

ECOLOGICAL FARM INTERNSHIPS:

MODELS, EXPERIENCES AND JUSTICE

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EDITED BY CHARLES Z. LEVKOE AND MICHAEL EKERS

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PART I:
INTRODUCTION

FRAMING FARM INTERNSHIPS

Charles Z. Levkoe and Michael Ekers

Over the past decade, growing numbers of interns have been working on small-scale ecological farms across North America and Europe. Farmers are looking to young people seeking hands-on farm experiences as a way to train the next generation of ecological producers and to meet the labour demands of their operations. Interns typically exchange their labour for room and board, a stipend and importantly, training in ecological production methods. While many farms pay workers a minimum wage, or more, and provide benefits, interns as a relatively new type of non-waged worker have become a source of outside labour on many farms. At the core of the farm internship issue are a number of pressing questions about the financial challenges of ecological farming, the training of new farmers and the rise of precarious work. It should be stressed that labour issues exist across the agricultural sector and the reliance of some producers on migrant workers is emblematic of this issues. Nevertheless, as a relatively new and potentially defining trend within the ecological farming sector, the issues discussed in this report bear considerable significance for farm operators, interns and the broader food movement.

This report draws on the knowledge, experience

and voices of farmers, past interns, non-profit organizations and lawyers to assess the implications and trajectories of the non-monetary exchanges of labour and education, among other things, taking place on ecological farms. This report is therefore largely driven by the perspectives and experiences of those with practical knowledge of the farm internship issue. The report is based on a workshop held on October 13, 2016, in Toronto that brought together a range of speakers that have contributed to this report and a dynamic audience comprised of farm owners, workers, past interns, students and academics. The goal was to assess the opportunities, limitations and possible trajectories of the farm intern phenomenon while examining what just food labour might mean for interns, farm workers, farmers and for those advocating for socially just and ecologically sustainable food systems. In this introduction, we offer some brief context and framing of the issues explored in the workshop and compiled in this report.

The issue of farm internships raises a number of practical questions regarding how such work/education arrangements have emerged and how they have been facilitated and managed. However, the issue also points to deeper questions around farm viability,

agricultural labour law, possibilities for exploitation, but also the potential to build a viable farm sector that can offer an alternative to the corporate, industrial food system. Given the intersection of new forms of farm work with these broader issues, it becomes clear that internships exist as a pivot point for the sector moving forward and raise difficult questions regarding how to build just and sustainable food and farming futures.

In Canada, but also throughout the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe, internship positions have been facilitated by farmer-led organizations. For example, the Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT), which operates across parts of North America, the Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network (ACORN) in Eastern Canada, and the Soil Association in the United Kingdom have developed distinct internship programs to address the lack of formal education available to aspiring ecological farmers. Other innovative education models exist where aspiring farmers pay for training and mentorship (e.g. Everdale and Farms at Work). In the contributions that follow, Heather Lekx, Lucia Stephens and Rachel Harries reflect on their experiences with these organizations and both the opportunities and dilemmas associated with various farmer-training initiatives.

Farmers and staff at the organizations noted above are increasingly establishing connections between their own programs and the public debates on the fairness and viability of internships, which raise a series of important questions further examined in this report. Recently, public attention has been focused on the ethics and legalities of internships across the economy, throughout political offices and in the non-profit sector, but little attention has focused on agriculture. The contributions of Natalie Childs, Jordan Marr and Abena Offeh-Gyimah (with Tinashe Kanengoni and Stephanie Henry) build on the broader conversations on internships and question the fairness and ethics of non-waged farm work. Collectively, they ask who really benefits in such arrangements and question who exactly is being trained to farm when the principal method of education is through unpaid work and thus restricted to those that can forego paid employment.

Issues of fairness, equity and justice are very much structured by the regulatory and legal frameworks regarding internships and agricultural work. Farmers are deeply concerned with whether or not their internships are legal and many interns are unclear of their own rights as workers/volunteers. Several legal

cases around ecological farm internships have transpired in the US and in British Columbia as interns have received back-pay for their 'unpaid' or 'underpaid' work. This heightened public and legal attention has thrown into question the viability, legality, and potentially the fairness of the exchanges taking place between farm hosts and aspiring farmers. Although there are no simple answers on the legality of farm internships, Joshua Mandryk offers a perspective on internships and the Ontario Employment Standards Act and Nadia Lambek explains some of the agricultural exceptions to this Act. Whether because of exceptions to labour law or the lack of enforcement of relevant laws, both authors discuss how labour legislation structures the precarity of workers.

Underlying these organizational, social and legal considerations is a tension between farms being small businesses but also incubators of social and environmental change. In our own research on the issue of farm internships we have found that many farms and farmers face dire financial circumstances and struggle to keep their businesses afloat. From this perspective internships might be viewed as a source of cheap labour that helps farms survive from year-to-year. However, in his contribution, New Farm co-owner Brent Preston questions how cheap intern labour really is given the costs of training, housing and managing new groups of interns every year, not to mention lost opportunity costs. However, on the other side of this issue, farm internships can't be completely reduced to economic considerations. As a number of contributors to this report suggest, the training received through internships can be deeply formative both in terms of forging pathways to becoming farmers but also in building a broader understanding of food and agriculture systems.

“At the core of the farm internship issue are a number of pressing questions about the financial challenges of ecological farming, the training of new farmers and the rise of precarious work.”

The report is organized in three sections. Part 1: Models of Farmer Training and Farm Internships offers organizational insights and perspectives on the challenges and opportunities of developing farm internship programs. Part 2: Perspectives and Experiences of Farm Internships reflects on the exper-

periences of a past intern, a farmer who hosts interns and a farmer who has moved away from internships, instead choosing to hire paid migrant workers. Part 3: Justice, Law and Social Movements explores questions of justice through considering both the legality of internships and matters of social inclusion and exclusion. We invite you to read the thoughtful and

grounded contributions to this report that examine these issues from a series of different vantage points, cutting across different sectors, geographical spaces and perspectives in the food system.



Photo by Soil Association

PART 2:

**MODELS OF FARMER
TRAINING AND FARM
INTERNSHIPS**

This section includes perspectives from three organizations that are all engaged with farmer training and internships: The Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT), the Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network (ACORN Organic), and Soil Association. Authors describe the models they have developed across Canada and the United Kingdom and discuss what has and has not worked in the various contexts in which they operate and why. They also share their thoughts on where the farm internship issue is headed and what can be done to create arrangements that might work best for all involved.

THE COLLABORATIVE REGIONAL ALLIANCE FOR FARMER TRAINING (CRAFT)

Heather Lekx

This discussion is based on my experience as the coordinator of the Southwestern Ontario Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT)¹ node from 2002-2009, and the continued involvement of Ignatius Farm with CRAFT in Ontario.

A small organic community of farmers offered independent internships in Southwestern Ontario in the 1990s – some were amazing life-changing internships and some had limited educational value for someone new to farming. In 2001, Jacinda Fairholm and I were discussing how not all farmers were great teachers for their interns. We wondered how to provide more solid organic farming internships in Ontario. Jacinda visited the original CRAFT group in Massachusetts as part of her Masters research at York University in the Faculty of Environmental Studies. My prior experi-

ence with the University of California Davis student farm informed the Ignatius Farm Internship model, but we realized the CRAFT model could enable us to learn together with seasoned organic farmers offering internships. We hoped this could raise the bar for farm intern education. After presenting the idea to several farmers we knew, the CRAFT network in Ontario was formalized in 2002 with seven participating farms. In the first year, we all realized the value of monthly farm visits for our own learning, the quality of the interns' experience, and the networking that occurred between farmers and interns. We were all improving our own internships and farming practices by sharing our methods and lessons learned during the field days geared to interns.

1 www.craftontario.ca/regions/

At a basic level, CRAFT's structure is as follows:

- Monthly collective field days on the farms that are part of the network. This generally includes a farm tour, workshop on a designated subject (e.g. soils, composts, crop rotations, season extension, finances, livestock or draft power, opportunities post-internship), a potluck lunch with time for conversation and clean-up, and a work project to thank the host;
- Promotion of internships including via our website;
- Two winter meetings for planning.

Bringing together the interns from different farms provided them with an opportunity to get to know each other. This alone decreased the isolation that can be experienced by farm interns living rurally for the first time. The interns visited farms important to the development of ecological farming in Ontario, enabling them to place their own farm structure into that context. Some interns met their future farming partners at CRAFT field days. Many CRAFT graduates who have started their own farms have praised the training they received from the internship. The aim is for all interns to get a good sense of the opportunities and challenges of running a farm business, and receive solid, hands-on skills training that is difficult to replicate in other educational settings.

Since it began, most of the original group has continued with CRAFT. We started in Southwestern Ontario because this is where we had an existing ecological farmer network. Around 2007, there was an increasing interest across Ontario in using the CRAFT methodology and name around Ottawa, Kingston, Sudbury, and the Kawarthas. New nodes were established that varied in structure and form. The CRAFT Kawarthas node continues to be quite active.

Today, CRAFT Southwestern Ontario operates as a farmer driven initiative and a collaborative network. It is not a formal organization or a legal entity. All the CRAFT farms operate independently, and each offer their own form of internship. We are a diverse group of farmers working together and there is a lot of variety in the ways intern training is provided on each individual farm. At times, our opinions differ on what CRAFT can do and our capacity to improve the individual farm intern experience. For example, an individual farm can provide fully hands-on training, while some follow a curriculum and others are a combination of both. Some farm hosts pay their interns, have Work-

place Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) coverage and include housing as a taxable deduction, while others are operating with non-waged interns or through bartering agreements. Because CRAFT is not a registered organization, it does not have any legal power or the capacity to enforce labour regulations.

CRAFT does require that new farms seeking to join the network meet a set of requirements, and they are evaluated by existing member farms. For example, members need to practice and teach organic practices (even if not certified organic), participate in the field days, and have a method of mentoring interns. Other current commitments are listed on the CRAFT website². Internships on CRAFT farms are to be more than a simple labour-education exchange. Participating farms understand that we need new and more ecological farmers, and they are providing mentorship for these aspiring farmers and ecological farming advocates.

“Internships on CRAFT farms are to be more than a simple labour-education exchange. Participating farms understand that we need new and more ecological farmers, and they are providing mentorship for these aspiring farmers and ecological farming advocates.”

