

COMMUNITY HEALTH

DESCRIPTION

Community health is defined as the strength of the community in which a farmer operates. Strong community relations and respect for agriculture can lead to a better quality of life for farmers. Research shows that the support received from a community can significantly impact a farmer's job satisfaction.⁴⁸ Similarly, the interests of community groups and local inhabitants must be considered by the farmer during the planning and development stages of agricultural activities, including the hiring of migrant labor, when these developments directly affect the community.

Agricultural employment plays an important role in the maintenance of viable farming populations and communities. Ensuring the health and safety of the employees is an important social concern leading to an increasing number of worker safety programs and standards.⁴⁹ Recent market conditions have resulted in the decrease of a permanent agricultural labor, from 9.9 million in 1950 to only 2.8 million in 1998.⁵⁰ The results include sourcing of undocumented labor, impacting the stability of farming and its nearby communities.

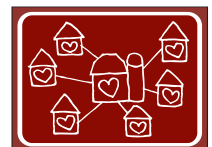
Consequently, this module evaluates a farmer's working environment through two main criteria: community relations and protection of labor supply.

INCENTIVES FOR CHANGE

- Benefits to farmers. In most dairy operations, labor accounts for 15% to 20% of total costs.⁵¹ Identifying and hiring only documented labor will help the farmers and the community in the long term. Replacing undocumented labor is costly and inefficient to farmers. Additionally, hiring undocumented labor is illegal across the United States and can result in significant fines. One of the most extreme cases was a farmer in Florida who was fined \$150,000 for hiring undocumented workers, and then an additional \$120,000 for firing forty workers who presented what appeared to be adequate paperwork.⁵²
- Benefits to community. Strong community relations and a dependable labor supply help the success of a farmer. Since Vermont dairy farmers contribute 80% of all farming revenues in the state, the stability of these farmers is important to the community and state economy.⁵³ The hiring of documented or even permanent labor force will have positive repercussions on the community. These laborers are likely to have greater loyalty to the community, contributing to its economic and social viability.

ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

For all questions, please choose the answers that best identify your current management practices. Use the summary sheet on the last page of this module to evaluate overall performance.



COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Community Involvement. (What community groups are you and/or your family involved in? (Please check all that apply. The maximum number of points is 7.)

	Self	Spouse	Children	Parent
4H				
School board				
Fire Department				
Young Cooperators				
Town Government				
[Other]				
[Other]				

The following describes my involvement in the community:

- 1. Unfortunately, I do not have any time for community activities.
- 2. Either my spouse or I am involved in one local community organization.
- 3. Either my spouse or I are involved in more than one community organization.
- 4. In addition to #3, my children and/or my parents are involved in either one or more community activity.

When it comes to the community's involvement on my farm: (Check all that apply. For scoring, add 1 for each box checked.)

- 1. I host visitors/tourists on the farm at least once a year.
- 2. I host educational trips for children from local schools.
- 3. Members of the community visit our farm through corporate outreach programs.

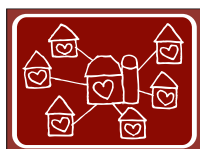
Research trends show that a farmer's job satisfaction is strongly tied to his relationship to the community as well as his own personal life. Advocating community building has several benefits including offering variety to a farmer's day, exposing farmers to different professions and other farmers, and increasing the success of local farmer's markets (indirectly improving business relations).⁵⁴ Corporations, such as Stonyfield Farms, have established community outreach programs entitled, "Have a Cow." For a price of \$6, consumers can adopt a cow, receive regular updates, and visit their cows on the farm.⁵⁵ This is an additional method of community outreach from the farmer.

PROTECTION OF LABOR SUPPLY

Documented Labor. Verifying documentation for new migrant labor:

- 1. I do not check whether they have authorized paperwork.
- 2. I am satisfied when they tell me they have authorized paperwork.
- 3. I am satisfied after I have examined and verified the paperwork is legal.
- 4. All employees are documented and in possession of appropriate identification. Employers are participating in migrant training programs. Or, I do not hire migrant labor nor do I have any other hired labor.

