

Agricultural Proficiency Award Areas



Not all of the proficiency award areas listed in this publication are available annually. Availability of awards depends on obtaining a special project sponsor. Your chapter FFA advisor can assist you in determining whether the proficiency area for which you want to apply includes a sponsored award.

It is impossible to list every type of SAE in each area in this publication, especially when students, parents and advisors have devised such creative programs. Only a few examples are listed in the descriptions that follow. A slight modification in an SAE program can make it better suited for a different proficiency area than originally thought.

Your state FFA advisors or national FFA staff can assist you in determining which proficiency award application, you should provide sufficient explanations as to support placement in that category.

The agricultural proficiency award areas approved for sponsorship by the National FFA Board of Directors for 2006 and beyond include those that follow. **(Only areas with sponsorship will be offered in any given year.)**

Who Can Apply?

Agricultural proficiency awards are available to all FFA members enrolled in high school agriculture, including special needs students.

Individually, you can apply for specific proficiency areas while you are in or after you are out of high school, as long as you have been out for **no more** than one year. If you have graduated from high school, you must have completed at least three full years of instruction in agricultural education or the program of agricultural education offered in the school last attended. At the minimum, you must have kept one full calendar year's worth of records as an FFA member to apply for a national level proficiency award.

Realistically, you are more competitive at the national level with more years of records. Some states have specific requirements; your state FFA advisors can provide more information.

Proficiency applicants do not need to live on a farm or ranch to participate in the awards program. The agricultural industry needs qualified employees in over 250 career areas, including processing, sales and service, conservation, forest management, horticulture, landscaping, nursery operation, turf management and floriculture.

If you have an SAE that is both entrepreneurial and placement, you need to decide which area you are stronger in. For instance, you have worked for a turf grass contractor for several years, but have started your own enterprise with a couple of customers during the latest year of your SAE, you would apply in the placement area to take advantage of the longer history and development. You can include information on your goals, resume,

personal page about your entrepreneurship, and that will show the progress into your career goal, but you are only confusing the judges by mixing the information from both placement and entrepreneurship on one application.

- **Agricultural Communications**-typically includes programs in which a student works at newspapers or other agricultural print facilities, such as magazines, to obtain training and practical experience in writing and publicizing in preparation for a writing or communications career. SAE programs may occur at radio or television stations, fair media rooms or other businesses that require speaking skills and a knowledge of agriculture. This area includes any use of communication technology, such as websites, aimed at communicating about agriculture.
- **Agricultural Education** - for students with SAE's related to education and extension, including, but not limited to: youth mentoring, agricultural education departmental assistants, PALS mentors and student coordinators, students developing and conducting informational materials and presentations for civic organizations and school aged youth, and students who are involved in SAEs surrounding educating the public about the broad topics of agriculture, agriculture education and FFA.

