A Conversation about Millennials Ready to Be Builders: Vance Crowe

I n June, I met Monsanto’s Director of Millennial Engagement, Vance Crowe. Over lunch at American Farm Bureau Federation’s Communication Conference we had a very interesting conversation.

Crowe gave me an insightful perspective on tribes, how millennials approach their life (yes, he is a millennial) and what insights the agriculture community can glean from this knowledge.

In fact, Crowe believes agriculture, as an industry, is best positioned to facilitate this demographic segment of the U.S. population, a demographic bigger than the Baby Boomers.

As a result of June’s lunch conversation, I solicited Crowe to be part of our conversation series. Here’s why engaging this creative, yet sometimes self-doubting demographic, matters.

Arizona Agriculture: Give an overview of your background.

Crowe: I grew up as the middle child of seven in a small town in Central Illinois. While I was surrounded by farming and even knew hog, cattle, dairy and grain farmers I really had no idea about the tribe that is “agriculture.” I might as well have lived in downtown New York City for how much I knew about where my food came from.

Like a lot of young people who have grown up in the relative safety and abundance of the western world I had literally no idea what I wanted to be when I grew up. My parents [a stockbroker father and teacher mother] had given me the greatest of gifts; the opportunity to grow up to be whatever I wanted. I got married and my wife and I moved to St Louis so that she could change careers from Aerospace Engineering in the defense industry to physical therapy. I started a small communications company helping make complex ideas simple to understand. I eventually spotted the job posting for a Director of Communications company helping make complex ideas simple to understand.

After graduate school I went to work at the World Bank. That place was far more political than I ever imagined and I wanted something else, something that was more focused on solving real problems. Ultimately, I left the World Bank when I got married and my wife and I moved to St Louis so that she could change careers from Aerospace Engineering in the defense industry to physical therapy. I started a small communications company helping make complex ideas simple to understand. I eventually spotted the job posting for a Director of Communications company helping make complex ideas simple to understand.

The Cultural Shift in D.C., Does It Want Staying Power?

By Chelsea McGuire, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Director

I n July, Arizona Farm Bureau President Kevin Rogers returned from the Council of President’s conference in D.C. to tell me that EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt received a standing ovation from a room full of Farm Bureau leaders. That story alone should tell all of us that in the past 8 months, the culture in Washington has shifted in significant ways. And even more importantly, those shifts have largely worked in Agriculture’s favor.

Take, for example, the use of the Executive Order. Once a dreaded tool used to expand and justify government overreach, the last few months have produced orders we’ve welcomed with open arms. Just a few weeks after the inauguration, President Trump signed an Executive Order directing review of the infamous “Waters of the United States” rule. In another Executive Order, President Trump directed the review of National Monuments designated under the Antiquities Act, specifically designations of greater than 100,000 acres made since January 1, 1996 (this includes four Arizona monuments). In yet another Executive Order, President Trump implemented a “regulatory budget” requiring federal agencies to remove two existing regulations for each new regulation they seek to implement.

This regulatory reform trend isn’t isolated to the White House, either. In Congress, the Regulatory Accountability Act of 2017 is under consideration by the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. This is the first time the bill has progressed this far in the Senate since it was first introduced in 2011. The culture in Washington has indeed shifted, and it’s a refreshing change of pace.

Agriculture has good reason to welcome these changes. Our producers can tell countless stories about the financial and administrative burdens they bear as a result of overly broad rules and regulations. And it’s not just our producers who believe that less regulation is good for business; a recent study from the Mercatus Center of George Mason University suggests that, between 1980 and 2012, the opportunity costs of overregulation stunted economic growth at a rate of 0.87 percent per year. Moreover, decreased regulation has proven to be an economic booster. Take, for example, British Columbia. When faced with looming
By Julie Murphy, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

The House recently approved the bipartisan GROW Act (H.R. 23), which includes the Farm Bureau-supported Water Rights Protection Act (H.R. 2399). Reintroduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Colorado U.S. Representative Scott Tipton in June, the Water Rights Protection Act will bring U.S. ranchers much-needed relief from ongoing efforts by the federal government to extort privately held water rights from law-abiding citizens. Arizona Farm Bureau supported this important bill that will prevent federal land manager from forcing ranchers to choose between their privately held water rights and maintaining the health of their livestock.