It is against the law to hire undocumented labor in the United States. Unfortunately, labor trends have resulted in a growth of this type of labor in the agricultural arena. With the reduction of the American labor supply, U.S. farmers requested the Department of Labor to issue H2A guest - worker visas that allow foreigners to enter the United States to perform seasonal agricultural labor.⁵⁶ However, tedious and complicated paperwork often leads workers to enter illegally. The U.S. Department of Labor estimated that in 1998, 52% of the agricultural labor force lacked documentation to work. Hispanic workers comprise 36% of the hired wage and salary farm workers in the U.S. Of these, approximately 75% of Hispanic farm workers were not U.S. citizens, compared to 28% of all hired farm workers and 7% of all wage and salary workers in the United States.⁵⁷



Child Labor. My hiring policies regarding child labor are:

- 1. I do employ legal minors, but only during non-school hours.
- 2. In addition to #1, I offer special training for minors.
- 3. In addition to #2, I train others, or I am capable of the special management needs of minors.
- 4. In addition to #3, I communicate with the parents of minors regarding their work. Or, we don't hire child labor.

According to the US Child Labor Law,⁵⁸ the minimum age for general employment in non-agricultural sectors is 14 years old and 18 years old for hazardous work. In agriculture specifically, the minimum age of employment is 11 for non-hazardous work and 16 for hazardous work. During school hours, a child must be 16 years old to work during school hours and at least 14 to work outside school hours. However, a child at the age of 12 or 13 may also be employed with written consent of the minor's parent or guardian. A child under the age of 12 may be employed by a parent or guardian on a farm owned or operated by that person.⁵⁹

BASE WAGE. How much do you pay your farm workers?

- 1. I pay my workers the legal, minimum wage according to Vermont State Law.
- 2. I pay my workers the legal, minimum wage with scheduled increases.
- 3. In addition to #2, I assist them with one of the following: housing, a pasture for the employee's livestock, personal use of the equipment, garden space, or daily meals.
- 4. In addition to #2 or #3, I assist them with buying health insurance, or I don't have any employees.

The consensus among farmers these days is “a good worker is hard to find.” In 1999, an average wage paid on dairy farms was \$17,000,⁶⁰ compared to the poverty line of \$15,000. Vermont's current minimum wage rate is \$6.25 per hour, but will increase to \$6.75 on January 1, 2004 and to \$7.00 on January 1, 2005.⁶¹ Providing additional benefits, such as partial health care costs, housing, and food, to farm workers is a common trend, which helps to ensure the consistency and dependability of a good laborer.

Worker Sanitation. What precautions do you take regarding worker sanitation? (Check all that apply.

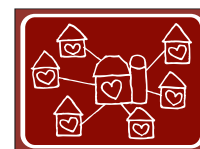
For scoring, add 1 for each box checked.)

- I provide all employees with clean drinking water, clean latrines, and hand washing stations.
- All hand washing stations have soap and water.
- Upon inspection, all facilities are clean.
- I provide a shower facility with warm water for employees to wash and change after the workday.

What precautions do you take regarding general safety? (Check all that apply. For scoring, add 1 for each box checked.)

- I provide general safety training to all employees when they are hired.
- I provide general safety training conducted by professional firms to provide safety training.
- I have developed training checklists for each job to ensure each employee receives appropriate training.
- I have set goals for safety and track success.
- I reward my employees with bonuses when safety goals are met.

According to the Cooperative Extension Service at the University of Nebraska, poor employee management causes more safety problems than any other factor. Proper monitoring of worker sanitation and general safety can prevent unnecessary sicknesses and injuries, both of which can result in expensive costs to the farmer.⁶²



LINKAGES TO OTHER MODULES

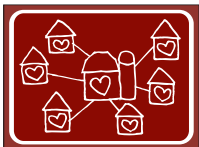
While the questions above cover some of the basics regarding financial and quality of life management, other practices also impact farm financials. Please review your practices regarding the following topics in the Educational Modules listed below.

COMMUNITY HEALTH TOPIC	OTHER MODULE(S)
Community Relations	Farm Financials
Protection of Labor Supply	Farm Financials

FURTHER INFORMATION

Additional details and information on the above can be obtained through the following sources:

