

2018 Illinois Essay Contest Winner

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The co-op is a vital part to the survival of the small, family-owned and operated farm. Without a co-op to offer competitive prices for your products, the small, family-owned and operated farm will not continue to stay alive. This has always been how it is, and how it always will be. However, how will cooperatives develop and adapt with new breakthroughs in the world of agriculture?

I come from a small, family-owned and operated farm. I live on it, work on it, and will continue to keep it alive. The local FS in Hookdale, Illinois, is the co-op I have been riding to for as long as I can remember in the passenger seat of a grain truck hauling corn, beans, or even wheat. I am a fourth-generation farmer and some of our family's grain always goes to the Hookdale Elevator. Our local FS has showed their value to us year after year, truckload after truckload, bushel after bushel. They have offered us great service over the years and I know they will continue to do so.

We plant FS seed that goes toe to toe with other seed companies. We use FS feed, we buy fencing products for our cattle, use FS anhydrous, and buy chemicals from FS. FS has always been there for our family over the generations and as I grow older, I know they will still be there for me and my family. The cooperative will continue to adapt and overcome throughout the future as they have in the past.

This new and modernized generation of farmers taking over in a short amount of time will have a different set of requirements than past generations. The new generation of farmers are going to require more technical advancements such as grain tickets over the computer, or quicker and more efficient fertilizer applications using precision guidance technology. The new farmer wants speed, good customer service, efficiency, and fair prices for their goods. Also, the new generation of farmers want to keep the conventional benefits of the co-op, such as an assured source of supplies and competitive pricing, according to the USDA. And these are the things that our co-ops will step up and do. And if the co-ops do these things, then they will continue to stay valuable to the next generation.

Cooperatives will stay relevant by being helpful to the new generation at times when they need help. When a farmer needs help figuring out how much fertilizer to put on, FS will help. When a farmer needs someone to figure out a feed ration, FS will help. When a farmer needs help working on a guidance system, FS will help. As farmers evolve, the co-op will evolve with them as the cooperative is a part of farming and farmers need cooperatives.

So as you can see, cooperatives will continue to show their value to every generation of agriculturists, not just the next one. The co-op will continue to develop and evolve, just as the farmer has.