

A FARM LABOR SERVICE – A WIN-WIN FOR FARMERS, JOB-SEEKERS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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University of Vermont Extension identified the need for an organized temporary workforce for Vermont's farms. Extension organized the development of the Vermont Farm Labor Service Cooperative and operated a farm labor service pilot program, designed to match workers with part-time, temporary farm employment opportunities. It determined the practicability of a farm labor service in the areas of market viability, technical feasibility, and profitability. Extension, focused on the incubation of the farm labor service allowing the farmer run cooperative to concentrate on its own organizational development.

The twelve-month pilot raised the awareness of an agricultural temp service concept, provided both quantitative data, qualitative measurement of impacts, and exposed some difficult roadblocks as well as future opportunities. Immeasurable benefits included media coverage and subsequent public image building of farm employment opportunities within the dairy industry and the identification of the continued need for human resource management training.

The Vermont Farm Labor Service pilot created a momentum within the Vermont dairy industry of a new paradigm of employment. The cooperative has moved on to the next level, hiring a manager and operating the service itself.