

THE PATH TO YOUR FUTURE



Career Opportunities in the Dairy Industry

This Workbook, “The Path to Your Future . . . Career Opportunities in the Dairy Industry”, is designed for youth, ages 15 to 21. The workbook’s purpose is to help youth develop a career objective and to describe dairy-related career opportunities.

Materials for this publication were contributed by California Polytechnical Institute, Hoard’s Dairyman, Pennsylvania State University, Southeastern Vermont Career Education Center, University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and many dairy industry personnel.

Information and editorial guidance provided by:

Kelli Dunklee
Jennie Hess
Julie Kirchdoerfer

For further information contact:

Holstein Foundation
P.O. Box 816
Brattleboro, VT 05302-0816
Telephone: 802-254-4551

THERE ARE 48,000 POSITIONS AVAILABLE IN AGRICULTURE.



- *Agricultural Journalism*
- *Agricultural Policy Analyst*
- *A.I. Representatives*
- *Breed Association Consultant*
- *Cattle Fitter*
- *Communications Specialist*
- *Computer Specialist*
- *Dairy Producer*
- *Dairy Product Promotions*
- *Dairy Research*
- *Extension Agent*
- *Financial Consultant*
- *Livestock Photographer*
- *Nutritionist*
- *Sales Representatives*
- *Sire Analyst*
- *Veterinarian*

The dairy and agricultural industries offer many opportunities. Even as dairy farms are becoming more efficient, more competent individuals are needed in all sectors of the business world to insure the dairy industry's strong future. From the most technical to the most general managerial position, each agriculturalist plays a significant role in delivering dairy products to the industry's most important person - the consumer.

WITH ONLY 44,000 GRADUATES TO FILL THEM.

This guide contains short descriptions of various dairy-related careers. There also are self-assessment and career planning exercises. These can help you determine if, and where, you fit into the realm of dairy careers. You may find one career combines your creative and dairy interests while another requires your mathematical abilities. These exercises can be done individually or in a workshop setting. Discussing the material with family, friends and group leaders may help you learn more about your career goals. Explore. The horizon is your limit!



SELF-ASSESSMENT

the beginning of the journey

WHAT ARE YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES? WHERE DO YOUR INTERESTS LIE? WHAT SKILLS OR TALENTS DO YOU HAVE?

Self-assessment is the first step in career planning. Identifying your interests and abilities can help you decide what you want in a career. Self-assessment is made up of:

- **Basic personal inventory**
- **Skills profile**
- **Interest analysis**
- **Personal qualities**
- **Capabilities and accomplishments**
- **Educational qualifications**
- **Job qualifications profile**
- **Values/environmental preferences**

The following exercise will help you clarify the personal attributes which will affect your career decision. If some of your attributes are not listed, add them at the bottom.

I ENJOY . . .

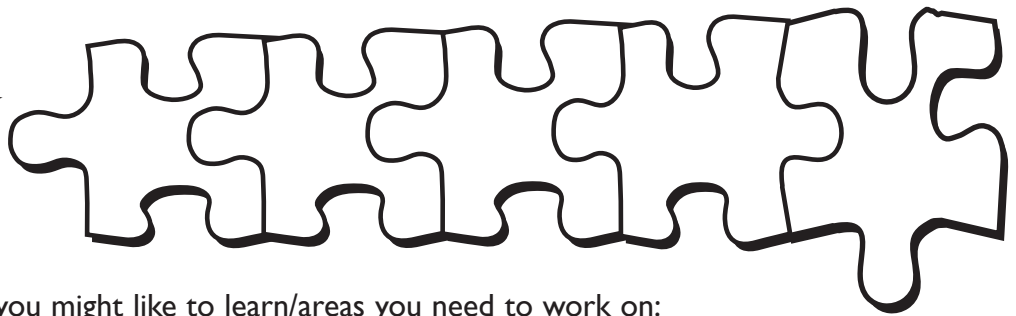
	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never		Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
helping others					evaluating cows				
working with others					traveling				
working specifically with youth					making decisions				
working independently					communicating				
working under pressure					taking photographs				
working indoors					researching, experimenting				
working outdoors					applying knowledge, theory				
creating artistically					analyzing, critiquing				
designing (graphics etc.)					meeting challenges				
writing					planning/organizing				
influencing others					working meticulously				
teaching					working with numbers				
serving the public					working for self				
working with animals					flexible hours				
"talking cows"					standard salary				
opportunities for advancement					minimal supervision				
relocation to advance					frequent job travel				
others					others				

