

Harley Rogers - Texas

Hi I'm Harley Rogers. I am a 10-year 4-Her from Hamilton, Texas. I've grown up on a ranch my whole life and I have been showing cattle since I was seven years old. The beef cattle industry is something that I am very passionate about. A few years ago my siblings and I decided we wanted to start a grass-fed beef business to meet the consumers demand. Grass-fed beef is something that is very popular in the urban area. I started marketing the beef in Farm to Table markets in the Austin and Dallas area. I was constantly being asked questions about the beef I was marketing. The buyers would email me questions concerning hormones and additives in the beef. A lady named Constance was very concerned about my steers, so I gave her the chance to come to Hamilton and view my operation. Constance came down to small-town Hamilton, Texas in her little Mercedes-Benz. I took her to my ranch and showed her all my cattle and my everyday routine. She was so impressed and as a result Constance and I became friends. She would come to my stock shows and watch me show, and she would text me all the time. Gaining this trust between the consumer and producer is something that I believe is very important. Constance told all her neighbors in Fort Worth about me, which proved to me that she trusts me and they trust me. I realize that this is just a small step in building the bridge between consumer and producer while getting the word out about where your food comes from, but I believe that this is my stepping stone into the future of Agriculture.

Now, a delegate from Delaware will speak.

Alexandra Swan - Delaware

Hi my name is Alexandra Swan, I am from New Castle, Delaware, and I have been in 4-H for 9 years. New Castle is very limited on farm space, and limits the ability to have farms and to have an agriculture view. I have been blessed to have the opportunity to raise market and breed lambs, but due to the space left on my families small farm I do not have the ability to grow my farm and buy 10 more head of lambs. Although I am fortunate to have a farm and be a part of agriculture in Delaware, there are many people who do not get to be a part of agriculture. 4-H has allowed me to be an advocate in livestock but many kids in 4-H do not get to have livestock. Many kids in Delaware 4-H do crafts, foods, and clothing but have no interest in agriculture or where their food comes from. New Castle 4-H is putting together a “Day on the Farm”. With “The Day on the Farm” 4-H is teaming up with Woodside Creamery which is a local creamery to teach families about being on a farm and what is really behind farming, not only at the creamery but also other organizations that promote agriculture are being invited to talk about their aspect on farming and responsibilities on their own farms. Our goal in New Castle is to bring the urban and rural community together so that agriculture can grow in New Castle, Delaware.

Now, a delegate from California will speak.

Gabriella Germann – California

My name is Gabriella Germann and I am from Ceres, California. I have been a 4-H member for nine years. I've lived in a dairy farm my grandfather started in Central California my whole life. Being immersed in the agriculture industry through the dairy business, I have developed a passion for the industry and its promotion. Even though I live in a primarily agricultural community, I was stunned by the lack of awareness among youth and teens. My family has hosted school visits to our dairy for elementary school children and I have presented at local elementary school career days, speaking about the dairy industry and agriculture as a whole. Through this, I have learned the importance of informing people about agriculture while they are young, so as to cultivate early understanding and support, bridging the gap between consumers and producers.

Now, a delegate from Illinois will speak.

Jill Parrent - Illinois

My name is Jill Parrent and I am a delegate to National 4-H Conference from Normal, Illinois.

I am a 10 year 4-Her and have been involved in 4-H my entire life. My grandparents, mom, aunts, uncles, and cousins have been involved in 4-H for three generations so 4-H has been a family affair. I view agriculture through several lenses as I live in a town of 200,000 yet my mother's family owns and operates a ranch and farm that has been in the family for 4 generations. My immediate family is involved in an agritainment pumpkin farm.

The pumpkin farm is a fall destination for much of our urban population to visit. It focuses on teaching guests about agriculture through activities and entertainment while making family memories in the fall. For the 7 weeks we are open, over 36,500 patrons come to our farm. We expose them on to how plants grow, animals and their behaviors, the many "jobs" a farmer has and must do, and how agriculture influences our lives each and every day. Nearly every activity available is connected to agriculture in some way.

