

2025 WINTER CONFERENCE SPEAKER PROFILE RAY ARCHULETA

7 Reasons You Don't Want to Miss Ray "The Soil Guy" Archuleta

Why can't you make a living farming 500 acres? Why are so many of America's vital rivers still polluted? Why aren't we fixing these issues, even though there's more focus than ever on conservation? If you've ever wondered the same things, you're asking the right questions and not alone.

Ray Archuleta ("The Soil Guy") has questioned everything he's learned in his formal education in agriculture. His curiosity motivated him to seek different perspectives—and the journey has been nothing short of revolutionary.

"For years I defended the old system and pledged allegiance to the industrial ag model," says Archuleta, a former Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employee who has embraced regenerative ag for over 20 years. "But that system is destructive to our society. That's why I became a zealot for regenerative agriculture."

We're thrilled that Archuleta will be part of ProfitProAG's 2025 Winter Conference in Albert Lea, Minnesota. Please join us on Feb. 19-20, when Archuleta will share his regenerative ag journey, which starts with a renewal of heart and mind.

He incorporates a deeply personal perspective as he shares proven, practical ways to care for the earth's most fundamental resources, including soil. His insights have been featured in documentaries including Common Ground, Kiss the Ground, and Dominion. During the 2025 ProfitProAG conference, you will:

- 1. Hear directly from the farmer himself.** Archuleta is a native of Espanola, New Mexico. He discovered his passion for agriculture when he was a young teenager working on his uncle's ranch in north Santa Fe. "I connected with the beauty of the rural landscape, and I loved working outside and working with animals," Archuleta said. Today, he owns a 155-acre ranch in Seymour, Missouri, where he faithfully employs principles of regenerative farming, including livestock production.
- 2. Get the dirt on microbes from a real soil scientist.** Did you know that 60% of soil organic matter is comprised of the bodies of microbes? "Microbes and the soil are one," said Archuleta, a certified, professional soil scientist. He earned his associate's degree in livestock science from Northern New Mexico College, his bachelor's degree in agricultural biology (a combination



"Tiny differences in management can lead to overwhelming differences in output and profitability."

- Dr. Jim Ladlie

of agronomy and entomology), plus 30 hours of graduate work at New Mexico State University in soil science.

3. Learn who influenced Archuleta's thinking—and what this means for you. Early in his career, Archuleta worked in Guatemala and Costa Rica as a livestock specialist with the Peace Corps. His horizons expanded again around 1995 when he met Pennsylvania farmer Steve Groff, who is widely known for his dedication to soil health and passion for human health. (Groff is also the author of the book *The Future-Proof Farm: Changing Mindsets in A Changing World*.)

These concepts began to take root during Archuleta's 30-year career with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). His work with soil health took him across the country, from North Carolina to Oregon. "When I was an NRCS district conservationist in Oregon in the early 2000s, I lived in Idaho," Archuleta said. "I wondered why the beautiful Snake River was filling up with sediment and algae. I also questioned why water quality remained such a challenge for years."

These ideas stuck with him as he met farmers like North Dakota farmer Gabe Brown, author of *Dirt to Soil: One Family's Journey into Regenerative Agriculture*. "Gabe was building soil and growing his own fertilizer, thanks to the beneficial microbes in the soil."

Archuleta also listened closely to the late Ray Styer from North Carolina, whose success with no-till, cover cropping, and soil health inspired numerous farmers and consultants for four decades. "Ray's soils were amazing, and he added no fertility," Archuleta said. "That's when I started putting the pieces together."

Archuleta realized that much of what he'd been taught about farming was wrong. "Not one of my teachers in my formal education had encouraged me to learn from nature, nurture it, and not force things with ag chemistry," said Archuleta, who also credits Allan Savory's book *Holistic Management Handbook: Regenerating Your Land and Growing Your Profits*, with informing his perspective.

4. Discover why failure doesn't have to be deadly. What finally motivated Archuleta to go all-in with regenerative ag? Failure. "What I had been taught to do wasn't working. Failure isn't a bad word, though. It showed me I needed to look at soil health in its broader context, from culture to economics. I also learned that having little or no respect for creation is a moral and spiritual problem." These failures

are not unique to American farmers, Archuleta added. "I've seen this play out in countries around the world during my travels."

5. Focus on simplicity. Successful farming means shifting away from a paradigm of control and force and choosing to work with nature's design, Archuleta emphasized. "I emulate and nurture the Creator's intelligent design," said Archuleta, whose Christian faith also guides him. He's a strong proponent of cover crops, biodiversity, and smaller farms. "Eighty percent of the world is fed by small farms," he noted.

If there's one thing Archuleta recommends for regenerative agriculture and better soil health, it's keeping a living root in the soil as long as possible throughout the year. "If a farming practice doesn't mimic nature, I don't use it," he added. "The natural system will heal itself if you don't spray it to death."

6. Gain confidence to stay the course. It's not easy to think differently from conventional ag views. "You've probably wondered, 'Why can't others see this?'" said Archuleta, who admitted that he almost got fired when he shifted away from the industrial ag mindset to regenerative ag. It's tempting to fall into groupthink. "People are like sheep," said Archuleta, noting that it's easy to conform to majority opinion, rather than charting your own course. That's why it's important to find regenerative ag mentors and keep learning. "This can be a lonely journey," Archuleta acknowledged. "You're never alone, though, when you have a strong moral compass, a strong network of like-minded farmers, and never forget your mission."

7. Renew your hope for a productive, profitable future. Archuleta is convinced that regenerative agriculture alone can sequester CO2 and fix the climate challenge. It's also a path forward to more productive, profitable farming. "Are you sick and tired of being sick and tired? Then you're ready for the seed of regeneration. This type of agriculture changes people's lives for the better."

Embracing a regenerative mindset isn't age-dependent, either. Archuleta thinks back to one of his presentations, where he met a 38-year-old farmer and a 71-year-old farmer. "The younger farmer didn't get it, but the 71-year-old did. He switched to regenerative ag practices, including no-till and cover crops. The best part? He told me he loved farming again."