



NATIONAL  
FFA ORGANIZATION

# Agricultural Proficiency Awards

## 2017 Proficiency Award Area Descriptions

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*Proficiency awards are an outgrowth of a member's supervised agricultural experience (SAE) enterprises and recognize skill development and career based competencies in related award areas. With 235 unique careers, creative members and a dynamic industry opening new opportunities in agriculture constantly not all SAEs will qualify in a proficiency area. Proficiency award areas do not define SAEs, but provide recognition to members exploring and/or becoming established in specific agricultural career pathways.*

### PROFICIENCY AWARD APPLICATION TYPES

**Entrepreneurship:** A student plans, implements, operates and assumes financial risks of ownership in an agricultural related enterprise or business. Examples include owning/operating a lawn care service, holiday poinsettia business or a pay-to fish operation.

**Placement:** Non ownership, agriculturally related paid or unpaid/volunteer work. Examples include working at a nursery, working as a groom at a horse stable or volunteering at a local park.

**Combined:** For the proficiency award areas that are not split into separate entrepreneurship and placement areas (*example: Agricultural Communications-Entrepreneurship/Placement*) you may enter both placement and entrepreneurship records using the Combined application if your SAE includes both entrepreneurship and placement. If your SAE is in an unsplit area but your SAE includes only entrepreneurship or only placement, apply as placement or entrepreneurship not as a combined application. Check this award area list to see combined areas (*this list changes annually*).

**Research:** Involves planning and conducting an agriculturally based scientific experiment based on hypothesis and the use of the scientific methods of investigation on the hypothesis. This may include qualitative, quantitative, experimental, descriptive and quasi-experimental research.

As students develop their long-range SAE plans they may engage in enterprises or activities that cross SAE categories, which could theoretically qualify for multiple proficiency awards. It is important that when a student's enterprise has grown to encompass multiple award areas, they limit their application to the activities, duties and accomplishments that are appropriate only to the proficiency award area in which they are applying.

#### *Proficiency award resources:*

Proficiency award handbooks, rules, FAQs, tips and tricks to help complete a competitive application can all be found on the National FFA Organization website at: <https://www.FFA.org/participate/awards/proficiencies>

#### *Assistance with proficiency area determinations:*

When choosing the appropriate proficiency award area, after carefully reviewing the area descriptions below, if you have doubts or questions please contact your state staff and/or national FFA staff with a detailed description of the SAE program. The National FFA Organization will assist in the area determination. To contact national FFA for a proficiency related inquiry please email [proficiency@ffa.org](mailto:proficiency@ffa.org).

### PROFICIENCY AWARD AREA DESCRIPTIONS

**Agricultural Communications – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Includes programs in which a student is placed at a newspaper or other agricultural print (such as magazines) facilities to obtain training and practical experience in writing and publicizing in preparation for a writing communications career. Programs may also be at radio and TV stations, fair media rooms, or other businesses requiring speaking skills and knowledge of agriculture. The student may also own and produce an agriculture related broadcast or show. This area also includes any use of or development of new technology (such as websites and blogs) aimed at communicating the story of agriculture.

**Agricultural Education – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Relates to education and extension, including, but not limited to, youth mentoring, agricultural education departmental assistants, PALS mentors and student coordinators, 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 – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Involves the design and construction of agricultural equipment and/or structures, and/or selection of the structural materials, and/or implementation of plans for utilizing concrete, electricity, plumbing, data communication cable systems, heating, ventilation, and/or air conditioning into agricultural settings. May also include the development of new and emerging agricultural technologies such as engineering, remote sensing, precision agriculture, ag-robotics and other new technologies not covered by a more appropriate area.

**Agricultural Mechanics Repair and Maintenance – Entrepreneurship** – Student owns an enterprise or business involving the repair and maintenance of agricultural equipment (including lawn equipment) and/or structures, including agricultural power systems including mechanical, electrical, chemical, wind, solar and/or water power.

**Agricultural Mechanics Repair and Maintenance – Placement** – Student works for an employer involved in the repair and maintenance of agricultural equipment (including lawn equipment) and/or structures, including agricultural power systems including mechanical, electrical, chemical, wind, solar and/or water power.

