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Ag Week Spotlights Hot Careers in Agriculture Field

To help feed a hungry world, Missouri's agricultural industry needs more skilled workers. National Ag Week, March 15 to 21, and National Ag Day, March 20, will help draw attention to the great career opportunities in this growing field.

"With the world population soaring, the demands on agriculture, food and natural resources keep increasing," said Dr. Terry Heiman, director of Agricultural Education for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). "We need innovative students to meet the enormous challenges these industries will face in the next few decades."

According to projections from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, there will be more jobs in agriculture, food and natural resources in 2010 than there will be college graduates to fill them. For 2005 to 2010, the projected number of job openings nationally for new graduates is 52,000. That is 2,700 more than the projected number of qualified graduates. Almost half (46 percent) of agriculture jobs will be in management and business, while a quarter of the jobs will involve science and engineering.

Students (and parents) who wonder about the earning power of agricultural careers might be surprised at the potential. The average annual wage of an experienced farm or ranch manager in Missouri, for example, is \$83,700. For an experienced biochemist, the average wage is \$104,500; it is \$46,300 for an experienced agricultural inspector.

The Missouri Hot Jobs List, put together by the Missouri Economic Research and Information Center, reveals that the greatest opportunities are reserved for college graduates. Of the 18 natural resources and agricultural jobs on the list, only two require less than a bachelor's degree.

Agriculture and agribusiness are foundational to Missouri's economy. A 2008 report from MERIC showed that Missouri's crop, livestock, processing and other agricultural sectors accounted for \$12.4 billion, or 7 percent, of the gross state product. Agriculture employs more than 1 out of 10 workers in Missouri.

To find out more about agricultural careers, visit www.MissouriConnections.org. This DESE-sponsored site offers several tools for career and education exploration. To learn more about National Ag Week and Ag Day, visit www.AgDay.org.

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Full-length news release, quotes and fact sheet are available at www.dese.mo.gov/divcareered/missouri_connections_news_room.htm

The Missouri Connections Public Outreach Partnership workgroup represents a collaboration of state agencies concerned with education and workforce development who are helping inform and build awareness among the public, particularly students and potential students, of targeted careers, educational and industry trends, and workforce development priorities.

Workgroup members represent the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; Department of Higher Education; Department of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development and Missouri Economic Research & Information Center; Missouri Center for Career Education; and Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Freelance writer is Anita Harrison.