Soybeans: A vital crop.

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Abstract

For Scott Gibson, farming is a way of life. Over the past 50 years, the average farmer has grown from feeding 26 people to 155 that is a 500 percent increase! Gibson is one of those farmers that makes a difference. Mr. Gibson’s farming operation has been family orientated as far back as he can remember. From learning his background to learning his farm operation, I have learned more from him then I would have otherwise. This hand-on-opportunity gave me not only a closer relationship with an Arkansas farmer and a day filled with learning about agriculture, but most of all, a experience that I will never forget.

Scott Gibson, former President of Craighead County Farm Bureau knows about all aspects of farming. Gibson became exposed to traditional agriculture at a young age he recalls “Dad farmed, and I was exposed to it. I immediately became hooked”. Gibson inherited his farm and later expanded his farming operation outside of Jonesboro, to Brookland. He left the farm to go to Arkansas State University, receiving a Master's in Business Administration, however he never used his degree. He came back to the farm and has been farming ever since. His passion and dedication drew him back to the farm. In the time since he returned, he has been farming 2,500 acres, of which is 90% irrigated cultivating rice, corn, and soybeans. As Mr. Gibson helps to keep Arkansas economy booming, he also keeps Arkansas agriculture number one, and keeps rice the number one commodity. Arkansas soybeans are ranked tenth nationally, but that doesn't stop it from being a vital crop in his operation. Mr. Gibson said he would rather work with soybeans because they are a “diverse crop” that is “primarily market friendly” compared to many other crops. “soybeans are the best fit for crop rotations”. As soybeans use different chemistry (such as pesticides), it leaves the soil full of nutrition for the next crop harvest. In his rotation of rice, corn, and soybeans, it was the soybeans overall that gave him the advantage to gain higher yields.

Continuing through our interview, I asked him a personal controversial question of “Do you think our agriculture system benefits from subsidies, or are they harmful?” Mr. Gibson responded, “Both.” He went on to explain the process of subsides and the dollar turnover that allows farms to buy new things such as equipment or whatever the farms need. Even though there are people that do abuse the system, many benefit from it, such as small rural communities. “If you go to a smaller community in Arkansas, and talk to some people around town they would explain how important agriculture is to their local economy, how it allows towns to thrive.” But just like every farmer they have to face challenge.

The second paragraph of the FFA creed, written by E.M. Tiffany states, the following: “I believe that to live and work on a good farm, or to be engaged in other agricultural pursuits, is pleasant as well as challenging; for I know the joys and discomforts of agricultural life and hold an inborn fondness for those associations which, even in hours of discouragement, I cannot deny.” As an agriculturist, he knows the joys and discomforts first hand. The biggest challenge is Mother Nature. “Mother Nature is the biggest factor to any farmer, from rain to a hailstorm, or maybe a drought, but it’s all in God’s hands.” Another challenge is customer acceptance. G.M.O., or Genetically Modified Organisms, is one of the biggest controversial topics in the agricultural industry. “GMO’s are a necessary component, as they reduce chemical use and give a higher yield.” He went on to explain how by 2050 the planet’s population will have reached 9.7 billion, and to feed that many people, GMOs are one of the answers to be the solution. Farmers are maximizing each yield so that not only can they make the most money off their land, but also to try and feed our exponentially growing population on less land than ever before. We have to educate the public and give the truth about farming to eliminate misconceptions.

But the “Joy” of farming is cultivating crops and knowing he is making a difference.

From the very beginning, you are caring for the plant, from matching the proper balance for chemicals, to planting and caring for the crops coming months, thus “Giving a sense of satisfaction” Mr. Gibson stated. Until harvest season, Mr. Gibson is tending to his crops on a daily basis. He is also making a difference by farming. “Global Goals” were established by the UN General Assembly , and the two major goals were end hunger and end poverty ( David Hong, “On World Food Day”). As America has the most abundant and safest food supply in the world, American farmers are making a difference by farming.

In just the brief time of an interview, I learned about the soybean industry through a hands, personal on experience. Not many students take an opportunity like this to get involved. It amazed me how complex farming rotation can be, and how important one crop could be to the whole farming operation. I am eager to share this experience with other FFA members and consumers, to Agvocate!

References

Gibson, S. (2016, May 5). [Personal interview]

Hong, David. "On World Food Day, Farmers Should Come First." *The Christian Science Monitor*. The Christian Science Monitor, 16 Oct. 2015. Web. 13 May 2016.

Photo of Scott Gibson’s wife, Karie Gibson and I. 