

# Unpacking the Farm Labor Puzzle

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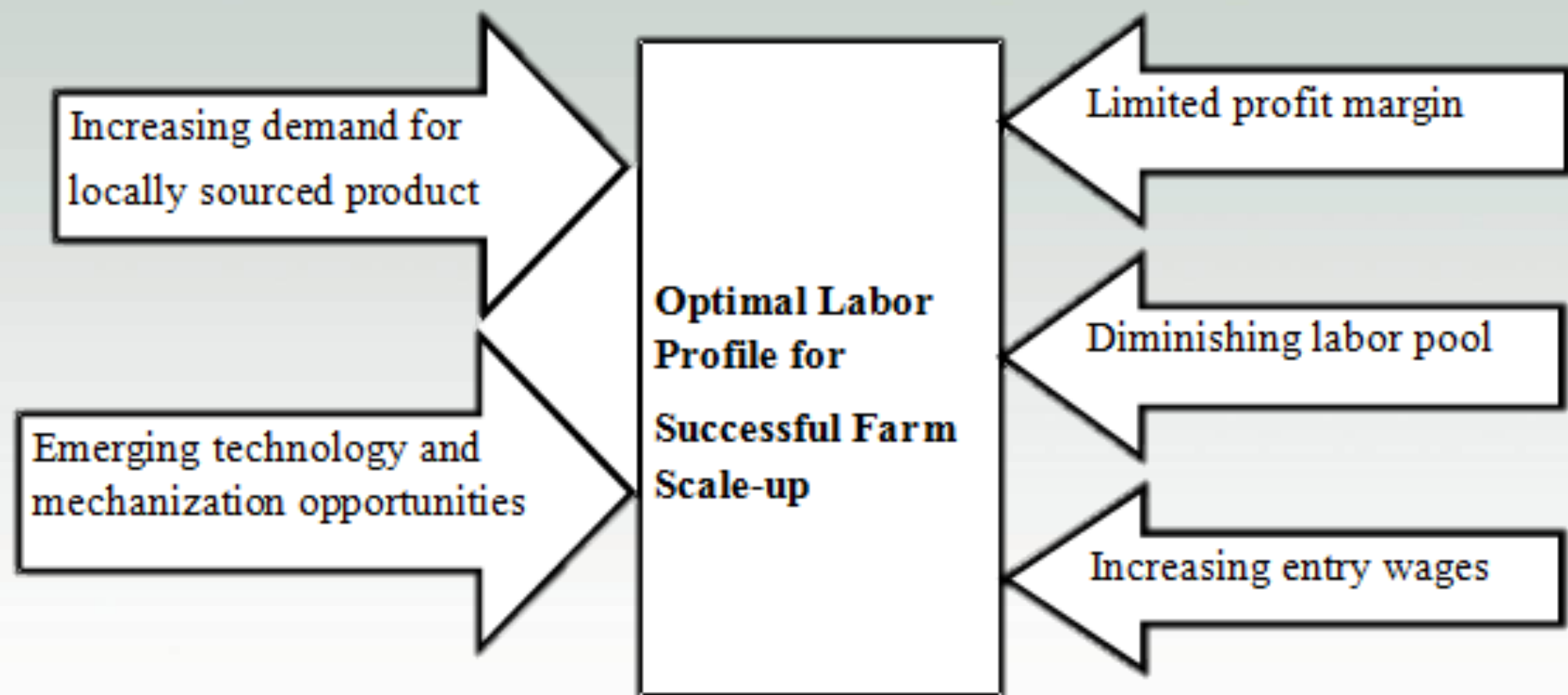
# What we know about farm labor...

