

## **MN Agriculture - Makayla Nepp And Her Love For Farming and Pigs**

Makayla Nepp describes "women in ag" in the fullest sense and I love that she is a *Woman Farmer!* Makayla is a trend that we are seeing more and more in southern Minnesota and the rest of the country. And I can't be more excited about seeing women farming! When you read her story, you will see her love for farming and pigs.

She bought two pig finisher barns (400 head and 600 head) and 90 acres of land in 2012-2013. Makayla lives in Winnebago, Minnesota (Southern Minnesota) After graduating from college in 2013, she works full time for her dad on their 300 head sow farrow to finish operation. Her dad also has 1700 acres of land they farm as well. When she bought her hog barns she didn't have enough baby pigs to fill her barns. Currently, 500 isoweans (pigs newly weaned) are delivered once a month to her farm. Her farm is family owned and run. During harvest and planting her great uncle and a family friend helps us. Her cousin also works for them all year and they have one employee who helps. Her grandpa, who is almost 73, works everyday on the farm..

Makayla considers her family a fairly small family farm. They farrow (sows giving birth) about 20-25 sows every 2 weeks. The pigs born on her farm are then raised to market. Her dad and employee breed the sows and she helps move sows, process litters, vaccinate, sell pigs, etc. They also grow corn, soybeans, peas and sweet corn. The majority of the corn they grow are fed to their pigs. The remainder of the corn and our soybeans are sold to a local elevator. [Seneca](#) picks their peas and sweet corn. They try to plant 30 to 40 acres of peas and corn each year so they have a place to haul some manure before their harvest starts. During the spring Makayla does tillage work and in the fall she does anything ranging from running the grain cart, applying their manure to the fields, and tillage work.

### **Social Media Sites:**

I have a personal facebook page that I'm always flooding with "Ag stuff" relating to pigs, farm work, etc. I also started a facebook page named "Ag2U" in college. I haven't been updating that like I should but once in awhile I will put up a picture or a status and other people are free to post on that page as well whether it's questions or farming pictures or anything really.

### **Where do you sell or provide services to? Who is your end consumer?**

"Our hogs are mainly sold to [Hormel](#). Once in a great while they will be taken elsewhere if needed.

Our soybeans are taken to the elevator and shipped out from there and the little corn we take to the elevator is also shipped out via train. Our end consumer is anyone who eats pork and eats food basically! :) That's why we love getting our story out! Myself and family are also the end consumers so our everyday work is so important to us because we eat what we raise."

**What makes your farm/business unique or special?**

"I would say the unique thing about my farm is well simply its female owned! I know a lot of females do farm but it is such an accomplishment of mine to own farm land and hog barns at age 21."

**Why do you grow/raise/produce? What went into your decision to do what you do?**

I've helped on the farm since I was a fairly young kid. In high school I would much rather spend evenings on the farm with everyone than go to a sporting event. When the time came to start thinking about college I decided that I would really like to spend my days working on the farm. I couldn't imagine myself in an office or anything like that and I knew I had a passion for farming. (Also, my dad didn't have any sons and I knew my other sisters were not going to return to the farm, so that was another huge factor. I wanted the farm to stay in our family).

**What is one interesting fact about your farm/crops/livestock/your business you would like to share.**

One interesting fact about our farm is the way our grandparents (dad parents) are involved. Grandpa is almost 73 years old and he works over 40 hours a week. All of our feed for our hogs is ground on this farm by him!! It's amazing. Also, my Grandma is the strongest, most down-to-earth person I know. She has held this family farm together over the years by staying calm in any situation or bad/rough year there is. She cooks every week day noon meal for us and during harvest she cooks two meals a day for us and delivers them to the field.

**What is a most embarrassing moment you have had on the farm?**

An embarrassing moment I had was I had brought a dead pig home from one of the finisher barns and I was going to take it out of the back of my pickup and put it in the dead pig receptacle. Well, there were some people here delivering some chemicals for the fields. As I was stepping from the swinger bucket to the back of my pickup I slipped and fell right on the dead pig while those people were watching. I don't think I had ever been so embarrassed in my life!!

**What do you love most about farming/business?**

I love the hands-on work and getting to spend the days with the little piglets. My absolute favorite part of our farm is working in the farrowing barns from helping sows farrow to keeping the piglets

warm, dry and healthy. Farming is such a rewarding job and it is really neat to watch the pigs and crops grow and be able to say, "We did this." The more work we put into it the more rewarding the outcome is.

