



The Search for the Next Generation of Ag Pilots is On!

Aerial application is an exciting field that combines precision agriculture with low-level aviation to aid farmers in producing a safe, affordable and abundant supply of food, fiber and biofuel. To those who are a part of this unique profession, it's not just a job but a way of life. Becoming an ag pilot isn't easy, but it is worth it. As agriculture's air force ages, the window of opportunity is open for a new generation of ag pilots to step forward and provide the aerial application services America's farmers depend on.

- ★ **2,700** Number of ag pilots in the United States
- ★ **50+** Average age of ag pilots in the U.S.
- ★ **71 million** Acres aerial applicators treat by air each year in the U.S.
- ★ **8.1 billion** Projected world population in 2025, up from 7.2 billion in 2013

Think you've got the right stuff? Here's what it takes to enter and make it as an ag pilot.



Requirements

- **Commercial Pilot Certificate**
- **Class II Medical Certificate (annual examination)**
- **Trained and tested in agricultural aircraft operations**
Ag pilots must **pass a knowledge & skills test** administered by the FAA or the pilot's chief operations supervisor.
- **State-administered EPA commercial pesticide applicator certification**
Ag pilots must **obtain a pesticide license** in each state they fly in demonstrating their knowledge in the handling and application of crop protection products.
- **Meet the requirements for insurability in the aircraft and type of flight operations**



Training Options

- **Preparatory Education**
Basic flight training program at a flight school, or flight training curriculum at a two- or four-year college
- **Agricultural coursework** at a university, college, community college or other institution. (A college degree is not mandatory, but many incoming ag pilots have a degree in agro-science or business. Others have a more aviation-focused education.)
- **Attend a flight school specializing in agricultural aviation training**
- **On-the-Job Training/Apprenticeship**
Being trained under an experienced aerial application operator is an excellent way to get the on-the-job training needed to become a safe, efficient ag pilot. This could include **learning from the ground up** as a mixer/loader for a period of time.



Skills/Mindset

- **Flying is a big part of the job, but just one of many facets of being an ag pilot.**
Ag pilots are often referred to as **"farmers in the sky"** because of the amount of agricultural knowledge required to ensure the job is completed correctly and safely without incurring economical or environmental damage to persons or property.
While being an aircraft mechanic is not a requirement, **mechanical knowledge** is helpful.
Good communication skills to deal with customers and the community are important.
Finally, an aspiring ag pilot must have a **deep desire** to pursue this career path. That fortitude will serve you well.



Working Conditions

- **If you are a "rookie," expect one to two years of learning the ground operation with a gradual transition to flight operations.**
- **During the flying season, expect LONG days.**
In the summer ag pilots are **airborne by sunrise**. They work until the work runs out, the temperature is too hot to effectively apply product or the sun goes down. In certain areas applications are conducted during nighttime hours as well.
During the busy season some operators/pilots work **seven days a week** while the work is available.
- **During the offseason...**
Ag pilots **complete any required recurring training** and earn continuing education credits at state and national agricultural aviation conventions.
The seasonal nature of ag flying in many areas may afford ag pilots with the opportunity for time off or to supplement their income through other forms of work.



Income Potential

- **Most ag pilots are paid based on the amount of acres they treat.**
- **Initially, the pay will be lower while you work on the ground learning the ropes.**
- **Once you start to fly and perform aerial applications the pay improves.**
- **Once in the air many first-year ag pilots can average \$20,000–\$40,000 depending on the quantity and type of aerial application work performed.**
- **Skilled aerial applicators can make \$60,000–\$100,000 a year, the Wall Street Journal reports.**

Need for Aerial Application

- Aerial application is often the safest, fastest, most efficient and most economical way to treat a crop when pests or disease threaten it.
- By 2050 there will be 9.6 billion people on the planet. That's 2.4 billion more mouths to feed compared to today. That's why...
- There will always be a need for professional, well-trained ag pilots!

For more information on careers in the ag aviation industry or to join NAAA for access to a network of aerial applicators nationwide, visit www.agaviation.org