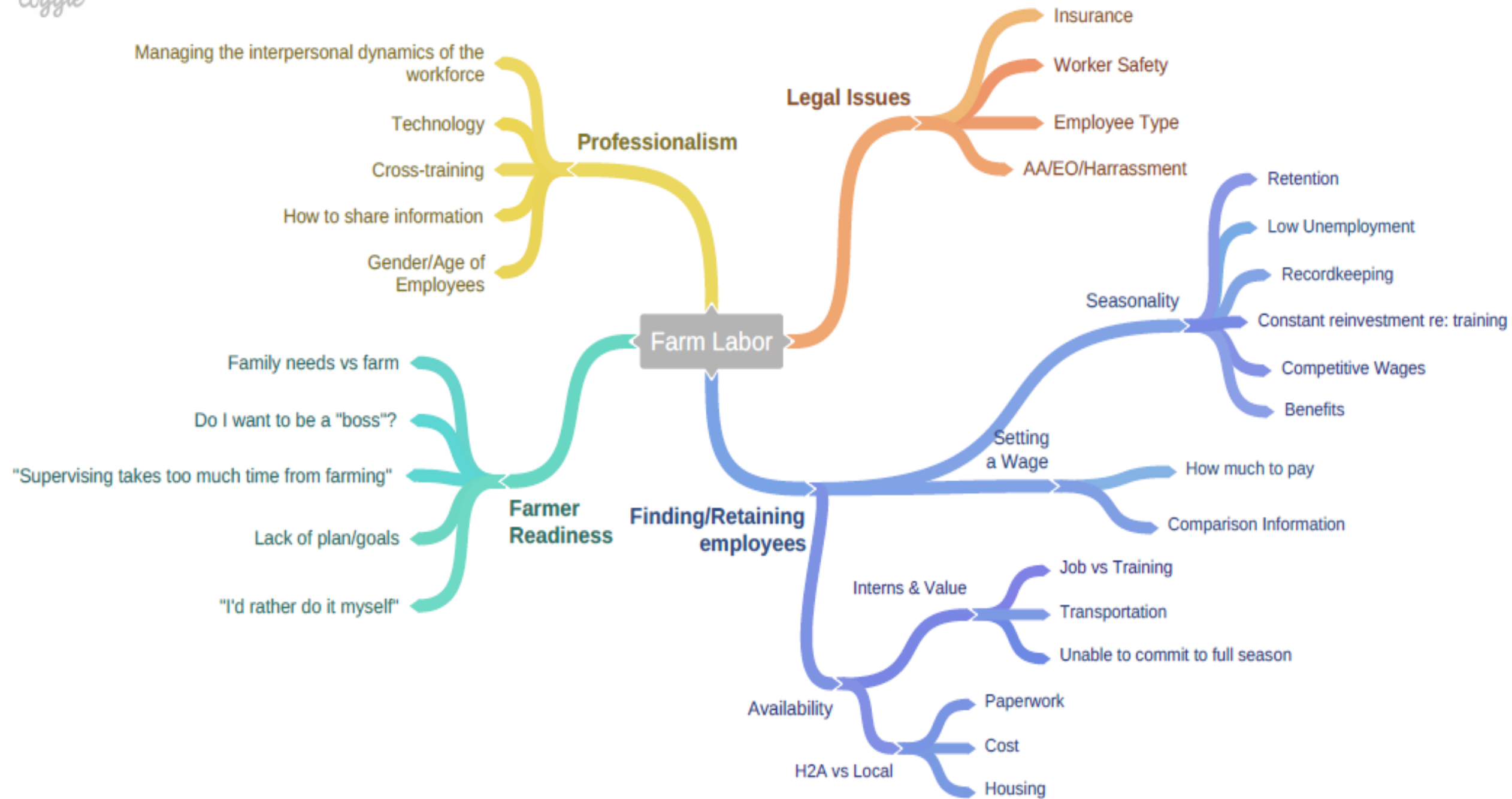
- Significant expense
- Barrier to scale-up
- Scarce labor pool
- Increasing regulatory barriers
- Seasonal nature of the work
- Complex integration of legal, economic, social and cultural factors



# Competing Tensions

- Lack of adequate labor pool
- Profit margin too small to support labor
- Cost of living exceeds wage limits
- Farmers not prepared for the reality of managing
- Available labor pool is not prepared for the work
- Increasing demand for “local” product
- Out-migration of youth
- Growing economy
- Low unemployment
- Addiction issues
- Season extension
- QoL considerations