Over its history, the CRAFT network has considered ways to do more than the intern field days and to think about how new farmers could be supported post-internship. CRAFT member Everdale³ (an environmental learning centre) initiated conversations around a 'CRAFT II', but our network determined it did not have the capacity to house that initiative. Everdale has since launched the Farmers Growing Farmers course amongst other agricultural training programs. Although the CRAFT network hasn't had the capacity to create other major initiatives, its members have collaborated to initiate, contribute to, or support Ecological Farmers of Ontario conferences, publications and kitchen table meetings. One of the great gifts of being a network is our ability to reflect on how our individual internships are working and improve them, but also to share ideas about new farmer training. The legal responsibility of the CRAFT network has come up a number of times over the years. In order

2 www.craftsouthwestontario.ca/farms/
3 www.everdale.org/

to address liability concerns for the network, we now require the interns to sign a waiver in the spring when they come to the first field trip. The waiver specifies that the intern is working with a specific farm, and not employed by CRAFT (i.e. CRAFT facilitates the education days, but the intern's employment/training agreement is directly with the farm running the internship). The waiver was reviewed by a lawyer to address liability concerns of the CRAFT network. If an issue did arise on a particular farm, we did not want other farms or CRAFT implicated. The legal question for the CRAFT network is around the relationship between member farms and the collaborative network.



Photo by Michael Ekers

The winter planning meetings are the main fora in which the farms discuss the legal aspects of internships and labour on farms. The farms learn from each other to address their human resources, training and mentoring questions. Some farmers prefer to be outside of the government's labour structures and barter labour for education. It is up to individual farm businesses and operators to make these choices.

Within CRAFT, there are divergent internship approaches amongst farms including the amount and kind of stipends provided, the forms of mentorship and education, the types of housing and food that is offered, hours worked, and type of enterprises. It has been a great strength of the network to have this variety; sometimes intern applicants are recommended to another farm as a better fit. At the same time, there are some general trends in CRAFT farms. For example, most CRAFT farms are growing mixed vegetables and selling their produce through Community Shared Agriculture projects. These are generally the kinds of farms that are most popular among

interns, because they want to learn how to grow more than just two or three crops. Also, interns want to understand alternative production methods, including business models and markets. Diverse farms are also the kinds of operations that require the most labour.

Since CRAFT began, many farms within and outside of CRAFT have started offering internships and then stopped. Hopefully, this is a good indicator that folks are figuring out that an internship has a lot in common with hiring any young worker, but the internship comes with more expectations of training than a farm may be able to meet. A new worker always needs to be trained in the job that they are going to do. But, an intern may expect to learn the theory that goes with the skills, how to use your expensive tools, the finances of your business, and why you do anything you do! Training new interns or new staff every year is also not an effective use of your time in the spring when you have a lot to do. Eventually, an intern should be providing the farm with some benefit, so legally they are then considered a worker for which you have certain responsibilities. If we really think through these issues, it may make more sense for some farms to hire good workers it can retain.

Ignatius has continued to offer farm internships because we strongly believe in mentoring future farmers and food system advocates that have climate change and ecology as driving motivators in the design of farm practices. This is especially important for people that did not grow up on a farm who need experience to determine their future in ecological agriculture. It is also important for the future of farming in Canada because many farmers are unsure who will take over the farm. That big picture is part of the overarching goal. For those only in it for the labour, internships may not be the best option and CRAFT is not the right network. We expect much more from our member farms. From my perspective, CRAFT needs to keep that at the forefront.

There is also a secondary goal of encouraging and supporting farms to be able to make a profit and pay workers a fair wage. These higher-level aspirations are very important. But they also pose a big question when lean farm incomes generally rely on highly efficient, skilled migrant farm workers earning close to minimum wage: when it comes to training new farmers, which farms actually have the time, capacity, and commitment to devote to this important common good?

GROW A FARMER: THE ATLANTIC CANADIAN ORGANIC REGIONAL NETWORK'S LESSONS LEARNED FROM FARM-BASED EDUCATION

Lucia Stephen

There is a pressing need in the Atlantic region to train new farmers to build and sustain a strong, diverse and vibrant agricultural economy. As the average farmer approaches retirement⁴, farm succession is a looming issue, as family farms dissolve and potential successors are hesitant to commit to the common agrarian realities of lifelong debt and the ongoing challenge of meeting the demands of labour.

To address these matters, in 2012, the Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network (ACORN)⁵ initiated the first multi-faceted experiential farmer-training initiative of its kind in Canada, titled *Grow A Farmer*. As part of this project, from 2013-2014, the organization facilitated a two-year pilot of a curriculum-guided farm apprenticeship program that supported over ten apprentices on farms across the Maritime region.⁶

ACORN is a non-profit organization that aims to enhance the viability and growth of the Atlantic Canadian organic agricultural community through a unified regional network. Established in 2000, the organization's work spans all four Atlantic provinces, providing events, resources and services that assist new, aspiring, transitioning and established organic producers, processors, as well as consumers, on a range of topics that span from "seed to spoon."

ACORN's *Grow A Farmer*⁷ initiative was conceived to foster and sustain farm renewal and increase effective entrepreneurship practices for new, aspiring and transitioning organic producers. In 2012, the organization received two years of funding to develop the project and launch a pilot to introduce a new opportunity for those wanting to learn how to farm organically and become better connected to a network of supportive mentors.

The initiative was inspired by a number of factors, including my personal experience attending the University of California's accredited Apprenticeship in Ecological Horticulture. In addition, numerous consultations were organized with coordinators of other notable farmer training programs, based throughout

the Northeastern States, Ontario and British Columbia.

The *Grow A Farmer* Advisory Committee was comprised of a dynamic team of producers, government advisors and stakeholders invested in organic agriculture in Atlantic Canada. In my role as coordinator, I met with this group over the course of 2012 to discuss the program structure, define roles and responsibilities of host farms, apprentices and ACORN and to develop the 100-plus page curriculum/guide that covered the basic principles of organic agriculture. The guide included learning outcomes, suggested field activities and an index of key terminology. The Advisory Committee also established fundraising strategies to support the program beyond the grant term and wrestled with the long-standing debates of appropriate compensation and farm liability.

The program was open for applications in November 2012 and candidates had the choice of a placement on one of ten different host farms located throughout the Maritimes that represented different styles and scales of certified organic production. Once approved and placed on farms, apprentices maintained work-weeks that combined 35 hours of field work with five hours of classroom time with their host to cover the *Grow A Farmer* curriculum.

The host farms were the primary facilitators of this weekly education and ACORN would supplement the activities with a group orientation day, farm tours, webinars, workshops and, at the end of the season, free access to the annual ACORN Conference, where apprentices "graduated" and received a certificate of completion.

ACORN also supported the learning and educational capacities of the host farms, each of whom received a resource package related to best practices in farm management and human resources, including guidance on communication strategies and effective tools for farm-based learning. During the off-season, hosts participated in a full-day train-the-trainer session

4 According to data collected from the 2011 Census of Agriculture, combining the averages of all four Atlantic provinces, the average farmer in Atlantic Canada is over 55 years old.

5 www.acornorganic.org

6 This initiative also includes an ongoing Mentorship Program and numerous events and learning activities targeted to new and aspiring organic producers. For more information, visit www.growafarmer.ca.

7 www.growafarmer.ca

to network and discuss strategies for farm-based education. These communications continued through feedback calls scheduled throughout the growing season, to monitor successes and challenges of respective arrangements and to provide ongoing support.

Despite numerous achievements and positive feedback, three main issues emerged, which together resulted in the closure of the apprenticeship program after the two-year pilot period.

“Until more farms are profitable enough to support wages for on-farm apprentices, and new policies are introduced to foster clear and supported pathways for new entrants to organic agriculture, the apprenticeship models have value but require reinforcement to best support the growth and success of future farmers in Canada.”

First, what became obvious to both the hosts and to the apprentices was that the nature of a busy farming season often compromised the amount of time farmers were truly able to devote to training. Occasions that could have been devoted to providing adequate explanations of key farm tasks and concepts were easily compromised by the ongoing demands of production, thus limiting the ability for apprentices to develop their agricultural knowledge and skills.

In reflection, it was unrealistic to expect that all of the hosts would be able to commit to five hours a week of training. While some managed well, factoring in review of the curricula around lunchtime or during a particular day, the expectations of teaching while farming were simply too high and other tasks and projects were often prioritized.

Second, of significant concern were the legal implications for farmers relying on non-waged labour. As the typical farm apprenticeship involves underpaid (i.e. less than minimum wage) or unpaid labour in exchange for room/board and education, the Advisory Committee discussed compensation, and specifically whether farms should pay their apprentices as full-

time employees, which proved to be a major debate. Based on existing experience, some members were firm in their belief that candid conversations between both parties that fostered mutually beneficial exchange agreements were adequate. Others believed minimum wage was an absolute requirement for anyone contributing to the labour and affecting the farm's profitability.

Though we determined that we would offer a range of options to farms and applicants and not require participating hosts to adhere to a uniform policy to pay workers a formal wage, ultimately, this arrangement proved to be problematic. While some hosts suggested that their operations were not yet profitable enough to support waged labour, research on provincial labour standards in the Maritimes indicates that stipend support is not a legal form of compensation, unless the intern/apprentice is receiving credit from an institution. This proved that technically speaking, apprentices should be compensated at minimum wage under the province's labour standards and be given the same benefits as a paid employee since they are contributing to the profit of the enterprise.

Third, despite including precautionary measures such as participant waiver forms, and requiring proof of farm insurance policies that covered on-site volunteers, liability concerns remained a contentious matter throughout the pilot period.

ACORN's role of being technically responsible for program activities on numerous sites in different regions became challenging. Though the organization never dealt with any host-farm incidents of on-site injury or damage, without having enough certainty regarding adherence to farm safety practices for each operation, this left ACORN in a precarious position. Furthermore, significant risk existed for all parties as the apprentices were not technically considered farm staff and thus would not be provided with worker's compensation in case of injury or accident.

Because of these three reasons, the Apprenticeship Program was put on an indefinite hiatus, while other options of farmer training were explored.

In reflection, there are a number of options that could have provided better support and structure to facilitate educational opportunities as discussed above. For example, though a number of other apprenticeships are supported with subsidies that can allow apprentices to access resources and financial assistance for the duration of their training period, farming is not currently eligible for such funding⁸. These ap-

apprenticeships must be designated as Red Seal Trades – a national designation that validates and governs trades through regulations that define the curriculum, accreditation and certification of tradespeople.

Based on preliminary research, if farming was considered a Red Seal Trade⁹, apprentices could access loans of up to \$4000 to support their technical training. They would also be eligible to receive the Apprenticeship Incentive Grant, which provides a taxable cash grant of up to \$1000 per year, for a maximum of \$2000 over a two-year period. These sorts of financial supports could alleviate the burden that many farm apprentices face when committing to unwaged labour as a means of experiential learning.

In addition, it would be helpful to increase support for on-farm employment/internships via programs, such as the Canada Summer Jobs Program or the recently introduced Agricultural Green Jobs Initiative, which help to incentivize and assist farmers in paying a living wage and to provide growth opportunities for those seeking farm educations through secured and stable employment.

