

## Worksheet: Employee Manual How-To Guide

An employee manual shares information about a farm's policies, practices, standards and expectations. A written manual creates a record of employee requirements. Plus, communicating rules and expectations to employees may protect the farm from legal or compliance issues.

You can refer to templates as you begin developing an employee manual for your farm. Reference the following templates as a starting point.

- [Agriculture Employee Handbook Template](#) (Michigan State University)
- [Employee Handbook](#) (Cornell University)
- [Personnel Policy Generator](#) (The Farm Labor Dashboard)
- [Sample Employee Handbook](#) (National Milk Producers Federation)

When preparing a farm employee manual, use this checklist to ensure you document critical information your team should know.

### Part 1: Business History and Background

- Outline the farm's history to show how the operation has evolved.
- Describe the values (e.g., equal opportunity, work ethic, collaboration) you expect the farm business and team to uphold.
- Illustrate your farm's current organizational chart.
- Share the farm's vision and mission to highlight your business aspirations.

### Part 2: Expectations

- Present workday details, including schedules and attendance policies.
- Describe appropriate on-the-job standards and behaviors, including dress code, cell phone use, personal conduct, confidentiality and use of employer resources.
- Indicate training activities you require employees to complete.
- Denote your farm's expected safety practices and emergency protocol.
- Specify conflicts of interest disclosure requirements.
- Communicate that performance reviews will serve as a time for evaluating how well employees meet expectations listed in the employee manual.
- Note consequences you enforce if employees fail to meet expectations.
- Explain policy prohibiting sharing farm photos on social media.

### **Part 3: Compensation and Benefits**

- Share your approach to determining a position's pay rate.
- List pay days.
- Explain payroll deductions.
- Identify all benefits and incentives (e.g., health insurance, retirement, time off, bonuses, stock ownership, on-farm housing, farm-raised meat and produce) offered to employees.
- For each benefit and incentive, describe how employees qualify to receive it.

### **Part 4: Employment Relationship**

- Explain the at-will work arrangement, which means either party may withdraw from the employment relationship at any time.
- Provide a performance review schedule, so employees know when their supervisors will evaluate their work, adherence to farm expectations and employment relationship.

### **Part 5: Acknowledgement**

- Distribute manual copies to all farm employees.
- Ask employees to sign a statement that expresses they have read and understand the policies and procedures noted in the manual.
- Keep signed acknowledgments on file.

### **Other Tasks**

- Choose a current employee to review your manual draft and provide feedback about topics that should be added or further explained.
- Hire an attorney to review the manual and make suggestions about how the manual could further minimize employee conflict and the farm's legal risk.
- After finalizing the manual, adopt mechanisms to enforce the policies and standards stated in it.

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