“I find this practice by the U.S. Forest Service to be somewhat unbelievable and completely shameful,” said Arizona Farm Bureau’s First Vice President and southern Arizona rancher Stefanie Smallhouse. “One can only hope that these actions have been a result of a severe lapse in judgement by folks who forget in which country they live. I’m encouraged by this legislation.”

“It’s time to put a stop to federal strong-arming of ranchers by a government that owns the majority of the land for grazing west of the Mississippi,” added AFBF President Zippy Duvall said. “Water is the most valuable resource for every farmer and rancher. Under these tactics we’ve seen in recent years have little to do with conserving water and everything to do with big government and money.”

In recent years, federal land managers in the West have increasingly demanded that the ranchers who work the land surrender their water rights to the government or lose their leases. Public lands are meant to be enjoyed and shared by our citizens, and Arizona Farm Bureau is fighting for these lands. The government’s treatment of these ranchers is not only unfair, but unconstitutional, AFBF said.

For America’s farmers and ranchers to continue to provide the food, fuel and fiber for the nation and the world, they simply must have access to water. This is especially crucial in the West. All citizens have a right to expect that their federal government requires permitting for an individual/business or industry to move forward.

The Water Rights Protection Act (H.R. 2399) bars the federal government from seizing state-granted water rights from ranchers and restore basic property rights to them. According to AFBF, the act echoes policy changes President Trump set forth in his executive order on Promoting Agriculture and Rural Prosperity in America, which further supports the protection of ranchers’ water rights.

The legislation also:

• Prohibit agencies from demanding transfer of privately held water rights to the federal government in exchange for federal land use permits or other things.
• Maintain federal deference to state water law; and
• Maintain environmental safeguards already in place.

Added Arizona Farm Bureau’s President: “This issue reaches beyond the ranching community into any arena where the federal government requires permitting for an individual/business or industry to move forward.”

The Water Rights Protection Act reaffirms the existing principle of federal law that recognizes the ability of states to confer water rights and acknowledges that the federal government will respect those lawfully acquired rights. Further, the bill would ensure that valid holders of water rights under state law cannot have their rights diminished or otherwise jeopardized by assertions of rights by federal agencies when those assertions have no basis in federal or state law.

Cultural Shift continued from page 1

economic disaster, the Canadian province undertook to cut regulation across the board by implementing a regulatory budget. Now, they’re Canada’s best-performing economy in terms of GDP growth. In other words, regulatory reform has the potential to usher in real, beneficial results.

There’s another, less-tangible benefit of this push toward regulatory reform, too. (And maybe it’s my sentimental side, but this one has me even more excited.) Each attempt at repealing, modifying, or replacing onerous regulatory rules brings with it an opportunity for the voice of Agriculture to be heard. WOTUS provides a perfect example: As a direct result of President Trump’s Executive Order, Arizona Farm Bureau and other natural resource users were able to express their opinions on the WOTUS rule to Governor Ducey. In turn, Governor Ducey recommended the EPA re-write the rule to include “clear, objective characteristics.” The EPA has since announced its intention to repeal and replace the rule, and Congress is currently working on legislation that would allow it to bypass the time-consuming notice-and-comment period before implementing a new one.

Arizona Farm Bureau Submits a Dozen Comment Letters since March

And WOTUS isn’t the only issue on which we’ve given our input. Since March, Government Relations staff has submitted dozens of letter to topics impacting all sectors of our industry. We wrote a dozen comment to the Department of the Interior, explaining how the Antiquities Act has been abused to prevent the beneficial use of millions of acres of Arizona land. We wrote to the EPA to describe how environmental regulations burden our industry without providing a real benefit to the health of our land and water. We’ve submitted comments supporting the use of several safe and effective chemical pest control formulations. Even the Arizona Department of Agriculture has asked stakeholders for input as to rules and regulations that it can repeal or modify to make our industry more efficient. Even then the reform is a cause for concern, like NAFTA renegotiations or the upcoming Farm Bill debates, we’re optimistic because our legislators are actually asking for our opinions—and, if the current trend holds, we’re confident that what we say will not fall on deaf ears. But to make our message even more powerful, we rely on you, our members. Time and time again, we hear that our elected officials are much more willing to listen to the stories of their constituents than to the complaints of people who have no real investment in the issues. Your personal examples of how overregulation has impacted your operations really do matter, and now is the time to share them!