The initiation of the *Grow A Farmer* Apprenticeship Program provided a valuable trial for ACORN to work with producers to assess effective methods of farmer training. Farm apprenticeships provide critical experiential education and mentorship opportunities that cannot be acquired through classroom study alone. However, until more farms are profitable enough to support wages for on-farm apprentices, and new policies are introduced to foster clear and supported pathways for new entrants to organic agriculture, the model has value but requires reinforcement to best support the growth and success of future farmers in Canada.¹⁰

For more information about specific policy recommendations that support the needs of future farmers, see Food Secure Canada's New Farmer Initiative at www.foodsecurecanada.org/community-networks/new-farmers-fishers.



Photo by Charles Z. Levkoe

9 Some key elements of this process include designation in at least five provinces or territories, proven "national demand within the industry" for Red Seal endorsement, and must represent a significant amount of common trade tasks in each participating region. For more information, see www.red-seal.ca/trades/d.2s.3gn.1t.2-eng.html

10 www.foodsecurecanada.org/community-networks/new-farmers-fishers

THE FUTURE GROWERS SCHEME: WORK-BASED TRAINING FOR NEW ORGANIC PRODUCERS

Rachel Harries

For nearly a decade, the UK's largest organic food and farming charity—the Soil Association¹¹—has delivered a training scheme for aspiring organic fruit and vegetable producers. The Future Growers scheme¹² grew out of a realization by established British organic growers that as they were aging, there was a dearth of new entrants coming into the small to medium-sized farm sector. At the same time, the demand for organics was growing with the rise of organic box schemes and farmer's markets.

Many of these growers had learned their trade in horticultural colleges, which had since closed or had been amalgamated into agricultural (land-based) and further education colleges. While some of these colleges offer horticulture training, the focus is typically on amenity or sports horticulture, landscape gardening, and nursery production rather than fruit and vegetables. Those that do offer organic training often do so as hobby courses for back garden growers. Within the agricultural colleges, large scale vegetable production is more likely to be covered in livestock or arable systems as part of a rotation, with organic seen as a marketing niche rather than a holistic production system. Formal training in organic horticulture, particularly aimed at market garden scale has become almost non-existent. It is viewed as irrelevant as mainstream production is scaled up within the UK or outsourced to countries with cheaper labour.

This lack of interest and investment in training for smaller farmers is part of a wider general shift towards intensive and industrialized agriculture, which sees small farms, such as those under five hectares, as smallholdings or hobby farms rather than commercial units. According to the current Common Agricultural Policy, farms under five hectares in the UK are not eligible for subsidies (poultry and small scale pig farms also suffer from the five hectare barrier). This attitude impacts most on horticultural units, which can be productive and viable with a smaller land area.

How Does Future Growers Work?

In 2007, an informal apprenticeship program was established that was later to become the Future Growers scheme, with the aim of training new entrants.

The scheme was coordinated by the Soil Association, with a steering group of growers and support from the Organic Growers Alliance¹³, Garden Organic¹⁴ (a charity that campaigns, educates and conducts research on organic growing), and the Organic Research Centre¹⁵.

The Future Growers scheme consists of three key elements. The first is a two-year work-based placement where apprentices are employed by farms at national minimum wage. The second is a formal training through approximately 16 seminars, masterclasses and farm walks, delivered by growers with specific expertise in key topics. The third is through the wider community of other apprentices with peer-to-peer learning and experience-sharing providing variety and depth as well as a valuable supportive social contribution. The scheme offers a total immersion into the organic movement, with participants and graduates recognized and welcomed by established growers at meetings, conferences and other events.

Funding for the program came from apprentices' fees supplemented by independent grant-making trusts. The scheme is not accredited and so has not been eligible for statutory funding. Many of the participants have been career changers, aged 25 to 35 years old and often with a first degree in an unrelated subject.

Initially the two-year commitment was important. Hosts invested time in the first year in training and in the second year saw their apprentices step up and prove their worth. Apprentices experienced the differences in how crops grow year to year, and worked through a winter with different jobs, priorities and less income.

A key feature has been the condition that apprentices are in paid work positions (at the National Living Wage, previously the National Minimum Wage). Whilst being trained on the job, the apprentices and trainees are also providing productive labour for generally private businesses. As paid employees, they gain an understanding of the economics of farming, recognizing their own labour as one of the costs of production against the value of the final product. All the farms in the scheme are able to factor in the cost of labour and

11 www.soilassociation.org

12 www.soilassociation.org/futuregrowers

13 www.organicgrowersalliance.co.uk/

14 www.gardenorganic.org.uk/

15 www.organicresearchcentre.com/

still be viable, so apprentices and trainees learn while working in a functioning commercial environment. This is the model we want future growers to train within, so they can go on to earn their own livelihoods. If the farm cannot pay for one of its more important inputs – remembering that these inputs are people in the case of labour – how is it demonstrating how to earn a living in organic farming?

“We have seen an ideological difference between those farms that are willing to pay and those that are reliant on volunteers, interns or WWOOFers as a key part of their workforce, and justify this as a part of the social aspect of organic farming.”

However, this insistence on paid positions has challenged the viability of the scheme. We have seen an ideological difference between those farms that are willing to pay and those that are reliant on volunteers, interns or WorldWide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOFers) as a key part of their workforce, and justify this as a part of the social aspect of organic farming. An ex-Future Grower suggested that some farms are better at selecting the people they want to work with and are willing to pay. They choose people with more skills and experience who are able to quickly contribute to the farm in a more cost effective and productive way. Like many, she feels uncomfortable questioning the efficiency of farms that claim they aren't making enough money to pay their labour.

It is important to note that we are not training new entrants who are only interested in organic farming as a lifestyle choice, or primarily as a therapeutic or educational activity. We train new farmers to grow more good food for more people.

Changes and challenges

Over the past ten years, the scheme has evolved from a two-year apprenticeship to include a six-month traineeship (introduced in 2013, also as paid employment) to take advantage of farms offering seasonal work. This transition has been driven by various factors: changes in the organic market and in customer behaviour (e.g., the increase in supermarkets offering home delivery has impacted box schemes); the recent recession; the weather (with several very wet years); and, the introduction of a higher minimum wage.

Apart from a few committed farms, many growers have been disinclined to commit to two-year apprenticeships. We had expected to see trainees progress onto apprenticeships but this did not happen despite many trainees continuing to work on the same farm. The on-farm work placement element of the scheme has also become increasingly problematic. The scheme has been operating as an informal recruitment agency for farms, promoting job opportunities as Future Growers placements. However, some farms have been less committed to the scheme, recruiting workers, but not insisting that their new recruits also sign up to the scheme. There has also been a range of quality in the placement experience, training and mentoring provided by the farms, which the scheme promotes as a core element but over which we have little control. Some farms find it easier than others to meet the demands of running a commercial business while providing a high level of training and mentoring.

Two-year placements also meant that some farms only offered placements every other year. Some farms also found new permanent assistant farm managers through the scheme – a sure sign of success but limiting the number of new placements on offer. Many future growers saw the benefit of staying and learning for several more years on their host farms before setting out on their own to set up a new enterprise.

There is interest in the scheme from social enterprise farms, particularly community supported agriculture style enterprises, who want to support the training of new growers but cannot necessarily afford to pay another worker. This is indicative of the Community Supported Agriculture scene in the UK, which has evolved with a community-led approach that relies heavily on volunteers, although many are now becoming more business-minded.

Despite these challenges, over the past decade the scheme has played an essential role in filling a generational skills gap. Future Growers has now trained 71 new organic producers (42 apprentices and 29 trainees) and brought new energy and enthusiasm into the sector. Of all those that started the scheme, 71% are still in growing, a figure of which we are immensely proud. Many other informal internship and apprenticeship schemes now use the Future Growers model to shape their training.

Moving forward

However, by setting the bar high and requiring paid employment, the Future Growers scheme had limited the number of potential participants, to a point at which it was no longer viable. In 2016/17 we decid-

ed to overhaul the scheme, paring back our role in finding and facilitating work placements and focusing on providing a six-month program of rich farm-based training events that are open to any aspiring grower, while encouraging them to find their own placements.

From the outside much remains the same. We have drawn on a well-established network of farms and organic experts, cherry-picking the most successful to host field trips and deliver seminars - one weekend field trip per month over six months. Participants still have access to an online learning community, bursaries for conferences, a certificate of completion and career support. They join a close-knit and supportive learning community that has been one of the biggest successes of the scheme.

Host farms advertise their employment opportunities on our Organic Marketplace¹⁶ webpage with new recruits encouraged to participate in the Future Growers programme of events. There is access to guidance on managing work-based learning, including how to structure mentoring sessions.

Paid employment on a farm is no longer a condition of participation, although it is still recommended. This has enabled us to offer 18 places on the six-month long program all of which have quickly booked up, in spite of increased fees. Interestingly, about half of the participants have been recruited by farms promoting their vacancies as Future Growers traineeships and offering paid work.

The Soil Association continues to actively promote the importance of being able to earn a livelihood working in organic food and farming through blogs, articles and events, and ensuring that the farms we visit offer practical working examples of commercially viable organic farming.

The Wider Context

Lastly it is important to consider the impact of Brexit on horticultural labour in the UK, with restrictions on movement of people likely to be imposed. Limits on 'unskilled' workers entering the country will hit the larger horticulture enterprises hardest, although many medium-sized farms also bring in Eastern European migrant labour, particularly for harvesting.

The increased cost of labour, if businesses have to pay higher wages to attract local workers, is a significant threat. Solutions that are more likely to be favoured by big farms include increasing mechanization to keep labour costs down and lobbying for a re-introduction of a seasonal worker scheme to allow entry to

temporary workers. However, the Soil Association is working with more forward-thinking businesses and support organizations to look at recruitment, training, employment and management practices to make horticulture jobs more attractive.

A newly introduced business levy to fund apprenticeships means larger horticulture producers will have training budgets to spend. If these are used to invest in horticulture apprenticeships, as part of new employer-led frameworks and new crop production apprenticeship standards that are in development, the sector as a whole will benefit. Rather than needing to create their own standards and qualifications, small to medium scale organic farms would be able to piggyback on these and formalize the training they are already providing. The danger is that they will not be relevant for small to medium organic and ecological farms.

Whatever the future holds, the Soil Association is committed to helping new entrants to horticulture onto the first step of the ladder and to ensuring that they can develop farms and livelihoods that demonstrate better growing, better food and better business.



Photo by Michael Ekers

PART 3:

**PERSPECTIVES AND
EXPERIENCES ON
FARM INTERNSHIPS**

This section addresses insights on farm internships gleaned from those uniquely positioned in relation to the issues. The three contributions investigate the politics and practicalities of farm internships from the perspective of a past intern, a farmer who hosts interns and an owner-operator who has moved away from internships and towards paid employees. The authors discuss the realities of staffing farms with interns and paid workers and the quandaries around fair compensation, training, and reducing the potential for exploitation.

