

Following Your Agricultural Vocation: Finding Employment on Farms

Information compiled by PASA in collaboration with Grow Pittsburgh

What job is right for you?

As you begin your job search, you may find that there are many different structures to employment opportunities on farms. Think about your own time-frame, experience level, and interests, and seek out the type of position right for you.

Internships and **Apprenticeships** may be full or part season positions, and should include an educational component and the opportunity to learn and build skills. These opportunities may be paid or unpaid. Many farms hire **Seasonal Workers** to provide labor during the height of the farming season. These jobs are usually temporary, seasonal positions, and often paid hourly. If you have at least a season or two of experience of farm work, a **Farm Manager** position may be a good fit. These positions may be hourly or salaried, and may involve supervising others. Some positions are seasonal, and others may be year round. Often, Farm Managers are responsible for farm planning in addition to day-to-day farm operation.

- Job Description: Are expectations clear and achievable?
- Payment: Understand and negotiate wages/salary, hours and overtime work.
- Housing: Some positions may provide housing or help you to find affordable housing near the farm.
- Insurance: If you are lucky, your position might include benefits like health insurance. If not, you may need to purchase your own.
- Worker's Compensation: Ask what would happen if you would be injured at work.
- Continuing Education: what training or educational opportunities are offered? This could mean anything from on-farm seminars to the ability to take a day or two off for a workshop or conference. Also clarify if the costs of an educational event will be your responsibility or if they are wholly or partially covered by the farm.

Suggested Sites to Look for Farm Jobs

PA Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA)

Classified- Jobs section

<http://www.pasafarming.org/classifieds/sections/jobs-intershops>

[PASA Farming for the Future Conference](#)- Jobs Board

Orion Magazine

<http://jobs.oriongrassroots.org/>

NEFOOD

<http://www.nefood.org/page/jobs> (and listserv)

Beginning Farmers

<http://www.beginningfarmers.org/>

ATTRA: Intern/Apprenticeships

<https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/internships/>

Rodale Institute

<http://www.rodaleinstitute.org/opport>

Backdoor Jobs

<http://www.backdoorjobs.com/farming.html>

Latest Sustainable Ag Opportunities Email List

<http://us4.campaign-archive1.com/?u=76c0bb8f4637459fcb1d94bf3&id=6002047e0b>

How to Present Yourself

Resume

Your resume should list your recent job experience as well as any positions you have held that are particularly relevant to the work you are hoping to do. Include sections to summarize your qualifications, describe any volunteer work and internships, and list any particularly relevant workshops or conferences that you've attended. Also list your educational background and references who can speak to your farming and managerial skills as well as your character.

When listing your qualifications, consider mentioning particular benefits you could bring to the farm, such as:

- ability to drive a manual transmission vehicle
- experience driving a tractor (list what equipment you've used, like a baler, disc, etc.)
- machinery experience/skills
- carpentry experience/skills
- computer/social media skills
- cooking or canning experience/skills
- marketing experience/skills
- experience managing people
- organizational skills (from spreadsheets to event planning)
- experience with educational programming
- knowledge of pests/disease/beneficial insects
- experience with livestock or poultry
- greenhouse or seed-starting experience
- seed saving experience
- any other skills that may be of use on a farm



Cover Letter

When sending a resume, include a cover letter. This letter should paint a clear picture of the skills and qualifications you would bring to the position and how they line up with the job requirements.

When listing your experience, be clear about the amount of time you have spent or skill that you have.

For instance:

- Rather than, “I have experience on both rural and urban farms,” say, “I was a field intern for three months at This Rural Farm, a field intern for a full growing season at This Other Rural Farm, and managed the growing and marketing at This Urban Farm for two full years.”
- Rather than, “I did various types of field work,” say, “I learned how to hold and work with hand tools properly and feel confident in my seeding, transplanting, trellising, cultivating, and harvesting skills.”

Also, be sure to mention the specific title of the job you are hoping to secure, as some farms may be hiring for several different positions. Be sure to address why this particular job is exciting to you, and take the opportunity to thank the farmer for considering you for the position.



Stories of Experience

Advice from newly hired farm employees

Network! Websites and other job postings are great, but nothing beats a personal connection. Talk to as many farmers as you can about job opportunities. Even if they aren't hiring, you'll learn what they look for in an employee so you can better prepare when you find an opening. I found out about a job opening last year at the PASA conference, and I've been working there for 10 months.

Put together a resume. One particular skill you have may land you the job. Can you weld, fix engines, or create Excel spreadsheets? I know about fruit trees, and that made the difference for me.

- Tim Gebhart, Kretschmann Organic Farm

If you're looking for a farm job, make sure you're familiarizing yourself with the local and regional farm scene. Browse on the internet and see how farms are connected. Write emails. Ask questions. Farm organizations are willing and very happy to help you get connected with farmers in the area.

When contacting the farm you wish to work on, make sure to share a personal blip about why it is that you want to work on their farm. Why are you a good candidate? What do you bring to the table? Make sure to be honest and show your true self. Share what it is that makes you want a farm job. Explain your passion for farming. Share your work ethic. Ask questions.

Be overly willing to learn from each farmer you work for; practice their methods and think about if it makes sense how you see the farm business and ecosystem fit together. Again, ask questions when working because it is the best farming education you can get. Work hard, think critically, and learn as much as you can.

The more farm seasons you work, the more you will understand how farms are connected to each other and to the region and this will not only help you find future work, but it will grow your farming education and personal farm philosophy.

-Jamie Wilbraham, Grow Pittsburgh Senior Apprentice at Braddock, 2012. Groundswell Community Farm Manager, 2013.