



Bulletin #1063, The Benefits and Drawbacks of Farm Work Experience in Maine

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Agricultural work can be a good fit for many individuals. It requires flexibility, adaptability, resourcefulness, and problem-solving. Working in the agricultural environment allows you to work alone or as part of a team, the end work product can be very rewarding. This set of lists was generated to encourage any individual to consider applying for and accepting farm work.

Benefits

- The setting for farm work is typically outside where fresh air and sunshine is abundant.
- Most farm tasks require physical activity. Farm work is typically a good way to stay in shape and use your body and your mind.
- Tasks in farm work are typically suitable for many age groups, from 14 years old to beyond retirement age, and suitable for males and females.

- Farm work is a great way to gain knowledge and learn a variety of new skills. You may be exposed to an array of work experiences with animals, crops, soils, equipment, construction, tool use, mechanics, farm safety, food safety, business management, labor management, record keeping, customer service, etc.
- Many farm jobs require interacting with people (co-workers, customers, sales representatives, service people, veterinarians, etc.). You will likely meet and get to know several people through your farm work.
- If the situation warrants and you are of the proper age and/or maturity, you may have the opportunity to operate farm equipment such a tractor, skid-steer loader, utility vehicle, etc. and accompanying implements.
- Farm work can be part-time, full-time, year-round, or seasonal. With such flexibility, the farm work schedule is apt to fit your personal schedule. Most farmers recognize the flexibility of many farm tasks. Farm work, even for the short term, is a great experience.
- Farm work can be rewarding. You will often see results or the “fruits of your labor” by the end of the workday, week, month or season.
- You can learn while you earn with a farm job.
- The pay range for farm work in Maine ranges from minimum wage to over \$15.00/hour.
- Besides payment in dollars, “extra pay” for some farmworkers might be provided in fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy products, livestock, land-use, storage, and more.
- With a farm job, you’ll have the opportunity to earn extra income while attending school, being employed at another job, or have other personal or family responsibilities (such as parenting or caregiving). Some farm jobs include room and board (living space and meals).
- With practice and experience, you will learn to be a “problem solver” using available resources and your ingenuity.
- Over time you will learn to be an efficient worker. Time is a resource that you will learn to treasure; saving energy and figuring how to accomplish tasks with efficiency will be key to successful farm work.
- Farm work looks good on one’s resume, it’s likely to stand out on your resume to the reviewer and interviewer. If you’ve worked on a farm, the reader recognizes that you know how to work.
- If livestock is a part of the farm enterprise, workers will likely have the opportunity to witness and/or assist with births.
- You get tuned-in to nature, such as the changing of the weather, the environment, and the ecosystem.

Drawbacks

- Some farm tasks require outside work that can be uncomfortable (too hot, too cold, too wet, too dusty, etc.).

- Sunburns may result from working outside in direct sunshine. Protection from the sun's ultraviolet rays is recommended for your personal health now and as you age.
- Some farm tasks require getting dirty.
- Some farm tasks involve animal excrement, compost, odorous materials, or dead animals.
- Many farm tasks require physical strength.
- Some farm tasks require waking up early in the morning or staying up late into the night.
- Farm work can be dangerous. A positive safety attitude is a must.
- Having and using proper work clothing, outerwear, and footwear is necessary for most farm tasks.
- Some farm work may be hazardous to your health and wellbeing. Such tasks likely require personal protective equipment (PPE) such as eye protection, hearing protection, head protection, hand protection, a respirator or dust mask, foot protection, and skin protection.
- Not all farm tasks fit a flexible schedule. Many tasks require a fixed daily schedule such as milking, feeding, cleaning, sanitizing, farmers' markets, sales, etc.
- Some farm tasks require ingenuity, quick thinking and quick response time. One must have a clear mind and be in good physical condition.
- If livestock is a part of the farm enterprise, workers will likely witness livestock deaths.

Bottom Line

You can see by comparing the two lists that the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks. Farm work will equip you with skills and knowledge that will last a lifetime and will likely benefit you in your personal life and your work life. If you would like to work on a farm, nursery, or greenhouse, your local county extension office or a state extension specialist could likely connect you to farms in your area.

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