

Kara Snyder 0:00

Hello and welcome to the podcast a podcast produced by the College of Applied Science and Technology at Illinois State University. I'm your host Kara Snyder and I serve as assistant dean of marketing communications and constituent relations for the College. Each episode we're sitting down with an alum of the College and today we have a chance to talk to Jacqueline Holland. Jackie is an alum of the Department of Agriculture and currently serves as the grain market analyst for Farm Futures farm progress by Informa markets. Welcome, and thank you for being here.

Jacquie Holland 0:31

Thanks for having me, Kara.

Kara Snyder 0:33

It's gonna be fun. Let's start at the beginning. Why did you choose ISU?

Jacquie Holland 0:38

So I chose ISU because I was just really kind of ready for a big change. And to see more in the world. I grew up on a dairy farm in northwestern Illinois. And I graduated in a class of 33. So I was just really eager to meet new people to have more experiences to see what else was out there in the world than my little farm town. And I fell in love with the campus as soon as I stepped foot on it at my visit. I just felt that that right feeling right away. And the other thing too, I wasn't super confident about my major when I started my college search or even when I ended it for that matter. But I felt that ISU offered enough of a variety of good programs to safely explore opportunities that could work out for me in the future.

Kara Snyder 1:32

I was curious, growing up on a dairy farm if agriculture was always the thing for you. So tell us what else you explored before you landed there.

Jacquie Holland 1:41

So no, no, no agriculture was not at all the plan when I got to ISU, I think I had initially declared my major as political science. And then I ended up in the College of Business as a finance major also. And I liked that. But at very early in my college career, I had also explored doing a pre med route. But I kind of realized as I was at ISU and talking to a lot of my friends about the farm, and you know, just kind of talking about food, because food is always a great common thing to talk about, that I really loved. You know, my farming community, my farm background, and just being able to apply, you know, some of the biological concepts of managing livestock, for example, and how that trickles down into different aspects of the food supply chain. I just kind of realized, like, Yeah, I did like finance, but I also wanted to have an ag background have more of an ag focus with it. So I think I added ag as my major my sophomore year. And yeah, that's how it happened.

Kara Snyder 3:10

I love that story. Because I think for a lot of us, a lot of conversations end up pointing back to food, so I totally understand it along those lines. Did you have a favorite place to eat when you were on campus?

Jacquie Holland 3:22  
McAlister's.

Kara Snyder 3:24  
I love it, too. It's still there by the way.

Jacquie Holland 3:29  
Yes.

Kara Snyder 3:29  
What do you miss the most about your time on campus and being a student?

Jacquie Holland 3:33  
Living so close to my wonderful friend, is you drank so many wonderful humans. And it provided me so many different opportunities to meet with new people to collaborate with new people to have fun with new people just build really meaningful and long lasting relationships all around the campus, in community through different organizations through you know, my best friend, she lived down the hall from me and at Cannes back in the day. And so many of those relationships with different classmates through coursework and different activities and organizations. I'm just really, I think I like sobbed uncontrollably right after graduation as I was driving back to my parents, because then like, I had this sudden realization that I was never going to be in the same place with all my best friends again. So the people I'm miss the people so much

Kara Snyder 4:34  
The people make the place that is for sure. Yes. So you're on this car ride with your parents. You've finished your degree. Tell us what was that initial job search like for you and where did you end up with your entry level job.

Jacquie Holland 4:51  
It was kind of daunting. I wasn't super sure what I wanted to do where I wanted to land and you know At that time in 2011, we were a little bit past the recession. But there were still kind of some, we were insulated from it quite a bit in ag. But there was still, I think, a lot more competition than I had been expecting. I wasn't sure what I wanted for my career at that point. But I got a job working as a credit analyst at a bank back close to my parents in northwestern Illinois. And it was a good experience. I, you know, I was kind of able to figure it out kind of quickly, and then also realized very quickly that it just wasn't the right fit for me.

Kara Snyder 5:40

So then tell us how did you go from that position to your current position with farm progress by Informa markets tell us about that path.

Jacquie Holland 5:51

It was quite the roller coaster. You know, I had always wanted to get my master's degree. And I was really passionate about Ag Economics through a lot of my time in the ag department and working with a lot of the ag business instructors. So I knew for sure that for my graduate program, that was the area I wanted to be in. I went to Purdue University to get my master's degree in Ag Economics. And from there, I attempted to continue on with a Ph. D. program at Colorado State. However, I did not pass my qualifying exams at CSU in the Ag Econ department. But you know, I was still in Colorado, I thought at that time that I kind of wanted to stay there and kind of see what else there was to see in the area. And I needed to make rent, I got an entry level job at pilgrims pride, which is the poultry division of the big Meat Packing Company, JBS, and I did transportation analytics for a couple of years there. From there, you know, I knew I wanted to be back a little bit closer to working in the dairy community that I come up in. From there, I got a job as a production analyst at a cheese plant, here in Colorado. And then this opportunity came up to work as a grain market analyst, and to be able to work directly with farmers, which is what I've always wanted to do. So once this position came up, I jumped at it. And I've really been able to use so many of the skills I kind of learned at all of the jobs that maybe weren't the best fit before. I can utilize them quite a bit in this role. And it all works out. Well. Yeah,

Kara Snyder 7:49

Thank you for sharing that story. And I really appreciate you sharing the part about the exams being a roadblock for you. Tell us about the mental shift you had to do when you thought you had this clear cut path laid out. And you had to kind of pivot was that challenging for you to kind of bounce back from that? Oh, yeah,

Jacquie Holland 8:09

You know, at the time, it was devastating. I always thought I was going to be a Midwest girl. And, you know, the plan was to go to CSU and then come back in work at a university in the Midwest. So yeah, initially, that was very devastating. But I'm so glad that it happened because I've been able to learn so much more about different aspects of the industry that I don't think I would have otherwise learned on that career path. So yeah, it was traumatizing at the time. But I you know, looking back now, I'm so glad it worked out the way it did.

