agriculture Youth Council by sharing the website, <https://agyouthcouncil.wi.gov/>, and ask them to apply in the future.

Most of all, join me in saying thank you to Wisconsin's agricultural educators. Educators, you are informing and inspiring our state's future agricultural workforce. Our farms need you, our processors need you, our agribusinesses need you, and our state needs you. Thank you for your commitment to our youth and to Wisconsin agriculture.