

# Farm Employee Management: Assembly of Farm Job Descriptions

File C1-73

**F**ile C1-74, *Put Job Descriptions to Work on Your Farm*, discusses the reasons why it is beneficial to have job descriptions for the positions on your farm. There are multiple bonuses to your operation. Good job descriptions aid in recruitment, interviewing, selection, and hiring of better employees. Once those employees are on your farm, employee training and development are enhanced because you know what needs to be done. This results in increased employee satisfaction and productivity. Accurate job descriptions aid in evaluating employee performance and determining if additional training is needed. Improved communication among employees occurs when everyone understands his or her duties and role in the farm operation. Finally, when you take the time to assemble and maintain updated farm job descriptions, your organization benefits as a result of this process of analyzing your labor requirements and identifying what needs to be done and by whom. The actual assembly and writing of job descriptions on your farm is not difficult, especially if you approach the task in a step-by-step manner.

**Conducting a Job Analysis:** Identify the key positions already in existence on your farm. Be sure to include every position in the job analysis process, including the positions and tasks performed by the owners and managers at your farm.

Then, for each position, conduct a job analysis. A job analysis is simply the process of breaking down and understanding the various elements of a position. First, explain to your employees that you are conducting a job analysis for the purpose of writing job descriptions and that you expect all employees to benefit from this process. Give each employee a form that asks three basic questions:

1. What do you do on your job? List every task that you perform from the most minor and simple to the most major and complex. List as many tasks as possible.

2. For each task you listed, state how often you perform that task, such as daily, weekly, monthly, several times a year?
3. For each task you listed, list the items of equipment or tools that you use to perform that task.

After each employee has completed this written exercise, take the time to sit down with the individual worker and go over it. You will likely find that some tasks were omitted. Inquire about what training was important to learn how to do these tasks and what additional training would be beneficial. Ask the employee, “If you were hiring someone to do your job, what qualifications or prior training would you want that employee to have?”

The job analysis process focuses on what work is currently being accomplished. However, it is helpful to think about what tasks may be going undone – and should be completed on a regular basis in your operation. This process identifies additional labor needs on the farm.

**Examine the Job Analysis Results:** Once the job analysis process is completed, scrutinize these results for what you might be able to learn. Sit back and think about whether the positions as currently configured make sense. Are there responsibilities and tasks that should be reassigned? Are the time and talents of some employees being wasted on menial tasks that could be assigned to newer, less experienced employees? Is there one or more positions that should be restructured or new positions to be created? Charting or diagramming the positions and work-flow on your farm may help you to see a better way to get things done.

**Elements of the Job Description:** Armed with the results of your job analysis process, you are ready to start writing job descriptions. The purpose is to paint a word picture of each job so that everyone in the organization understands what is expected

of that position. Most job descriptions will include at least six basic elements:

**1. Job Title.** Make sure the job title accurately describes the job being performed. Obviously, the types of jobs on your farm will depend on the nature of your operation, i.e., whether the farm is strictly a row crop operation or if you have a beef or dairy cattle operation, swine, poultry, or other livestock. Some operations need mechanics, computer technicians, bookkeeper/accountants, or general maintenance workers. Remember, a typical agricultural production operation has different needs from what you might have seen 30 years ago.

**2. Job Summary.** Immediately after the title, give a concise definition or description of the major job responsibilities. This is the type of short description that may be used for recruitment purposes.

**3. Job Qualifications.** List the knowledge, education, experience, or training necessary to perform the job. Include realistic physical requirements essential to perform the job such as an ability to stand for long hours at a time or lift and carry a certain weight. Do not make statements that are discriminatory on grounds of race, gender, age, or national origin.

**4. Job Duties or Tasks.** List all the job activities that the worker performs in that position. Start with the most frequently performed duties and proceed to the least frequent duties. The degree to which the position is specialized will impact the number of job tasks on the list. It may be helpful to include an approximate percentage of the time that duty is performed. At the end of the list, it is common to include “other duties as assigned by supervisor” to allow for flexibility.

**5. Work Relationships.** In this section, describe who supervises the position and whether the position includes any supervisory duties. Describe how this position relates to other positions in the organization.

**6. Time of Work Description.** This section is not intended to be a specific work schedule, but rather a description of the range of hours worked each week and whether the position includes night and weekend work.

Other information about the job such as compensation plans, benefit plans, and housing are generally not included in a job description. This would normally be included in a separate document for that specific purpose.

Once you have completed job descriptions for each position on your farm, you will find them to be invaluable tools in improving your organization. As you use job descriptions in employee recruitment, development, and evaluation, the process of keeping them updated will become easier as well.

As always, feel free to contact me with any of your farm employee management questions.

#### Farm Employee Management Series Articles

C1-70 - Get the Right Start in Hiring Employees

C1-71 - The Job Interview, and What Questions Can I Ask?

C1-72 - Do We Need an Employee Handbook?

C1-73 - Assembly of Farm Job Descriptions

C1-74 - Put Job Descriptions to Work on Your Farm

C1-75 - Evaluation and Selection of Job Candidates

C1-76 - Getting the New Employee Off to a Good Start on Day One

C1-77 - Employment Eligibility Verification – The Basics of Form I-9 Compliance

C1-78 - New Employee Orientation

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Prepared by Melissa O'Rourke  
Farm and Agribusiness Management Specialist  
morourke@iastate.edu  
712-737-4230

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