

I found an interesting 2017 FFA article that listed its predictions for the Top 5 Agriculture Careers in 2020. In order, they were 1. Drone Technologists 2. Hydrologists 3. Ag Communicators 4. Food Scientists 5. Precision Agriculture Technologists.

The common thread with nearly each of these is science and technology – things that people may not always associate with agriculture. That’s a misperception that we have got to change.

Science and technology already factor heavily into today’s modern farms – GPS technology guiding precision agricultural inputs, no-steer technology on tractors, soil testing, water testing, plant tissue testing, field surveying by drones, farming software and online data – just to name a few.

As agriculture works to keep pace with the food needs of a growing population, we will most certainly be looking at science and technology to drive even more advances in yields and production, which is exciting to think about.

With the 2021 opening of our department’s Agriculture Sciences Center and the Plant Sciences Initiative at N.C. State University, we are arming ourselves with state-of-the-art technology and facilities to support and grow our state’s \$95.9 billion ag and agribusiness industry.

I believe the completion of these buildings and being able to bring them online now is well timed with the big task we have in front of us to increase global food production by 75 to 100 percent by 2050. They are the right projects at the right time. And this investment will help North Carolina farmers and farms be well positioned to meet future demands.

People are often surprised by the types of jobs we have in the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. We employ many scientists and people in science-based careers across many disciplines – lab technicians, soil scientists, veterinarians, plant scientists, entomologists, chemists, environmental scientists, food scientists, and more.

In this paper, we have highlighted a couple of young people working in agriculture and pursuing careers in the field and we also have two articles written by University of Mount Olive students as part of a partnership with their communications classes.

And, I am proud to say with the start of the year, we are kicking off a new social media series highlighting NCDA&CS employees and the work they do to support agriculture and the industry.

We need bright young people to see the opportunities available in agriculture so they can help us harness the technology that is available, create new technology and apply these advances to production. We are only scratching the surface of what we can achieve with technology, which makes it a very exciting time for the industry.