

THE STATE OF THE AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

If you watch your nightly news, it seems that all you hear is about the state of the national economy and which big corporation has laid off the most employees. If you are one of those employees, that's not the kind of news you want to hear, certainly. So, what about the rest of us? Do we have something to worry about in our jobs?

I've always said, that no one's job is ever totally secure, even the owner of one's own business. We are, in agriculture not immune to effects of the general economy, either. Agriculture is however, in all of the recessions that I can remember, the industry that tends to pull the rest of the economy out of the cellar. We all do desire to eat 3 or more times a day. The demand for food is rather constant, more so than some of the more discretionary purchase items such as a new car, or the latest electronics gadget.

So what is the job situation in agriculture? Well, the short answer is that in our assessment, it is strong and mostly stable. Certainly some companies are not hiring at the moment, or have a company imposed freeze in hiring. There are however many other companies that just can't find enough of the right kind of people yet. For every company on hold or reducing staff, there seems to be another out there that is looking to pick up some quality employees. The key here is, whether you as a potential job seeker have the skills and experience that the company is looking for.

Ag 1 Source works nationwide in seeking potential employers to work with, and we also have a few in Canada at the moment. Only active jobs are posted and we generally only work with the professional level positions. If a position is filled, it is removed from our site at first opportunity. As of early February, 2009, we have as many jobs posted as ever before, currently 307 total strong professional positions with at least 100 different companies showing on our website that our recruiting consultants are working on. Of those jobs, some are related to more than one industry, but here's the current breakout by some of the major industries: Agronomy – 213 jobs, Seed – 112, Equipment – 46, and Feed/Livestock – 57. In addition, our recruiting consultants all have companies that regularly indicate to us that they'd be interested in candidates if we found the "right person" while the position may not be officially listed. That adds about 100 more opportunities. These are just the current active positions since we work with many different companies year around. Quite frankly, those numbers have grown year over year for us. That's one indication of the strength of the Agriculture economy.

Taken from a recent article in ThePacker.com by Andy Nelson, "The U.S. may be in, or about to enter, the worst economic period since the Great Depression, but when it

comes to fresh fruits and vegetables, the old saw — “people gotta eat” — seems to be holding true, largely insulating the produce industry from the recession’s ravages. A recent poll commissioned by the Newark, Del.-based Produce Marketing Association finds that over the past six months, consumers have at least maintained consumption levels of 14 out of 15 leading fresh fruits and vegetables. Avocados were the only commodity in the poll to show a consumption decline.”

I’m sure that we could all find some news somewhere to support or contradict whatever news it is that we want to believe in. The bottom line at Ag 1 Source is that our active and open jobs list continues to steadily grow and we continue to make placements with those companies on a pace at least as good as the previous year. There is and always will be some industries that are more active than others at any given time throughout the year. Some of that is seasonal.

The best advice we have for job seekers is to keep your attitude positive, maintain professional composure, and make sure to have a well documented list of accomplishments. As the Boy Scout motto is: Be Prepared.