School age students come to our farm to experience a taste of agriculture they wouldn't have the opportunity to experience otherwise. In our 2014 season we had the opportunity to teach over 4500 students about agriculture using agritainment. We teach them many aspects about agriculture. For example, we introduce them to 8 different field crops grown often in Illinois. They get to see the plants, feel the stalks and seeds, and learn why the crop is produced. The students pick their own pumpkin, learning how a pumpkin grows – from the seed in the soil to the flower, the importance of bee pollination, and finally a ripened product. They also learn about the many bushels of corn produced in Illinois, touch and feel an ear of corn, and learn that by-products of corn include the sweetener in some of their sodas and sport drinks, the coloring in fireworks on the 4th of July, and that nearly every item on the menu at McDonalds contains corn or soybeans. I have a passion and desire to teach the public about agriculture through activities that excite them while keeping them interested in the lessons we teach them. If I have the opportunity to impact 20 kids, I know that is 20 lives more than I would have been able to impact without our agri-tainment farm.

Now, a delegate from Indiana will speak.

Shelby Nierman – Indiana

Hi my name is Shelby Nierman. I have grown up on a small dairy farm in Brownstown, Indiana where I have been involved in the 4-H program for 10 years. Living in a rural area, I am surrounded by agriculture. My parents and grandparents have instilled in me the value of 4-H, and because of that, I have had numerous opportunities to meet people from across the United States. A few years ago, I was given the opportunity to be a part of the first Indiana 4-H Dairy Youth Academy. This experience brought together fourteen youth from across Indiana with an interest in the agriculture industry. We were able to visit various farms in Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Canada. Through this experience, even with an agricultural background, I was surprised with the different ways that farmers manage their operations. If you ask a farmer what he would do if he wasn't in this industry, he will more than likely say he hasn't thought of doing anything else. It is important to understand that farmers are passionate about their jobs in the agriculture industry. This select group would not have the incentive to complete the hard work of their job without passion and dedication. The opportunities I have had allow me to not only share my story, but also accept the diverse backgrounds of others. Programs, such as 4-H, are essential in bridging the gap between rural and urban areas. The 4-H program brings together youth with individual experiences, passions, and beliefs. To bridge the gap between rural and urban perspectives of agriculture, producers and consumers can find a common interest through the 4-H program. We have the opportunity to hear the opinions of consumers through 4-H, and because of this, we can improve, innovate, and learn from each other.

Now, a delegate from Rhode Island will speak.

Kailey Foster – Rhode Island

Hi my name is Kailey and I'm from Rhode Island. I've been involved in 4h for about 6 years. Unlike most of my fellow delegates I did not grow up with too much agriculture in my life. Sure, my dad is a milk truck driver and his family members are all farmers, but other than that I had no connection to that way of life. My mom grew up in the city where her idea of a major farm was an apple orchard. On the other hand, my dad grew up on a farm and was very involved with 4H and FFA. With that being said I was always preached to by my mom that farms are gross, dirty, and smelly. It wasn't until I was 10 years old when I caught my first glimpse of what 4H was. My dad took me to a local fair to watch my very first dairy show. I remember how excited my dad was to show me this part of his childhood and him telling me if this was something I wanted to do I could. Watching my first show changed my look on agriculture, now the tough part would be to get my mom to have a change a heart like I did. My mom eventually gave in and let me join but she wasn't 100% on board with the idea. So that year I joined 4h and I worked hard with my dad to prepare my animal. When fair season comes along, my mom did come as support but kept her distance from the cows. She liked to spend her time at the "fluffy rabbit" cages. When she found out that these "fluffy rabbits" are also a part of 4h she took that in as her way to accept 4h better. Since then we have had many rabbits, at one point we were caring for 50 rabbits. Even though we have had many rabbits, I have never had a cow of my own. As the years have gone by I have gotten more and more involved with 4h and with the dairy cows and my sisters also joined my club also with dairy projects. This made it so my mom learn about agriculture and she started to except this way of life and 6 years later I am getting a cow of my own. My experience of coming from a family with both urban and rural backgrounds has given me an opportunity to be my own bridge within my family.

Now, a delegate from Connecticut will speak.

