

## **MN Agriculture: Ashley Schmelling - A "Woman in Ag"**

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Day 16 of my "30 Days of MN Agriculture" is Ashley Schmelling. Ashley is from Blooming Prairie and she is part of the perfect definition of family farm and a "woman in ag." She works along side her brother, her parents, her aunt and uncles and her grandpa. It is a family farm. Ashley is a precision ag specialist and is fulfilling her lifelong dream of working in agriculture.

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

"My brother and I are the fifth generation of our family to farm here in Southeast MN. It is very much a *FAMILY* farm with our grandparents, aunt and uncle, and our parents all being involved.

I work off the farm as well and that job also in agriculture. I started at Central Valley Coop driving the weigh wagon in the fall of 2010 and now I am a Precision Ag Specialist for the Central Advantage program. I create variable rate planting and fertilizing recommendations and I provide support for all the monitors- Case IH, John Deere, Ag Leader.... the list goes on."

#### **How long have you farmed or been in business?**

"I grew up on the family farm but I was not actively involved in agriculture until a little over five years ago. That was when I graduated from college and moved back home. I started working for [Central Valley Coop](#) and also began taking on more of a role with my family's farm as well. This

fall my brother gave me my 15 minute crash course on driving grain cart and then set me loose to do that. They haven't asked me not to come back so I must have done alright =)"

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

"On our farm we grow corn and soybeans. Yes, they are GMO. We used to have hogs but got out of that in the 90's and now we just have a finishing barn for a cousin of ours.

At Central Advantage we offer farmers an entire precision ag program- everything from variable rate recs to yield data analysis, monitor support and setup, record keeping, grid sampling and nitrate sampling at side dress time."

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

"The corn and soybeans that my family and I grow go to local elevators. Some of our corn also goes to local Ethanol plants. The end user is anyone that is a consumer.

What I enjoy most about my work as a precision ag specialist is that the people I am providing this service to are farm families just like my own. I grew up in this area and a good number of them have known me since I was little. Several of them are even distant cousins and other family members with their own operations."

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

"Why I do this is simple- it is *what I love to do*. When I was growing up and knew it all, I didn't plan on farming. I actually got my degrees in Journalism and Marketing Communications. But I knew by the end of my time in college that I needed to be involved in this industry, as it is one that I honestly believe in and believe is making a difference and doing it for the right reasons. Plus, there is nothing better than working alongside your family. Getting to work alongside other farm families at my job off the farm too is an added bonus."

**If there is one thing you could change about farming it would be . . .**

"Two Words= Mother Nature."

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

"I wish they knew how much thought goes into the decisions that are made- whether it be in regards to what kind of seed we plant, how much fertilizer we put down, how much

chemical we spray, when we apply it, or how we apply it. I wish they knew how much livestock farmers care about their animals, how much time they actually spend tending to their animals. I know a lot of hog farmers, cattle farmers and a couple turkey farmers through work and more often than not meeting with them means going out to their place and calling them up from the barns. I wish they knew we don't just shoot from the hip and pray we made the right choice. We take our time and think about what it means, now and in the long term too.... And then we pray we've made the right choice.

In many ways, technology has made it easier to get information faster and made it more visual. But this does not mean less work. Now we know exactly what factors are at play on our fields and they aren't all the same. That means more diligent record keeping and plans that include a whole host of possibilities. Don't get me wrong- we love the conversations this brings about and the things we learn about the ground we run. It's a great thing."

### **What is your favorite Minnesota location?**

"Probably a typical Minnesotan answer but I love anywhere up in Northern Minnesota. Crane Lake area is near the top of that list- beautiful place and great people."

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Read others 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](#)