



FARM COMMONS

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CREATIVE FARM BUSINESS MODELS TO ADDRESS EMPLOYEE HIRING, TRAINING, AND MANAGEMENT BARRIERS.

POTENTIAL OPTIONS



Farm Commons empowers the agricultural
community to resolve legal
vulnerabilities within an ecosystem of
support.



How do we do it?

- Developing extensive library of farm law education materials
- Hosting farm law workshops for producers and agriculture support persons
- Facilitating community-based and non-legislative solutions to complex farm law problems
- 501(c)(3) nonprofit funded by grants, donations, and membership fees

Who am I?

- I'm Rachel
- Grew up in Northern Minnesota's agricultural community
- Founded the organization in 2012
- Executive Director today



Problems experienced by farmers

- Difficult to recruit the right help (or any help at all)
- Insufficient managerial candidate pipeline
- High turnover
- Difficulty accessing alternative labor solutions (H2A)



Problems experienced by farm workers

- Low pay, no benefits
- Inconsistent work, year round or year to year
- Variable quality of management on individual farms
- Unclear career path/trajectory

Is there a solution in pooling?

- Workers come together to pool their availability and collectively sell their services to farmers.
- Farmers come together to hire a shared labor pool, centralizing the recruitment, management, admin, and legal duties.
- A private, independent business provides labor to farmers (for example, a temp agency)

What solutions does this potentially provide?

- Centralized management could be more efficient for farmers and provide better service to workers
- Ease of working across multiple farms could smooth out seasonality of work
- More consistent, cross-farm work could lead to improved managerial opportunity/potential
- Ease of administrative duties and legal compliance



The devil is always in the details.

- But, we can still draw some conclusions regarding **practical, legal and financial** feasibility.
- As well as **understand receptiveness** of agricultural community to these ideas.

Financial

- Business models would require farm businesses to pay at least \$17 per hour for services provided by the labor pool.
 - Wages at \$11-13 range
 - Half time office coordinator for day to day operations

Legal

- Legal obligations and cost of compliance would increase, significantly in some cases/states.
 - Overtime
 - OSHA
 - Unemployment insurance

Practical

- Success depends on sourcing/supplying labor in related markets like commercial landscaping or new markets like home gardening support

Conclusions

- The legal structure of the business doesn't matter tremendously from a legal/financial perspective: worker owned coop, farmer owned coop, private business...
- Can the business model solve enough problems to be worth the increased cost?

Is there receptivity to these solutions?

- Focus group results are next up!
- Questions?