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CHALLENGES FACING THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

The following are three sizable challenges facing modern agriculture.

Since the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic in early 2020, businesses big and small have faced significant challenges. Though the pandemic has ended, many sectors, including the agricultural industry, are facing familiar and unfamiliar challenges.

The agricultural sector is crucial to the survival and health of billions of people across the globe. Though it's obvious that modern agriculture is vital to feeding a global population that was greater than eight billion people at the dawn of 2024, the United Nations notes that agriculture also boosts prosperity and economies by providing jobs. That reality only underscores the notion that the challenges facing the agricultural sector are facing everyone, even those whose livelihoods are not directly linked to the industry. According to Earth.org, an organization that offers environmental news, data analysis, research, and policy solutions, the following are three sizable challenges facing modern agriculture.

1. Climate change: Perhaps no challenge is greater for humanity in the twenty-first century than climate change, and the agricultural sector is no exception. Climate change has caused shifting weather patterns marked by unpredictability and potentially disastrous developments like prolonged drought. Estimates from NASA indicate corn yields may decrease by 24 percent by the end of this century, a potentially dangerous development linked to a host of factors, including a shifting climate and elevated surface carbon dioxide concentrations that can be traced to human-caused greenhouse gas emissions.



2. Population growth: The booming global population is attributable to numerous factors, including longer life expectancies in developed nations due to medical advancements. How to keep the global population fed at a time when the climate is adversely affecting crop yields is a significant challenge facing both humanity and the agricultural sector. As the population grows, so, too, does the demand for water, which also must be used to grow crops. Navigating this challenge will be significant, and how it's managed could affect the economic stability of the agricultural industry in the decades to come.

3. Investment: Perhaps no industry is more vital to human survival than agriculture. Earth.org notes that countries with strong agricultural sectors often boast higher standards of living and health than nations with a

less productive agricultural industry. Despite that, Earth.org notes that investment in the agricultural sector is not commensurate with the growing population. Supporting measures to invest more heavily in the agricultural sector could reduce food shortages in the decades to come and ensure the agricultural sector is better positioned to address the many challenges it is already confronting in the twenty-first century.

The challenges facing the agricultural sector affect those who work in the industry but also the global population as a whole. Recognition of that reality may compel more people to support measures designed to ensure the agricultural sector can thrive and help the world to overcome potentially devastating challenges in the decades ahead.



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THE CHALLENGES CLIMATE CHANGE POSES TO AGRICULTURE

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration notes that the impacts of climate change on various sectors of society are interrelated, a connection that mirrors the ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Climate change poses an array of challenges. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration notes that the impacts of climate change on various sectors of society are interrelated, a connection that mirrors the ripple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The human health crisis that arose during the pandemic affected all aspects of life, as illnesses limited worker productivity, thus affecting the global supply chain, including the availability of food.

Scientists warn that a similar scenario could play out as a result of climate change. The agricultural sector could face considerable challenges in the years to come. The Fourth National Climate Assessment is a government-mandated report that must be delivered to the United States Congress once every four years. Among the many aims of the report are to provide an analysis of the effects of global changes on the natural environment and agriculture. The report also must project major trends for the next 25 to 100 years. The most recent report, delivered in 2018, noted that changing precipitation patterns could intensify in the coming years, leading to more intense periods of heavy rain and longer dry periods.

Those shifting patterns and other changes could lead to an increase in conditions and weather events that

pose unique challenges to the agricultural sector.

- **Flooding:** The Union of Concerned Scientists notes that many agricultural regions of the United States have already experienced increased flooding. The effects of flooding on the agricultural sector are often devastating and include accelerated soil erosion, water pollution and damage to infrastructure that challenges farmers' ability to get food from their farms to stores and, ultimately, consumers' dinner tables.