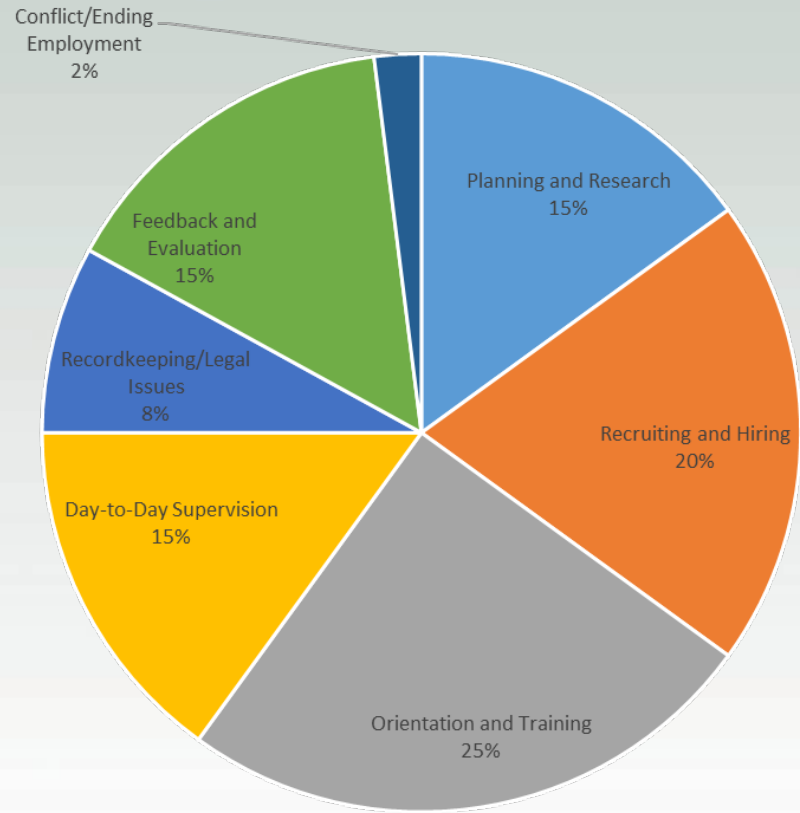




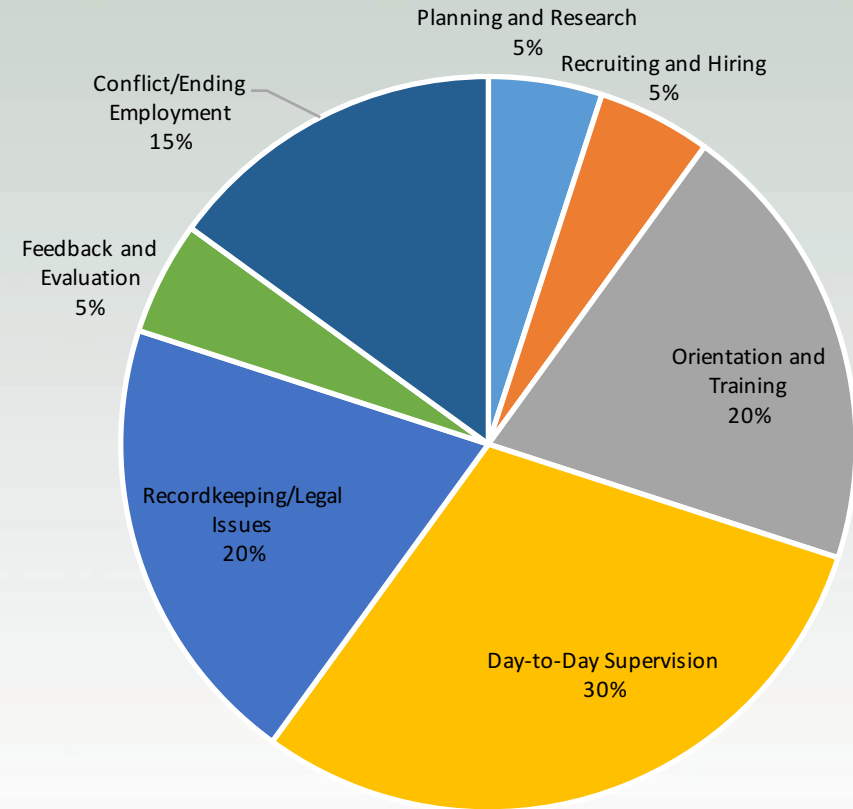
# Selecting the right employee mix...



