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## Engaging Educational Professionals and Students on the Viability of AFNR Careers

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# Overview: 39% more available AFNR jobs than AFNR graduates

(Goeker, Smith, Fernandez, Ali, & Theller, 2015)

- Establishing a sufficient scientific and professional workforce that addresses the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a major research priority for the American Association for Agricultural Education (Roberts, Harder, & Brashears, 2016).
- Many educational professionals (e.g., guidance counselors, career technology education directors, work-based learning coordinators, teachers, school and district administrators)—all of which are influential in students' career decisions—are not aware of new and vibrant AFNR career opportunities (Thompson & Russell, 1993).
- By educating teachers and other education professionals on AFNR careers, the gap between qualified AFNR graduates and AFNR jobs can be eliminated.

\*AFNR = Agriculture, Food, & Natural Resources

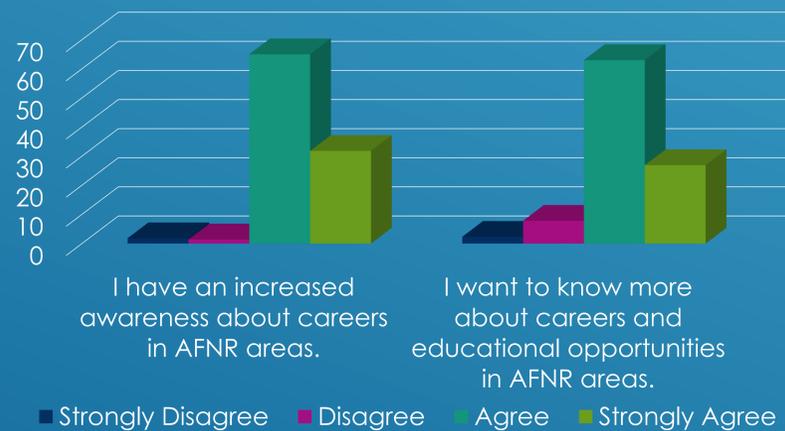
## How It Works: Explore → Learn

- Teachers and other educational professionals are exposed to various career opportunities within AFNR through a series of workshops.
- Workshops are held in two stages: *Explore* and *Learn*.
- *Explore* workshops focus on exploring various career opportunities within AFNR and take place in the form of a statewide career day.
  - Surveys are conducted and analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the *Explore* workshop and to determine specific AFNR areas for *Learn* workshops.
- *Learn* workshops provide educational professionals with an opportunity for hands-on experiential learning in the determined AFNR areas of interest.
  - Curriculum and resources (e.g. lesson plans for teachers, brochures and other promotional/informational materials for guidance counselors, etc.) are developed and provided to educational professionals about AFNR careers.



## Results to Date

"Because of my participation in the Eco Challenge Environmental Careers Day"



Participants\* in the *Explore* workshop indicated the highest needs for professional development in the following areas:

1. Biotechnology in Agriculture
2. UAVs in Agriculture
3. Urban Agriculture
4. Water Quality and Environmental Science.

\*Participants at the *Explore* workshop included high school youth and education professionals.



## Poster at a Glance

- A large shortage of qualified individuals going into agriculture, food, and natural resource (AFNR) careers.
- Two stages of workshops—*Explore* & *Learn* workshops—students and educational professionals are exposed to AFNR Careers.
- Needs are identified in *Explore* workshops.
- Educational professionals are provided with the curriculum and resources they need to promote and educate students on AFNR careers through a series of *Learn* workshops.

## Future Implications

- Deliver at least three *Learn* workshops over the next three years.
- Deliver workshops in conjunction with other professional development conferences already in place to maximize participation, help promote continued growth in AFNR career areas, and potentially expand the *Learn* workshops beyond the three funded by the grant.
- Curriculum and resources will continue to be developed and shared with educational professionals to promote and educate students on AFNR careers.

## Costs & Resources

- Funding for this project was supported by a USDA-NIFA grant.
- Grant funds support two university educator faculty salaries for about two weeks each; travel for administrative faculty involved in the project (four total); one undergraduate and one graduate student assistant for assessment, planning, and development of workshops and curriculum for one year each; and travel stipends for participants.
- Partnership with university faculty and extension, businesses, and other individuals directly involved in AFNR careers.