A MORAL CASE FOR PAYING FARM INTERNS THE MINIMUM WAGE, AND SOME ATTITUDES THAT PREVENT FARMERS FROM PAYING MORE

Jordan Marr

In 2007 I completed my first of two full-season ecological farm internships. I had just obtained my bachelor's degree, hoped to find work that felt meaningful, and, having studied food systems at university, decided that some on-farm experience could improve my prospects for a desired career in food and farming policy or economics.

I was raised in the city, and had no experience working on farms. This, combined with my belief that the economics of farming were very tough, made it seem natural and acceptable to me that my farm host could not offer me anything close to Nova Scotia's minimum wage in exchange for my labour. What he did offer, in return for a commitment from me of 40 to 50 hours

of labour per week, was room and board on the farm and \$100 per month. I lived and worked on the farm for six months.

That internship, and a similarly compensated position that followed on a vegetable operation on Vancouver Island the following year, changed my life. I had a lot of fun, learned a range of new skills, and discovered that I wanted to be a farmer, which I am today. In 2011 I launched my own commercial vegetable business that I continue to operate to this day.

I also worked very, very hard for the benefit of my hosts, and, looking back, I believe my labour was exploited.

I don't say this with any bitterness or resentment and I am still friendly with my former farm hosts. Such is the paradox of the ecological farm internship: I am not the only 'graduate' of this mostly informal system of training new farmers whose experience was positive but who also concludes, often in retrospect, that they should have been paid more for their work. The crux of the issue is that farm internships can be deeply valuable but also exploitative and this is the tension that needs to be addressed in the spirit of fairness.

On my own farm I host interns. I recruit people who are attracted to my farm because of the skills I am willing to teach. But they are also labourers: the vast majority of their experience involves farm work, and that work is essential to the operation of my farm. For this reason, I pay them no less than British Columbia's minimum wage.

What is the minimum wage? Why do we have it? I believe that at its root a minimum wage represents a moral imperative. As a society, when we establish wage rates for workers we're establishing a floor for financial compensation for hours worked. We socially agree that wages below the minimum level are to be considered unjust. There are exceptions to every rule. For example, there are certain types of volunteering that we generally consider acceptable. The question then is: should farmers be one of those exceptions?

Many farmers hosting interns believe they should be. Their primary argument is that they can't afford to pay more, because profit margins in farming are so low. Many also feel their position is justified because of how important or righteous their work is. In addition, they point to the enthusiastic embrace of the internship model by young, aspiring farmers as evidence that there is nothing wrong with compensation levels.



Photo by Charles Z. Levkoe

I can attest that the economics of farming are very challenging and that interns show up at their host farm of their own free will. And I, too, believe my work is very important. But I think these are arguments of convenience, not substance. By way of demonstration, I'll provide two parallel scenarios that help us evaluate the ethics of farm internships.

A coffee shop owner who is committed to paying his coffee growers a fair price for their beans, who used pricey, sustainable materials in the building of his shop, and whose source of energy for the shop is 100% renewable but very expensive, decides to employ interns to run his shop. For these six month internships, he will pay them only \$4/hour, because of the education they'll receive: they will learn how to be baristas as they work, or even get to learn how a coffee business is run. He would like to pay them more, but he can't afford it. When an internship is over, the interns leave and new ones are brought in.

An organic farmer orders the \$3000 of seeds she needs to plant her crop. The seed company sends her the seeds, along with an invoice for \$3000. She writes them a letter in return, explaining that she would like to pay the full price but she can't afford it, so she sends them a cheque for \$1000 instead.

“If more farmers acknowledged that farming is a choice and a privilege, rather than a right and a sacrifice, there would be less rationalization for underpaying farm interns.”

These scenarios aren't meant to be perfectly analogous to farm internships. But there is a similar type of rationale at play when farm interns are paid much less than the minimum wage. And I'll suggest that most people, and even most farmers who host interns, wouldn't find the above scenarios to be morally acceptable.

Let's pretend that at this point in my argument, I've managed to convince internship hosts that it's wrong to pay their interns less than the minimum wage; that they now accept that their position rests on weak moral footing. I still think some of these same farmers would continue as before, because as farmers, it's easy, and maybe even fair, to pass any moral failings on to the consumer who isn't paying enough for their food.

This tendency to pass on blame to other actors in the food system is why the moral imperative to pay interns is necessary, but not sufficient, to change the behaviours of farm hosts. In addition, I think we need to try and change certain attitudes that persist among farmers that contribute to their decision to pay unjust wages.

One such attitude is the feeling of entitlement to being farmers that is common in my profession. I've noticed that some of my colleagues feel they deserve accolades just for being willing to farm, and this isn't helped by a burgeoning foodie movement that (with good intentions) insists on heaping praise on farmers just for showing up for work. If more farmers acknowledged that farming is a choice and a privilege, rather than a right and a sacrifice, there would be less rationalization for underpaying farm interns.

It's a universal trait that we as humans tend to waste what comes to us cheaply. Fifty radish seeds spill onto the ground and I shrug and keep walking; fifty hybrid tomato seeds spill, and out come the magnifying glass and tweezers.

As such, farmers who pay very little to their interns probably tolerate, or even enable, inefficiencies that the farmer paying more dearly for her labour would not. Within limits, increased production costs beget smarter, more efficient approaches to farming and more effective workers, and some internship hosts don't factor this in when deciding what to pay their interns. If they did, I think they would have an easier

time spending more on their labour.

Finally, some farmers who fret about the cost of labour at the minimum wage or above tend to focus on the hourly, daily, or weekly cost of said labour, rather than assessing the cost of workers as a line item in a yearly budget. The prospect of bearing an expense of \$450 per week for a labourer, for me, can be scary, much more so than when my labour costs are considered in the broader context of a year's revenues and expenses.

Farming is a tough profession, and the work farmers do is essential. But the solution to a farmer's economic challenges shouldn't be to pass economic instability on to others. For this reason, I think that in most cases, farm interns and other farm labourers should be paid the minimum wage *as a starting point*. Let's not pretend, as we engage in this debate, that the average provincial minimum wage provides a lavish living to its earners. As farmers, we should be starting at the minimum wage, and then aspiring to pay even higher rates as conditions allow.

Doing so will place us on a stronger moral footing while we pursue better economic conditions for farmers the right ways: by appealing to eaters to pay more for their food, for example, or by lobbying our governments for agricultural policy reforms that will give us a better shot at a decent living.



Photo by Charles Z. Levkoe

WHO GETS TO BE A FARMER?

Natalie Childs

I started working on farms almost five years ago, and like almost every other young farm worker I know, I entered the field through an unwaged internship: in my case, on a medium-scale mixed fruit and vegetable farm in British Columbia. The specific details of these internships vary, but in most cases, people spend five to six months working 40 to 60 hours a week on a farm for room, board, and a minimal stipend, as well as the educational experience they're expected to gain. In my own experience, I struggled with what felt at times like an unjust arrangement—working at repetitive, mindless tasks like weeding and harvesting that didn't teach me much for a dollar or two an hour—but it wasn't until I had been working in farming for a few years that I realized just how widespread and systemic unpaid internships had become.

In an article published in GUTS Magazine, I interviewed a number of people who had recently completed farm internships, and I heard remarkably similar stories.¹⁷ The imbalances I felt in my own farm internship were not the result of bad management, but the consequence of a sector-wide reliance on unwaged interns to provide the bulk of the farm labour year after year.

One thing that became especially clear when I spoke with farm interns was just how skewed the power dynamics were. For many, the lines between personal time and work time during their internships were consistently blurred. Interns living and working on someone else's property, often very isolated from their own communities, are placed in vulnerable situations, where they are dependent on their host for work, housing, transportation and food. Such arrangements make effective and equal dialogue challenging.

The broad strokes of my own experience are fairly typical for the new crop of organic and ecological farm interns. In Canada, interns are overwhelmingly white, mostly middle to upper-middle-class, mostly women who have some post-secondary education, coming to farming from cities and suburbs, rather than from farming families. On top of the class privilege which has allowed me (and others) to do unwaged work, I'm attentive to the fact that as a white cis woman, I've been able to spend time in rural and isolated communities that, I suspect, would have felt less welcoming if I was a person of colour, visibly gender-non-conforming, or a person with a visible

disability. Rural communities are not safe in the same ways for everyone.

These racial and class dynamics bolster the 'do what you love' mentality around the choice to pursue organic agriculture as a career path, a way of thinking which masks the fact that Canada desperately needs more farmers, and more farm workers. As Miya Tokumitsu points out in her analysis of the 'do what you love' ideology, "according to this way of thinking, labour is not something one does for compensation, but an act of self-love. If profit doesn't happen to follow, it is because the worker's passion and determination were insufficient."¹⁸

This rhetoric of organic farming treats farm labour like non-profit or volunteer work, and the current internship system is certainly one of the reasons that most young Canadians don't view farming as a valid career path, leaving gaping generational holes in the farm labour market. Canada is approaching a crisis in its agricultural workforce, with an increasingly large number of farmers over the age of 55 and very few new farmers set to take their place. Despite this unsustainable trend and the pressing need for new farmers in Canada, farm work remains systematically undervalued.

One might think the growing activism around exploited farm labour – including the increased awareness of the injustices faced by migrant farm workers, and the prevalence of child labour on farms – would be a wake-up call for the sector, but, thus far, little has changed. Part of this recalcitrance comes from the fact that labour regulations vary from province to province, and British Columbia – where a lawsuit took place forcing a farm to pay its interns thousands of dollars in back pay – has a mandatory minimum wage law that applies to farmers. Manitoba, Quebec, Yukon, and Newfoundland and Labrador also have an absolute minimum wage, but laws in the rest of Canada expressly exempt farm workers from minimum wage requirements.

This lack of fair compensation is a direct result of the government's explicit refusal to consider farm workers as 'regular' employees. Without an enforceable minimum wage and obligatory legal protections for all farm workers, farmers will keep being incentivized to exploit their labour. Canada is approaching a significant shortage for farm workers, and we need to

17 See gutmagazine.ca/the-fruits-of-unpaid-labour/
18 www.jacobinmag.com/2014/01/in-the-name-of-love/

consider whether paying people (and giving them the basic benefits we give to workers in other industries) might help remedy the situation.

“The imbalances I felt in my own farm internship were not the result of bad management, but the consequence of a sector-wide reliance on unwaged interns who provide the bulk of the farm labour year after year.”

The suggestion that “farmers just can’t pay workers” relies on a system of farm labour exceptionalism that’s built on a history of racism and class-based oppression. While agricultural labour on the whole has long been underpaid and gruelling work, the organic food movement in particular has been guilty of focusing on the ‘health’ of its products and practices for consumers, while completely ignoring the health and well-being of those who produce it. In Canada, as in other Western countries, this looks like a movement that whitewashes the work that goes into growing and harvesting their ethical food. The economic and social racism that structures our current food system must be addressed if we are going to build a better and more just food system. This will require the creation of a foundation of solidarity between farmers and farm workers, and the creation and enforcement of safe conditions and fair wages for all farm workers, most specifically and urgently for the migrant workers who grow and harvest so much of the food we eat.

