



LAND  
STEWARDSHIP  
PROJECT

# FARMING SKILLS EVALUATION

## Vegetables

**Goal:** The Farming Skills Evaluation is used by farmers and prospective farmers to assess competence areas in farming. Keep in mind that these skills will be obtained over a series of years.

*Two uses for the trainee:*

- (1) Take a seasonal survey of your exposure and competence in the given skill areas.
- (2) Use the seasonal survey to fill out a Growing Season Learning Plan to help narrow your focus for a given year.

*Two uses for the farmer/advisor:*

- (1) Request that the beginning farmer take the Farming Skills Evaluation before their seasonal work on the farm. The farmer/advisor may also help the trainee to determine priorities for the Growing Season Learning.
- (2) Farmers may wish to highlight certain areas on the Farming Skills Evaluation that are strengths on their farm.

*Please evaluate your level of competency in each of the areas listed below. This will help you to clarify areas where you need additional training or experience. Please evaluate all of the areas listed, even if you have no experience or there has been no change in your skill level. Keep in mind that beginning farmers don't need to learn everything at once.*

1. Fertility and soil management	2011 Season				
	No exposure	Some exposure	Some exposure & some competency	Functional competency	Advanced competence
<b>Core Competencies</b>					
Planning soil building crops	1	2	3	4	5
Planting and managing soil building crops	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding the basics of soil health	1	2	3	4	5
Crop incorporation	1	2	3	4	5
Organic matter management	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding soil testing	1	2	3	4	5
Managing off farm inputs (ie. Compost, fertilizers, minerals)	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Additional competencies</b>					
Fundamentals of composting	1	2	3	4	5
Hand built compost	1	2	3	4	5
Manure windrows	1	2	3	4	5
Living mulch systems	1	2	3	4	5
Foliar feeding	1	2	3	4	5
Compost and plant-based teas	1	2	3	4	5
Vermiculture	1	2	3	4	5

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<b>2. Bed/Field Preparation</b>	<b>2011 Season</b>				
	No exposure	Some exposure	Some exposure & some competency	Functional competency	Advanced competence
<b>Core Competencies</b>					
Primary tillage/incorporating organic matter	1	2	3	4	5
Secondary tillage/seed bed preparation	1	2	3	4	5
Tractor/implement use	1	2	3	4	5
Rototiller use	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Additional competencies</b>					
Raised beds	1	2	3	4	5
Plastic mulch	1	2	3	4	5

<b>3. Plant Care &amp; Culture</b>	No exposure	Some exposure	Some exposure & some competency	Functional competency	Advanced competence
	<b>Core Competencies</b>				
Vegetable crop planning	1	2	3	4	5
Cultivar selection	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding cultural needs of crops	1	2	3	4	5
Direct Seeding	1	2	3	4	5
Transplanting	1	2	3	4	5
Crop rotations	1	2	3	4	5
Spacing considerations	1	2	3	4	5
Succession planting	1	2	3	4	5
Basic concepts of plant botany	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Additional competencies</b>					
Climate control/shading	1	2	3	4	5
Support structures for plants	1	2	3	4	5
Pollinating	1	2	3	4	5
Grafting, pruning & training	1	2	3	4	5

<b>4. Weed Management</b>	No exposure	Some exposure	Some exposure & some competency	Functional competency	Advanced competence
	<b>Core Competencies</b>				
Weed identification	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding culture of weeds	1	2	3	4	5
Hand tool cultivation	1	2	3	4	5
Mechanical cultivation	1	2	3	4	5
Reducing seed sank	1	2	3	4	5
Mowing	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Additional competencies</b>					
Flame weeding	1	2	3	4	5
Inter cropping	1	2	3	4	5
Stale bed making	1	2	3	4	5
Natural and plastic mulching	1	2	3	4	5

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<b>5. Pest and Disease Management</b>	<b>2011 Season</b>				
	No exposure	Some exposure	Some exposure & some competency	Functional competency	Advanced competence
<b>Core Competencies</b>					
Designing healthy crop rotations	1	2	3	4	5
Pest identification	1	2	3	4	5
Application of pest control inputs	1	2	3	4	5
Disease scouting and monitoring	1	2	3	4	5
Pest scouting and monitoring	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Additional Competencies</b>					
Beneficial insects	1	2	3	4	5
Beneficial insect habitat	1	2	3	4	5
Designing bio diverse systems	1	2	3	4	5
Trap cropping	1	2	3	4	5
Barrier pest control	1	2	3	4	5

<b>6. Greenhouse Management</b>	No exposure	Some exposure	Some exposure & some competency	Functional competency	Advanced competence
	<b>Core competencies</b>				
Planning seeding schedule	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding planting media	1	2	3	4	5
Fertility in greenhouse	1	2	3	4	5
Germination techniques	1	2	3	4	5
Direct seeding techniques	1	2	3	4	5
Transplanting	1	2	3	4	5
Judging water needs - watering	1	2	3	4	5
Hardening off	1	2	3	4	5
Pest/disease management in greenhouse	1	2	3	4	5
Heating and venting a greenhouse	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Additional competencies</b>					
Building a greenhouse	1	2	3	4	5
Making soil mixes	1	2	3	4	5
Outdoor seed beds	1	2	3	4	5
In soil greenhouse growing	1	2	3	4	5

