

Who's Going to Tell It?

The fewer the facts, the stronger the opinion.

Each year the public knows less and less about farming. When "Agriculture" is the category on TV's "Jeopardy" show, it is the last topic chosen by these knowledgeable contestants. Even though they know little about "The Bible," that category is chosen before "Agriculture."

In the early years of this century, much of the population, and especially the leadership, had a rural background. They had firsthand experience with farming. They understood and appreciated the problems and the dedication. Not so today. The public knows little of the everyday life of farming.

The most authoritative opinions are often expressed on subjects one knows least about. Today's public is very vocal about government farm programs, animal welfare, clean water, safe food, air pollution, and environmental protection—all agriculturally related topics.

The partially informed believe the farmer is responsible for increased erosion, depletion of mineral resources, poisoning of food and water, and air pollution through livestock. The fact that this is not true is a message that is not reaching the general public. Why?

There are too few educational programs to counter this concept. Agriculture is no longer a popular subject in high schools and colleges. And while millions of dollars are contributed to organizations whose goal is protecting the environment, these very sincere groups are often misinformed.

The future of the world may well depend on properly informing them about agriculture's contribution to the environment while feeding the world. It is a story of miracles and wonders—of remarkable scientists and educators.

To tell this true story won't be easy. It will be costly. But failure to tell it will be far more costly.

J. Fielding Reed

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Polash & Phosphate Institute
Suite 401, 2801 Buford Hwy., N.E., Atlanta, GA 30329

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