PUT THE PUZZLE TOGETHER

Now take a closer look at the items you like to do often and those items you never do.

1. Which five are most important to you? Write these in the puzzle pieces below. You now know what you like doing best and have learned more about yourself.

**THIS
IS YOU!**



2. List five skills/tasks that you might like to learn/areas you need to work on:
3. List five personal qualities which you will want to emphasize to employers:
4. List the five most important values in your life which will play a role in your career choice:
5. List five work environment values which you will want to consider when choosing a job/career:

Keep these interests and abilities in mind as you read through the job descriptions on the following pages. People who actually work in each career provided information for the job descriptions. These people once were where you are now. They set their goals and are achieving them. You can do the same.

In each job description, you will find personal attributes necessary for the career. Compare those to the puzzle you completed above. If they are alike, you may have found your career. But, you also may find you have interests in several careers. Explore each one. By doing so, you may develop a strong interest in one career or decide that it is not for you. The purpose of this exercise is to aid you in making career decisions.

Many other career opportunities are offered in the dairy industry and beyond. Consider these as well. And remember, changing your mind is okay. Many people try several careers in their lifetime before they find the right one. Careers have been pursued in numerous ways. The path you follow depends on you, your values and interests.

DAIRY OPPORTUNITIES

AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS MANAGER

As the dairy industry's focus on business increases so do available business positions, such as management. The manager may supervise a staff; prepare and implement company programs or projects; monitor income and expenses; hire employees; implement company planning and serve as a liaison with other corporate divisions. The scope of a manager's responsibilities depends on the organization's size.

In many businesses, there is a hierarchy of management positions. For example, an A.I. organization might have managers of promotions and field staff in addition to a general manager. A manager must be honest, fair, understanding, able to handle many projects at once, goal-oriented and able to communicate with others. A college degree in agriculture or business, and dairy or agriculture experience are recommended.

AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS (Print, Advertising and Broadcast...)

A dairy publication's editor helps plan, write and manage editorial material; writes articles; manages columnists, free lance writers and other staff; generates press releases and ads; takes pictures; edits and proofreads. Communication, writing and administrative skills; organization; attentiveness to detail; and a sincere concern for the customer are necessary for this job.

The dairy journalist usually writes articles independently, but plans publications with other staff members and industry personnel. Work hours often are flexible, while the amount of travel and task variety depend on the publication's magnitude. A journalism degree, writing classes and an Agricultural background are highly recommended for this career. Furthermore, word processing and desktop publishing skills are helpful.

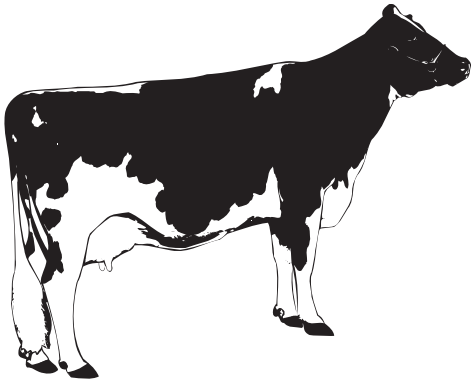
Many free-lance, writing, photography, graphics and management positions are available in the ag journalism field. Ag journalists expect a continuing demand for people in their career.