- **Drought:** The National Integrated Drought Information System reports that the primary direct economic impact of drought in the agricultural sector is crop failure and pasture losses. The Government of Canada notes that areas of western Canada are already experiencing frequent and severe droughts, and scientists expect other areas of the country to be affected by drought more often in the years to come. The same goes for the United States, which the UCS notes has already dealt with severe drought in California, the Great Plains and the midwest. Depleted water supplies are a byproduct of drought, and such depletion can take a toll on crops and livestock.

- **Economics:** The effects of climate change on crops and livestock may force farmers to change the nature of their farms. The UCS notes that farmers may be forced to choose crop varieties and animal breeds that are suited to the new conditions sparked by climate change. Going in a new direction could force farmers to make potentially costly investments in machinery and other changes as they make the transition.

Climate change will pose unique challenges to the agricultural sector that could force farmers to make some difficult decisions in the years ahead.



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CAREER OPPORTUNITIES IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

The following are just a few of the many careers to consider within this vital industry.

Individuals approach their careers in various ways. Some may aspire to climb the corporate ladder, while others may pursue a career that affords them ample personal time to spend how they see fit. Many individuals look for careers that afford them ample opportunities to work in the great outdoors, which could make the agricultural sector an appealing industry.

Talented individuals with an array of diverse skills dot the agricultural sector landscape, and the following are just a few of the many careers to consider within this vital industry.

• **Equipment technician:** Data from the career experts at Indeed indicates agricultural equipment technicians earn an average salary around \$65,000 per year. Agricultural equipment technicians maintain and repair existing machines and install new ones, among their many responsibilities.

• **Purchasing agent:** An agricultural purchasing agent buys products and raw materials at wholesale. Indeed notes that purchasing agents often must meet specific purchasing quotas for processors and work with various clients who supply an array of agricultural products. The national

average salary for agricultural purchasing agents is around \$51,000 annually.

• **Warehouse manager:** The receiving, shipping and storage of agricultural materials is overseen by a warehouse manager. Indeed notes that these professionals now routinely utilize artificial intelligence products to manage inventory. Warehouse managers must know and adhere to safety procedures and guidelines that dictate how materials and products are stored. The average salary of a warehouse manager is around \$52,000 per year.

• **Sales:** Like every industry, the agricultural sector requires talented sales personnel. Agricultural sales reps sell materials and products and identify the needs of potential customers. Agricultural sales reps may spend ample time on the road at trade shows. Doing so allows them to identify customers as well as their needs and wants, and promote their own products and services. An ability to foster strong and trusting interpersonal relationships is invaluable for agricultural sales reps, who Indeed reports earn an average of about \$60,000 per year.

• **Environmental engineer:** Environmental engineers play pivotal roles within the industry, and could become even more vital in the decades ahead as the effects of climate change become more apparent. Environmental engineers design and implement solutions that



occur on agricultural sites, helping to address issues such as unhealthy soil, insufficient drainage and inefficiencies, among other concerns. A career as an environmental engineer within the agricultural industry can be rewarding and lucrative, with Indeed noting that the average annual salary for this position is a little more than \$77,000.

These are just some of the career paths individuals can consider as they explore the agricultural sector.

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THINGS EVERYONE CAN DO TO SUPPORT RURAL ECONOMIES

Attempts to revive rural economies will require a collective effort on the part of people from all walks of life, and there's much everyone can do to pitch in.

Efforts to revive small business sectors have helped countless communities regain their prosperity and sense of community pride. Those efforts have been wildly effective in many urban areas, and they also can help rural economies recover from the many challenges they've been confronting since the Great Recession, which occurred between 2007 and 2009.

Rural communities have faced many unique challenges since 2007. For example, a 2019 study published in the journal Rural Sociology found that 46 percent of remote rural counties were depopulating, while just 6 percent of metropolitan counties were facing population losses. Reviving rural communities does more than help the people who call those communities home. Thriving rural communities can ensure access to fresh foods for people in both rural and urban areas, thus keeping costs down. Thriving rural communities also can reduce reliance on government assistance programs. With access to well-paying jobs, more people in rural communities can live above the poverty line. That's a significant benefit, as the U.S. Department of Agriculture reports that roughly 85 percent of counties combatting persistent poverty are rural.

