

# CRITICAL FARM LABOR ISSUES FOR BEGINNING AND START-UP FARMERS



VIRGINIA  
Beginning Farmer & Rancher  
COALITION PROGRAM  
[www.vabeginningfarmer.org](http://www.vabeginningfarmer.org)



June 15, 2015

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# Critical Labor Issues for Beginning and Start-Up Farmers

- Allyssa Mark and Kim Niewolny of the Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition Program
- Anne Geyer & Pierson Geyer of Agriberry Farm
- Question and Answer Session



# Labor Issues to Consider

- Sources of Labor
- Legal Issues
- Management Issues
- Insurance Issues
- Fair Practice Issues





# Sources of Labor: Yourself

- Taxes
  - Self employment tax
  - Income tax
- Health Insurance
- Bookkeeping



# Sources of Labor: Family Members

- Benefits
  - Tax benefits
  - No background checks
  - Flexibility
  - Keep farm business in the family
- Things to Consider
  - Personal vs. work relationships
  - Finances



# Sources of Labor: Farm Workers

- Benefits
  - Extra human hours
  - Focus on management or work off-farm
- Things to Consider
  - Independent contractors
  - Wages
  - Taxes and insurance
  - Cultural perspectives
  - Language
  - Safety



# Sources of Labor: Volunteers

- Volunteer vs. Employee
- Non-profits may use volunteers





# Sources of Labor: Interns

- Benefits
  - Lower labor costs
  - Train future generations
  - Get to know potential workers
- Things to consider
  - Paid or unpaid
  - Time
  - Training





# Legal Issues

- Volunteers and Interns
- Other worker protection
  - Child labor laws
  - OSHA
  - Worker Protection Standard
  - Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act



# Management Issues

- Labor shortages
- Hiring the right employees
- Paying the right wages
- Training
- Assigning tasks to employees



# Insurance Issues

- Types of Insurance
  - Health insurance
  - Workers' compensation
- Benefits
- Requirements





# Fair Practice Issues

- Fair Labor Standards Act
  - Minimum wage
  - Overtime pay
  - Recordkeeping
  - Child labor
- Exemptions



# Summary

- A number of angles and issues to consider
- “Map out” labor needs
- Think for the long-term
- Seek resources for good planning
  - ✓ [www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/AEE/AEE-67/AEE-67-PDF.pdf](http://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/AEE/AEE-67/AEE-67-PDF.pdf)
  - ✓ *Successful farmers*

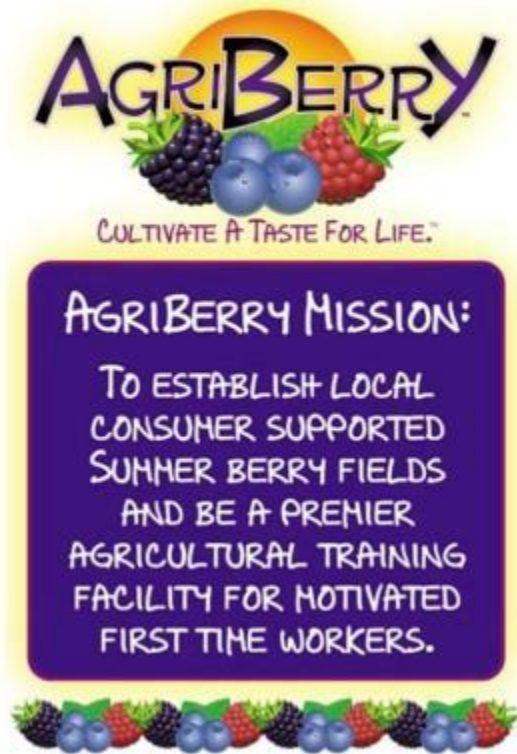
# CRITICAL FARM LABOR ISSUES FOR START-UP FARMERS

- Anne Geyer, Owner Agriberry Farm  
Hanover VA
- Pierson Geyer, Field Supervisor  
Agriberry Farm
- Webinar June 15, 2015
- [www.agriberry.com](http://www.agriberry.com)  
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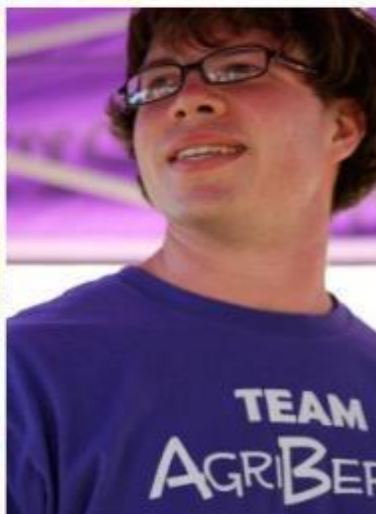




# Agriberry Experiences “First Worker” Training Program 2008 - present



Agriberry Goal to establish a core of *experienced* workers to lead *first time* workers & enhance potential for a new generation of farmers...





# Reality of the farm crop



- Annual or Perennial?
- Seasonal harvest or year round?
- Markets for the various quality levels?
- What is economic sustainability threshold?