- **US Department of Labor.** The Department of Labor promotes the welfare of the labor pool of the United States by improving working conditions, advancing opportunities for profitable employment, protecting retirement and health care benefits, helping employers find workers, strengthening free collective bargaining, and tracking changes in employment, prices, and other national economic measurements.
 - Address: Frances Perkins Building, 200 Constitution Avenue, NW Washington DC, 20210
 - 1-877-889-5627
 - www.dol.gov
- **Department of Labor at Vermont.** The Department of Labor & Industry provides for the safety, protection and welfare of people where they work, live and play, in a manner that is fair, consistent, supportive and professional. It also provides historical and current wage information to employees in Vermont.
 - Address: National Life Building, Drawer 20, Montpelier, Vermont 05620-3401
 - Phone: (802) 828-2288
 - <http://www.state.vt.us/labind/>
- **University of Vermont Extension, The Farm Business Management Specialist.** UVM Extension strives to be a state leader in promoting agricultural business in Vermont through the provision of information and educational programs for diverse audiences.
 - www.uvm.edu/extension



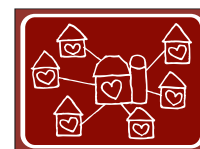
SUMMARY RESULTS FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH

Instructions: In the table below, please record the score for the answer you selected for each question. For multiple-choice questions, the response number serves as your score for that category (i.e. choice # 2 is worth 2 points). For “check all that apply questions,” please see scoring criteria for each question in the chart below. Once all responses have been completed, add up the answers and record the total.

QUESTION	ANSWER/SCORE
1. Community Relations (7 points total possible)	
2. Documented Labor	
3. Child Labor	
4. Base Wage	
5. Worker Sanitation (Add 1 for each box checked)	
6. General Safety (Add 1 for each box checked)	
Total Score (Out of Possible 27)	

Interpretation: The next step in understanding your farm's performance in the category of Community Health is to compare your results to best practices. Below is a table that ranks your performance from best practices (green) to practices that require improvement (red). Compare the number of points you received for your practices compared to optimal practices.

	Point Range	Interpretation
Green	23 - 27	Best practices regarding Community Health are currently being employed on this farm.
Yellow	19 - 22	Farm is using some good practices regarding Community Health; however there are some key areas that should be improved on.
Red	12 - 19	Community Health practices should be carefully evaluated and a strong effort should be made to adopt improved practices in several areas.



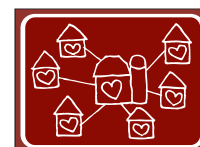
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Footnotes

- 48 Heller, Martin C., Keoleian, Gregory A. "Assessing the sustainability of the US food system: a life cycle perspective." *Agricultural Systems*, 76, 2003, 1007-1041.
- 49 Food Alliance; Certification Standards for the Food Alliance Certified Label; February 19, 2003.
- 50 Heller, Martin C., Keoleian, Gregory A. "Assessing the sustainability of the US food system: a life cycle perspective." *Agricultural Systems*, 76, 2003, 1007-1041.
- 51 Jeffrey F. Keown. Extension Dairy Specialist. Managing Dairy labor, Cooperative Extension , Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources , University of Nebraska-Lincoln; April 1996 <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/dairy/g1064.htm#WAGES>
- 52 Heller, Martin C., Keoleian, Gregory A. "Assessing the sustainability of the US food system: a life cycle perspective." *Agricultural Systems*, 76, 2003, 1007-1041.
- 53 Pelsue, Neil, and Woodruff, Katie. "Agriculture, Food, and Community in Vermont." The University of Vermont Extension. July, 1996. 7 Dec. 2003<<http://www.uvm.edu/extension/publications/factsheets/agfs2/>>.
- 54 Heller, Martin C., Keoleian, Gregory A. "Assessing the sustainability of the US food system: a life cycle perspective." *Agricultural Systems*, 76, 2003, 1007-1041.
- 55 Stonyfield Farms. "Have a Cow" Program. < <http://www.stonyfield.com/fungames/HaveACow/>>
- 56 Heller, Martin C., Keoleian, Gregory A. "Assessing the sustainability of the US food system: a life cycle perspective." *Agricultural Systems*, 76, 2003, 1007-1041.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 Child Labor Coalition; Child Labor in the U.S.: "An Overview of Federal Child Labor Laws;" <http://www.fieldsofhope.org/world/index.asp?country=United+States+Of+America>.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Jeffrey F. Keown. Extension Dairy Specialist. Managing Dairy labor, Cooperative Extension , Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; April 1996, <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/dairy/g1064.htm#WAGES>
- 61 Department of Labor & Industry, Vermont. "Wage and Hour Program"; <www.state.vt.us/labind/>
- 62 Jeffrey F. Keown. Extension Dairy Specialist. Managing Dairy labor, Cooperative Extension , Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; April 1996, <http://www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/dairy/g1064.htm#WAGES>

