Farmer Encyclopedia Article

Farmer

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Farmer

Farmers make a living by managing or operating farms, places where plants (crops) or animals (livestock) are raised to be sold to others. Crops include grains such as wheat, vegetables, fruits; fibers such as cotton; nuts; flowers; and landscaping plants. The type of crop grown on a particular farm depends on the climate, soil, and layout of the land, whether it is low-lying or mountainous, for example. There are livestock, dairy, and poultry farmers, as well as farmers that raise bees and fish.

Farming is financially a risky business, with success depending on weather conditions, plant and animal diseases, insect problems, prices of fuel and other expenses, and market demand. Farmers may work on large commercial farms or on smaller farms which may be family owned. The work is very demanding physically and takes place mostly outdoors. During the growing season, farmers may work almost constantly, seven days a week. Animals must be cared for every day. Farmers must have both labor and management skills. They decide which crops to plant and which fertilizers to use. They need to know how to care for their livestock and keep the barns, pens, and other farm buildings in good condition. Farmers work with tools and machinery and maintain equipment and facilities. They must have good financial skills, including keeping records of expenses, taxes, and loans. Also, farmers must understand the various laws that apply to their business. Computers have become increasingly more important in farming to keep track of finances, manage inventory data, and track schedules for applying pesticides or breeding livestock.

Becoming a farmer does not generally require formal training or education. The enormous knowledge that is necessary for this profession is often acquired by a person raised on a farm. In grade and high school, it is good training to participate in agricultural programs run by organizations such as 4-H. However, even a person raised on a farm can benefit from getting an education at a university. A bachelor's degree in agricultural sciences, which include courses in farming, producing crops, and raising livestock, can be helpful, along with courses in crop, dairy, and animal sciences. Business courses such as economics, accounting, and marketing are also useful.

See Also

Apiculture; Aquaculture; Farming.

Bibliography

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