

## “ Agriculture – Every Day in Every Way”

I am a farmer, every day in every way. It is the core of my being.

Most farmers are born into this calling. Early on, they learn an appreciation for the earth, water, and air, as well as the living things under their care. Early on, they feel the earth between their toes and sometimes in their teeth. Early on, they have the joy of planting a seed and watching it grow to become food. Early on, they experience the fatigue and the rewards of hard work. Early on, they feel the discomfort of sore muscles, the sting of a swift kick, and the tear of barbed wire on the skin. Early on, they witness the miracle of life and the great sadness of death – the circle of life – up close and personal.

It is a calling and a destiny, one that cannot be easily ignored nor put aside. It often means sacrificing sleep, fun, or sometimes even dreams.

You see, it is the farmer who feeds all the others. It is the farmer who struggles, working long hours under difficult conditions producing affordable food and fiber. It is the farmer who strives to improve the land as a gift for future generations. It is the farmer who puts one’s self at risk to save or care for the living creatures under her/his care.

In agriculture, there is a great burden of responsibility. If I do not farm this land, who will? If I do not feed the people, who will? If I do not care for the living things, who will? If I do not improve the soil, air, and water, who will? It’s not something a farmer can easily walk away from.

What reason is there to go on doing this year after year? What can be gained? So much is sacrificed!

For me, it is watching the cattle graze in the pasture on a sunny day. It is the smell of healthy soil and fresh cut grass. It is the sound of corn growing in the field. It is standing out on a warm evening watching the calves frolic and spar for that highest spot on the hill.

It is savoring a glass of fresh milk and enjoying fruit from the local market – taken with a healthy grass-fed steak and knowing where it all came from. It's the feel of natural fiber on my skin. It is witnessing a new life coming into the world and taking its first breath. It is saving one that wouldn't have made it without you. It is weeping alongside the mother of one you couldn't save as she calls to her offspring who will never answer. It is watching each new generation grow and give life to the next. It is the feel of a rough tongue on your cheek from a visiting calf as you sit in the field contemplating all of this.

I am a farmer. I celebrate agriculture - every day, in every way.