

Farm Worker Benchmarks 2016-2017

7. How many farms did you apply to work at this season?



What stood about this job from the rest of your employment options?

Response

A thoughtful, honest owner, and a living wage.

Better payment than any other offers, offered a job to both me and my partner, offered an opportunity for increased responsibility.

Experience of the owners and commitment to a high quality product.

It was obvious that the farmers/owners cared about the quality of life of their employees and willing and able to provide that experience. It was clear that they had similar interests and goals with building a sense of community around their farm.

The farmer seemed very knowledgeable and willing to teach me farming organically. He was willing to stop and take time to talk about things I'm interested in.

The farmer was really proud of his business model and was proud that he never took any loans for the farm. He really wanted to teach his interns how to make a living off farming.

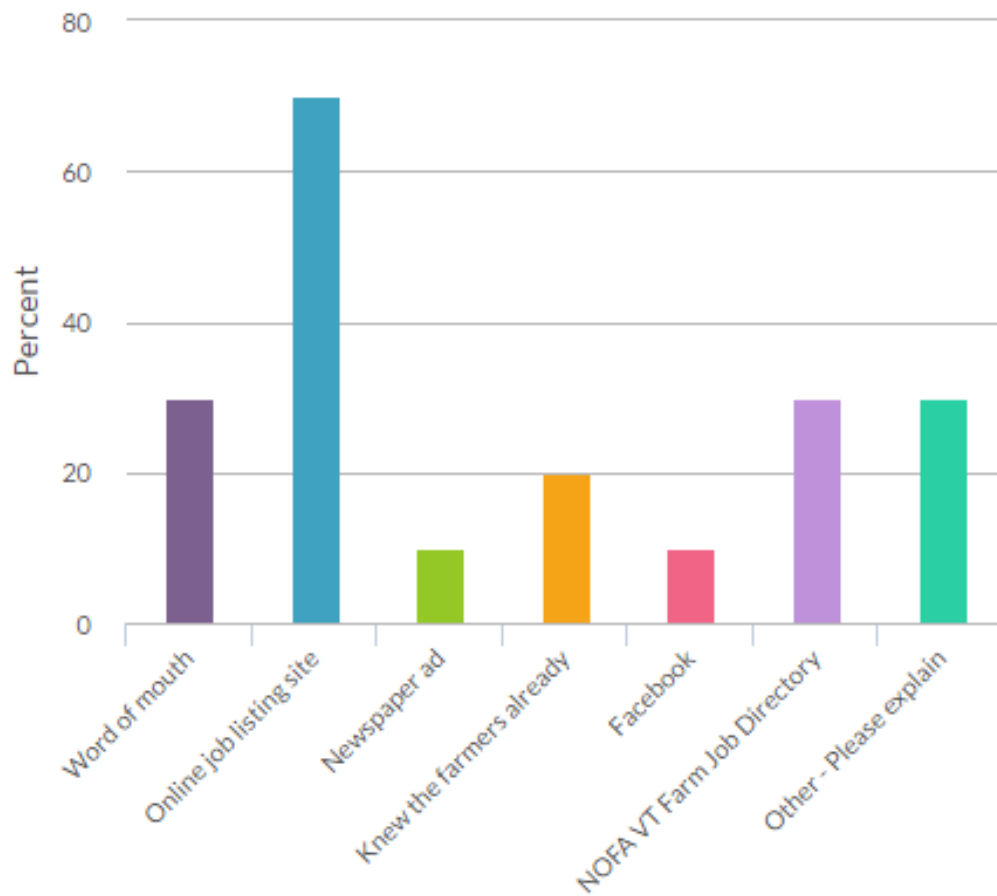
The offer of an "assistant manager" position, rather than the typical apprenticeship or hourly work job.

The pay was significantly higher than many other jobs in the area and other farms I was looking at.