AGRICULTURAL POLICY ANALYST

The dairy industry constantly makes technology and efficiency advances. Meanwhile, the balanced market supply and demand concept grows more complex. Therefore, qualified people with agricultural backgrounds are needed on state and national agricultural policy committees and research teams. These people are responsible for developing laws, regulations and policy that may affect the industry. Usually stationed in government headquarters, they must work with many people including lobbyists, government personnel and other federal and local entities. As they perform these duties, communication skills (verbal and written) and the ability to work under stressful, unstructured conditions are essential.

This career offers a variety of tasks and the opportunity to develop policy that will impact agriculture. These people help make the policy and laws that affect the stability of the agricultural community and general society. A bachelor's degree and a broad base of agricultural knowledge and experience are very helpful.

A.I. REPRESENTATIVE



The Artificial Insemination (A.I.) representative travels from farm to farm to sell semen and A.I. supplies; provides A.I. and genetic information; does follow-up paperwork; may serve as an A.I. technician; and directs and assists with breeding seminars and conventions. He or she must be good-spirited, helpful, friendly, encouraging, and flexible in order to properly handle many different farm situations and personalities.

Self-motivation is critical as this person works independently to finish the job. These people enjoy helping make dairy genetic improvements and helping producers succeed in their businesses. Practical farm experience, dairy industry knowledge, and a college degree are recommended.

BREED ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE

A breed representative promotes and assists with dairy breed programs and services; provides domestic and international marketing assistance; evaluates cattle and advises farmers; serves as a mediator between members and association staff; and helps solve program and general dairy management problems. As he or she works closely with the producer, diplomacy and sincere concern for people and dairy cattle are necessary.

Representatives travel within states, nationally and internationally to farms, meetings and shows. These people work independently and have flexible hours. They enjoy the work variety, challenges, people and farm contacts, and helping others.

An agricultural college degree is recommended and practical dairy experience is required. The demand for consultants will remain steady, but the position may become more specialized to meet dairy industry needs.



CATTLE FITTER



A cattle fitter is most similar to a combination of a hair stylist and make-up artist. They style and shape hair to enhance the appearance of an animal. Frequently they are hired to travel with the show string for the entire show season. Many fitters also travel from sale to sale.

Knowledge in feeds and feeding, milk quality, herd health, udder health, breeding and genetics and animal evaluation are required. Self-motivation is important as this person works independently to finish the job. Fitters enjoy showcasing outstanding dairy cattle and exhibiting at the many shows that take place throughout the year.

COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

A communications specialist develops educational, informational and promotional materials (written and audio-visual). He or she writes, designs, and manages complete projects which require budget management and planning. A communications specialist must work with organization staff, clients and members to design effective literature and materials. Positions are available in A.I. organizations, breed associations, milk cooperatives and other dairy businesses.

This person must be creative, attentive to detail, flexible, self-motivated and willing to accept suggestions and criticism as he or she strives to meet the customer's needs. A college degree, communication skills (oral and written) and dairy experience are highly recommended. Experience with budgets and planning also is helpful.

Communications specialists enjoy producing materials that help producers and dairy personnel understand the benefits and features of their companies' programs, services and products.

COMPUTER SPECIALIST

A computer specialist plays an important role in the dairy industry. Career opportunities continue to increase as dairy farms and agricultural businesses use more computers and computer technology. The computer specialist's responsibilities may include computer programming; PC and mainframe assistance; processing data to create meaningful information and reports for dairy farmers and company staff; and selling computer products to dairy farmers or industry personnel.

He or she works independently and sets goals within company plans. Little travel is involved unless called for by product managing. People in this career enjoy challenge; are creative; and are able to handle many projects at once.

Training can be accomplished in many ways, from on-the-job training to a bachelor's degree. General recommendations made by computer personnel are to train the mind for logical and organized thought and to continue learning.



DAIRY PRODUCER

The dairy producer has more responsibilities now than ever. His or her primary tasks are managing cattle, crops, labor and finances. The cattle responsibilities include breeding, health, feeding along with many general decisions and tasks. The producer must plant and harvest the needed crops or buy feed for the herd. Labor management is vital, as the producer may depend heavily on his or her hired labor. As the industry continues to prosper, the farm must be more business-oriented. This requires sound financial planning and management.