Danielle Brazeau - Connecticut

Hello, my name is Danielle Brazeau. I am from Storrs, Connecticut and this is my sixth year in 4-H. Growing up in a suburban area I have developed an appreciation for farmers through 4-H. My 4-H animal projects include rabbits, chickens, horses, and goats. I have learned that it doesn't matter how you feel or what the weather is like, the animals still need to be fed, watered, and cleaned. This is something I feel many people in my community do not understand. The animals don't just sit there and care for them selves. Raising livestock is a huge commitment and a lot of hard work but is also very rewarding. I was given three chickens by someone in my town who like the idea of fresh eggs but once they got chickens they realize that they weren't up for the work involved. I along with many others involved with animal husbandry have a great passion for what we do. In 4-H and FFA we attend public events to educate people about our agricultural related projects and all the hard work that goes into them. We want them to understand not only where their food comes from but also all the work and commitment that goes into producing it. It is also important to educate youth about agriculture because they are the next generation of consumers. If they know more about how their food is produced it will help bridge the gap between the producer and consumers.

Now, a delegate from California will speak.

Colton Searcy – California

Hi, my name is Colton Searcy, this is my 10th year in 4-H, and I live in Porterville, CA. I live in the largest agriculture producing county in the nation, but I have no agriculture background. 4-H and school field trips have taught me everything I know about agriculture. Being in the county that I live in, the drought has affected the way I live. 4 years of below average rainfall has caused the wells on the east side of Porterville to completely dry up. Portable showers, portable toilets, and bottled water are a necessity. Governor Brown has just imposed a 25% restriction on water throughout the state, but how are you going to restrict water if we don't have any? If we build water infrastructures and contain the water, we will revive the local economy from all the loss of crops. Even with the water restrictions, we would need to have 11 trillion gallons of water, that equates to the amount of water Niagara Falls puts out in 150 days. If we work together with agriculture and urban areas, we can make the best out of the drought.

Now, a delegate from Minnesota will speak.

Hannah Hasbargen - Minnesota

Good afternoon, my name is Hannah Hasbargen and I live on a family operated farm in the Red River Valley of Minnesota. When I was six years old, I began to show livestock in 4-H and this is my thirteenth year being an active 4-H'er. Today I would like to talk about the Future of Agriculture and I will start by comparing the United States to other countries around the world.

By 2050, the world's population is projected to be 9.1 billion, which is 34% higher than it is today. As you can see in this table, the percentage of people who farm in Africa is 65% whereas in the United States only 1% of the population is directly involved in the production of agriculture. This is very interesting when looking at the next comparison, which is the cost of food as a percent of disposable income. Consumers in the US spend less than 10% on food while their African counterparts spend approximately 70% of their disposable income on food.

We face a number of challenges internationally as producers including sustaining global food security; however, there are also domestic challenges. Some of the major issues include consumer perceptions of biotechnology, food safety and labeling, and pesticide use; when you take these technological advances and innovations away from farmers you decrease production levels while increasing prices. We need to remember that as agriculture producers we are working to feed the masses and further improve agricultural practices.

U.S. ethanol production has increased rapidly since 2006. The expansion in domestic ethanol production has been one of the main drivers of the corn market.

During the Super-Cycle of Agriculture, corn reached a high of \$8 per bushel and soybeans soared to \$18. As farmers, we took our profits from the high prices of the Super-Cycle and invested them by pattern tiling 50% of our land, updating our crop drying systems to add efficiency and reduce cost. We also use GPS and precision guidance technology on all of our tillage, spray, planting, and harvesting equipment to reduce costs by eliminating overlap.

Our operation has integrated this into field mapping with yield and fertility that allows us to variable rate seed and fertilizer, which saves us up to 25% on costs. These innovations have been made by the majority of farmers in our area and should leave us in good condition to weather the period of low prices that we now find ourselves in due to the downturn of the cycle.

The Super-Cycle has shifted paradigms of agriculture and rural America, creating challenges, chaos, and opportunity, which will be influenced by the policies made in this room. So, will we face the situation like other developing countries where a higher percentage of our disposable income is used to feed the nation or will we allow technological advances to continue to infiltrate the agriculture industry?

Now, a delegate from Wyoming will speak.