**Agricultural Processing – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – A student owns an enterprise or works for a business of assembling, transporting, processing, fabricating, mixing, packaging and storing food and nonfood agricultural products. Programs could include processing meat, milk, honey, cheese, raisins and other dried fruits, maple syrup and/or other food processing. Nonfood products could include by-products processing such as meat, bone, fish and blood meal, tallow, hides; processing of wool and cotton, making compost, cubing and pelleting of forages, producing bird seed and other pet foods. **NOTE:** Processing of non-food forest products is no longer part of the agricultural processing area. See: Forest Management and Products.

**Agricultural Sales-Entrepreneurship** – Student owns the enterprise or business, not covered in a more appropriate proficiency award category, could include enterprises such as the sales of feed, seed, fertilizer, agricultural chemicals, agricultural equipment, machinery or structures. Enterprises could also include the merchandising (which is buying an item with the sole purpose to resell it in a short time frame) of crops, livestock, processed agricultural commodities, horticulture (including quarry rock for decorative or landscape purposes), floriculture, or forestry items at either the retail or wholesale level. **NOTE:** SAEs that include the production or processing of the previous items does not belong in this award area.

**Agricultural Sales-Placement** – Student works for an agriculture related business that is not covered in a more appropriate proficiency award category. This could include sales of feed, seed, fertilizer or agricultural chemicals. Students could also work for businesses that involve the sales of agricultural equipment, machinery or structures. Activities could include the merchandising (buying an item with the sole purpose to resell it in a short time frame) of crops, livestock, processed agricultural commodities, horticulture (including quarry rock for decorative or landscape purposes), floriculture, floriculture and/or forestry items at either the retail or wholesale level. **NOTE:** SAEs that include the production or processing of the previous items, it does not belong in this award area.

**Agricultural Services – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns enterprises or works in an agricultural business that is not covered in any of the existing award categories. This includes enterprises such as custom equipment operation and maintenance, agricultural management and financial services, animal breeding services, custom baling, crop scouting, implementing integrated pest management programs, horseshoeing, taxidermy services, auction services (working at or owning the auction house), commercial agricultural well drilling, residential tree removal service, custom and contract feeding services or other appropriate services offered through agricultural enterprises. Students applying for placement in agricultural services must work for a company or individual whose primary activity to provide agricultural services. **NOTE:** Activities related to lawn care, landscaping, mowing or other landscape and care activities are not included in this area. Students with these types of enterprises or activities need to apply in other, more appropriate areas related to turf care, horticulture or nursery landscape.

*The Agriscience Research Proficiency is designed for those students actively engaged in agriscience research and experimentation. This includes students who are actively engaged in doing their own research individually, as well as those students who may be cooperating on research projects with others including but not limited to teams in school, experiment stations or colleges/universities. The student must be actively involved in the development of the experimental design, formulation of the hypothesis, collection of data, interpretation of the data and publicizing the results to be considered for an Agriscience research proficiency*

**Agriscience Research - Animal Systems** - Research in the life processes, health, nutrition, genetics, management and processing of animal systems related to small animals, aquaculture, livestock, dairy, horses and/or poultry.

**Agriscience Research Plant Systems** - Research in the life cycles, classifications, functions, practices of plant systems related to crops, turf grass, trees and shrubs and/or ornamental plants.

**Agriscience Research Integrated Systems** - Must fit one of the following descriptions:

- **Diversified Research** – Research in two or more of the agriscience research areas.
- **Environmental Service Systems/Natural Resource Systems Research** - Research in the systems, instruments and technology used in waste management and their influence on the environment.
- **Food Products and Processing Systems Research** - Research in the product development, quality assurance, food safety, production, sales and service, regulation and compliance, and food service practices within the food industry.
- **Power, Structural and Technical Systems Research** - Research in the agricultural equipment, power systems, alternative fuel sources and precision technology, as well as woodworking, metalworking, welding and project planning for agricultural structures.
- **Social Sciences Research** - Research of leadership, personal growth and career success skills necessary for a chosen profession that effectively contributes to society.

**Beef Production- Entrepreneurship** – Student owns the enterprise or business that uses the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market beef. This award area is for any beef animals, including miniature Herefords, Zebu, etc.

**Beef Production- Placement** – Student works for a livestock producer applying the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market beef. This award area is for any beef animals, including miniature Herefords, Zebu, etc.

**Dairy Production- Entrepreneurship** – Student owns an enterprise or business and applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market dairy cattle and dairy cattle products. This award area also includes enterprises in which a student who leases cattle for a dairy production business.

**Dairy Production- Placement** – Student works in the dairy cattle industry applying the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market dairy cattle and dairy cattle products.

