
Agricultural Engineers

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Nature of the Work

Agricultural engineers apply knowledge of engineering technology and biological science to agriculture. (See biological scientists and agricultural and food scientists elsewhere in the *Handbook*.) They design agricultural machinery and equipment and agricultural structures. Some specialties include power systems and machinery design; structures and environment; and food and bioprocess engineering. They develop ways to conserve soil and water and to improve the processing of agricultural products. Agricultural engineers work in research and development, production, sales, or management.

Employment

About one third of the 2,900 agricultural engineers employed in 2002 worked for professional, scientific, and technical services, supplying consultant services to farmers and farm-related industries. Others worked in a wide variety of industries, including crops and livestock as well as manufacturing and government.

Job Outlook

Employment of agricultural engineers is expected to increase about as fast as the average for all occupations through 2012. The growing interest in worldwide standardization of agricultural equipment should result in increased employment of agricultural engineers. Job opportunities also should result from the increasing demand for agricultural products, the continued efforts for more efficient agricultural production, and the increasing emphasis on the conservation of resources. In addition to those resulting from employment growth, job openings will be created by the need to replace agricultural engineers who transfer to other occupations or leave the labor force.

Earnings

Median annual earnings of agricultural engineers were \$50,700 in 2002. The middle 50 percent earned between \$40,320 and \$70,100. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$35,590, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$87,220.

According to a 2003 salary survey by the National Association of Colleges and Employers, bachelor's degree candidates in agricultural engineering received starting offers averaging \$42,987 a year, and master's degree candidates, on average, were offered \$54,000.

Sources of Additional Information

Information on a career as an agricultural engineer can be obtained from:

► American Society of Agricultural Engineers, 2950 Niles Rd., St. Joseph, MI 49085-9659. Internet: <http://www.asae.org>

See the introduction to the section on engineers for information on working conditions, training requirements, and other sources of additional information.



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