There's a lot of diversity on earth sky time in work, projects, income, people, art, and health

good hourly pay with overtime, included working farmer's markets, employment through december, 8 hour work days that end at 3:30pm

8. How did you hear about the farm jobs for which you applied? Check all that apply.



What were you looking for in a farm?

1 A diversified organic farm owned by farmers with substantial experience and a sustainable economic model and a farm that had management opportunities where I could have more responsibility and say in the season's direction.

1 A place to continue my education of Farming and to further develop the skills I would need to begin my own sustainable farm practice

1 A sense of community and connection with the farmer. I was looking for a place that would have the ability to learn and grow as a farmer with a sense of responsibility and ownership.

1 Experienced owners, organic, diversified in products and markets, smaller scale, opportunities for greater responsibility

1 Housing was the first thing I look for. What type of housing, if it's free, running water, WiFi. Next I look for paid jobs. As much as I love farming I do need some gas and beer money after working 50+ hours a week. After that I look for a personable boss and one that's willing to teach, to take the time to show me how to do things and why we do them that way. Place and type of farm (animal or veg) don't really matter to me.

1 Organic practices and humane working conditions.

1 Organic produce. Preferred farms where I wouldn't work with animals. Wanted to work for a first generation farmer. Reasonable stipend.

1 Someplace that wanted experienced farmers, provided room and board, and had a diverse range of crops and markets. And someplace that would pay more than the typical apprenticeship. Ideally somewhere in VT that was closer to our families than northern Vermont.

1 Time for self discovery. Time to persue my many interests in the outdoors, produce farming, art, herbalism, yoga, and good health and meeting progressive young farm interns.

1 diversity and uniqueness in produce/products grown and sold, holistic soil and land stewardship, opportunity to learn new systems and successful farm business and marketing strategies, a place with potential for longer term employment and farm business involvement, values creative input and artistic design

What was your single most important consideration when looking for a job this year?

A good fit with the owners and position.

A place that paid well and provided housing and food for both me and my partner. Also A place with a focus on education and helping the apprentice to become more comfortable in their skillset

Finding a management position that paid a living wage.

Finding somewhere that provided a (relatively) higher payroll but still provided housing, and that would hire myself and my partner to farm as a couple.

Housing with pay.

I needed to find a farm that was equally interested in investing in me as I invest in their operation.











Money. I had student loan payments coming in on top of other bills. Couldn't afford to work at most of the places listed.

Organic practices, produce, community, youth, farmers markets.

Treatment of workers.

to work somewhere where i felt there could be potential for longer term employment and creative involvement

Why did you choose to take this job?

Value		Percent	Responses
Know the farm		10.0%	1
Location		30.0%	3
Like the farmers		60.0%	6
Interested in this type of farming		70.0%	7
Farm reputation		30.0%	3
Rate of pay		60.0%	6
Included housing		70.0%	7
Fit my break schedule		10.0%	1
Perks (staff meals, educational opportunities, flexible hours, coffee break, etc.)		10.0%	1
Other - Please explain (click to view)		20.0%	2

What difficulties did you encounter when looking for a farm job?

Response

Deciding on whether to stay in Vermont or move to another state

I did not struggle so much in the application process but i struggled in the first farm i went to and leaving that farm because it was not a healthy enviroment to be in.

It was difficult to have foresight in planning our transition from the previous farm where we worked to this one; while some winter down time is nice, there is an inherent level of anxiety present in not being able to count on a position that fit our criteria as the last season ended.

It's always hard to go off of just phone interviews or even in person interviews in the late winter when trying to find a job, let alone one that fits all your needs!

N/a

Not enough options within a reasonable commuting distance.

One farm offered me the position but came back telling me they could only pay me half of what the ad said, I turned down the position. Another farm offered me a position and came back saying their housing would not be available (contrary to their ad) and I would have to find my own housing. I asked them if they could help me find affordable housing and they told me "there isn't affordable housing". So I very quickly turned them down.