**Diversified Agricultural Production - Entrepreneurship/Placement**- Involves the use of the best management practices available to produce and market a combination of livestock and crops in **two or more** proficiency areas. These areas include at least one species included in Diversified Livestock and at least one species included in Diversified Crop proficiency area.

**Diversified Crop Production – Entrepreneurship** – Student owns an enterprise or business that applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market crops from **two or more** of the crop related proficiency areas. These areas include grain production, fiber/oil production, forage production, specialty crop production(excluding floriculture production) vegetable production or fruit production.

**Diversified Crop Production – Placement** – Student works for a crop producer that applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market crops from **two or more** of the crop related proficiencies. These areas include grain production, fiber/oil production, forage production, specialty crop production, vegetable production or fruit production.

**Diversified Horticulture – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student works for someone who or owns the enterprise or business that applies the best management practices available to efficiently manage an SAE program that includes **two or more** of the following proficiency areas: landscape management, nursery operations, turf grass management, or the specific floricultural production or floral design and floral sales activities accepted in specialty crop production.

**Diversified Livestock Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Involves the use of the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market a combination of **two or more** livestock related proficiency award areas. These areas include beef, dairy, sheep, swine, equine, goat, specialty animal, small animal production and care or poultry.

**Environmental Science and Natural Resources Management – Entrepreneurship /Placement** – Students receive practical experience concerned with the principles and practices of managing and/or improving the environment and natural resources. Activities may include the areas of management of agriculture waste (excluding common compliance with EPA regulations) recycling of agriculture products, environmental cleanup, serving in the conservation corps; managing agricultural energy usage (not for building or maintaining), multiple uses of resources, land use regulations pertaining to soil, water and air quality, preservation of wetlands, shorelines, and grasslands, erosion prevention practices; public relations and education concerning pollution; installing subsurface drainage, public relations and education concerning pollution.

**Equine Science - Entrepreneurship** – Student owns an enterprise or business that provides experiences in horse production, breeding, marketing, showing and other aspects of the equine industry. Programs may also include calf roping, barrel racing, rodeo, racing, training, riding lessons and therapeutic horseback riding if horses are owned and/or managed by the member. This also includes miniature horses (prior to 2012, formerly in specialty animal production).

**Equine Science- Placement** – Student works for an employer providing experience in horse production, breeding, marketing, showing and other aspects of the equine industry. Programs may also include calf roping, barrel racing, rodeo, racing, training, riding lessons and therapeutic horseback riding if horses are not owned and/or managed by the member. This also includes miniature horses (prior to 2012, formerly in specialty animal production).

**Fiber and Oil Crop Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that includes the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market crops for fiber and/or oil such as cotton, sisal, hemp, soybeans, sesame seed, flax, mustard, canola, castor beans, sunflower, peanuts, dill, spearmint and safflower.

**Food Science and Technology – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that applies microbiology and biochemistry or food product development to improve taste, nutrition, quality and/or value of food. Programs could include the development of new products, food testing, grading and inspecting. **NOTE:** Food science is not processing of food products, marketing or sales of food products, or food preparation and/or service.

**Forage Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that includes the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market crops for forage such as sorghum not used for grain, alfalfa, clover, brome grass, orchard grass, grain forages, corn and grass silages and all pastures.

**Forest Management and Products – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that includes 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, harvesting, Christmas tree farming, making and selling cedar shakes and firewood and wood chips/mulch, or working for the Forest Service. Does not include any food items harvested from the forest or residential tree removal services.

**Fruit Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that includes the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market crops for fruits such as stone fruits, pome fruits, citrus fruits, pineapples, coconuts, berries, cranberries, melons, grapes, olives, nuts and all common fruits. (Pome fruits include apples, mayhaws, and pears. Stone fruits include peaches, nectarines, plums, apricots and cherries).

**Goat Production - Entrepreneurship/Placement** - Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that involves the use of the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market goats and all goat products.

**Grain Production – Entrepreneurship** – Student owns an enterprise or business that applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market crops for grain production 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.

**Grain Production – Placement** – Student works for a crop producer or grain production related business that applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market crops for grain production 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 – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that involves improving and protecting the beauty of an area by using natural vegetation or commercial ornamental plants and/or modernizing the home for better health and comfort through installation or improvement of water and sanitary facilities, heating and air conditioning or labor saving devices. Also includes community development activities such as volunteerism, community development and community betterment activities. **Note:** Students working strictly with the installation or improvement of water and sanitary facilities, heating and air conditioning or labor saving devices should apply in the Agricultural Mechanics -Design & Fabrication area. Students whose activities are limited to using natural vegetation or commercial ornamental plants should apply in the Landscape Management area.

