

Thoughts from DOCE

A recent NIFA news release reported the number of graduates with degrees related to agriculture in the United States grew by approximately 17 percent. This is evidence that NIFA's partnership with the Land-Grant University System has been successful in meeting the demand for the high-skilled graduates to fill job openings in food and agriculture.

The rise in graduates may stem from the [32 percent increase in enrollment](#) in degree-granting institutions between 2001 and 2011. The question now is how can NIFA help its partner institutions continue this trend or, better still, increase the rate at which students graduate with degrees in all agricultural related fields, including ag-economics, bio-energy, food security, environmental studies, and family and consumer sciences.

NIFA has enhanced its partnerships with land-grant and non-land-grant colleges and universities through increased funding and improved post-award management. As the eligibility for federal financial assistance tightens, demand will grow for scholarships and fellowships, so it is imperative that we use these limited resources more effectively. Agricultural employers should have a voice in discussions on enhancing the leadership and technical skills taught at academic institutions. You will read about how DOCE efforts are meeting these challenges in this edition of Ed-Facts. Let the Division Director know your thoughts and feedback at SSURESHWARAN@NIFA.USDA.GOV.

Outlook Report: Employment Prospects Good for Graduates in Ag

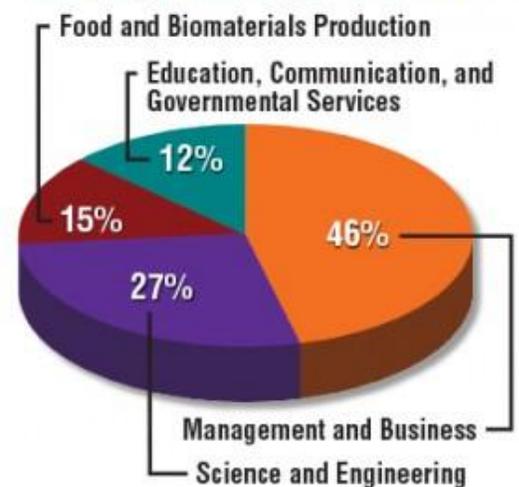
The 2015-2020 Agricultural Employment Outlook report, published by NIFA and Purdue University, estimates 57,900 high-skilled job openings annually in the food, agriculture, renewable natural resources, and environmental fields in the United States. However, on average, only 35,400 new graduates with a bachelor's degree or higher are expected; the resulting shortfall of 22,500 jobs are left to be filled by from graduates of allied disciplines, including biological sciences, engineering, health sciences, business, and communication.

The report projects almost half of the job opportunities will be in management and business, with another 27 percent in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) areas. The report also shows that women make up more than half of the food, agriculture, renewable natural resources, and environmental higher education graduates in the United States.

Since 1980, NIFA and Purdue have published this five-year study on job prospects for graduates in the food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences. This year's report also notes that graduates who are mobile and have work experience will have more opportunity. Graduates with technical and professional skills and those who have completed internships or work experiences related to the jobs they apply for are also more likely to be hired.

Source: Purdue University/Employment Outlook

Employment Opportunities



NIFA and the National Research Council to Hold Workshop on Ag Education

Where will the agricultural enterprise find the next generation of job applicants? Do young people know about career opportunities in agriculture? What skills and expertise do candidates need as agriculture and agricultural jobs evolve? How can the nation's colleges and universities attract and prepare potential candidates to excel and contribute to the U.S. agricultural knowledge base?

To answer those questions NIFA and the National Research Council will invite employers in industry, academe, and government to join with educators in a workshop to draft a blueprint for filling the workforce pipeline with diverse, flexible, and well-educated candidates. U.S. agribusiness leaders and others will have the opportunity to co-sponsor the event and help academia produce graduates with skills needed by the industry to be competitive [see lead story this issue]. Future issues of Ed-Facts will provide more details about this workshop as they become available.

DOCE Program Fast Facts

- [The Non-Land-Grant Colleges and Universities \(NLGCA\) grant is open for proposals with a deadline of July 20.](#) This grant supports research, education, and outreach activities for NIFA-certified non-land-grant colleges of agriculture. [Details on certification and a list of qualifying institutions is available online.](#)

Year	Number of Awards	Total Awarded
2014	18	\$4,315,950
2013	13	\$3,992,489
2012	15	\$4,442,755

- DOCE is organizing a June 16 pre-conference for its project directors (PD) in conjunction with the 2015 North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture Conference in Athens, Ga. About 60 PDs from the following programs are expected to participate: Secondary Education, Two-Year Postsecondary Education, and Agriculture in the K-12 Classroom Challenge Grants Program (SPECA), Higher Education Challenge (HEC) Grants Program, Hispanic-Serving Institutions Education Grants Program (HSI), and Alaska Native-Serving and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions Education Competitive Grants Program (ANNH). The purpose of this pre-conference is to share best practices and help improve post-award management. You do not have to be a PD to participate and learn from the funded projects.
- A joint panel meeting for ANNH, Resident Instruction Grants Program for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas (RIIA), and Distance Education Grants for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas (DEG) programs will be held in Washington, DC, on June 23 and 24. We expect about 35 participants from Alaska, Hawaii, and the insular areas to attend.
- Several grant workshops are planned for this summer to help enhance access to NIFA grant programs. One of these grant workshop will be at Texas State University-San Marcos on August 27 and 28.

EDUCATION IMPACT: Wayne State University

Wayne State University's College of Agriculture in Detroit, Mich., received a Non-Land-Grant Colleges and Universities grant to test soil and vegetables in urban gardens for environmental contaminants and provide communities with guidance on how to grow food safely and in a sustainable manner. As part of this project, 12 undergraduate students conducted soil sampling and learned to test for metals, chemicals, bacteria, and other soil contaminants. They also met with community member to discuss the link between soil and food. Next, three graduate students will do in-depth laboratory analysis of the soils and vegetables in community gardens. "This has been a great opportunity for our institution," said Project Director Dr. Yifan Zhang. "Even before this grant, students were volunteering to work in urban gardens so I see great career potential for students in agriculture. I hope to obtain additional funding so I can provide similar opportunities for even more of our students."

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