The farmer's partner was our farm manager and she was just a generally harsh person. She was overly rude and disrespectful.

There are sooo many farms out there and the best way to know which one(s) is the right fit, is to visit them in person. And sometimes, that's not feasible...

it's very difficult finding farm jobs that are beyond an apprentice or simple farm hand level for those who want more investment or responsibility

21. What benefits do you receive as an employee of this farm? Please indicate whether the benefit is very important, somewhat important, neutral, not important to your job satisfaction. Choose not applicable if you do not receive the listed benefit.

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Neutral	Not Important
Housing Count	4	1	2	0
Meals Count	2	0	2	1
CSA shares Count	2	0	1	0
Commissions Count	1	0	1	0
Flexible hours Count	2	2	1	0
Vacation time Count	3	3	1	0
Networking opportunities Count	4	2	0	1
Educational opportunities Count	5	2	0	0
Swim breaks Count	1	2	2	1
CRAFT farm tours Count	2	5	1	0
Health insurance Count	0	0	2	0
Living Wage Count	1	0	0	0
Stipend Count	1	0	0	0
vegetables Count	1	0	0	0

What are the best things about this job?

Response

All of the opportunities to do different things every day.

Flexibility, spontaneity, diversity in work and play so much more

Learning what systems I personally require to work efficiently

Location

That I get to go to work feeling excited and happy to be here every day.

The pay.

The wage and a thoughtful owner.

Unlimited vegetables + as much as the farmer was strict about efficiency, he would slow down for teaching opportunities and really take the time to explain things

the people and being part of such a high quality grown produce

What are the worst things about this job?

Response

Abusive management practices.

Lack of communication with employers

Lack of organization, inconsistency of communication and expectations and being consistently disrespected.

Little time to self, jack of all trades so some components fall back while others thrive

Rude farm manager

The crossover between personal and professional life.

The lack of communication

The miserably hot days when work must go on.

in general farm jobs are low paying and it's hard to find affordable housing in the upper valley

What suggestions do have for how farmers can improve the hiring and working environment?

Response

Be clear very clear about the work load, social and political views if thats going to come up on the farm and work ethic before hiring or bringing some one on especially if they are coming from a distance.

Clearly communicate expectations from the beginning- even in regards to seemingly minute details- particularly when entering in a communal living environment. Be transparent about your systems and approaches. Create comfortable space for communication. Offer a mutual trial period.

Consistent and intentional meetings with check-ins, lists, and clearly stated expectations that give both employers and employees the freedom and flexibility to ask questions and make sure everyone is heard and on the same page.

For hiring, I would suggest knowing all of the possible resources/job boards for posting openings (i.e. NOFA, Good Food Jobs etc) As for the working environment, I feel that it is important to let the employees know you care about their well-being. Including snack/stretch/water breaks and sometimes swim breaks are good ways to emphasize this.

I think that a comprehensive application, interview, and reference check system is really helpful in elevating the farm workforce to the level that I believe is achievable and necessary to make this kind of farming part of mainstream society. I also think that allocating resources to help farmers to be in the position to pay their farm workers well enough that they can live comfortably off of the farm and so that they can have work hours that allow them to have lives outside of farming is valuable. Although I believe that farming is different than most other jobs because of the dedication and passion that it requires, I feel that we must continue moving towards a system that mimics the conventional work place expectations that are integral to our society in order for this type of farming to become a lasting part of our society.

Just provide a lot of information on what living is like/looks like, what farm looks like and who all works there. Some places are too far to just casually visit so making as much of visit without having to physically be there.

To clearly lay out what the responsibilities of the staff will be, and what they should expect in a season as far as how many hours are expected to work.

Treat employees like human beings. We're already working for much less than other industries; don't be abusive on top of that.

having a public bathroom available for use, scheduled check-ins mid season for feedback, involving farm staff in work of particular or special interest to the employee, clear schedule for starting and ending dates and vacation time, helping farm workers find affordable housing near farm