**Landscape Management – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that includes experiences of planting and maintaining plants and shrubs, landscaping and outdoor beautification, grounds keeping, sprinkler installations and improvement of recreational areas.

**Nursery Operations – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that provides students with job-entry experience in areas such as turf, ornamental plants, vegetable starter plants, shrubs and/or tree production for the purpose of transplanting or propagation. This could include water garden plants if produced for sale.

**Outdoor Recreation – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that develops outdoor recreational activities for public or family use as experiential or income-producing enterprises. These enterprises could include vacation cabins and cottages, camping and/or picnic areas, recreational fishing, and/or hunting areas, water sports (not including indoor lifeguard activities), winter sports, shooting preserves, guide services, riding stables, trail rides, vacation farms and guest ranches, natural scenic or historic areas, and running petting zoos and rodeo events where the member does not own or manage animals.

**Poultry Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that includes the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market chickens, turkeys, domestic fowl such as ducks, geese and guinea, and their products.

**Sheep Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that includes the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market sheep, sheep products and wool.

**Small Animal Production and Care – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that includes the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market small animals such as all rabbits, cats, dogs, mice, hedgehogs, guinea pigs, lizards, small birds (such as canaries, cockatiels, cockatoos, parakeets, parrots, etc.) and programs that typically provide a service in caring for the well-being of pets. Programs could include working at a pet shop, as a groomer, as a dog trainer, providing pet sitting services, working at a kennel, or preparing guide and assistance animals.

**Specialty Animal Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market specialty animals within the Agriculture industry. Students in the specialty animal production proficiency area must demonstrate that they are producing and marketing specialty animals not covered in any of the existing award categories. Specialty animals can include the following: aquaculture, bees, mules, donkeys, bison, oxen, mink, worms, ostriches, pigeons, emus, alpacas or llamas. Placement experiences could include roles as a zoo worker or placement at any specialty animal facility. In their supervised work experience, students must participate in hands-on activities including feeding, inoculating, performing basic animal care, weighing, measuring, showing and possibly marketing animals in an entrepreneurial or work placement environment. **NOTE:** Goats are now in the goat production award area, and miniature horses have been reclassified and moved to equine science. All rabbits should be entered in small animal production.

**Specialty Crop Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market crops not covered in any of the existing award categories such as: native prairie plants, sugar beets, dry edible beans, green peanuts, gourds, tobacco, specialty corns (popcorn, white corn, Indian corn), all grass seed production, herbs and spices, mushrooms, sugar cane, hops, sorghum cane, confectionary sunflowers, production of crop seed or specific floriculture production. (Such as chrysanthemums, daylilies, etc.)

**Swine Production – Entrepreneurship** – Student owns an enterprise that applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market swine.

**Swine Production – Placement** – Student works for an employer that applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market swine.

**Turf Grass Management – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that involves the planting and maintaining of turf for outdoor beautification, providing a lawn mowing service; improving recreational areas, sod produced for sale, and sport field or golf course management.

**Vegetable Production – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that applies the best management practices available to efficiently produce and market crops such as asparagus, beans, potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, pumpkins, sweet corn, tomatoes, onions, zucchini, hot peppers, all canning vegetables and all common garden vegetables.

**Veterinary Science – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that includes working with veterinarians in clinical practice, research facilities, colleges of veterinary medicine, animal health industry, or any other environment in which they assist veterinarians in performing duties related to the health of people and/or the health and welfare of large and small animals. This experience should be under the supervision of a veterinarian and may include wage earning, entrepreneurial or exploratory activities not limited to hands-on care of animals, management of business aspects of a veterinary practice, or working on legislation or regulations relating to animals.

**Wildlife Production and Management – Entrepreneurship/Placement** – Student owns the enterprise, or works for a business that includes the improvement and the availability of fish and wildlife through practices such as land and water habitat improvement, wildlife surveys, development of new land and water habitat, trapping, or the stocking of fish and wild game. This proficiency includes activities conducted with the Fish & Wildlife departments, or Department of Natural Resources. The production of wild species for the stocking of ducks, geese, quail and pheasants are eligible if used as an income enterprise.