

AGRICULTURAL ADVOCACY

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The topic of agricultural advocacy has become increasingly important over the last few decades. The number of people involved in production agriculture continues to shrink and the percentage of the population who grew up on a farm becomes lower each year. As part of the millennial generation, my brothers and I have grown up surrounded by many who know nothing of what farming is and who farmers are. We have spent much of our lives attempting to address misconceptions and defy stereotypes of what it means to be a modern-day farmer. Only recently did our idea to start making music videos on YouTube take what we'd tried to accomplish with the people around us to the masses.

Over the last 5 years, my brothers and I have stumbled upon a communication platform that gives us a wider reach than anyone could have predicted. Our YouTube videos have been seen over 50 million times in over 200 countries. Our daily Facebook post interaction frequently eclipses 500,000 people. Many of these people do not come from agricultural backgrounds. Teachers have been able to use our videos in schools around the world, even in urban areas. The humor and relatable content found in our videos is what drives our success and the popular songs we parody are the bridge we use to drive people from urban areas to our channel.

Ten years ago, much of what we are able to do on social media today was not possible. Smart phones have given us the ability to capture what we are doing on the farm and broadcast it to thousands of people at the click of a button, all from the seat of a tractor or wireless internet in our homes. At no time in history has such a powerful communication tool made reaching large groups of people so accessible. Unfortunately, this surge in communication has led to a frustrating amount of misinformation being shared as well. Simple google searches of modern day agricultural technology result in overt negativity toward farmers and the agricultural industry. My brothers and I have realized over the years that not only should we be showing what farming looks like and what farmers do in our videos, we need to be prepared to answer the tough, controversial questions that people have about the technology farmers use.

After watching our videos, people often have questions about farming practices. There is a sense of trust and credibility that is built after watching our family have fun together. This trust and credibility allows us to answer these questions with honesty and candor. It opens up a valuable opportunity to share with millions of people why farmers use the technology they

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do. Without that trust, many will reject information about tools such as GMOs, pesticides, preventative animal medicine, and feed additives before they are even explained. We believe building trust is as big a part of advocacy as presenting the information.

As we enter into the future of agriculture and advocating for what we do, we must remember that trust, transparency, and vulnerability is essential to telling our story. The need to advocate has never been clearer and will continue to increase. Each and every person in the industry needs to be prepared to share answers to hard questions. Social media and new technology allow us to do this in ways not possible in the past. Although the battle to educate may never end, we must not give up the conversation.