# Interns...

- 2009 first intern experience
- 2010 had 8 interns very valuable
- 2011/2012/2014 HR interns
- 2013, 2015 none



# How to locate workers

- Want Ads?
- School Career Counselors?
- Spring break job fair?
- Craigslist?
- Word of mouth?
- Networking...



# LEADERSHIP





# Legalities...Payroll...Handbooks

- Importance of being a role model employer
- Do your own payroll or a payroll service?
- Handbooks, and basic HR topics ...

# On the Job Training...

## Plant Care as well as Harvest



# Hourly Rate or Piece Rate

- Cost of minimum wage per hour...
- Hybrid System



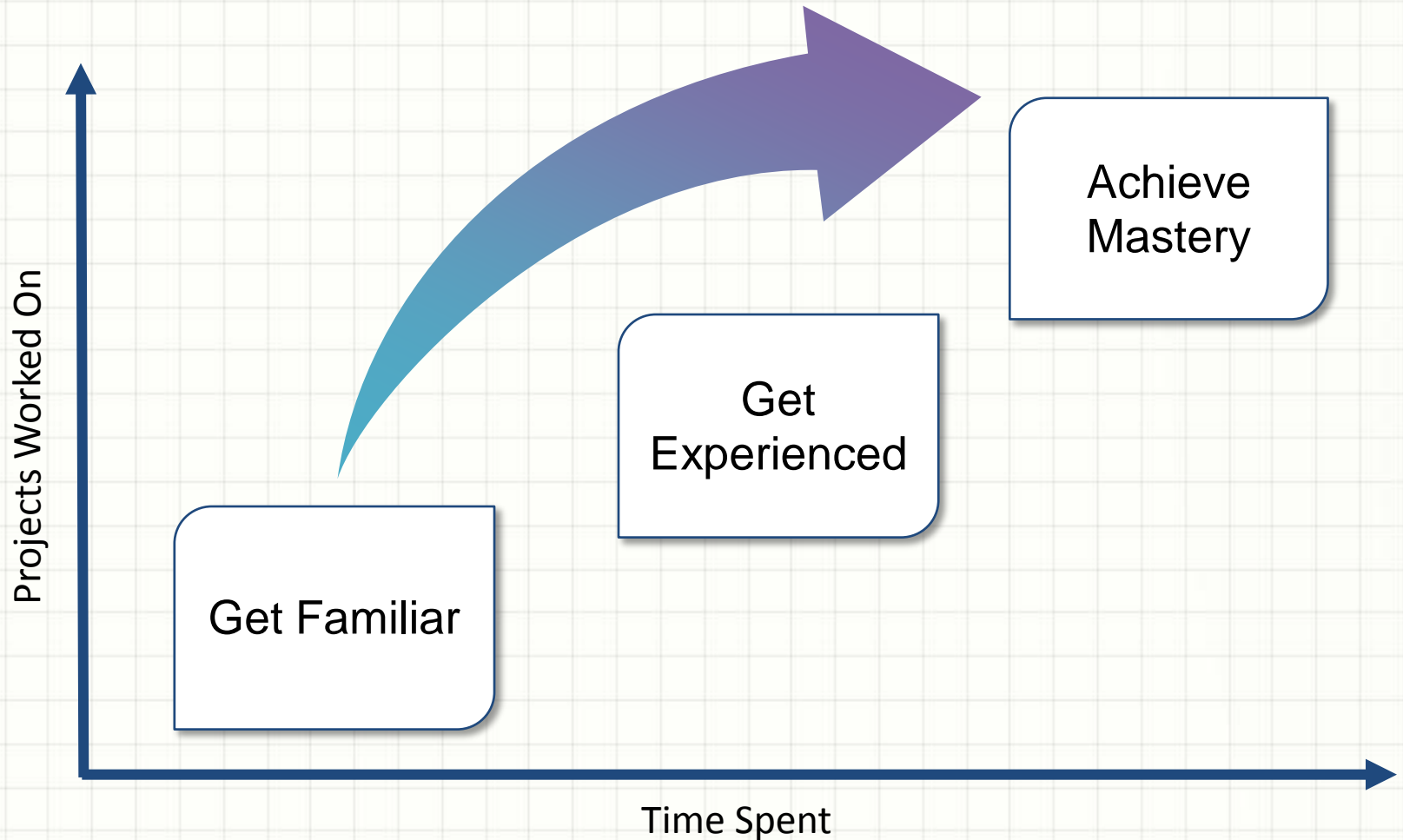
# Doing Your Best Work



- 35 Successful Agriberry 2014 young workers



# Working Toward Mastery



# Making Progress

- Luke, Nate, Ethan, Adrian, Helen, Jason, Montana...
  - 2009 first year
  - Challenges
  - Successes
  - 2015...



# Discussion

- What we have learned
- Best practices
- Take-aways





# Summary

- Consider realistic long term sustainability...
- Ask for help...
- Connect with resources near or far...





# QUESTIONS?



- Anne & Chuck Geyer, Owners Agriberry Farm Hanover VA
- Pierson Geyer, Field Supervisor Agriberry Farm
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