We already have some strong models in Canada of small ecological farms that ensure adequate compensation and worker fulfillment. Ferme Leve-Tot, where I worked for two seasons, was an exemplary case of a farm that strove to be attentive to the needs and goals of its workers, without sacrificing either the imperative to be financially sustainable, or the sense of farming as a ‘calling.’¹⁹ The owners of the farm went out of their way to ensure that my fellow farm

workers and I were fairly compensated for our labour, had access to ongoing agricultural education, and stayed within the allotted 40 hours/week that we were being paid for.

I recognize that, as a more experienced farm worker who had already undergone an internship, I was in a position that likely isn’t available to beginner farmers, but the continued success of Ferme Leve-Tot and many other farms like it demonstrates that successful small scale farming is eminently possible without exploitative labour practices. It requires conceiving of farm workers as a valuable and valued part of the farm operation and of the cost of their labour as a non-negotiable part of the cost of doing business.

In order to produce food sustainably, we need many new farmers and farm workers. This means building pathways for urban and rural folks to become farmers – paths that include strong educational options, more good farm jobs, and support for new farmers.

More broadly, what would a just food system look like for all farm workers? It would mean support from government and consumers. It would mean ending agricultural labour exceptionalism—paying at least minimum wage to both Canadian and migrant workers, and not excluding them from the securities and benefits that other workers enjoy. Importantly, it would also require that eaters start to ask questions about who works to grow their food, no matter where they buy it. Folks who buy organic and local food because they value the health of the planet, their communities and their families also need to consider the health of those who grow their food. When buying conventionally produced food, we all need to consider how its relative cheapness is artificial—it comes largely on the backs of the workers who produce food.

For farming to be a viable career option for all people, there’s so much work that needs to be done and we need a buy-in from many levels: change from farming communities and support from governments, but also education, awareness and care from consumers about who grows our food, and under what conditions.



Photo by Charles Z. Levkoe

INTERNS AREN'T FREE

Brent Preston

My wife Gillian and I own and operate The New Farm, a small scale, certified organic farm near Creemore, Ontario. We have just finished our tenth season of farming. We both come from a human rights and international development background and were living in downtown Toronto before we moved to the farm twelve years ago. Gillian grew up on a small diversified farm in Vermont, but I had no farming experience.

When we started our farm, we set out with a clear set of values and goals that guided the development of our business. We wanted our operation to be sustainable, in the broadest possible sense. For us that meant ecological and environmental sustainability - organic practices, minimal mechanization and very limited reliance on off-farm inputs - but, it also meant financial sustainability. We started with the goal of creating a farm business that would fully support our family, with no off-farm income.

Because we had very limited capital left after buying the farm, we worked the first two seasons with very little outside labour (we hired two friends from the area for a day or two a week to help with harvest in the second season). Our only mechanization was a walk-behind rototiller, and our wash facilities were extremely rudimentary. It was clear after two seasons that to be financially successful we would need more labour on the farm, so we joined the Southwestern Ontario chapter of the Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT). We recruited four interns for our third season of farming, then increased that number to six the next season, and then eight the next.

Bringing on unpaid interns to work on the farm dramatically increased our productive capacity and brought us closer to true profitability. However, after three seasons with interns we found there was a limit to how far we could push our production with an intern labour model. We also found that interns, although unpaid, are not free. There were a number of important and significant costs, outlined below:

Stipends: We paid our interns \$50 a week to cover out-of-pocket expenses.

Housing: In our first season, we rented a house for our four interns in the village of Dunedin, five kilometres from the farm, but as we increased our numbers

we had to find other accommodations. Building accommodations on the farm for our interns would have been very expensive, so we bought and renovated an old schoolhouse one kilometre from the farm. This was still expensive, but gave us an asset we could sell if the farm business failed.

Transportation: There were costs involved in getting our interns from where they lived to the farm and into town on days off, and we had to buy a third vehicle.

Food: Our interns could eat as much food from the farm as they wanted.

Off-Farm Training: Providing ample off-farm training opportunities was an important factor in our ability to attract high-quality interns to work on our farm. We attended one full-day CRAFT training day once a month, and organized an additional off-farm day every month. We also sent all our interns to Toronto to work with The Stop Community Food Centre for several days during the season. There were direct costs for all of these activities, plus the loss of productive time on the farm.

Training: None of the people who applied to work with us had any farm experience, and the large majority had no experience doing any kind of manual labour whatsoever. This meant that we had to teach our interns how to do manual work before we could teach them to do the specific tasks of farming. Therefore, there was a period of very low productivity that lasted several months at the start of the season. The fact that we had to recruit new interns every season meant that this low-productivity training period had to be repeated annually. Productivity increased later in the season, but the average productivity of each intern over the whole season was generally very low. The interns we hosted certainly can't be faulted for requiring a lot of training - their need for training was precisely the reason they wanted to do an internship in the first place. But from a farmer perspective, training interns every season is extremely costly.

Opportunity Cost: This was the greatest cost associated with our interns. Our interns had a reasonable expectation that either Gillian or I would work side by side with them, pretty much all of the time. This was the best way for them to learn, which was their primary motivation for working on the farm. However,

working in the field all day with the interns prevented us from doing all the other tasks that are essential to running a profitable business - sales, marketing, planning, bookkeeping and record keeping. It was difficult to properly manage the business side of the farm while working with the interns on the production side all day.

After three years of interns, it was clear that we could not increase the productivity of our workforce, due to the interns' lack of skill and experience and the requirement to work with them all day. Our focus on profitability had also led us to become more specialized, and to focus more on wholesale customers and less on direct-to-consumer sales. This made our farm less attractive to interns - the large majority of prospective interns want to work on a very diverse farm that sells directly to consumer, usually through a Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) project and/or farmers' market. We had never operated a CSA, and our farmers' market sales were far less profitable than our wholesale sales.

We eventually came to the conclusion that in order to make our farm financially sustainable we would have to specialize more and sell only to wholesale markets, but these decisions also made it impossible to recruit good interns and offer a fair, fulfilling internship experience on our farm. We therefore decided to hire paid employees.

The same factors that made our farm unattractive to interns - wholesale sales and specialization - also made it unattractive as a place to work for former interns seeking paid employment. The Creemore/Collingwood area also has many minimum wage job opportunities in the summer that are less physically demanding than working on a farm, so we were unable to recruit workers in our community. We there-

fore hired workers from Mexico through the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program.

“After three seasons with interns we found there was a limit to how far we could push our production with an intern labour model. We also found that interns, although unpaid, are not free.”

In our first season with paid employees, we hired four workers, three of whom are still working for us five years later. Our first four employees all had experience working on farms in Ontario and had a wide range of practical skills. They were far more productive than interns had been. In our first season with employees we almost doubled our sales from the previous year (when we had eight interns), which covered our increased labour costs and much more.

We now hire seven employees each season, all of whom have worked on our farm in the past. Our cost of wages is much higher than they were with interns, but our training costs are much lower, and our overall productivity is far higher. Our farm is now consistently profitable, and neither Gillian nor I have any off-farm income. We have tried to make the working environment on our farm as fair and safe as possible, and have instituted a profit-sharing system with our employees. The experience of working with skilled employees who return year after year has also been very rewarding for Gillian and me. We have a close, long-term bond with those who work on our farm, and we're proud to provide them with a job that allows them to build wealth and opportunity for their families in Mexico.



Photo by Brent Preston

PART 4:

**JUSTICE, LAW AND
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

Building on the previous discussions, this section tackles some of the more complicated questions around farm internships. Authors take on issues of justice, legal considerations and movement building. What does just labour mean in a context in which many producers persist in a state of financial precarity? Who gets to be a farmer? Are internships legal in the context of various agricultural exceptions to labour laws? Are farm internships part of emerging alternative economies and movements?

SOCIAL JUSTICE PERSPECTIVES ON URBAN FARM INTERNSHIPS

Abena Kwatema Offeh-Gyimah, Tinashe Kanengoni, and Stephanie Henry

Our reflections are based on experiences with an internship program at the Black Creek Community Farm²⁰ (BCCF) and the AfriCan Food Basket's (AFB) Cultivating Youth Program, both of which are based in Toronto, Ontario. The BCCF internship program is located in the Jane and Finch community and the AFB youth program at Lawrence Heights Community Centre and within other communities across the city.

In the urban context, many youth food and farming programs are developed as an instrument to work with youth-at-risk and address issues of harm prevention, education and engagement, and food security in racialized neighbourhoods. At Lawrence Heights, creating food, nutrition and nature-based programming was an opportunity to create new spaces for

youth to learn about their community, reconnect with nature, explore their personal identities and better understand their socio-cultural positioning in the world. Beyond this project, food security and urban agriculture are valuable tools for personal development and connection to social, environmental and economic issues in the City of Toronto. The programs were about learning how to dream of possibilities beyond the neighbourhood.

The internship program at BCCF focused on building leadership, confidence, employment skills, and expanding social networks. Unlike traditional farm internship programs, the focus went far beyond developing skills necessary for growing and selling food. For BCCF, urban farm internships were also

focused on community building, leadership, and food education. The emphasis on training youth to become community leaders made interns feel valued, especially in a place where vulnerable populations have historical memory and experiences of marginalization and injustice.

Despite the many values and benefits of the BCCF internship program, there were a number of challenges that limited its ability to impact the participants and community. Although funding for the program provided the youth with tokens, program materials, and a stipend for food, the assumptions embedded within the program's structure were quite problematic. For example, the expectation that urban youth from low-income communities would commit a minimum of six months to the internship program without pay while living in the city created major obstacles for some people.

“In an urban farm internship, issues of race, class, gender, and exclusion embedded in the food system cannot be isolated from the context of the socioeconomic realities in which the interns live and work.”

In rural internship programs, participants exchange hands-on experience for room and board over the course of a farming season. These kinds of programs appeal to a much different demographic than the primarily racialized youth participating in BCCF programming. Looking at the differences between urban and rural internships raises many questions about who can actually afford to take time away from full-time work to learn to grow food. Moreover, it's not just who can afford to work for free, but also, who actually has the time to invest in a full season of farm training. In an urban context, most participants did not come to the program just because of the farm training, but for a number of reasons including the hope of receiving work experience, building social relationships, and the transit tokens and lunch that were provided as part of the program. In short, it is important to consider just who the interns are and what kinds of experiences and skills they are being offered through the internship training program.

A focus on food justice and equity is crucial in the urban context. It is important to step back and real-

ize there are people who have become displaced and alienated from the natural environment, food knowledge and skills, land ownership, and outdoor experiences. Many people in marginalized communities are also coming to urban agriculture with some form of direct or indirect trauma, which may be current or historical. Engaging people in a sensitive, honest and empowering manner requires listening and acknowledging their situation. With this understanding, it becomes clear that a successful urban internship program is not just about engaging people in skill development and training but also being with them through a journey of personal and emotional healing. Honouring and providing space to develop local leadership was a key tenet for keeping youth engaged. This was a complicated and unpredictable process.