Kara Snyder 8:47

Totally one of those learning experiences that make us who we are, even though it can be a struggle at the time, looking back. Perfect sense.

Jacquie Holland 8:56

Yep. Yeah. But again, I had to make rent. You know, there's like, okay, just get a job and get rent paid. And we'll go from there.

Kara Snyder 9:06

Right, right. And so now you've found this job that you really like and you talked a little bit about how you get to work directly with farmers. Is that your favorite part of your current role?

Jacquie Holland 9:17

Yes, yes, it is. I love following the financial markets and in the commodity markets, being able to utilize that ag business background that I really that ag business foundation that I started building at Illinois State to benefit the the people that I care the most about. So it's just been such a wonderful gift to be able to do that as my job now.

Kara Snyder 9:45

What is the most challenging part of your job?

Jacquie Holland 9:49

I think it's just that there's always so much information and I'm constantly trying to parse apart what is the most important thing to be telling farmers. I have to publish daily reports about the market though. So, you know, even though some days it feels like I'm trying to drink out of a firehose, and that I can't tell farmers enough information, there's always the next day to share with them what I may have missed the day before. So just that constant inflow can be very overwhelming at times.

Kara Snyder 10:27

Sure, that makes perfect sense. How would you describe your leadership style at this point in your career?

Jacquie Holland 10:34

When I was at Illinois State, I think I had grand ambitions of being a CEO at some point, like being a CEO by 30, or something like that. And now, I've just become very much more of a lead by example, kind of leader. I've worked with some really amazing people who have taken the time to stop and help me to be successful. And I'm really proud of the fact that as I've advanced in my career, I've been able to take on more teaching like opportunities to help other people advance in their careers. And I've just found that it's so much more rewarding to me to see other people succeed than it really is for my personal success. So very much lead by example and help out others who are in the trenches with me.

Kara Snyder 11:30

Yeah, paying it forward. I love to hear that. Tell us in your free time, what activities do you find rewarding.

Jacquie Holland 11:38

I really love being outdoors. So with this latest Cold Snap, I was actually already in northwestern Illinois, for a work conference, and I stayed a little bit longer to help out on my family's farm. So So I still like to do a little bit of farming when I can. But out here at my current home here in Colorado. I love love, love to be outdoors. I love running. I love swimming, biking, yoga, hiking.

My husband and I love paddleboarding. And I you know, I also really love to read. So yeah, I love being active. I love being active both physically and mentally.

Kara Snyder 12:24

Good for you, that's awesome. Well, Jackie, we're gonna finish here with the speed round. So just go with your first instinct on these questions. What is your go to breakfast?

Jacquie Holland 12:34

Doughnuts?

Kara Snyder 12:36

I love it.

Jacquie Holland 12:37

Yeah, like I try to eat healthy. And for the most part, like I eat a lot of oatmeal, but doughnuts are my favorite.

Kara Snyder 12:44

That might be my favorite answer to this question. Where did you go on your last vacation?

Jacquie Holland 12:50

Spain and Portugal.

Kara Snyder 12:52

Nice. Are you a cat person or a dog person?

Jacquie Holland 12:57

A dog person. My husband and I got our first dog together last year. And I love that little dog.

Kara Snyder 13:06

And you mentioned you love to read? Can you tell us what you're reading right now? Anything we should add to our list? Yes,

Jacquie Holland 13:12

I read. I often read a couple books at the same time. I'm currently reading remarkably bright creatures, and also oceans of grain.

Kara Snyder 13:24

Oh, very good. I read remarkably bright creatures. It was excellent. I really enjoyed it.

Jacquie Holland 13:28

I'm really liking it right now.

Kara Snyder 13:30

Do you consider yourself to be an introvert or an extrovert?

Jacquie Holland 13:33

I am an extrovert, but I need a lot of recharge time. So I'm an extrovert, but I really need my introverted moments.

Kara Snyder 13:43

I appreciate that. I think knowing yourself well is half the battle there just so you can be an advocate for yourself and get that recharge time when you need it. Yes,

Jacquie Holland 13:53

Exactly. I love being social. But I also I think I told you earlier I also really enjoyed spending a lot of studying time in Milner library.

Kara Snyder 14:04

And I ask everybody that comes on the podcast Avantis gondola or Pub II cheese balls

Jacquie Holland 14:09

Pub II Cheese Balls all the way.

Kara Snyder 14:13

And one last question for you. If you could give one piece of advice to a college student, what would you say?

Jacquie Holland 14:18

Try everything. Try everything. I think I was so afraid of failure back in the day, but failure is the best teacher and it is given me so many great gifts though. Try everything and also be nice while you're doing it.

Kara Snyder 14:39

Great advice. Thanks again for being here. That was Jackie Hollen, the grain market analyst for Farm Futures farm progress by Informa markets. Join us next time on the podcast for more stories from our CAST alumni.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>