This culture of reform has given us an exciting opportunity to tell our Government what our members want to see—and not only that, there’s even some proof that they’re listening. But we know that politics is like the weather: unpredictable, and subject to change at the least convenient time. And that’s why we’re taking as much advantage of this opportunity as we possibly can. We are committed to telling our Government what our members need them to hear—after all, they’ve asked for it!"
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of Millennial Engagement at Monsanto and I thought to myself “here is the chance for me to see inside of this dark and scary place.”

I took the interview because who doesn’t want to see inside of Willy Wanka’s Chocolate Factory? I didn’t want the job but I thought the interview would be fun. During the interview I didn’t answer very many of their questions, instead I used the time to ask my interviewers all sorts of questions about Monsanto and their work. I got all the way to the end of the interview and the woman who was doing the hiring asked me if I had any more questions and I said, “Yes, if this is a new position, how are you going to train someone to be this ‘Director of Millennial Engagement’?”

The woman paused and then replied, “I would train whoever we hire differently. For the first several million years that humans existed our friendship existed barely outside of our kin. Only 10,000 years ago did humans develop the field of agriculture. Once we had agriculture previously hunter gather societies could start improving their access to calories. Once a single person can produce more food than they need then they are in a position to trade their food for other’s specialized products. Now we have thousands of farmers that talk regularly with one another on Twitter and others that make videos that are really engaging. This means a culture is emerging with leaders, inside jokes, customs, and hero stories for any cluster of people that get together on places like Twitter, Facebook or Snapchat.

These clusters of people can be thought of as your tribe and the value in knowing this, helps you understand that most of the opinions people have about the world is not driven by data but instead how the tribe feels about a subject. These people don’t even realize that they themselves are in a tribe or that other tribes could exist and that should inform how you talk with them.

Farmers need to understand that it isn’t just about “telling your own story.” It’s about being curious enough about other people that they want to hear about you. Once you have built trust by showing genuine interest you will see their receptivity and connection with you and how you do things in ways you couldn’t imagine. They will become force multipliers in promoting your agriculture because they will want to defend your work because you are a farmer that is in their tribe. This is what will change minds.

Arizona Agriculture: And, in keeping “tribes” in mind, you may be aware of how much preaching is done to farmers and ranchers that they must “tell their story.” So they have, and yet, often the story falls on deaf ears. Why?

Crowe: I was listening to the “Farmer and The City Girl” podcast with Rob Sharkey [The Farmer] and Sharkey and co-host Carrie Zylka discussed how if you just walk up to people and suddenly start telling them your story you seem arrogant and self-centered. Sharkey went on to say that yes, farmers need to be prepared to tell their story but what they really need to do is start genuine conversations with people outside their community. Be interested in other people so that they will be interested in you. That’s the key takeaway. The starting message was you’ve got to be ready to tell your story but the next step after you’re ready to tell the story is to find ways to engage with other people where you are engaging on their terms.

Farmers are already in an awkward situation when they’re talking to people they don’t know outside of their community and on top of that people are asking them to do something that’s really unnatural for them. This is the way we evolve this effort. It’s not just about telling their farm or ranch story to other tribes. It’s also about the when and how.

Arizona Agriculture: You and I had a fascinating conversation earlier this summer about the tension going on among young people right now? Explain why the agriculture community needs to be cognizant of this tension.

Crowe: Culture is always changing and sometimes it’s changing in more dramatic ways than others. I describe culture as a wave, eventually a number of ideas get into a pattern and they build into a wave that comes crashing onto the shore of society. Before that happens there is a change that takes place from the old way of thinking to the new way of thinking.

One of the things that I have seen in the last year is that we have more and more young people on the farms and in the cities looking around saying, “This path that we’ve been on, complaining about what we don’t have or don’t think is right with the...
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world, that doesn’t sit well with me. I want to do something more active.”

They are saying, “Instead of demanding that other people give me things, I am go-
ing to try and shoulder responsibility. I’m going to pick up rocks that are problems that I
see in the world and I’m going to put them on my shoulder and as I get better at carrying
one rock, I can get stronger and be able to carry the next size rock.”

I believe this will be a cultural shift. It’s important for the agriculture community
to be aware of it because ag is best poised to take those young people that say they want
to make a difference in the world and give them the training they need to go build tall.
Build things that will last a long time as opposed to standing out and holding signs.