- **Agricultural Mechanics Design and Fabrication** involves designing and constructing agricultural equipment, structural land improvements and/or buildings and structures. It also includes selecting structural materials and/or implementing plans that use concrete, plumbing, heating, ventilation and/or air conditioning in agricultural settings.
- **Agricultural Mechanics Energy Systems** (Agricultural Power)-involves adjusting, repairing and maintaining agricultural power systems, which includes those that run by the way of mechanical, electrical, chemical, wind, solar, fluid and/or water power.
- **Agricultural Mechanics Repair and Maintenance** involves repairing and maintaining agricultural structures, machinery and/or equipment, including lawn equipment.
- **Agricultural Processing**-involves students who assemble, transport, process, fabricate, mix, package and store food and non food agricultural products. Programs may include the processing of meat, milk, honey, cheese, raisins and other dried fruits, maple syrup and/or other food items. Nonfood products can include the processing of by-products such as meat, bone, fish and blood meal; tallow; compost; hides; wool and cotton. It can include the cubing and pelleting of forages as well as producing birdseed and other pet foods. **NOTE:** The processing of forest products is no longer part of this proficiency area. (*The Forest Management and Products area has more details*).
- **Agricultural Sales** involves students who sell feed, seed, fertilizer or agricultural chemicals. Students can also own businesses that involve the sales of agricultural equipment, machinery or structures. Activities can include the merchandising of crops, livestock, processed agricultural commodities, horticultural or forestry items at either the retail or wholesale level.
- **Agricultural Services** involves students who work in services offered through agricultural enterprises that deal with custom equipment operation and maintenance, agricultural management and finance, animal breeding, custom baling, crop scouting, horseshoeing, taxidermy, animal hospitals, custom and contract feeding or other appropriate services.
- **Aquaculture** involves programs that use the best management practices available to produce and market aquatic plants and animals. Programs can include catfish, shrimp and crawfish farming; mollusks; salmon ranching; tropical fish rearing and tilapia culture.
- **Beef Production** includes programs that use the best management practices available to produce and market beef efficiently.
- **Dairy Production** involves programs that use the best management practices available to produce and market dairy cattle and dairy products efficiently.
- **Diversified Agricultural Production** involves the use of the best management practices available to produce and market efficiently at least one livestock and at least one crop related proficiency.
- **Diversified Crop Production** involves the use of the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market efficiently two or more crop related proficiency areas such as: grain, fiber/oil, forage, specialty crop, non-horticultural vegetable or fruit production.
- **Diversified Horticulture** typically involves producing, processing and marketing plants used principally for ornamental or aesthetic purposes and fruits and vegetables traditionally related to horticulture. This diversified proficiency area encompasses student SAEs with at least two of the following areas: floriculture, nursery operations, landscape management, turf grass management, as well as fruit and vegetable production, such as viticulture (grapes), pomology (fruit trees) and horticultural fruits and vegetables (not including fruit and vegetable row crops).
- **Diversified Livestock Production** involves the use of the best management practices available to produce and market efficiently a combination of two or more livestock related proficiency areas such as beef, dairy, swine, equine, specialty animal, small animal production and care, or poultry.

Agricultural Proficiency Award Areas

- **Emerging Agricultural Technology** involves programs where students gain career experiences in new and emerging agricultural technologies, such as agri-science, global positioning, biotechnology, lab research, computers and others that are covered by none of the existing award categories.
- **Environmental Science and Natural Resources Management** typically results in FFA members receiving practical experiences in the principles and practices of managing and/or improving the environment and natural resources. Activities may involve managing agriculture waste, recycling agriculture products, cleaning the environment or serving in the conservation corps. This area can include multiple resource uses; wildlife surveys; erosion prevention practices; public relations and pollution education; land use regulations that pertain to soil, water and air quality; as well as wetlands, shorelines and grasslands preservation.
- **Equine Science** typically provides insights into horse production, breeding, marketing, showing and other aspects of the equine industry. Programs can also include calf roping, barrel racing, rodeo, racing, riding lessons and therapeutic horseback riding if horses are owned and/or managed by a member.
- **Fiber and/or Oil Crop Production** involves the use of the best management practices available to produce and market efficiently fiber and/or oil crops such as cotton, sisal, hemp, soybeans, flax, mustard, canola, castor beans, sunflower, peanuts, dill, mint and safflower.
- **Floriculture** involves the use of the best management practices available to produce and market efficiently fresh and dried field or greenhouse flowers, foliage and related plant materials, including the arranging, packaging and marketing of these materials for ornamental purposes.
- **Food Science and Technology** involves students who work for wages and/or experiences in applying microbiology, food biochemistry or food product research and development to improve taste, nutrition, quality and/or the value of food. Programs can include research, new product development, food testing, grading and inspecting. Work experience could be obtained at research facilities, in classroom/lab facilities or through the quality and safety testing of milk or other foods. **Food Science does not** involve the processing, marketing and sales of food products or food preparation and/or service.
- **Forage Production** involves the use of the best management practices available to produce and market efficiently forage crops such as non-grain sorghum, alfalfa, clover, bromegrass, orchard grass, grain forages, corn or grass silages and pastures.
- **Forest Management and Products** involves the use of the best management practices available to conserve or increase the economic value of a forest and/or forest products through such practices as thinning, pruning, weeding, stand improvement, reforestation, insect and disease control, planting and harvesting. It can include experiences with the Forest Service, Christmas tree farming, as well as making and selling cedar shakes, firewood and wood chips/mulch.
- **Fruit Production** involves the use of the best management practices available to produce and market efficiently fruit crops such as stone, pome and citrus fruits; pineapples; coconuts; berries; watermelon; grapes; nuts and all common fruits (Pome fruits include apples, mayhaws and pears; Stone fruits include peaches, nectarines, plums, apricots and cherries).
- **Grain Production** involves the use of the best management practices available to produce and market efficiently grain crops such as corn, barley (including the malting types), millet, buckwheat, oats, grain sorghum, milo, wheat, rice and rye. **Grain Production does not** include any of the aforementioned crops with an intended use for forage.

