

## Chapter 8: Some Odds and Ends

### Working with Family, Labor Issues, Organic Certification

## Working with the farm family

Farming is a challenging career, and integrating the whole family into the work can either increase the challenges...or alleviate them. When considering working with family be sure to:

- Separate the jobs on the farm in ways to allow each family member a clear idea of their responsibilities and what is expected of them.
- Look at each individual's strengths and use his/hers best qualities to increase the value of your farm.
- Communication is essential. Allow set times each week to discuss problems and then move past them. Make all comments constructive and ask questions that *help* the situation.
- Treat each member of your family/team as a business partner. Do not get personal; remember this is about a farm business, not each other.
- Remember that farming does not define who you are - *you* do. Go home to a loving family environment and leave the farm work/problems on the farm.

By working as a team with frequent discussions on how things are going and recognizing that each member has limits, your farm will be a pleasant place to work. Take the time during the day to lift each other up, appreciate each other and express gratitude for their commitment. Simple praise can go a long way. And don't forget about yourself. Allow yourself and each other to have bad days, but do not dwell on them. Do not push yourself constantly, take breaks as needed and ask

for help. Love each other, respect each other, lift each other up and nothing can stop you.

## Labor Issues Harvest Methods

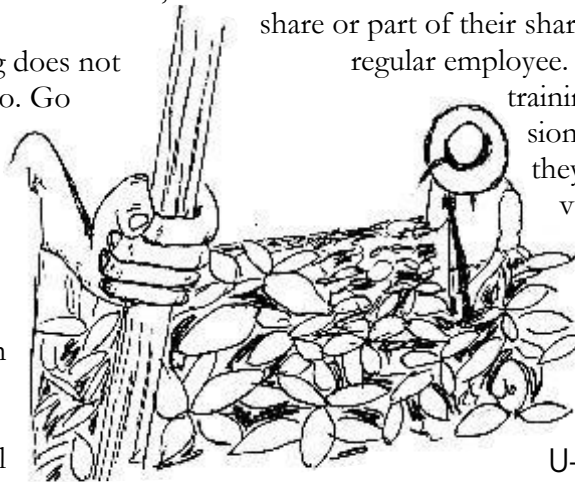
### Farmer/Hired Labor/Intern Harvest

By far the most common is for the farmer and/or hired labor to harvest all the produce. If you harvest everything yourself, you have complete control of the operation. With interns or hired help, you will lose some control but with minimal training and close supervision, these folks can do a good job for you, too. However, it is easiest to put others (volunteers and farm members) into the cleaning and packing side of harvest day.

### Work Shares

Many farms require working hours for their members. Or a shareholder could pay for their share or part of their share by working as a regular employee. Again, with minimal

training and close supervision in those first weeks they will be able to harvest well too. We think that extra irregular labor is best used for the cleaning and packing side of the harvest or not at all.



### U-Pick

Some CSA's ask their shareholders to harvest time-consuming crops such as peas, beans, potatoes, cherry tomatoes, berries, flowers, etc. At the Quail Hill Farm in New York members pick almost *all* of their own produce.

#### Benefits of U-pick

- Members get involved in the farm work. They get dirt under their fingernails.

- It can free the farmer to work on other harvesting jobs
- Connects people with the plants and soil. It is a wonderful tool for reconnecting farm members and their children to the farm.
- Ultimate in choice for members.
- Saves time for farm crew.

Some drawbacks to U-pick are

- Requires that members know how to harvest (may require member training).
- You will spend considerable amount of time making signs instructing members on what, where and how much to pick.
- Or you will be overseeing the U-picking.
- Mistakes will be made...
- Limited number of hours that most folks can come out to the farm. It requires considerable commitment to the farm.

Interns may be considered to be employees, from a legal standpoint. Consider the possibility that you may need to pay minimum wage, worker's comp coverage, tax withholding and other requirements of regular employees to be entirely within labor law. Members working for part of a share could even fit into this category in some circumstances.

## Organic Certification

### To certify or not to Certify

Many of the farm members you will recruit expect safe, pesticide-free produce. There is a certain presumption of organic practice in the CSA farm. And most (though not all) CSA growers are using organic practices. Many, however, are not certified organic under USDA rules.

### Legal Considerations

You need to be aware that the use of the term "organic" is now legally defined and can only be used to describe produce grown in accor-

dance with USDA rules, and certified as such by an independent certification agency. There are some small exceptions in the USDA rules but some states, including Michigan, do not recognize those exceptions. To legally call your produce organic you must apply for and receive USDA certification.

### Reasons to be Certified

- Independent, verified compliance with organic standards.
- Produce sold at other markets—farmer's markets or others—might command a higher price if it is certified organic.
- Consumers may not know all the details, but are comfortable with the label.

### Reasons some CSAs do not Certify

- Expense
- Paperwork

Both of these can be considerable and need to be evaluated relative to the size of the farm, its market strategies, and the personal feelings of the growers.

- Many CSA growers consider certification to be unnecessary since they are dealing with farm members who get to know and trust the growers and their practices on the farm.



**Knowledge** and **communication** are the key points here.

If you are portraying your produce as meeting organic standards, but are not certified, you need to **know what organic really means**. You need to know what you can – and can't – do for pest and disease control, fertility and other farm practices.

If you are not certified, and especially if you are growing produce using more 'conventional' methods, your members need to know this. **It is important that your brochures and other communications with your members are clear and understandable.**