

Thoughts on Agriculture from a Future Influencer Megan Reid, Barry's Bay Ontario

Last week I had the opportunity to go to a large agricultural conference in Ottawa. The GrowCanada® conference brought together about 500 people from all over Canada who are involved in agriculture. I was part of a small group of high school students who were invited to participate in the conference as “future influencers.”

Reflecting back on the two day conference, I learned a lot about agriculture; the opportunities that are available in the industry; and all of the issues that the industry faces. It was a great experience

The main thing that stuck with me is that there is such a lack of knowledge in the public about agriculture, and there is such a negative opinion in the public about the new technologies in modern agriculture. It is really clear that so much needs to be done to explain the benefits of new agricultural technologies and the role they will play to solve many global problems, such as world hunger and the loss of our boreal forests.

The future of agriculture depends on us – on young people. The general lack of interest in my generation is, I think, because of the stereotype of the industry as a farmer driving a tractor in his overalls. But it's much more than that, and the industry needs to communicate more with young people to explain all of the opportunities that there are in agriculture, such as genetics, law, and sales; chemistry and international marketing.

I plan to continue in my role as a “future influencer”. The GrowCanada® conference has inspired me to promote agriculture as a great career opportunity. I plan to do that with much enthusiasm, perhaps even more enthusiasm than one of the conference speakers, Dr. Jay Lehr, who took to the streets of San Francisco to tell the story. You can see what he did at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2n2HjGam_jl I hope that I can inspire young people to find an interest in agriculture and all that it has to offer.

- Megan