Many of the urban youth on the farm were working multiple jobs just to make ends meet, meaning there was a double burden of being involved in non-waged and often low-waged work at the same time. We found that the training and programs needed to offer more than just spending time outside, but actually giving the youth something that is far more tangible. For example, many of the interns at BCCF learned about soil systems.

Recruiting and retaining interns is challenging. For urban youth that need to work to support their families, it is impossible to promise that the program would ever change their socioeconomic conditions. Also, there is likely no way that they would be guaranteed an opportunity for employment in farming beyond the internship. Furthermore, not paying a wage makes it hard for urban farm interns to save up to buy land. This also raises a host of other challenges from issues of safety for racialized youth who may be interested in farming in rural areas, to addressing historical experiences of trauma, exclusion, and access to land.



Photo by Soil Association

To be a farmer is not something urban racialized youth can easily choose as a career or a lifestyle. The hurdles are high for any aspiring farmer, but are significantly higher for racialized youth. This means that any farmer-training program needs to consider this and the specific challenges that racialized groups face. Different than most professions in Canada, farming is often connected to family land ownership and culture norms. It also has a lot to do with a messy history of land and race. White colonialists initially settled land and current ownership and farming trends still reflect this. Following from this, internships risk reproducing a specific set of conditions and a certain kind of farmer - white and middle class.

In an urban farm internship, issues of race, class, gender, and exclusion embedded in the food system cannot be isolated from the context of the socioeconomic realities in which the interns live and work. When youth from the Jane and Finch neighbourhood enter the internship program, it's framed as an opportunity to build on existing experiences and skills. For this reason, creating holistic collaborations with the organizations that already exist in that community is essential to maintaining the viability of the internship program, along with maintaining a sense of trust and respect. Taking this all into consideration, urban farm internships can be a vital part of food justice work if carefully planned, executed, and engaged within the local community.



Photo by Ignatius Jesuit Centre

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AND INTERNSHIPS IN ONTARIO: A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

Josh Mandryk

Interns have emerged as a new category of worker in Canada that are particularly vulnerable to misclassification. While internships have existed for a long time in industries like law and medicine, they have expanded across the economy and across many sectors. Now, many young workers with entry-level jobs are being labeled as interns.

The *Employment Standards Act*, 2000, S.O. 2000, c. 41 (ESA) is a floor of protections that covers overtime and hours of work, minimum wage, vacation pay, public holidays, severance, termination and temporary health leaves. It is intended to create a set of standards for all workers in Ontario. Workers cannot opt out of the Act by way of individual contracts with employers and neither party can come to an agreement in which they forego minimum wage standards. Even if interns agree to work for less than minimum wage, such an arrangement would be void in light of the *ESA*. The problem, however, is that there are many gaps in the *ESA* that leave workers vulnerable.

There are many special rules, exemptions and exclusions from the *ESA* (see Lambek's contribution to this report), but in the absence of an applicable special rule, exemption or exclusion, an individual performing work for an employer in an employment-like situation should be presumed to be an employee and entitled to the Act's protections.

Employers have used many common justifications for their use of unpaid interns and many of these apply to farming. For example, a common rationale is that "we are a startup and we just can't pay our interns yet" or "we're not quite making enough money." When progressive organizations get called out for having unpaid internships they typically say, "we are different than those big companies." These people might point to the stipend that they pay their employees or the provision of room and board. However, if the stipend does not amount to minimum wage, it is not meeting the basic requirements of the *ESA*. Additionally, the *ESA* is explicit about the value of room and board and what employers can charge for this - and it is considerably less than the amount someone would make working full time at minimum wage. These amounts, which are fixed by law, apply equally whether the employer is a big bank, a small business or a non-profit organization.

In Ontario there are three primary exemptions or exclusions. An exemption means that you are not obliged to follow certain parts of the *ESA* and an exclusion refers to not being covered by the *ESA* in its entirety. The first is the exemption for students in training for certain enumerated professions. For instance, law students are required to article before they are called to the bar as a lawyer and during this time they are exempted from most of the *ESA*, including the minimum wage and overtime provisions (although they are generally paid nonetheless). Second are academic exemptions that apply to secondary schools, colleges of applied arts and technology and universities establishing internship (or co-op) programs. The *ESA* does not apply to the students in these placements. The only way this would apply to farming would be if agricultural students complete internships through a recognized academic program.

The third is the trainee exemptions, targeted at internships that are not attached to a school where someone may be working for an employer that claims they are a "trainee." To fit here, every single part of the following test must be met for it to be legal not to pay a trainee. According to the *ESA*, the trainee test consists of six parts:

- The training is similar to that which is given in a vocational school.
- The training is for the benefit of the individual.
- The person providing the training derives little, if any, benefit from the activity of the individual while he or she is being trained.
- The individual does not displace employees of the person providing the training.
- The individual is not accorded a right to become an employee of the person providing the training.
- The individual is advised that he or she will receive no remuneration for the time that he or she spends in training.²¹

If any one of these tests is not met a person must be paid. In Ontario, a trainee or other employee can file a complaint without cost with the Employment Standards Branch. An Employment Standards Officer will investigate the complaint and issue a decision. From that point, either party can appeal the decision to the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

There have been a handful of decisions in trainee

cases that provide some guidance regarding how the factors noted above actually apply. For instance, with regard to the first factor, in *Girex Bancorp Inc. v. Hsieh*, 2004 CanLII 24679 (ON LRB), the employer recruited two recent graduates from a college software design program to participate in an unpaid internship in which they wrote software code. The business claimed it was practical training to complement their education. The Labour Relations Board ruled that there was no similarity to vocational school training because no form of instruction or evaluation was provided that a school would normally provide. The decision stated: “there was no evidence of any formal instruction, supervision, or evaluation. Consequently, the Board finds that the work experience the Claimants received cannot be characterized as ‘training’ similar to that which is given in a vocational school.”

In respect to the second factor – that the training is for the benefit of the intern – we need to remember that workers always benefit to some degree from on the job training. I articulated as a law student, continued to learn throughout work and was still paid for my time; now I’m a lawyer. Every time I do a new task I ask my higher-ups and they teach me. I learn a tremendous amount in my job but at the end of the day I’m working and generating a profit for the firm. In many cases, employees spend an entire day or week being trained but it doesn’t mean the training is for the worker’s benefit. It’s for work, the reason they are there is to work, and in most cases it should be paid.

The third factor has a very high threshold, which stipulates that the employer derives little, if any, benefit from the activities of the intern while they are being trained. It is unlikely that anyone who has completed a farm internship would say that their host/employer didn’t derive benefit even if they had a ‘positive experience’. As an employer, an employee performs work, and even if the work is substandard, the employer is still required to pay them.

The fourth factor specifies that trainees cannot displace employees. In the case of the software company described above, it is clear that the unpaid interns performed tasks that otherwise would have been completed by paid employees, thereby displacing workers. In the case of farm internships, it could be argued that in the absence of an intern working full time on a farm, an employee would be needed to complete the work or the operation would need to be scaled back.

The fifth factor stipulates that an individual is not accorded the right to become an employee of the person

providing the training. This means, for instance, that this requirement would not be met if someone were hired on a trial basis with the understanding that they will have a job at the end if it works out.

For the sixth trainee exclusion, the individuals must be advised that they won’t receive payment for the time spent in training. Most farmers are probably clear about the unpaid nature of an internship. However, they must meet all six tests and every case depends on its own facts. It would be very difficult to organize and run an internship that would meet all six tests when someone is providing labour to a farm, even if they are an inexperienced worker.

“Even if interns agree to work for less than minimum wage, such an arrangement would be void in light of the ESA. The problem, however, is that there are many gaps in the ESA that leave workers vulnerable.”

Beyond the *ESA* and the exclusions, we must also consider the ethics of internships. Just because it’s legal doesn’t mean it’s right, even if the exemptions detailed above may apply. Certainly there are a lot of unpaid internships in Ontario that are organized through secondary schools, colleges and universities, which are completely legal because of the academic exclusion. But just because it’s legal doesn’t mean it’s not contributing to intergenerational inequity and displacing what would otherwise be paid work. In most cases, if there wasn’t an unpaid intern doing the work, a paid employee would be hired. There is a serious ethical question about whether the labour of young workers is being devaluated, regardless of whether an internship is legal or not.



Photo by Michael Ekers

FARM WORKERS IN ONTARIO: HOW THE LAW CREATES INSECURITY FOR AGRICULTURAL WORKERS AND THE IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING DEMOCRACY THROUGH THE FOOD SYSTEM

Nadia Lambek

We like to think that our laws protect marginalized groups and ensure our collective wellbeing. However, in the case of agriculture workers, the law is not always on their side. Indeed, the law and legal institutions that regulate work on farms in Ontario devalue agricultural work, disempower workers and actively construct a vulnerable workforce. In this brief piece, I will outline the main legal frameworks that govern work for agricultural workers in Ontario,²² and contrast that with protections offered to workers in other sectors. I will argue that these legal frameworks marginalize farm workers and make them vulnerable by denying them access to basic minimum employment protections and by denying them robust rights of association.²³ I will end with some comments on implications of the farm worker exclusions for progressive food movements and for people seeking to improve our food systems.