- **Home and/or Community Development** typically involves improving and protecting the beauty of an area by using natural vegetation or commercial ornamental plants, as well as modernizing a home for better health and comfort by installing or improving water and sanitary facilities, heating and air conditioning or labor saving devices. It can include community betterment and development activities such as volunteerism to improve the community.
- **Landscape Management** typically involves experiences of planting and maintaining plants and shrubs, landscaping and outdoor beautification, installing sprinklers and improving recreational areas.
- **Nursery Operations** typically provides students with job-entry experiences in areas such as shrubs, trees or other plant production for the purpose of transplanting or propagation. It can include water garden plants produced for sale.
- **Outdoor Recreation** typically involves outdoor recreational activities as the primary land use. Some activities best suited to family use or as income-producing enterprises include vacation cabins and cottages, camping areas, fishing, hunting, shooting preserves, guide services, riding stables, vacation farms and guest ranches, natural scenic or historic areas and rodeo events where members do not own or manage horses.
- **Poultry Production** using the best management available to produce and market efficiently domestic fowl such as ducks, geese and guinea; chickens; as well as turkeys and their products.
- **Sheep Production** involves the use of the best management practices available to produce and market sheep and wool efficiently.
- **Small Animal Production and Care** involves the use of the best management practices available to manage, produce, care for and/or market efficiently small pet animals, such as rabbits as companion animals, cats, dogs, mice, hedgehogs and guinea pigs. Programs can typically provide a service where students care for the well-being of pets. They can also include working at a pet shop or kennel, grooming or training dogs, as well as serving as a veterinary assistant or providing pet sitting services.
- **Specialty Animal Production** involves the use of the best management practices available to produce and market efficiently specialty animals covered by none of the existing award categories, including bees, goats, mules, donkeys, miniature horses, meat rabbits, mink, worms, ostriches, emus, alpacas or llamas. Placement experiences can involve working at a zoo or at any specialty animal facility.
- **Specialty Crop Production** involves the use of the best management practices available to produce and market efficiently crops covered by none of the existing award categories, including sugar beets, dry edible beans, gourds, tobacco, popcorn, Indian and other specialty corns, grass seed, herbs, and spices, mushrooms, sugar cane, hops, sorghum cane, confectionary sunflowers or crop seed.
- **Swine Production** involves the use of the best management practices available to produce and market swine efficiently.
- **Turf Grass Management** typically involves the planting and maintaining of turf for outdoor beautification, owning a lawn mowing service, improving recreational areas, producing sod for sale and managing golf courses.
- **Vegetable Production** involves the use of the best management practices available to produce and market efficiently crops such as beans, potatoes, pumpkins, sweet corn, tomatoes, onions, zucchini, hot peppers, as well as all canning and common garden vegetables.
- **Wildlife Production and Management** typically involves activities to improve the availability of fish and wildlife through practices such as trapping, stocking fish and wild game or those that develop new or improve existing land and water habitat for wildlife. This proficiency can include experiences with Fish and Wildlife Departments and the Department of Natural Resources. Wildlife, wild species of ducks, geese, quail and pheasants are eligible in this area if used as an income enterprise.