**If you were the "Ag King" for a day, you would \_\_\_\_\_.**

I would want to spread the word of Agriculture to as many people as I could in a day and I would also want to try and let anyone who wanted to, come and visit farms all day long to see first hand what it's really like to be on a farm and that farmers really do care so much about our animals and the environment.

**What is one thing you wish consumers knew about what you do or your farm/business?**

I really really really wish more people knew how much our animals mean to us and how we don't abuse our animals. I wish they understood more about barns and farrowing stalls and the way that we farm now compared to before and realize that all of these things are not animal abuse. That they in fact are so much better for the hogs. It really hurts when you see videos and articles about how farmers are cruel and hate their animals. When in fact we LIVE for our animals. Working with these animals is a passion and harming them is not even an option.

**What is one interesting thing no one probably knows about your farm/business/product that you would like to share?**

One interesting thing about our farm is that all of the feed the pigs eat....which is about 21 loads per week (4000 pounds per load) is all ground on this farm. We do not have any feed hauled to us and put in the bin. Also, all of our pigs spend all their days with us (hence farrow to finish) which means anything that needs to be done is all done by us.

**Who are your customers? Do you sell direct to consumers? If not, where do you sell your crops/livestock/services?**

Sometimes we sell directly to consumers. Some people like to process their own hog, so they pick them up right from us. Otherwise they are either sold to Hormel or we take a couple pigs a month down to our local locker. From there they are processed and then distributed to the consumer.

**What makes Minnesota the place to farm/grow/raise/produce/provide a service?**

I love Minnesota. The summer climate is great for growing crops (and well the winter....is just the winter ;) ) ...makes me very thankful for warm hog barns!!) I also believe ...this may be a little

biased..hehe.. that we do have some of the best black soil for growing crops in our area! The land is nice and flat for the most part which is also a plus for growing crops because you do have less erosion, run off, etc. The hogs take Minnesota quite well, the extreme hot and extreme cold can be a little rough sometimes but we always get through it. During the months of July and August the sows never breed as well because you simply cannot take mother nature out of the sows and they know that they don't want to raise their piglets in the dead of winter. There is obviously no perfect place with the perfect weather, but Minnesota is fabulous

### **What is one thing about Minnesota that people from other areas do not know about or are missing because they don't live here?**

Well, I would say if people don't live here they don't realize how cold it gets during the winter time. And, when I see articles and videos about "farmers being bad" I just want to tell all of them....Its FREEZING in Minnesota in wintertime and if I was a pig I would rather be in a 75 degree hog barn than outside in 20 below whether, snow and strong wind gusts. Also, fall is the most beautiful season in Minnesota

### **What is your favorite Minnesota location or a fun thing to do in Minnesota?**

Well, I haven't been to a lot of places in Minnesota as I am not much of a traveler, but if I had to pick I would say my funnest thing to do in Minnesota is either going to Valleyfair or the Minnesota state fair!

### **What is one ag related place in Minnesota that others need to know about. What is one non-ag related place in Minnesota that others need to know about and why?**

There are tons of "Ag places" in Minnesota ranging from hog farms, to cattle farms, to crop farms, to WFS elevators, to local elevators, to ag banks and other bank businesses. I am not sure a definite Ag place people need to know about, I just think people need to always be opened minded about Agriculture and if you see a place relating to Ag have a community safety day or any informative day stop by and meet some new people. Just going to the Minnesota state fair you can learn and see lots of thing Ag related! A non-ag related place in Minnesota to know about would be well heck the Mall of America! Minnesota is pretty lucky economy wise to have something that amazing and big in our state. Most people do know about it, but if you ever stop through Minnesota and haven't been there it's a pretty cool place!

### **What makes Minnesota unique?**

I think Minnesota is unique because our climate ranges SO much from mid summer to mid winter. Another unique part is southern Minnesota is a huge Agriculture area with flat ground, dark soil, and lots of hogs barns, but if you go way up in Northern Minnesota it is completely different. There is still Agriculture but the terrain and environment is completely different.

**Is there anything else you would like to add?**

I guess I don't have much to add. Agriculture is truly amazing. There are so many different thought processes that you have to go through on a day to day basis. Some days you can struggle more than you ever thought you could and other days are a breeze. But, either way I wouldn't trade a day of it for anything. I love telling people all about Agriculture and wish everyone would just learn a little bit about it. Or at least listen to our stories before judging us. Farming is my life and I love answering any question people want to ask.

That says it all Makayla! Thank you for being a farmer!