Brook Weibel – Wyoming

Hi my name is Brook Weibel. I live in Burns Wyoming, about 25-30 miles East of Cheyenne. I have been in 4-H for ten years and FFA for five years. I do a variety of projects in 4-H; for example I have done shooting sports, photography, as well as other static exhibits. My main project though is pigs; I have shown market pigs for about eight years. My parents both come from a farming and ranching background, and got my sister and I started with pigs when we were younger just to see if it was something we wanted to pursue even further. They were right, my sister and I loved having and showing pigs! We have always shown our pigs at fair but we haven't every done anything else with them.

This year however, we talked about trying to breed them. My parents both breed their own pigs when they were in 4-H and FFA. A couple years ago my sister had a really nice gilt, and we decided we were going to try and breed here, but then she got sick and we had to put her down. We haven't really talked about it since then; that is until now. We have a lot of things that we have to think about, such as whether or not we will A.I the pig(s), or if we will find a boar and go down that road.

We live on a 40 acre farm, but we don't really have any crops just animals, so we can't make our own feed like other people do, so it will be expensive buying feed. The other obstacle we are trying to work through is that we don't really have the facilities on our property to properly breed the pigs. This being said in the Burns community one of the main showing animals is pigs, and we have two or three people who breed them in Burns alone, and a few people in Pine Bluffs about 15 miles East of Burns. The biggest obstacle though is having someone available to feed the pigs every day, because my family is very active and we are gone quite a bit.

Though there are many obstacles, I know my family can overcome them, and it makes me excited to even think about getting up in the mornings and hanging out with piglets! My future in agriculture is hopefully breeding pigs, and having more facilities at my house to be able to do it on our own.

Now, a delegate from Colorado will speak.

Wade Hofmeister – Colorado

Hello, my name is Wade Hofmeister and I am from a small family owned farm in Colorado. Our main crop that we grow is alfalfa that we use to feed to our animals. Using this method we have reduced the amount of money that we would spend on buying hay from auctions and other sources. This method has also helped with making our feeding process faster. The main problems that we have of growing alfalfa are infestation of insects. This is a problem because the quality and quantity of the crop is diminished. Also it needs a sufficient amount of water for the plant to thrive from. It also must be plowed up ideally every five years because it does not provide well as it ages. Growing this crop has helped my family and I through tough times and provided food for all of my animals in 4-H.

Now, a delegate from Nevada will speak.

Garrett Tomera – Nevada

Hi, my name is Garrett Tomera and I am from Nevada. I have been in 4-H for 10 years. I am a sixth generation rancher of Northern Nevada. My family has been ranching for more than 150 years. Over the past years my family has noticed that the relationship between the producer and the consumer has been growing apart. My mom Kristi Tomera, and I started researching how to connect with the consumer we found out that in one of the southern states they have an app called, “meet your famer” in their grocery store. This app allows them to virtually meet the producer through a video that tells them about how their food got from the farm to the store. One way we educate our community is that we have an “agriculture in the classroom” at our local middle school. We bring livestock and tell the kids about the animals by products and how they are made.

Now, a delegate from Idaho will speak.

Tyler Bassett - Idaho

My name is Tyler Bassett from Bear Lake Idaho. I have been in 4-H for six years and counting. In my little school students have the option of taking AG classes. A decent amount of students take these classes, but more for a free period than to actually learn and better themselves. It is not that my teacher doesn't teach them because he does and does an amazing job at it. It is that my generation has no interest in Agriculture and does not care. They have no real respect for it. I have this image in my mind that if this continues my generation's level of using and understanding Agriculture will drop dramatically. This could, in turn, change the outcome of students that go into the field of Agriculture to produce the things we need for everyday life. I believe that if we include more activities involving outdoor Agriculture opportunities, that students that might have not have an interest in Agriculture will find that it is an extremely interesting and useful tool. Students will then respect it more and will want it in their daily lives. If more students find interest in Agriculture they then may go into it as a career, which will, in turn, increase production of required products. I find it very important that this happens and that Agriculture is not forgotten about in my or any generation.

Now, a delegate from Missouri will speak.