Necessary attributes of a producer are a sincere care for cows and the environment; to be hardworking, responsible, dedicated and patient; and the ability to handle many projects at once. A producer must be ambitious and pursue constant improvement to remain strong in the industry.

Although no specific qualifications are required for this occupation, a college education, dairy industry experience and organizational/extra-curricular activities involvement are helpful.

DAIRY PRODUCT PROMOTIONS

Milk and dairy product advertising and promotion continue to be vital to the dairy industry. Promotions personnel develop marketing, advertising and promotional programs to increase dairy products sales. They also conduct informational seminars for producers; educate consumers about dairy product nutritional value; write and design news articles, ads and other promotional materials; and provide public relations for the dairy industry.

These people must communicate with producers, volunteer groups, milk and dairy product marketing companies, the government and the public. So, promotion personnel are outgoing, creative and able to communicate effectively (written and orally). Public speaking skills and enthusiasm are a must. People interviewed in this career enjoy being creative and working with the public.

A college degree in marketing or agriculture is recommended along with a good knowledge base in marketing, nutrition and the dairy industry. Available dairy promotion positions may increase as dairy product advertising continues to become more important.

DAIRY RESEARCH

Constant research is the dairy industry's key to continued advancement. A dairy research chemist interviewed said "perseverance, dedication and patience" help him as he conducts his research. While sometimes a member of a team, many researchers work independently on their assigned projects. Bachelor's and Master's degrees generally are required to work in research, while practical field experience is recommended. Many dairy researchers also have completed Ph.D. degrees.

Opportunities for research are offered in a variety of dairy industry fields including forages, dairy production, genetics, milk quality, dairy product manufacturing, marketing, economics and milk pricing. All fields work together for the dairy industry's future. Many private companies, government agencies and universities offer dairy research positions.

DAIRY SCIENCE PROFESSOR

Teaching, research and extension are the primary responsibilities of college dairy science faculty. Furthermore, they may advise students (undergraduate/graduate), and sometimes serve as extra-curricular advisors and judging team coaches. Interpersonal and communication skills (written and oral), and willingness to work with and help people are necessary for this position. A faculty member needs these skills as he or she interacts with people from every sector of the dairy industry.

Researchers must have the ability to apply knowledge and organizational, planning and analytical skills to a specific topic of interest. Research's purpose is to improve, solve problems or answer questions in the dairy industry.

Interviewed professors said they enjoy interacting with students and helping dairy industry personnel. This position requires a bachelor's, a master's and doctorate degrees. In-depth knowledge of the dairy industry is necessary to be an effective educator in the general dairy community.

EXTENSION AGENT

An extension agent helps educate people in the dairy industry. He or she provides informal and formal education programs encompassing all phases of dairy production; plans, oversees and attends meetings; coordinates 4-H dairy programs; and works with dairy and other organizations at the county and state level.

Organizational and planning skills, optimism, sincerity in helping people, and communication skills are important attributes for an extension agent. The agent works with many people, but closest with the dairy producer. Those interviewed enjoy the variety of work, developing new programs and working with people for general dairy community improvement. A bachelor's degree in agriculture and sometimes a master's is required for this position. Practical farm and organizational experience also are very helpful.

Other employment opportunities available in extension include agricultural economics, rural planning and development, home economics and agronomy. The purpose of agricultural extension positions is to provide services and assistance to the agricultural and rural community.

FINANCIAL CONSULTANT

Dairy farmers must be more aware of the economics of their business. Consequently, agricultural consultants are needed to provide financial planning assistance. A consultant may be self-employed, or work for a company/organization as a loan officer, accountant or field representative. Consultants often provide technology, business and tax advice; accounting and budget planning assistance; tax preparation and many other services. A loan officer offers financial analysis and loan request recommendations, primarily for farm operations. Financial consultants work with numerous organizations and farm personnel to provide services.