Young people are self-organizing into new tribes. Tribes that did not exist before.
This will prompt change because they’ll be able to organize in ways that they have not in the past.

**Arizona Agriculture:** Wanting someone to tell you what you should be, is that a symptom of the millennial generation?

Crowe: Yes. One thing that I believe is tough for farmers to understand is that most people are not builders. If you grow up in the city, unless you grow up in a trade, you often
don’t have a sense that you can do something, build something or be something. That cul-
ture of “ability” is not being handed down, father to son, and mother to daughter.

And, because we were told all our lives we can grow up to be anything we want, it creates a weird pressure on young people because what they really want is the respect
of their peers and the respect of people that they respect. Young people don’t intuitively
know how to get that respect so they look for someone who can tell them how to get that.
This creates a vulnerable population.

A lot of young people today aren’t working towards a mastery of a skill or profession.
So, they go looking for someone to tell them that they are good instead of becoming
masters at something. Subsequently, many don’t get that sense of confidence that
your get from mastery.

Therein lies the value of agriculture teachers and the FFA that can teach you how
to master something, some skill. No activist group on the planet has as sophisticated of
a program, the potential, as Arizona agriculture and the FFA, to teach young people to
be masters of their own destiny.

**Arizona Agriculture:** What’s been the most surprising aspect of your role with Monsanto?

Crowe: Probably two things. One, I’m an extrovert on an extreme level. I love people.
I love meeting people. I love finding out what they think, testing out ideas and this
job gave the chance to talk to so many people that by the end of every week I am completely exhausted. So I spend time with my wife and my dogs and hole up at home
because this job is really about getting out and talking to as many people as possible and
I never imagined that I personally could get maxed out.

Second, I really did not imagine the feeling of satisfaction that I could derive from
representing an industry and company that has such a heavy reputation.

What I’ve found is that people’s fear of their food and how it is grown is like carry-
ing a weight that they don’t want to carry. I’ll get on a plane at the end of a week after traveling and I’ll sit down next to a mother whose been flying around the country
maybe selling pharmaceuticals or something. Often, what she’ll want to talk about is
her family. When it comes out who I work for, I can sense that she’s very suspicious of
the guy from Monsanto. For most of her adult life she has been made to feel guilty and
scared that she isn’t doing everything she possibly can to protect her children. There is
a lot of pain in the questions I hear, imagining that farmers don’t care well for the land
or animals that provide the food in her grocery stores.

The plane provides us time to talk, for her to voice concerns, probe answers, and
even learn things that make her fascinated with how far farming has come in just the last few decades alone. We have the time to really dive into something that pervades her
thoughts every single day and it is as simple as telling the story of the domestication of
broccoli.

By the time we get off the plane, she’s able to say, “Oh goodness, I didn’t have to be afraid.” She leaves that fear and anger she had on the plane. That’s one of the most
satisfying feelings another human being can have is to let another human being let go of
their fear and anger. Who knows what will happen with that person when they go home
but I never imagined that Monsanto would be the place that I could help people feel bet-
Don’t Miss Your County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting!
Influence Policy, Elect Leaders, and Have a Great Time

By Staff Reports

One of the highlights of the Farm Bureau year is the County Annual Meeting. Members can spend time with fellow farmers and ranchers from their area, hear from a speaker or two, and work on solutions for the issues affecting agriculture. In addition, members get to elect leaders for their county Farm Bureau as well as who will represent them as delegates at the state annual convention in November. If nothing else, you should go for the food, which is always guaranteed to be excellent at a Farm Bureau meeting!

During the summer, Policy Development meetings are held in each county to surface issues and solutions for Farm Bureau to work on. Hopefully you were able to attend yours, or will be able to if your county has yet to meet.

Once a suggested solution is approved by your fellow members as official Farm Bureau policy, you are no longer a single voice in the field. You now have the power of Farm Bureau behind you, and that is a formidable force for getting things done.

Stefanie Smallhouse is 1st vice-president of Arizona Farm Bureau and chair of the Policy Development Committee. “Farm Bureau is the Voice of Agriculture because we speak for our members. I encourage all Ag members to have their voices heard by attending their county’s PD and Annual meetings,” says Smallhouse.

County Annual Meeting information is listed in the table below and can be found online at www.azfb.org in the Calendar of Events under the Events tab. Select your county in the top right drop-down and look in August or September.

