

One Acre at a Time

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Ruth McCabe of State Center, Iowa, has been chosen as a recipient of the Peoples Company sponsored scholarship, 2022 Nuffield International. She represents United States agronomy and, more specifically, Iowa. As a conservation agronomist, Ruth dedicates her research to studying farming conservation adoption efforts worldwide. Ruth hopes to bring positive change to United States agriculture throughout the program, one acre at a time.

Originally from the coastal city of Long Beach, California, Ruth McCabe's passion for agriculture began in her college years in Minnesota. During undergrad, she took a few plant science and agronomy courses that would have a lasting impact on her career path. Ruth then completed her master's degree at Iowa State University in Agronomy. This led her to her current profession as a Conservation Agronomist at Heartland Cooperative, where she manages 40 growers across 15,000 acres in the state of Iowa. Ruth's move to Iowa also sparked her interest in hunting.

"Hunting made me realize that we need way more conservation efforts in the United States."

Ruth often hears the quote "Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt" in the hunting community. She found many similarities between agronomy and hunting conservation efforts and has since shifted her interest of hunting conservation into her agronomy career.

Within the next year, Ruth will be traveling the world visiting major grain-producing countries that have developed greater conservation adoption efforts than the United States. She hopes to learn what drove the conservation efforts in those countries and adopt them in the United States.

"Not every conservation practice works for every acre, but there is a conservation practice that will work for every acre," says Ruth.

She believes that production agriculture and conservation can exist in harmony in the US.

"If you have an agricultural field, you can incorporate a practice that can help that field do more than just produce grain; it can also filter water and provide wildlife habitat. I want to find agricultural fields that can do more than one thing."

Ruth has plans to visit Canada, Brazil, Argentina and many other countries with the help of the Nuffield Scholarship. She has chosen these countries because of their no-till adoption practices.

"Argentina is almost 100% no-till and is third in world production of soybeans, while the US remains around 5% in no-till practices."

Argentina and Brazil have both adopted nationwide farming conservation efforts. However, while Brazil's adoption was government-mandated, Argentina's move was guided by a farmer-led coalition. Ruth plans to determine the differences between the two adoption efforts and which one is favored more by farmers.

Ruth is serving as a representative, not only for the United States, but specifically for Iowa.

"My goal is to highlight the fact that Iowa has the greatest capacity for agricultural change. I hope that the exposure to change will bring new opportunities such as funding and partnerships that will bring interest to Iowa conservation efforts."

Ruth hopes that Iowa will be a leader in voluntary conservation efforts in the United States.

"I want to avoid a one size fits all approach to conservation. That is what may be ahead of us if we do not adopt."

The Nuffield Farming Trust Scholarships give individuals with a passion for agriculture the ability to positively impact farming and food. Nuffield sponsors 20 individuals each year through their research and travels to lead positive change in the agriculture industry.

Learn more about Ruth McCabe and the Nuffield International Scholarship Program at <https://www.nuffieldinternational.org/scholarship/winners/index.php?year=2022>