Legislative and Regulatory Frameworks

Employment Protections

Several statutory and regulatory instruments govern employment in Ontario both on and off the farm.²⁴ A key piece of legislation is the *Employment Standards Act, 2000*, S.O. 2000, c. 41 (ESA). The ESA is considered minimum standards legislation, as it guarantees a floor of protections that all employers must at a minimum provide their employees. These minimum standards cover a wide number of things, such as minimum wages and limits on hours of work.²⁵ While these provisions benefit most of Ontario's workforce, agricultural workers are exempt from many of the ESA's core and fundamental protections.²⁶

Specifically, the ESA exempts "farm employees" and "harvesters" from many basic protections. A "farm

employee" is an employee "whose employment is directly related to the primary production of eggs, milk, grain, seeds, fruit, vegetables, maple products, honey, tobacco, herbs, pigs, cattle, sheep, goats, poultry, deer, elk, ratites, bison, rabbits, game birds, wild boar and cultured fish."²⁷ A "harvester" is "an employee who is employed on a farm to harvest fruit, vegetables or tobacco for marketing or storage."²⁸

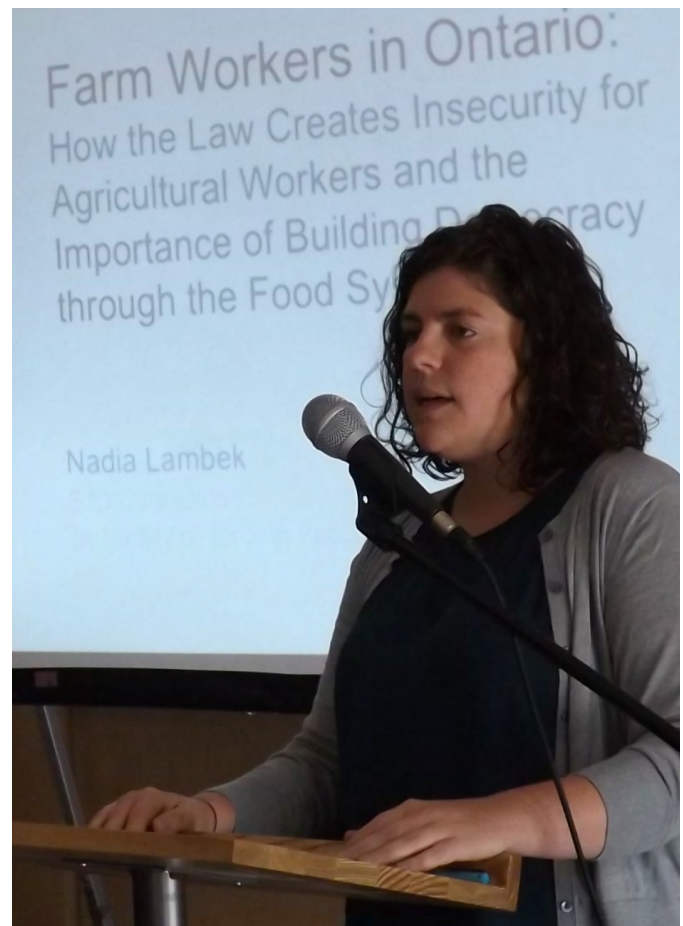


Photo by Samantha Stewart

22 In Canada, the provinces have jurisdiction over agricultural work. As a result, each province has its own legislative and regulatory regime.
23 As this short overview is focused on Ontario's employment and labour schemes, I will not address the very important issue of how Canada's immigration laws further marginalize temporary foreign workers. For more information on this important topic, see: Fay Faraday, "Made in Canada: How the Law Constructs Migrant Workers' Insecurity" (Metcalf Foundation, 2012); Fay Faraday, "Profiting from the Precarious: How Recruitment Practices Exploit Migrant Workers" (Metcalf Foundation, 2014); Min Sook Lee, "Migrant Dreams" (film, 2016).
24 Some of these include: the Employment Standards Act [hereinafter "ESA"] (minimum standards); Labour Relations Act, [hereinafter "LRA"] (collective bargaining); Workplace Safety and Insurance Act; Occupational Health and Safety Act; Pay Equity Act; Human Rights Code; Agricultural Employees Protection Act [hereinafter "AEPA"]; Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act.
25 ESA, supra note 3, at ss. 17 and 23.
26 See generally O. Reg. 285/01: Exemptions, Special Rules and Establishment of Minimum Wage, to the Employment Standards Act, 2000, S.O. 2000, c. 41 [hereinafter "O. Reg. 285/01"].
27 Ibid. at s. 2[2].
28 Ibid. at s. 24.

	WHAT PROTECTIONS DOES THE ESA CONTINUE TO PROVIDE?	WHAT PROTECTIONS DOES THE ESA NOT PROVIDE?
FARM EMPLOYEES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular payments of wages and wage statements • Leaves of absence • Termination notice and/or pay and severance pay • Equal pay for equal work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum wages • Maximum hours of work • Daily rest periods • Time between shifts • Weekly/bi-weekly rest periods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eating periods • Overtime • Public Holidays • Vacation with pay
HARVESTERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular payments of wages and wage statements • Leaves of absence • Termination notice and/or pay and severance pay • Equal pay for equal work • Minimum wage (BUT special rules apply) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum hours of work • Daily rest periods • Time between shifts • Weekly/bi-weekly rest periods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eating periods • Overtime • Public Holidays

These exclusions marginalize agricultural workers in several ways. Without access to minimum wages and with no maximum hours of work, “farm employees” are subject to their employers’ whims with respect to how many hours they are expected to work each week and how much they will be paid for that work. “Harvesters” can be required to work extensive hours, yet are not entitled to any overtime pay. In addition, employers can require that both types of agricultural workers work without breaks for meals and without days off.

Labour Protections

This vulnerability and marginalization is exacerbated by the fact that agricultural workers are not afforded the same protections as other workers in Ontario when they seek to act collectively to improve their working conditions. In Ontario, the *Labour Relations Act*, 1995, c. 1, Sched. A. (LRA) provides protections for workers to *inter alia* organize, engage in collective action, form a union, and negotiate a collective agreement. Workers are also given access to a specialized tribunal to address breakdowns in the negotiation process and to assist in the creation of a collective agreement.²⁹ However, the entire statutory scheme does not apply to employees engaged in agriculture.³⁰

Instead, agricultural workers are governed under a separate – and far less robust – statutory scheme, the *Agricultural Employees Protection Act*, 2002, S.O. 2002, c. 16 (AEPA). Under the AEPA, agricultural workers have the right to join an employees’ association and to participate in the association, and an employer cannot interfere with this right, by for example terminating the employee’s employment.³¹ In addition, the employer is obligated to “give an employees’ association a reasonable opportunity to make representations respecting the terms and conditions of employment.”³² The AEPA also provides for a dispute mechanism to address infringements of the Act.³³

The AEPA, however, denies agricultural workers many of the fundamental protections granted to other workers under the LRA. First, the AEPA lacks any protection to ensure only one single bargaining agent represents each workforce, allowing internal competition for representation. As noted by Justice Abella, Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, protections for only one union have been a “defining principle” of the Canadian labour relations model since the 1940s.³⁴ Second, the AEPA lacks any obligation to bargain in good faith. As a result, employers are simply required to meet with bargaining agents and

29 LRA, supra note 3.

30 Ibid. at s. 3(b.1); AEPA, supra note 3, at s. 2.

31 Ibid. at s. 9.

32 Ibid. at s. 5(1).

33 Ibid. at s. 11.

34 Ontario [Attorney General] v. Fraser, [2011] 2 SCR 3, dissent of J. Abella, at para. 345 [hereinafter “Fraser”].

to listen or read their demands, and nothing more. There is no requirement that the parties work together to come to a solution, as there is under the LRA.³⁵ And third, the AEPA lacks a statutory mechanism for resolving bargaining impasses and interpreting collective agreements.

“Until we have democracy in the workplace and until agricultural workers can bargain collectively, we will never achieve democratic food systems. We are reminded that the law itself creates many of the structural inequities in our food systems. But our laws can be changed.”

The exclusion from the LRA and the terms of AEPA have been the source of significant legal challenge. Most recently, in Ontario (Attorney General) v. Fraser, the AEPA was challenged on the grounds that it violated the constitutionally protected freedom of association rights³⁶ of agricultural workers by failing to provide them effective protection to organize and bargain collectively.³⁷ At the Supreme Court of Canada, the Applicants relied on earlier jurisprudence of the Court to argue that legal protections were necessary to ensure that agricultural workers could enjoy their rights, including the right to freedom of association. In particular, the Applicants relied on precedent stating that “a posture of government restraint in the area of labour relations will expose most workers ... to a range of unfair labour practices” and that “excluding agricultural workers from a protective regime substantially contributes to the violation of protected freedoms.”³⁸ Despite this precedent, the Supreme Court ultimately upheld the legislation, noting that freedom of association only protects “associational activity, not a particular process or result.”³⁹

As a result, the current statutory scheme is in place for the foreseeable future. There is some hope that the *Changing Workplaces Review* process currently

underway in Ontario will result in recommendations to the Ontario government to do away with the ESA exemptions and to provide LRA protections to agricultural workers, replacing the AEPA. The Special Advisor’s Interim Report unfortunately does not give a clear direction of what recommendations will be made.⁴⁰



Photo by J. Michael Smith

Conclusion

In concluding, while the statutorily entrenched vulnerability and marginalization of agricultural workers persists, the farm worker exclusions in the ESA and the LRA can serve as important reminders and rallying points for Ontario’s food movements. First, the exclusions serve as reminders to food movements to engage and work in solidarity with agricultural workers, rather than exclude them as our legislators have done. Second, addressing the exclusions can serve as a catalyst for progressive food movements in Ontario that continue to call for greater democratic control over food systems. Until we have democracy in the workplace and until agricultural workers can bargain collectively, we will never achieve democratic food systems. Third, we are reminded that the law itself creates many of the structural inequities in our food systems. But our laws can be changed. It is in our hands to create the kind of food systems we want and to ensure that small-scale ecological farmers have the support they need to continue their valuable work while also being able to provide their employees living wages. Our food systems are broken, but we can fix them.

35 The LRA, in contrast, requires that the parties “bargain in good faith and make every reasonable effort to make a collective agreement.” LRA, supra note 3 at s. 17.

36 Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Part I of the Constitution Act, 1982, being Schedule B to the Canada Act 1982 (UK), 1982, c 11, at s. 2(d) (“Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: ... (d) freedom of association”).

37 Fraser, supra note 14.

38 Dunmore v. Ontario (Attorney General), [2001] 3 SCR 1016, at para. 20.

39 Fraser, supra note 14, at para. 47.

40 Special Advisors, *Changing Workplaces Review: Special Advisors’ Interim Report* (July 27, 2016), at pp. 55-63.

PART 5:
CONCLUSIONS

FINAL THOUGHTS:

Michael Ekers and Charles Z. Levkoe

The contributions to this report demonstrate that farm internships cannot be narrowly understood as a simple exchange of labour for education, but rather, reflect a broader number of economic, ethical, legal, practical and aspirational considerations. Put another way, farm internships are a distillate of a range of issues at the core of both alternative and conventional food systems including the financial viability of farms, concerns regarding farm succession and training a new generation of farmers, and finally, the question of labour, given the frequent precariousness of farm workers.

These issues are complicated and very much in motion and, as such, are difficult to negotiate, especially for farm operators and those seeking either paid farm work or training through internships. The discussions raised throughout this report demonstrate that there are no easy answers to the conundrums and ethical dilemmas surrounding farm internships. It is those with proverbial 'skin in the game', namely farmers, farm workers (unpaid and paid) and supporting organizations that will ultimately feel the pressure to negotiate the issues raised in this report and set a course forward. However, these issues cannot be addressed in isolation from the challenges within the dominant corporate, industrial food system. It is clear

that institutional support is needed for those interested in taking up this cause. Moreover, the financial viability of ecological farms is surely part of the policy puzzle for ensuring that aspiring farmers have opportunities for adequate training and meaningful and paid work, which could contribute to a more diverse and robust ecological farm sector.

It is not our intention to offer any definitive conclusions in light of the diverse contributions collected here, which reflect a range of perspectives from people situated quite differently in relation to food and farming. By way of conclusion, we end with a number of unresolved, and perhaps unresolvable questions emerging from this report. We offer the following questions by way of reflection to continue the dialogue over the question of labour and training within the ecological farming sector and in the spirit of strengthening this sector.