Supervisory Responsibilities - Ideal



Supervisory Responsibilities - Actual





- Farmer Readiness
- Finding and Retaining Employees
- Legal Issues
- Professionalism (aka Next Level Management)
- Tools and Resources



# Farmer Readiness

- Self-assessment
- Systems in place vs “*winging it*”
- Safety procedures
- Can you make payroll?
- Are you aware of the legal and tax implications?

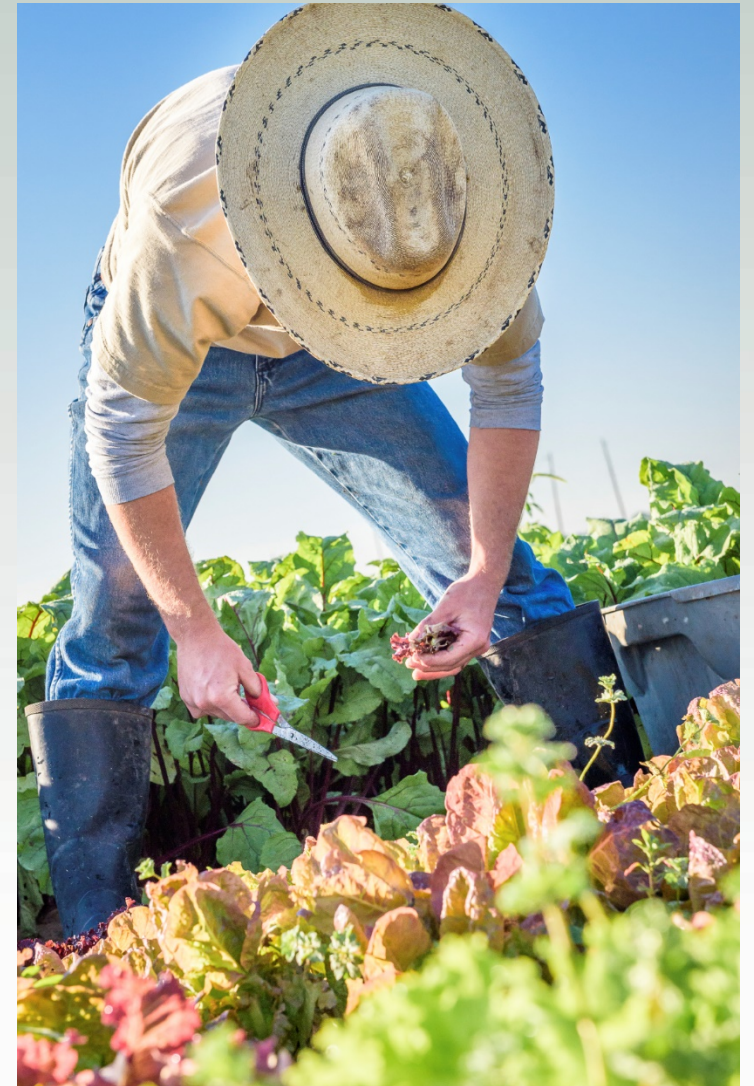
# Finding and Retaining Employees

- Adequate planning
- Job descriptions
- Know the employment environment
- Start early
- Screen carefully
- The wrong employee can be more costly than no employee



# Legal Issues

- Consult an expert
- Maintain a paper trail
- Compliance is key
- Maintain separation between profit centers





# Professionalism

- Keep communications open, transparent and professional
- Have a clear anti-harassment policy
- Be aware of the motivations of different employee types
- Be aware and observant



# Tools and Resources

- Job description tool
- Labor Cost Estimator
- Farmers' Labor Readiness Assessment
  - <http://www.uvm.edu/aglabor/dashboard>
- Policy Manual
  - (ex. Farm Commons – Farm Employee Handbook)



The University of Vermont

[UVM Extension New Farmer Project](#)[Agricultural Labor Management](#)[Labor Dashboard](#)

## Welcome to the Labor Dashboard



### LABOR READINESS ASSESSMENT

Find out if there are areas where you need to prepare.



### JOB DESCRIPTION GENERATOR

Produce and download accurate, professional job descriptions.



### COST CALCULATOR

Determine the full cost of hiring an employee on your farm.



# Future research



- Mechanization decisions
- Wearable technology
- Gendered elements of labor mgmt
- Better econometrics on the optimal labor profile
- Revisiting labor coop models



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