To discuss this further or to get involved, contact Christy Davis at 480.635.3615 or Amber Morin at 480.635.3611.

2017 County Annual Meetings

<table>
<thead>
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<th>County</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APACHE</td>
<td>Extension Office - St. Johns</td>
<td>Wednesday, Aug 16th</td>
<td>6:00PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>COCHISE</td>
<td>Big Tex Banquet Hall</td>
<td>Friday, Aug 18th</td>
<td>5:30PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>COCONINO</td>
<td>Williams Rodeo Grounds</td>
<td>Saturday, Aug 12th</td>
<td>12:00PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRAHAM</td>
<td>Branding Iron Steakhouse</td>
<td>Thursday, Aug 31st</td>
<td>5:30PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>GREENLEE</td>
<td>Duncan High School Cafeteria</td>
<td>Thursday, Aug 24th</td>
<td>6:30PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>LA PAZ</td>
<td>Elks Lodge</td>
<td>Saturday, Aug 12th</td>
<td>6:00PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>MARICOPA</td>
<td>Pera Club</td>
<td>Friday, Sept 29th</td>
<td>6:00PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOHAVE</td>
<td>Hualapai Recreation Area</td>
<td>Saturday, Aug 26th</td>
<td>10:00AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAVAJO</td>
<td>La Cucina De Eva</td>
<td>Tuesday, Aug 15th</td>
<td>6:00PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>PIMA</td>
<td>The Mountain Oyster Club</td>
<td>Friday, Aug 18th</td>
<td>3:30PM</td>
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<td>PINAL</td>
<td>The Property</td>
<td>Wednesday, Aug 30th</td>
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<td>YAVAPAI</td>
<td>Cherry Creek Ranch</td>
<td>Saturday, Aug 19th</td>
<td>5:30PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>YUMA</td>
<td>Booth Machinery</td>
<td>Wednesday, Aug 23rd</td>
<td>4:00PM</td>
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Ag is Ugly but Hunger is Even Uglier

By Julie Murphy, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

Farming and ranching is ugly but hunger is even uglier. Parts of farming and ranching, obviously, are beautiful too. But the bucolic scenes of green rolling hills dotted with grazing cattle and anchored with a perfectly white-trimmed red barn is just a painting stamped in your dream. Wake up. You think I’ve become cynical? Maybe. I’ve been in the industry too long? Nope. I’ve lived on a farm. Farming is hard work and it’s dirty. If you’ve never farmed, worked a ranch or helped run a dairy, your understanding will default to the red barn, perfectly trimmed with white paint. We forget about the ugly; the dirty.

One favorite story my older brother, Brent Murphy, and I reminisce about always took place after cotton harvest season. Brent was tasked with cutting cotton stalks on acres and acres of recently picked cotton. It was a cold (even in Arizona), dirty and asthma-inducing task. So Brent rigged up an old gas mask and outfit to try and reduce the impact: Airforce jump suit, Army jacket, respirator and headphones. Brent called the stalk cutter the “lung killer.”

We were a bit dramatic when we decided dad was working us too hard. I would have liked a red barn; it’s in my dream too. And today’s farms with red barns warm my heart. I’m kind of glad mom and dad were dirt farmers. I’m thinking animal agriculture has some pretty ugly scenes too.

And, today enclosed tractor cabs, other technology advances and ongoing best management practices make the act of farming less ugly, but it’s still dirty work. Brother Brent would have had an entirely different experience if only he’d had an enclosed tractor cab. But then we’d be missing a story on a farm with no red barn. Sorry, I’m obsessing on the red barn.

Farming is hard work, it’s ugly but hunger is even uglier. If you ask a farmer or rancher about his passion for his dirty work, he’ll explain why he wants to feed you. They always want to feed you. Because in some ways he or she is trying to wipe out those images we have of hungry children; not just the images but the hunger.

The world is hungry and perhaps farmers understand this better than you and me and the reason they always want to feed us. According to the United Nations, 11% of the global population suffers from hunger (one in nine) and one in three people is malnourished. Additionally, close to one-fifth of all children under five remain undernourished. The statistics about hunger in the United States too are mind-numbing and impossible to ignore.

On second thought American farming and ranching, with or without a red barn, ultimately is really beautiful.

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Editor’s Note: Arizona Farm Bureau and our county Farm Bureaus participate in a variety of programs to raise funds and gather donations for local Food Banks.

www.azfb.org