

## Why Agriculture Education Should Receive More Funding

My name is Sophia Donadio and I'm a member of the Agriculture education program at Middletown High School. Today I'd like to tell you why Agriculture education should receive more funding.

As a senior in Middletown High School's agriculture program, I have experienced a lot of what agriculture and the FFA has to offer me. I entered the program hoping to learn about animals but I ended up learning so much more. As a freshman in the program I was a shy person who was not confident in herself or her abilities. I wasn't a person who would speak in front of others or compete; I was someone who kept to herself.

Agriculture Education helped me develop abilities that I never believed I had before

As an agriculture student I am required to complete a Supervised Agricultural Education project outside of school. Agriculture students participate and learn advanced career skills that they implement in 49 national proficiency areas based on these work experiences. Members also have the opportunity to compete in 25 different Career Development Events, which is a real-life test of hands on skills that prepares them for more than 300 careers in agriculture. Agriculture is the nations largest employer, offering 23 million jobs, which is 17 percent of the work force. Additionally, a study by UCONN in 2007 showed that the impact of Connecticut's agricultural industry on the state economy was up to \$3.5 billion. By helping our programs continue, you are helping to stimulate the state's economy. Agriculture education truly prepares students to meet the demand of this industry as well as others. After all, my education in the agriculture program is not just about agriculture but its also about leadership, business, and public

speaking; all of which are essential skills for anybody, whether they are entering into an agricultural field or not.

The mission of the FFA, the organization that students involved in agriculture education are a part of is, “FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education.” As my time in the FFA and agriculture education program at my high school draws to a close, I can say without a doubt that the FFA and my agricultural education teachers have truly accomplished this mission. That shy girl who entered high school has truly changed. That girl is now serving as chapter reporter for the second year in a row, has two jobs in the agricultural field, has competed in multiple Career Development Events and public speaking competitions, and will be attending college in the fall to study animal science. Please continue to help supporting Agricultural Education programs in their endeavors. These are truly amazing programs that prepare students to meet the demands of college and the industry. However, these programs desperately need more money so that they can continue their amazing work. Therefore, I urge you to vote to increase funds from the Governor’s proposed \$32,000 to \$7.5 million. Thank you.