Darby Schmidt – Missouri

Hello, my name is Darby Schmidt and I am from Defiance, MO. I have been a 4-H member for 10 years. I have grown up in a small town about an hour outside of St. Louis, but have attended a large, suburban school system my entire life. There is a decreasing number of farms in my community, and only a few students with agriculture backgrounds. As a 4-H project, I started raising and showing Boer goats. 4-H was my gateway to agriculture. I have had many opportunities to see first-hand the public's misconception of today's agriculture in my school. Most of my classmates have no idea where their food comes from and have a lack of knowledge about modern agriculture. When my friends come over to my house they are very interested to learn about how their food is raised. They don't understand how livestock has to be feed and watered everyday. They also don't understand that when the goats are sick, I have to give them medication. I believe that it is important to teach the importance of modern agriculture in our schools and to improve the future of agriculture we must educate our youth consumers. Everyone eats, so it is important for everyone to learn about where their food comes from. Through advocating in my school and being a member of the 4-H program, I have decided to pursue a degree in agribusiness and be a part of the future of agriculture.

Now, a delegate from Maine will speak.

Shaynen Schofield - Maine

Hello my name is Shaynen Schofield I am from Waldo County, Maine. I do not personally live on a farm but agriculture is a huge part of my life. I have been in 4-H for ten years and in this time I have shown sheep, goats, pigs, and I currently show dairy cows. My school is divided into two groups- kids with an agricultural background and the kids with little to no agricultural background. I personally have an agricultural background. I spend most my summer showing cows at fairs and at my uncles farm taking care of the animals. A lot of the kids at my school with little to no agricultural background don't understand the amount of effort that is put into taking care of the animals. Waking up early to get chores done before breakfast and we start chores around 3 so we can get done at a decent hour. I believe if we had a special day for agriculture awareness were people could go to a farm near them and see where their food comes from and so they could see the amount of effort put into raising and taking care of the animals. I think that this could help make farmers and ranchers more respected in the way that their life is the farm they have little time for anything else.

Now, a delegate from Colorado will speak.

Jenni Golbuff – Colorado

Hello, my name is Jenni Golbuff. I am 17 years old and a 4-H delegate from the State of Colorado. I have been a 4-H member for 12 years. I am a supporter of the biotech crops, because, using these crops can help to protect our resources. These modified crops actually use less fuel, help water efficiency, reduced spray uses, and give farmers better harvests.

When I was a little girl, a large tornado ripped through my little farm town in Minnesota. A lot of buildings were destroyed, but what was worse, was the harvest that fall. My little town mainly harvested soybeans and corn, and most of our harvests were destroyed in the May Day Tornado. When I found out about Biotech crops, I was amazed. Just imagine, a trait added to corn so that it can have stronger stalks they will not be as easily destroyed in tornados or storms.

Better harvests and less resources used to help feed the future generations? That's what we need to be thinking about, not just for the present farmers, but for the future farmers and future generations, like my fellow delegates and myself, who are the next generation.

Now, a delegate from Texas will speak.

Merah Winters – Texas

Hello, my name is Merah Winters. Located in Central Texas, I live in a large urban and rural community. My 4-H involvement spans 9 years so far.

Within that urban setting, it amazes me the lack of awareness many citizens in the community have. When asked, “Where does your food come from?” many consumers will respond, “The grocery store.” Or “I don’t know.” 4-H is a program that has allowed me to help reverse this loss of knowledge and teach some essential skills learned through agriculture.

Agriculture has immensely benefited from great technological advancements, however these advancements are slowly becoming dysfunctional and damaging. Within the production of livestock many popular technologies such as Artificial Insemination, In-vitro, and flushing help the producer turn out healthier and larger yields of their product. Now don’t get me wrong these technologies do have their perks, but their cons have a much larger impact on the future of agriculture. When producers take these advances to the extreme scary things happen. The loss of diversity in the genetic pools when producers breed for certain traits leads to loss of immunities, genetic mutations, and congenital defects.

My best example of genetic diversity lives in my barn. I have a 10 year old, 300 pound, mutt of a goat. Hash Brown was my very first 4-H project. From bottle baby to a vertical 8 foot tall goat, this genetic mash up has never gone down due to illness. His only medication is the monthly worming and an occasional booster shot. His diversity in breeding has aided him in being an extremely healthy livestock example.

Thank you for your time and this opportunity to be the youth voice of agriculture, and we’ll see you at the barn. We will now open the floor for questions.