

Learning to Do... Living to Serve

The Agricultural industry is rapidly growing and constantly changing through the years. Techniques that were used ten years ago are probably not going to be the same today.

The New Century Farmer program is an educational program in which students will attend a series of workshops and sessions discussing topics ranging from the global marketplace to farm financing, consumer trends and managing risks.

The New Century Farmer Program is an intensive, all expenses paid, five-day conference held in Des Moines, Iowa, in the summer. Participants are able to learn how to become a more effective leader, develop practical knowledge about agriculture and a global perspective on the industry.

Blake Fennell, a senior plant and soil science major at Texas Tech University attended the New Century Farmer Program in July of 2010. He said one thing he learned while attending the conference is to tell his story and inform others about agriculture and what it does for the world. Fennell said he really liked the program because it was fast-paced, educational and taught him things that are very important in the industry such as marketing tactics and new technologies that are emerging in the industry. He said he was able to take all of the new ideas and concepts he learned back to the family farm.

"These days the industry is so market-oriented that you can grow the best crop around, but if you can't market it then you are not going to be sustainable," Fennell said.

The New Century Farmer Program is conducted by the National FFA Organization. Fifty students are chosen from all over the U.S. to attend the conference, and these students are chosen because of their leadership abilities and enthusiasm for agriculture. Marty Tatman, the education specialist for the New Century Farmer program said the program is extremely beneficial to all of its students.

"There are two key benefits that students gain from being a part of the New Century Farmer conference," Tatman said.



"Over the course of the entire week students work on creating their vision for their operation; where they want their operation to be in 5-10 years. On the last day of the conference they walk away with a written plan of where they want to be in production agriculture."

Fennell said he thinks he enjoyed the New Century Farmer Program so much because he was able to be around other people who have that same drive and passion as he does when it comes to agriculture. He said it was a great way to network and meet top people in the industry as well as a way to make life-long friends.

"Even though theres a wide variety of people there, we all clicked together and had a fantastic time."

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