



Janine Retzer
1997 graduate of UW-Madison
Bachelor of Science - Agronomy
Lakeside Foods, Inc.
Assistant Agronomy Manager



“Take advantage of the many opportunities to learn about agronomy careers by participating in internships. There is nothing like first-hand experience to learn if you are interested in doing that type of work.”

- Janine Retzer

She spends her time in the fields

Janine Retzer calls the green bean and carrot fields of Wisconsin her office, thanks to her B.S. degree in agronomy from UW-Madison’s College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. She is the Assistant Agronomy Manager of Lakeside Foods, which is a Wisconsin-based company that supplies many different food products to grocery stores and food distributors across the world. Janine is responsible for procuring raw vegetables for four processing plants in northeast Wisconsin.

Janine spends about 70 percent of her time working in the fields where she contracts with growers, decides what to grow and when, scouts fields, manages pesticide and herbicide spray programs, sets harvest schedules, and budgets for the next growing season.

Agronomic skills are the number one thing she uses to solve problems in the field, but she says that people skills are also vital to her success. “I work with everyone from upper management to the factory workers and have a lot of one-on-one contact with the growers,” she says. Her membership with the Midwest Food Producers and the Ozark Food Processors Association allow Janine to network with peers in other companies to discuss the problems they are experiencing and how to deal with them.

“There will always be a need for vegetable production,” she says, “but the industry is changing.” With a large proportion of current employees approaching retirement age, companies are seeking young people to take their place. In particular, they are looking for highly capable people because consolidation among growers results in each agronomist becoming responsible for more acreage.

According to Janine, there are many opportunities for women in this field. Although they currently constitute a minority of workers in the industry, she says companies seem very receptive to hiring more women to fill positions.

With her undergraduate degree in hand, Janine found that she had many opportunities including managing field crops, research, sales, and much more.

Janine shares that a degree in agronomy leads to many different opportunities including managing field crops, research, sales and much more. She recommends entering the workforce with a basic education in agronomy, as well as some understanding of soils, plant pathology, and some basic business.

“It’s a professional world out there,” says Janine. “You can go places with an agronomy degree.”