

Collin Crocker: Looking to the Future While Honoring the Past

by Devon Lyon of the Rushlight Agency

CL Farms, located within the scenic Southern Willamette Valley, is a mere stone's throw from Corvallis, Oregon. Collin Crocker with CL Farms, a dedicated fifth-generation farmer, takes pride in having the sixth and seventh generations of his family living on the farm too.

Alongside managing a farming operation that covers approximately 4,000 acres, Collin is the 2023 President of the Oregon Wheat Growers League, and lends his expertise to the National Association of Wheat Growers on the Board of Directors.

"[We] farm a very diversified operation. In addition to wheat, in most years I will raise grass seed, red clover, green beans, edible pumpkin seeds, purple top turnip seed, hazelnuts, and mint," he explained. Regarding his leadership role with the League, Collin noted it has been important to strike a balance between a respect for the past - ensuring continuity and stability where appropriate - while evaluating a thoughtful, proactive approach to the future. He was also clear that his goal isn't to make overt changes merely for the sake of change, but to make strategic, thoughtful decisions that serve the best interests of the industry. "The decisions I make on the farm, and during my term as President of the League, are driven by the intergenerational aspect of my farm operation."

His perspective traces back to the 1920s, when his family's original farmstead was established. However, Collin acknowledges the need for his generation to look forward, focusing on the development of the next generation. He emphasized the importance of involving the youth early, and nurturing their professional growth, especially in industry volunteerism and leadership. Recognizing the need for balance, he added, "We have to be careful to not burn out the younger generation by asking too much too soon. On top of their day-to-day industry work, they have additional personal responsibilities that take up their free time, like raising a family."

Collin sees one area where the next generation can immediately make an impact: social media and communication. Their ability to articulate and visually convey a positive message about agriculture is key. "It's powerful for officials in Salem and Washington, D.C., to see these kids. When they get in there and articulate their stories of life in modern agriculture, it's powerful. They do a great job because they are 'real'."

In advocating for the evolving nature of communication and encouraging the next generation to get involved, Collin expressed comfort with change. He emphasized that the enduring progression of agriculture over thousands of years has been fueled by innovation, a willingness to experiment, and the ability to adapt. And that's what he hopes he brought to his role as president: a thoughtful connection to the past, while leading a measured approach to the future.

###