This job requires an analytical, economics-oriented and inquisitive mind; good communication skills; and the ability to relate and talk "on the level" of a particular person or business. These jobs usually demand a bachelor's degree in business, economics or finance with an agricultural emphasis. Agricultural knowledge and experience help financial consultants relate to their clients. Each producer or business provides a unique situation and must be dealt with individually. Helping people meet their financial goals is one satisfaction of a financial consultant's work.



INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISING AND MARKET DEVELOPMENT

Positions in the dairy industry's international sector continue to increase as the United States develops a larger international market for cattle, embryos and other products. For non-profit organizations, international personnel plan, and manage international market development programs to increase U.S. animal exports. International personnel help members merchandise their dairy genetics and improve genetics in foreign nations. They conduct international promotion and advertising programs and serve in public relations or as liaisons with foreign personnel groups like the Foreign Agricultural Service.

Members of this field believe communication skills; the ability to work under stressful, unstructured conditions; patience; motivation; and genuine interest in other people's goals and objectives help them perform their responsibilities. Overseas experience, dairy cattle knowledge and marketing skills are necessary. This career's benefits are seeing a satisfied customer, travel and meeting people from many places.

LIVESTOCK PHOTOGRAPHER

A livestock photographer's expertise is in taking quality pictures specifically of livestock and agriculture. They are able to objectively view an animal, assess its faults and take a picture that will emphasize their qualities. They have the unique ability to work with people and animals. They frequently travel to farms, shows and sales. A knowledge of livestock habits, photographer skills, and patience are desirable for this profession.



NUTRITIONIST

A nutritionist specializes in understanding a cow's digestive system. This person develops proper diets for dairy animals while maintaining a productive and healthy herd. Many farms often hire full-time nutritionists. Being a nutritionist sometimes requires frequent travel to farms helping to resolve problems such as herd health and low milk production. They develop rations for productivity, growth and herd maintenance. Knowledge of computer skills, math skills, science and biology are required.

SALES REPRESENTATIVE

Many dairy companies offer sales positions. Whether the person sells feed, semen, farm supplies, advertising space or insurance, the jobs have similar characteristics. The salesperson's ultimate responsibility is to sell the product. He or she must maintain and service a territory of existing and potential clients, and assist with product or service questions and problems. This person must be "people-oriented", able to develop relationships easily and "think on his or her feet". Sincerity in helping the customer is very important. Benefits of a sales career include the opportunities to see satisfied customers and meet people.

A college degree and experience with agriculture and people are highly recommended. Extra-curricular involvement and communication skills development are important youth experiences that can help prepare for this career.

SIRE ANALYST

The sire analyst is one of many job positions A.I. organizations offer. This person's primary responsibility is to coordinate and locate bulls for entry into A.I. young sire and marketing programs. To fulfill this responsibility, the sire analyst must set or follow genetic standards, identify prospective dams, establish mating sire lists, determine sires to be sampled and coordinate release of information. Frequent travel often requires long and variable work hours.

A sire analyst must be a good judge of cattle; organized and prompt; and able to communicate effectively (written and verbally). A sire analyst must understand dairy genetic principles. A bachelor's degree in dairy or agriculture, possibly a master's in dairy cattle breeding, a dairy farm background and communication experience are highly recommended.

VETERINARIAN

The large-animal veterinarian plays a vital role on the dairy farm. As a herd health consultant, this person advises the producer about general animal health problems; provides cattle health service and care; and offers reproductive and herd health programs.

A veterinarian must be outgoing, enthusiastic, able to communicate well and have a strong dairy cattle interest as he or she works with many dairy personnel. Although a veterinarian's schedule is flexible, he or she must be available for emergency calls and long work hours often are required.

Extensive education, including a bachelor's degree and a veterinary doctorate degree, is required. 4-H and FFA involvement, working on a dairy farm and for a veterinarian, and a strong general education are youth experiences that also have helped people in this career.

VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE TEACHER

An ag teacher plans and teaches high school agricultural classes, advises students, coordinates FFA activities, assists with FFA project planning and development, and coaches FFA judging and competitive teams. To teach, it is necessary to have concern for youth and their development. Dedication, ambition, patience, flexibility and enthusiasm also help a teacher do his or her job.

Teaching involves some travel to contests, state and national conventions, retreats and professional seminars. A college degree in agricultural education and a teaching certificate are required. A strong background in agriculture and youth organizations is helpful.

One ag teacher said, "Seeing students achieve their goals is the most enjoyable aspect of teaching." Future demand for teachers will vary according to geographical area but the need for well-prepared educators is always high.

WORDS OF WISDOM

While choosing your career or path in life, remember to do what makes you happy. As children, all of us make many decisions about what we want to be when we grow up. These decisions change frequently, depending on our dreams. You will spend approximately 50 percent of your adult waking hours working. Job contentment often determines a person's happiness with himself or herself, family, friends, and life in general. Successful dairy industry personnel provided the following "Words of Wisdom":

"Your attitude determines your altitude."

"Set priorities and follow your interests - you will never go wrong."

"Do a lot of listening. Work hard at whatever you do - you receive only what you put into a program."

"Experience as many good things in life as possible. Feel comfortable with people - you can't be shy. The best leaders are those who have and still are working in the trenches. Enjoy what you do. If you have chosen a career, and it is not what you want - don't be afraid to change."

"Participation in non-agricultural activities through high school, college and church also are important experiences that help develop technical and people skills."

"You have to make an effort to control your own destiny. That means setting goals, then working to achieve them. Some call it planning your work - then working your plan."

"A good foundation in general education - math, English, etc. is always helpful."

"Honesty and ambition are necessary for long-term advancement in a career."

CONTINUING ON THE TRAIL

Now that you have one or a few careers in mind, you may be asking “Where do I go from here?” The direction you take next is up to you. Planning is your key to success. A plan will help as you walk the career path, whether you have one or several careers in mind. Remember that job hunting is a job in itself. It requires time, effort and above all thought.

THINGS TO CONSIDER:

- Developing a list of questions.
- Talking to people.
- Interviewing or spending a day with someone in your interested career field.
- Exploring several careers may help you develop a strong interest in one career or decide it is not for you.
- Internships can help you learn more about a job or company.
- Many career opportunities come through advancement within a company or organization.

Use the exercise below to plan your career objective. This one or two sentence statement lets the employer know two crucial things: the type of job or career you seek and the skills you would bring to that job. It is the clearest indication on your resume of what you want to do. A well-written career objective also tells the employer that you have put thought into your skills and goals.

Four potential components are:

- the general field in which you are interested (accounting, communications, etc.)
- the emphasis or specialization within that field (public accounting, advertising)
- skills which you bring to the job (strong writing, interpersonal and organizational)
- special features of the job or work environment (fast-paced, challenging, etc.)

Complete the following exercise individually. Your career development method depends only on you. Refer to the Sources of Information list on the next page. Use extra paper if needed. If you have chosen several careers, try this exercise for each one. Give this exercise serious thought. It may serve as a plan for the next several years of your life. Good luck!

My career objective is: _____

Needed education/training/qualifications: _____

How will I obtain these qualifications: _____

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

People: Teachers, professors, and advisors

Employers

Career consultants

Parents, friends, and neighbors

Places: High school guidance office

Career planning and placement centers

Community, interest organizations

Cooperative Extension Service

Public shows, expositions - dairy/agricultural

State and federal employment service

Libraries

Literature: Internet

Newspapers, professional journals, trade magazines, industry magazines, film and tapes

Professional newsletters, flyers

College catalogs

Occupational Outlook Handbook - U.S. Department of Labor



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FOUNDATION**

P.O. Box 816, Brattleboro, Vermont 05302-0816