

The SIGnboard: SIG Snapshot

IF YOU DON'T THINK "agriculture" when you think "Harvard," the members of **Harvard Alumni for Agriculture** (www.harvardagriculture.org) will happily broaden your horizons. Launched in 2011, this Shared Interest Group—one of the Harvard Alumni Association's almost 50 SIGs—seeks to raise awareness of "the most critical industry in the world" within the University community, increase coverage of agriculture in the curriculum, and de-



velop an active network among alumni who want to be "part of the conversation around the future of agriculture, sustainable food, and bioenergy production internationally."

Co-presidents Nicole Buckley '08 and Giulia Stellari '03 connected through Crimson Compass (the HAA's mentoring and networking database) over a shared interest in agriculture and startups. Although relatively few alumni self-identified with agriculture in the 2010 directory, the women had a hunch a larger group existed. They also realized that bringing together alumni with agricultural ties could overlap with College efforts to recruit more students from rural areas, a goal of the SIG's vice president, Nick Batter '08, a Nebraskan. Today the group is "over 250 members strong," Stellari says, and offers a range of online meetings and webinars (the most recent included Bill McKibben '82, founder of 350.org, and Dan Glickman, former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and former director of the Institute of Politics, discussing agriculture and climate change).

Members live in rural areas and cities, Stellari reports. Some work in commodities trading, financing, and real-estate, others run small-scale farms and ranches, sometimes using their land as test sites for innovative technologies. Some are active in startups: developing robotic vision for weeding fields, sustainable beverages, and new markets for rice and tef in Africa. Agriculture can be a controversial topic, notes the group's website, but by "creating venues for Harvard affiliates to come together on this topic, we can help facilitate strong industry leadership, standards, and dialogue."

For a complete list of SIGs, visit <http://alumni.harvard.edu/haa/clubs-sigs/sigs-directory>.