

Farm Internships & Apprenticeships: The Basics

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I. Introduction

A brief orientation to farm apprenticeships.

Farm Apprenticeships are increasingly important

- Apprenticeships are rising in number
- Apprenticeships are being adopted by colleges and universities, nonprofits, individual farms
- On-farm apprenticeships are recommended by agricultural practitioners (Trexler, Parr & Khana, 2006).
- Most farmers prefer hands-on learning (Kilpatrick, Johns, Murray-Prior & Hart, 1999).
- On-farm apprenticeships teach skills that farmers consider most important (Kilpatrick, et al, 1999).
- Apprenticeships are increasingly common on smaller, more diversified, more direct-marketing farms

What is an apprentice?

- No legally binding difference between the terms internship and apprenticeship
 - One survey found that most commonly used term is “intern”
 - Some farms use both terms, apprentices and interns, for different roles
- One analysis found that apprentices:
 - May be referred to as an apprentice, intern, on-farm student, etc.
 - Is over 18 years of age
 - Works on the farm for a specified length of time
 - Can be paid or unpaid
 - Agreement that farmer would teach them how to farm

Types of Farm Apprenticeships

- Commercial farm-based types:
 - Single Farm Model
 - Farm hosts learners for a tenured period of time, one season
 - Multiple Farm Model
 - Like single farm model but apprentices work on multiple farms
 - Agrotourism-style
 - Farms are set up for short term workers (ex: WWOOFers)
- Not necessarily commercial-farm based:
 - Student Farms in Higher Ed
 - University-enrolled students at colleges and universities
 - Nonprofit-based models
 - More common in urban settings, part-time
 - Farm Trade School model
 - Apprentices pay tuition for instruction, farm not necessarily a commercial farm

Why host apprentices?

- Oregon State Extension (2015) says:
 - Inexpensive Labor
 - Train Farm Workers
 - Help build the movement
 - Farming in remote areas
- Many other reasons!

II. Common Practices

What do other farmers typically do?

Established Farm Policies

- Established Application Process
 - Written Application
 - Farm visit, Working Visit if possible
 - Written Agreement
- Established Orientation Process
 - Probationary Period
 - Clarify Rules and Expectations
- Incentives
 - Stipend or other compensation (in-kind)
 - Increasing stipend or bonus to stay full season

Housing

- Most apprentices live on the farm
 - One survey found 4 out of 5 farms provide housing
- Within same house as farmer
- Separate housing
 - Standalone housing
 - Shared kitchen and/or bathroom
- Establish clear boundaries and house rules
- Clean, comfortable housing

Food

- Meals provided or rotational
- Eat with farmer for some or all of the time
- Cook separately or together
- Food grown on farm is provided

Structures of Education

- Apprentices are included in farm planning
- Regular meetings to go over work plan
- Work side-by-side, especially at beginning of a new task
- Ensure wide variety of tasks
- Involve apprentices in marketing
- Provide encouraging/positive feedback
- Regular check-ins to get feedback

Educational Practices

- Work alongside the apprentice
- Hands-on demonstrations
- On-farm special workshops
- Tours of the farm
- Tours of other farms
- Apprentices run errands with farmer
- Indoor classroom-style classes
- Encourage apprentices to attend other farming events, classes, workshops in community
- Explain the “why” not just the “how”
- Give apprentices the “big picture”

III. Legal Aspects

What sorts of things should I be considering to comply with the law?

IMPORTANT NOTE: This information is not legal advice. Please consult an attorney, or your state Department of Labor, to ensure full compliance with the law.

Interns must meet the following criteria to be exempt:

1. The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to training which would be given in an educational environment;
2. The internship experience is for the benefit of the intern;
3. The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under close supervision of existing staff;
4. The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern; and on occasion its operations may actually be impeded;
5. The intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship; and
6. The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.

Legal Considerations

- Worker on farm is generating enough income to pay for herself/himself
- Considered employee of the farm as soon as working
- Agritourism distinction, volunteer labor, CSAs
- Immediate Family are exempt (spouse, children, parents)
- Minimum Wage
 - Farm apprentices and interns are usually performing tasks that make them legally entitled to minimum wage
 - Total pay must be at least minimum wage
 - If food and lodging are provided by farm, can be deducted from wages in accordance with Virginia agricultural law
 - Can require fees for education received
 - There is a certain probability of audits (keep good records)

IV. Resources

What other resources are available to help me with my apprenticeship?

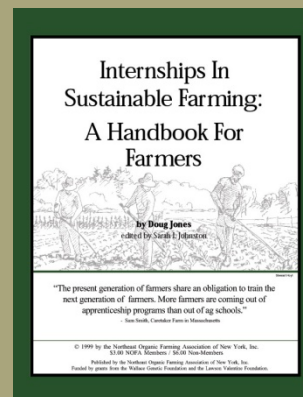
Supplemental learning activities in Virginia

- Chesapeake Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (C.R.A.F.T.)
 - Monthly evening farm tours and potlucks
 - Annual gathering
 - <https://chesapeakecraft.wordpress.com/>
- Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition
 - Whole Farm Planning Workshop Series, in-person and online
 - Farmer Mentor Network, Twilight Tours (contact Kelli Scott for more information, at kescott1@vt.edu)
 - www.vabeginningfarmer.org

“How-to” Guidebooks

- *Internships in Sustainable Farming*, Doug Jones, 1999, Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York
- *Sustaining Family Farming Through Mentoring*, Megan Mills-Nova, 2011, National Family Farm Coalition
- *Western SARE Farm Internship Handbook*, Maud Powell, 2007, ATTRA

Apprenticeship Guides for Farmers, developed by:



Further Resources

- ATTRA's National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), Curriculum and Listings
 - <https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/internships/index.php>
- OSU Extension's Farm Internship Curriculum
 - <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/sorec/class-proceedings#FarmInternship>
- Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems Curriculum
 - <http://casfs.ucsc.edu/education/index.html>
- Oregon State Extension Service Webinar, Quality Farm Interns
 - http://extension.oregonstate.edu/sorec/sites/default/files/intern_powerpoint_0.pdf
- Virginia Department of Labor for legal questions
 - <http://www.doli.virginia.gov/>

References

- Ahearn, M. C. (2013). Beginning Farmers and Ranchers at a Glance. *USDA-ERS Economic Bulletin*, 22.
- Oregon State Extension Service. (2015). Quality Farm Interns. Accessed 9/5/15. Available at:
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V. Questions?

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