<b>7. Irrigation</b>	No exposure	Some exposure	Some exposure & some competency	Functional competency	Advanced competence
	<b>Core Competencies</b>				
Determining moisture needs	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding irrigation systems	1	2	3	4	5
Planning irrigation systems	1	2	3	4	5
Water source and quality	1	2	3	4	5
Irrigation management and scheduling	1	2	3	4	5
System maintenance	1	2	3	4	5
Winter preparation	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Additional competencies</b>					
Soil moisture testing	1	2	3	4	5

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<b>8. Harvest</b>	<b>2011 Season</b>				
	No exposure	Some exposure	Some exposure & some competency	Functional competency	Advanced competence
<b>Core Competencies</b>					
Judging readiness for harvest	1	2	3	4	5
Harvesting techniques and tools	1	2	3	4	5
Managing field heat	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Additional competencies</b>					
Forecasting maturity and yield	1	2	3	4	5
Collecting and processing seed	1	2	3	4	5

<b>9. Post-Harvest</b>	No exposure	Some exposure	Some exposure & some competency	Functional competency	Advanced competence
	<b>Core Competencies</b>				
Receiving	1	2	3	4	5
Cooling	1	2	3	4	5
Cleaning	1	2	3	4	5
Drying	1	2	3	4	5
Packing	1	2	3	4	5
Labeling	1	2	3	4	5
Dry and cold storage	1	2	3	4	5
Quality control	1	2	3	4	5
Sanitation	1	2	3	4	5
Delivery	1	2	3	4	5
Designing efficient pack area and equipment	1	2	3	4	5

<b>10. Equipment Use</b>	No exposure	Some exposure	Some exposure & some competency	Functional competency	Advanced competence
	<b>Core Competencies</b>				
Hand tool use and maintenance	1	2	3	4	5
Sourcing equipment	1	2	3	4	5
Tractor safety/emergency procedure	1	2	3	4	5
Other power equipment safety/emergency procedures	1	2	3	4	5
Basic tractor operation	1	2	3	4	5
Routine maintenance	1	2	3	4	5
Determining equipment needs	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Additional competencies</b>					
Equipment repair	1	2	3	4	5

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<b>11. Farm design/management</b>	<b>2011 Season</b>				
	No exposure	Some exposure	Some exposure & some competency	Functional competency	Advanced competence
<b>Core Competencies</b>					
Assessing and purchasing farm land	1	2	3	4	5
Creating an annual budget	1	2	3	4	5
Production record keeping	1	2	3	4	5
Financial record keeping	1	2	3	4	5
Business organization (e.g., LLC, sole proprietorship, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Legal considerations	1	2	3	4	5
Insurance	1	2	3	4	5
Determining cost of production	1	2	3	4	5
Writing a business plan	1	2	3	4	5
Field and waterway layout	1	2	3	4	5
Buffer zones	1	2	3	4	5
Organic certification	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Additional competencies</b>					
Holistic farm management	1	2	3	4	5
Biodynamic certification	1	2	3	4	5
Computer literacy	1	2	3	4	5
Woodlot management	1	2	3	4	5
Prairie management	1	2	3	4	5

<b>12. Marketing</b>					
	No exposure	Some exposure	Some exposure & some competency	Functional competency	Advanced competence
<b>Core Competencies</b>					
Identifying and developing markets	1	2	3	4	5
Naming your farm for image	1	2	3	4	5
Determining your niche	1	2	3	4	5
Customer service/outreach	1	2	3	4	5
Invoicing	1	2	3	4	5
Pricing	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Additional competencies</b>					
Newsletter	1	2	3	4	5
Branding	1	2	3	4	5
Signature crop	1	2	3	4	5
Online presence	1	2	3	4	5

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<b>13. Labor Management</b>	<b>2011 Season</b>				
	No exposure	Some exposure	Some exposure & some competency	Functional competency	Advanced competence
<b>Core Competencies</b>					
Determining needs	1	2	3	4	5
Interviewing	1	2	3	4	5
Determining compensation	1	2	3	4	5
Payroll taxes	1	2	3	4	5
Workers compensation	1	2	3	4	5
Employer legal responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5
Delegating tasks	1	2	3	4	5
Evaluation and feedback	1	2	3	4	5
Training	1	2	3	4	5
Legal aspects of volunteers and interns	1	2	3	4	5
Teaching commitment to interns	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Additional Competencies</b>					
Job descriptions	1	2	3	4	5

This document is a product of the Farm Beginnings® Collaborative.

The Farm Beginnings® Collaborative is a national alliance of independent regional groups of farmers and farmer-training support organizations working together to promote Farm Beginnings, a farmer training model that is community based, rooted in sustainable principles, and farmer led.

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