

MN Agriculture: Ethan Rozeboom, Farming and Ag Law

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Day 10 of my "30 Days of MN Agriculture" is Ethan Rozeboom. Ethan is from Hills, MN, which is located in the extreme southwestern corner of Minnesota. Ethan is involved in his family's cattle and crop farm, but is also in his last year of law school. And like so many young people raised on a farm, he has the desire to give back to agriculture - just in a little different way - farming and ag law.

Social Media Sites:

LinkedIn: Ethan Rozeboom

Tell me a little about your farm and/or business?

"I grew up on a 4th generation family farm just outside of Hills, MN, where I help my father and grandfather farm. Growing up we were actively involved in the dairy industry, but with fading prices and market pressure to grow, we made the call to leave the dairy industry. This business shift drove us into the cow/calf industry. Since our move from dairy to cow/calf pairs we have found a niche market raising hormone-free and drug-free cattle. We also farm approximately 1,000 acres of land where we grow corn, soybeans, and alfalfa.

Besides being actively involved in the family farming operation I am also attending the University of North Dakota School of Law in Grand Forks ND, where I am in my final year of study. With that said, the agricultural and farming industry remain my main focus. While attending law school I have concentrated on the agricultural law sector. My interest in farming has motivated me to research and write several pieces on the farmers waning ability to negotiate and influence the modern GMO market and the lack of access to attorneys in rural areas. I have interned with rural practitioners in

the tri-state area and have come to recognize the farmers need for effective legal counsel.

The agricultural industry has become very profitable, but also volatile in recent years, and with that it has become increasingly important for farmers to maximize their dollar and prepare for the future. Upon graduation, my wife and I plan to settle on an acreage in the Hills area, where I intend to continue helping my dad on the family farm. I also plan to simultaneously practice agricultural law and help farmers run an *effective* business, while planning for the future, preserving the family farm for the next generation."

How long have you farmed or been in business?

"I have been involved with farming all my life. I grew up bottle feeding calves, milking cows, and in high school I was involved in FFA. However, I really became interested in an ag-based career the summer between high school graduation and the start of my undergrad college career. That summer I took a job with Extend Ag. Services out of Lakefield, MN. With them I was able to grow my knowledge base and realize just how promising the future of agriculture is, not just for the farmer, but for everything related to the industry. Where I struggled the most was figuring out how my career path could fit into this industry. I really have to thank the legal professionals I have interned with for helping realize the multifaceted nature of farming, as well as the legal industry. I struggled before to see where the two could get along, but I think they are more related than a person thinks."

Tell me a little about what you grown/raise/produce or service provided.

"We raise corn, soybeans, and alfalfa. The soybeans are sold on the market, but some of the corn and all of the alfalfa we use to feed our cattle. We have approximately 50 drug/hormone free cow/calf pairs. Raising antibiotic and hormone free cattle is already hard enough, but adding to the challenge is the lack of pasture. With the price of corn and soybeans reaching record highs, most pasture has been converted to production acres. Because of this we are forced to dry lot (raise them in a contained dirt lot) our cattle, meaning our chances of having a sick animal increase greatly. Since we raise antibiotic-free animals we cannot treat them in a traditional manner. By keeping yards clean, feeding a stable ration, and quarantining sick animals we have been able to greatly reduce our death loss and succeed in this growing niche market. Another important factor is the size of the herd.

Farming is only one side of my participation in the industry. On the legal side of the spectrum it is my hope to specialize in estate planning, business law, transactional law, all culminating and revolving around the farming sector and agricultural law."

What do you love most about farming/business?

"I love *the freedom* that farming allows people involved in it. A farmer is his own boss. Yes he/she wakes up 365 days a year to care for livestock and crops, but at the end of the day there is nothing like selling your products at market. Farmers are self-reliant and resourceful individuals that have to change with the times. Yet, when it comes down to it they are always willing to help another farmer in need."

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

"I wish consumers would make more informed decisions before labelling different sectors of the agricultural industry. I find myself misspelling rumors about factory farming and GMO's on a daily basis. I appreciate it when I can change someone's understanding of modern agriculture and help them understand the science behind it. So often when I talk to people they picture the industry as it was in the 1960's and 70's. Ultimately, I want the consumer to know why they are choosing organic produce over conventional, or why they are buying meat from their local butcher instead of a chain store."

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

"In recent years, the State of Minnesota has passed a lot of legislation creating a massive bureaucratic institution designed to regulate the agricultural industry. Most farmers see these various laws and permit requirements as hindering their ability to sustain and grow their business. While I do not agree with all of the legislation, I think a majority of it is actually doing farmers a favor. When compared to a state like Iowa, Minnesota is helping maintain the industry and promote a sustainable form of agriculture that the next generation can be proud of. While the rising price of production and increased taxes further frustrate farmers in the state, we have to remember that being a good steward of the land also means planning for the future. It is an exciting time to be involved in Minnesota agriculture, and I can only guess what the next few years will bring."

Read the other people featured in my "[30 Days of MN Ag.](#)"

There are others that are also participating in the 30 Days of Blogging Challenge. Feel free to check these out:

- [Janice Person aka JP Loves Cotton: A Month of Memories](#)
- [Rural Route 2 – 30 Days of Farm Girl Faith](#)
- [Prairie Californian – 30 Days of Food](#)
- [Mackinson Dairy – Women in Dairy](#)