Attempts to revive rural economies will require a collective effort on the part of people from all walks of life, and there's much everyone can do to pitch in.

- Buy products from local farms. When buying foods, looking for products from

local farms and/or domestic farms can benefit consumers in various ways. Many individuals find locally grown foods more flavorful than products imported from foreign countries. And buying local, whether the farm is on the outskirts of the metropolitan area you call home or elsewhere in your own country, provides some much-needed economic stimulation to rural communities.

- Look beyond foods. Rural communities produce more than food. Soaps, lotions, candles, decorative items, and other products people use everyday are produced on farms and within rural communities. Choosing these products over mass-produced alternatives made in other countries or in places where profits are less likely to be funneled back into local communities is a great way to support rural economies.

- Support legislation that benefits rural economies. One of the most effective ways to lend a hand to rural economies is to support legislation that can help them. There are many reasons why rural economies have fallen on hard times, and a lack of digital infrastructure has undoubtedly contributed to those struggles. All businesses benefit from a strong online presence, and communities can attract more remote workers if their digital infrastructure is improved. Those improvements are often the subject of local, state and even federal legislation. Individuals who want to help rural economies can urge their representatives to support legislation that can help rural communities build their digital infrastructure so it's on par with that which has already been established in more populous areas.

Rural economies are struggling. However, there's much everyone can do to pitch in and support efforts to revive rural communities.



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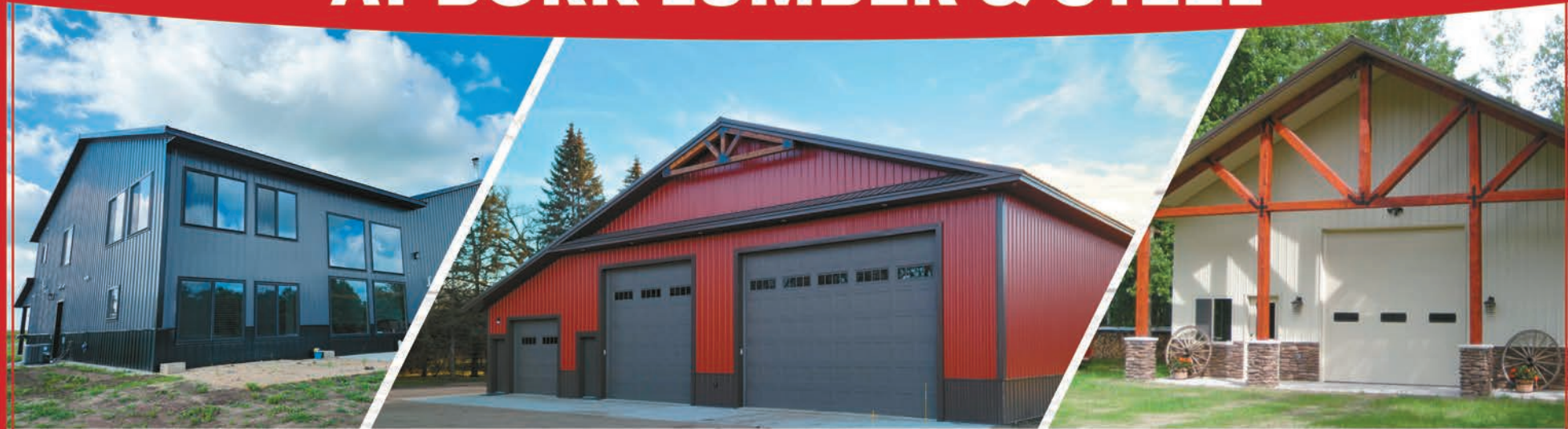


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