

An aerial photograph of rolling green hills, likely a farm or agricultural landscape. The hills are covered in vibrant green grass, with some areas appearing slightly darker, possibly due to shadows or different vegetation. In the middle ground, a small, white house with a red roof is visible on a slight rise. The overall scene is peaceful and rural.

**Agriculture
understands
its value to
Americans...**

GROWING
AMERICA'S FUTURE

...Let's come together to tell our neighbors.

Secure and well-fed, Americans have lost sight of the contributions agriculture makes to our nation. It is more than a source of the world's safest, most wholesome food supply. Approximately 22 million Americans work in the 200-plus agriculture-related fields producing food, fuel and fiber, among other products. Yes, agriculture delivers far more than nutritious food.

Growing America's Future is an alliance of organizations coming together to position agriculture for what it is – an engine for economic growth and an industry of value-added opportunities for the future.

Through this effort, American agriculture must be asserted as a strategic asset for the country – an asset that not only touches people's lives everyday but provides the country a reliable, renewable and affordable source of energy, nutrition and even national security.

"The science might still be sketchy, but common sense tells me organic is better food — better, anyway, than the kind grown with organophosphates, with antibiotics and growth hormones, with cadmium and lead and arsenic (the E.P.A. permits the use of toxic waste in fertilizers), with sewage sludge...as well as [animal] manure."

— Michael Pollan, *The New York Times*

While our country's heritage is founded on agrarian principals and our wealth built upon hard work, individualism, and producing raw materials, these tenets no longer sustain agriculture's success — and the critics' voices are heard loud and far.

Critical economic, health and social changes are

occurring. By embracing these changes in the context of what agriculture delivers, the industry can deliver an outcome which benefits all Americans and strengthens the viability of the agriculture industry as a whole. Consider the critical economic, health and social changes occurring today:

- New dimensions in globalization are increasing competition
- Serious concerns about energy security and energy supply
- World population growth is placing a focus on sustainability
- Declining U.S. dominance in research/ technology development
- Environmental issues are creating cost penalties
- Deterioration in health and social well-being
- An intensifying need for revitalization of rural America

Each of these challenges creates an opportunity to focus America on agriculture's influence and its impact on imminent national priorities.

Under Growing America's Future, each of these challenges can be categorized under one the following pillars:

- Energy
- Health & Nutrition
- Environment
- Materials/Products

These are the pillars for Growing America's Future and how we can best position agriculture as a solution for the country's long-term strategic challenges.

Four Pillars of Growing America's Future

By viewing our challenges as opportunities, we have the ability to renew growth in rural America through the creation of new economic engines. There are four areas, or pillars of opportunity, that naturally fall under Growing America's Future: Energy, Health & Nutrition, Environment and Materials & Products. Here are some of the advantages and disadvantages of each.

	Pros	Cons
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in biofuels helps rural economies • Increased biomass R & D is continually improving the efficiency of using commodity crops to create value-added products • Proposed Renewable Fuels Standard is dependent on strong ethanol industry • Volatility, uncertainty and price of oil improves political outlook for alternative fuels • Investment in technology by USDA, DOE and private sources is creating new products that can continue to fuel economic growth • Awareness of energy issues in population centers aids political outlook for alternative fuels • Lower price of gas due to ethanol is improving its reputation as a fuel • Improved engine wear of decreased emissions dispels argument against biofuels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer misunderstanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tax subsidies for products like ethanol - fuel economy - Cost of production • Other misinformation by organizations that lose with the growth of industries such as ethanol: the oil industry
Health/ Nutrition	<p>Agriculture biotechnology leading to new solutions for today's hotbutton issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing obesity • Healthcare • Foods traits of consumer interest <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fiber - Nutrients - Omega 3 - Isoflavones <p>These solutions create value-added opportunities for all of rural America and help address the health and nutrition needs of consumers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myths perpetuated by the media: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Claim ag policy leads to obesity - Biotechnology leads to many problems (loss of family farm, food safety, trade issues)
Environment	<p>Agriculture is using improved technologies in all aspects of operation to help alleviate many concerns and improve sustainability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pesticide usage • Soil erosion • Global warming; • Health risks • National security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consumer misunderstanding • Misperception of agriculture as contaminant <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fertilizer and pesticide runoff - Biotechnology affects ecosystem - Crop protection products being linked to health issues
Materials/ Products	<p>The growth of agriculture is largely in non-food areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmentally friendly materials, such as plastics made from corn vs. petroleum • Focus on organic • Consumer demand for renewable products drives regulation for use • Cost of using petroleum based products versus agriculture-based products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myths perpetuated by competing interests • Products not price competitive • No standards for production

So What's Next?

Growing America's Future requires the commitment of all who want agriculture and rural America to have a prosperous future. Consider what you've read here and decide what your role will be in helping shape agriculture to meet the challenges of the future.

Join us.

Here's the most important part. We all have visions in agriculture but we will only succeed in making this vision a reality if we are united as one voice. Consider the many resources you have dedicated to promoting agriculture and how they can be utilized for this effort. We need your help in making Growing America's Future happen. Contact Rick Tolman at NCGA by calling 636.733.9004 to begin a dialogue. Together we can strengthen agriculture and rural America for the future.