

# Youth Are the Solution



Julie White

Did you know the world population will grow by 2 billion people in the next 40 years, hitting 9 billion by 2050, and we'll need to produce 60% more food with less land, less water, less fertilizer and less pesticide? I'll admit that I find it hard to comprehend the challenge ahead.

This summer I attended the Ag Media Summit, an annual industry-wide gathering of agricultural communicators. On the final day, our keynote speaker at lunch was Trent McKnight, a rancher from Texas and founder of the nonprofit AgriCorps. Focusing on agriculture in Africa, he addressed the food security challenges facing the world due to the projection of the largest population ever.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations State of Food Insecurity in the World report, in the Sub-Saharan Africa region alone, one in four people remains undernourished. However, McKnight shared with us that Africa has 60% of all the uncultivated land in the world. Africa is home to millions of young people looking for a better life — but most of these youth do not see agriculture as a promising future.

To address this challenge, his organization is focusing on youth as the solution by connecting American agriculture volunteers with developing countries

to provide school-based agricultural education.

He explained that Africa has potential to feed itself and beyond. So why are the members of this organization reaching out to the young people to make this happen? According to AgriCorps, 90% of the world's youth ages 10 to 24 live in developing countries. Those young people are the early adopters of technology whether it is social media or a new ag advancement, and they can have an influence on their parents and families.

He reminded us that it wasn't long ago in the United States' past that we saw a similar movement which carried on through the present day. President Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Act in 1862, establishing land grant institutions to teach agriculture and other vocational fields of study to average Americans, giving us the model of education, research and Extension.

Years later the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 nationalized 4-H, and in 1917 the Smith Hughes Act was passed and eventually paved the way for FFA. Through these programs, young people were educated on improved technologies for farming and, in turn, influenced the older generation, who then began seeking advice from their Extension agents.

There is great opportunity to support our youth, here and abroad.

Each year the September issue of the *Hereford World* is dedicated to young Hereford breeders. The 2015 Junior National Hereford Expo (JNHE), hosted in Grand Island, Neb., was one of the best yet, setting records. More than 800 youth from 38 states attended JNHE for a week of competition, leadership and educational opportunities and to have a great time.

It's events like this and the Faces of Leadership Conference, which was hosted in Estes Park, Colo., that are developing the next generation of cattlemen. And, the people who help make these events happen — Hereford families, AHA members and staff and sponsors — see the value in investing in their Hereford youth.

We hope you enjoy the 85 pages of editorial focused on Hereford youth. In the pages that follow, you will also learn about the McMahon family's "Generations of Exhibitors," and find management articles to help you prepare for this upcoming fall and winter.

But with all this said, I think the take-home message is clear, and it's something agriculture communities across the United States have understood for a long time — time, money and energy invested in youth not only help them succeed but will set them up to lead and provide for future generations. **HW**