

Introduction

Agriculture can be seen as the world's most essential industry. Many products people use daily come directly from agriculture, including the food placed on people's tables. Knowing where that food comes from, and the overall importance of agricultural education is vital in the United States and the world. This message needs to be shared beyond the classroom: we need agriculture to survive.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, "in 2012, there were 3.2 million farmers, ranchers and other agricultural managers and an estimated 757,900 agricultural workers legally employed in the U.S." (USDA, 2012). These findings concluded that less than 2% of the United States population has a direct and vital understanding of the importance of agriculture. Most of the general population has little to no understanding of what really happens on farms (Diesburg, 2016). Agriculture is viewed as being stuck in the past, but in reality, agriculture is at the forefront of modern technology. Additionally, lack of agricultural knowledge tends to cause people to turn away from farming, a feeling increased by misinformation in the media. Considering people no longer understand the process of farming, they have begun to fear it (Protect The Harvest, 2015).

This project will help share how the agriculture industry is part of daily lives by targeting the students on California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo's campus. This project will model how hosting "The Farmer's Picnic" can address the importance of agriculture from the inside out.

Cal Poly's motto, Learn By Doing, is showcased through its agricultural programs and courses, meaning there is great opportunity to utilize the resources available on campus to better educate students. This senior project is designed to educate the student body on the impacts of the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences (CAFES) in their everyday lives. The Farmer's Picnic will work in collaboration with the CAFES Student Council, whose members are representatives from each club in the CAFES and meet weekly to discuss business within the college. Utilizing the CAFES Student Council, the Farmer's Picnic will encompass every sector of agriculture and educate students about the bigger picture of agriculture. Through industry focused education, the CAFES Student Council will work hand in hand with multiple student-run organizations to connect taste, touch, visual and auditory education of agriculture.

Background

In an attempt to get as many students, faculty and community members involved as possible, this senior project has been designed as a Farmers' Market in the University Union on Cal Poly's campus called the Cal Poly Farmer's Picnic.

The first open house that Cal Poly had was all the way back in 1904, the first academic year at Cal Poly. This event saw more than 200 visitors and was originally called "The Farmers' Institute and Basket Picnic." The event was intended to celebrate Cal Poly's motto, Learn By Doing, and gave visitors a chance to tour the new school buildings, eat barbeque and listen to guest speakers. This event became so popular that by 1913, more than 3,000 attendees came to the picnic (Cal Poly Archives, 2014). The authors hope to bring that same sense of intrigue and excitement to this years Farmer's Picnic.

The picnic is being held intentionally on a Thursday to be consistent with the Downtown SLO Farmer's Market held on Thursday evenings (SLO Downtown Association, 2018). Additionally, the event is held during UU hour, when students do not have class, so the majority of all students can attend.

Multiple organizations and clubs in the CAFES department will participate in this event as it contributes to points for club awards each academic year (CAFES Student Council, 2018). The authors intend to identify what CAFES students believe are the most important impacts of their majors and their clubs on an everyday student's life. From Ag Council and the Crops Club to ASI, and even Dairy Science, each group will be tasked with educating students, through their own experiences at Cal Poly, about certain facets of the agricultural industry. The authors want to convey to students that the College of Agriculture Food and Environmental Sciences is a small scale example of how agriculture functions and why it is so important.

The Farmer's Picnic will bring together students and connect them to the roots of agriculture at Cal Poly. Students will have the opportunity to learn about the origins of their food as well as the issues students face with food insecurity. The picnic will address issues students at Cal Poly face with food insecurity and how other students can help. One of such is the fact that one in four Cal Poly students experience food insecurity while attending school. Thankfully though there are multiple on-campus resources that can help to alleviate this problem. Programs like Cal Fresh and Mustang meal sharing plan are ways that students can combat food insecurity. Additionally, meal vouchers can be utilized by students and are distributed through the Dean of Students. These programs are free, confidential, no-hassle services to help students stay focused on their Cal Poly education.