Enduring questions:

- Recognizing the dire need for ecological farmer training and the limited options available, are there successful models to learn from beyond the avenues identified in this report (see contribution by Lekx)? How can prospective farmers gain hands-on experience along with a practical and theoretical under-

standing of farming systems? Are existing supports available? What possibilities could be pursued?

- Given the asymmetry in the institutional and fiscal support provided to corporate, industrial and ecological growers, what forms of support are available for those farmers, interns and advocates seeking to navigate and respond to the issues outlined in this report? These issues can't be solved on the backs of volunteer and paid workers at non-profits and farm advocacy organizations who already face workload issues. What grants might be available to provide funding for staff dedicated to supporting those involved with farm internships?

- Given the financial challenges faced by both established ecological farmers and new entrants, what does just labour mean in the context of producers who struggle to maintain their own farm operations? When many farm owners forgo a wage, yet build equity in their farm businesses and the land they may own, how can operators ensure that workers are fairly compensated in both financial and non-monetary terms (see contributions by Childs and Marr)?

- Beyond the groups and organizations facilitating farm internships, how far and wide have farm internships spread? What are the experiences of those interns and farmers operating independently that have no accountability or recourse to an organization facilitating farm internships? As several farm internship programs are shuttered (see contributions by Harries and Stephen) is there an issue of farms offering internships without any oversight and/or institutional support? What are the risks associated with this for farmers and for interns?

- Examination of employment legislation and agricultural exceptions to labour law can begin to tell us, in formal terms, whether farm internships are legal or not (see Mandryk's contribution). However, throughout much of Canada it is unclear how internship (employment) law intersects with the agricultural exceptions to employment standards (see Lambek's contribution), which means that the legal status of farm internships remains unclear and is likely to be decided through case law. Out of court settlements in British Columbia have favoured affording interns back-wages, but if cases make their way through the courts, what decisions will be arrived at and what will be the effect on the sector? Will this result in a decline in farm internships and what might be the new face of farm work on ecological farms?

- One of the questions largely unexplored in this re-

port is how questions of gender intersect with issues of farm internships. Why are more women than men learning to farm outside of a formal training program often without a formal wage? To what extent does this issue build on a longer history of women providing valuable labour to agricultural production without the recognition and financial rewards that men receive? Further, as women are trained through farm internships what further supports are available to ensure that women can take more leadership and power within the ecological farming sector?

- What are the risks and liabilities associated with farm internships for workers and operators? Farming often takes place in isolated places and for inexperienced interns, working with machinery and animals can be risky work that can lead to serious injuries. Moreover, given that many young women are working on remote farms, at times by themselves, are instances of sexual harassment and assault occurring? What might be done by organizations facilitating internship programs to address these risks?

“Farm internships are a distillate of a range of issues at the core of both alternative and conventional food systems including the financial viability of farms, concerns regarding farm succession and training a new generation of farmers, and finally, the question of labour, given the frequent precariousness of farm workers.”

- Finally, what is the relationship between farm interns and migrant workers? As Preston notes in his contribution, the employment of migrant workers was deemed necessary in building his sustainable farm business. Preston points to a profit-sharing program developed with his migrant workers, but unfortunately, this kind of partnership is exceedingly rare. What are the different types of rights, vulnerabilities and possibilities that exist for interns versus migrant workers? Can relations of solidarity be established between different groups of farm workers? Can ecological farm operators buck many of the labour trends associated with the conventional agriculture sector in which employees frequently work for low wages and often with limited rights (see contribution by Childs)? It would be unreasonable to expect individual farmers

or farm workers to solve many of the pressing questions outlined above, which points to the importance of building the institutional capacity of food systems networks. Nevertheless, in addition to many of the important issues flagged by the contributors to this report, the questions we offer here point to some of

the further discussions that still need to take place. Ensuring that social justice concerns are at the core of ecological farming is necessary for building a sustainable and robust food system for all.



Photo by J. Michael Smith

PART 6:
BIOGRAPHIES

Natalie Childs has many years of experience working on small and medium-scale organic vegetable and fruit farms in the Gatineau Valley of Quebec, on Salt Spring Island and in the Similkameen Valley of British Columbia. She's also an editor and writer for GUTS, an online feminist magazine, where she's written on many topics, including unpaid and underpaid farm internships and migrant farm labour in Canada.

Michael Ekers is an Assistant Professor in Human Geography at the University of Toronto Scarborough and teaches classes on nature and society, environmental governance and the political economy of agriculture. Over the last five years he has worked with farmers and interns in accounting for the rise of new forms of work in the alternative agriculture sector and both the opportunities and challenges internships pose for farmers, workers and more generally for the future of the agriculture sector. Michael's previous research focused on the cultural history of tree planting in Canada and accounted for the politics of everyday life and work in contemporary reforestation camps in British Columbia.

Rachel Harries is the former Producer Skills Manager at the Soil Association. She ran the Future Growers scheme and was involved in various projects sup-

porting new entrants to farming, including access to training, land, finance and business advice. She also worked on a European level as part of a network on access to land and sits on the board of the Biodynamic Land Trust. In 2013 she co-founded the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Network UK. Rachel has worked in the local food sector for over a decade, and has personal experience of volunteering on organic farms in the UK, Spain, Italy and India. She was also a workplace union representative and is passionate about workers' rights and sustainable livelihoods.

Stephanie Henry is a food and environmental enthusiast and purveyor of health. She has over 10 years of experience in community work and began her journey in agriculture as a farming intern with the African Food Basket in 2006. She has worked in various areas of the food movement including Food Share's Shoreham Good Food Market as Organizing Committee Member, Community Garden Coordinator at the Community Action Resource Center, and Farming Intern/Site Manager Assistant at the Black Creek Community Farm in 2014 and 2016, respectively. Her business, Our Life Natural Foods and Culinary Boutique, aims to educate participants through experiential learning about food sovereignty, justice and food security.

Tinashe Kanengoni is a passionate community and food systems innovator with over 14 years' experience developing and implementing a diverse range of urban community food security initiatives. Tinashe has worked in community food security initiatives and partnerships with marginalized communities in Toronto, Nairobi and Botswana. Currently, he is Principal Innovator for Seed to Table, an organization that focuses on community food security and nutrition in Scarborough. Tinashe is also Afri-can Food Basket's Lead Farmer at the Black Creek Community Farm. He is also a member of the Toronto Food Policy Council.

Abena Kwatema Offeh-Gyimah is a PhD student at McMaster University in the School of Social Work. In 2014, through the youth internship program, she farmed at Black Creek Community Farm. The following year, she coordinated the program, and through funding, the training focused on agroecology and provided placements in the food related industry for the youth interns. She is also a part of the Black Creek Food Justice Network, which does tireless work to address and challenge inequalities in the food system that Jane and Finch residents experience, and also supports other justice related work around food.

Nadia Lambek is a Doctor of Juridical Science (SJD) candidate at the University of Toronto Faculty of Law, and a human rights lawyer, researcher and advocate focused on food system transitions and the rights of working people. Her current research explores how the law and legal claims are framed by alternative food movements and how law can (and cannot) be mobilized in the pursuit of more equitable, just and sustainable food systems. Before beginning her SJD, Nadia practiced law, focusing on the promotion and protection of workers' rights at Cavalluzzo's in Toronto, Ontario. She also served as an advisor to former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter, and has collaborated with a number of organizations, including FIAN International, Oxfam (Bangladesh), the Global Network on the Right to Food and Nutrition, and Canada Without Poverty, on projects related to promoting the right to food.

Heather Lekx is the Farm Manager at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre. She came to Ignatius Farm as the inaugural CSA Farmer and started their Principles and Practices of Organic Agriculture internship program. She now leads a dynamic team who enjoy growing delicious organic vegetables, beautiful soil, new farmers, and community enamored with the farm ecosystem. Ignatius Farm programs also include 180 Community Gardens, a 250-member CSA, and eight

organic farmer tenants. Through work with many remarkable organic farmers and supporters, Heather brought into being CRAFT Ontario, the Great Lakes CSA Conference, and several farm training manuals.

Charles Z. Levkoe is the Canada Research Chair in Sustainable Food Systems and an Assistant Professor in Health Sciences at Lakehead University. He has been involved in food sovereignty work for over 15 years in both the community and academic sectors. Charles' interdisciplinary teaching, research and publishing in food studies bridge the fields of agricultural, political and social geography, urban policy, and environmental sustainability. His ongoing community-based research focuses on the opportunities for building more socially just and ecologically sustainable food systems through collaboration and social mobilization.

Josh Mandryk is a labour lawyer at Goldblatt Partners LLP. His practice focuses on all types of proceedings before the Ontario Labour Relations Board, including certification, unfair labour practice complaints, related employer applications, and construction industry grievances. Josh is the Ontario Director and past Executive Director of the Canadian Intern Association. In his roles with the Canadian Intern Association, Josh has been active in the fight for interns' rights. Josh has drafted law reform proposals, worked closely with provincial and federal politicians on Private Members' Bills, delivered guest lectures and 'know your rights' workshops, and presented before the Standing Committee on Social Policy and the Toronto consultation for the Changing Workplaces Review. He is frequently quoted in the media as an advocate for interns' rights. Josh is a graduate of the University of Toronto Faculty of Law and was called to Ontario Bar in 2015.

Jordan Marr owns a lease-based organic market garden business in BC's Okanagan Valley. His farming experience began with internships on two different farms in 2007 and 2008. He then co-managed one of those farms before launching his own farm in 2011 with his wife, Vanessa. In his spare time, Jordan writes for various farming publications, as well as his own website, The Ruminant, where he also produces a podcast about farming and food security. He currently sits on the boards of Canadian Organic Growers and the Certified Organic Association of BC.

Brent Preston was born and raised in suburban Toronto and worked as a human rights investigator, international aid worker and journalist before turning to farming. In 2005, Brent and his wife Gillian left

their home in downtown Toronto and founded The New Farm outside the village of Creemore. They supply premium quality organic vegetables to restaurants and retail stores throughout southern Ontario, and have a longstanding partnership with The Stop Community Food Centre and Community Food Centres Canada. The New Farm aims to be a human-powered farm, minimizing outside inputs and mechanization.

Lucia Stephen is an aspiring farmer, activist and organizer, based in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Over the past ten years, her work has focused on ways to recruit, support and sustain new, aspiring and transitioning

organic producers in Canada. In 2012, she co-founded and coordinated the Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network's Grow A Farmer Initiative (2012-present), a multi-faceted project dedicated to promoting organic farming as a viable and empowering form of livelihood. This experience has informed her additional roles as Board Member of Food Secure Canada and Co-Chair of Food Secure Canada's New Farmer Initiative. As of September 2017, she will transition to Toronto to pursue these interests through participation in York University's Master of Public Policy, Administration and Law program.



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