

Manitoba Farm Mentorship Roles and Responsibilities of MFM Interns and Trainees



Manitoba Farm Mentorship aims to get more successful farmers on the land in Manitoba. We are serious about helping aspiring farmers and new farmers to connect with successful mentor farmers. Folks who are attracted to this program are interested in:

- Organic or environmentally sustainable farming techniques
- Starting or managing smaller-than-average prairie farms
- Local or regional markets

The Organic Food Council of Manitoba and the community that is involved in Manitoba Farm Mentorship (MFM) hopes to reverse the depopulation trend of our rural areas by encouraging farmers to diversify, layer and intensify their farms, and seek locally-based networks and value-chains. We believe growers who have fashioned viable farms, market gardens and rural lifestyles have much to teach. **Based on the diversity of inquiries we have received from individuals seeking farm mentors, we have developed two categories of mentees: Interns and Trainees.** *(However, even if you feel these categories don't quite fit, farm mentorship may still be for you. Don't hesitate to contact us.)*

INTERNS

Interns are aspiring farmers who may have some, a little, or no farming experience and (usually) no land. Despite these significant challenges, Interns are serious about learning all the ins-and-outs of farming and are dedicated to starting up a farm operation within 5 years or so. These future farmers want to learn about commercial food production from the ground up by participating in the daily activities **on a farm**, usually for long term stays (at least one month to one growing season, or more). Interns are looking for successful farmer-mentors who are making a living (or a percentage of it) off their operation. Other learning objectives may include skill-building in specific production practices, developing a farm business plan, value-added ideas... the list goes on.

Interns must be willing to undertake the following:

- Complete MFM Intern/Trainee Questionnaire and submit \$30 for personalized mentor listing
- Contact mentor farmers to discuss your learning objectives and needs.
- Choose an appropriate mentor farm and complete the selection process with the mentor farmer – communicate with farmer/family, negotiate arrangements for your on-farm stay, complete any requirements of mentor farm family, etc.
- Uphold your end of the mentorship agreement. Commit to the internship for the negotiated time-period. Participate in farm tasks as agreed with farm mentor.
- Participate in MFM evaluations (once or twice yearly)
- Attend MFM and other courses, workshops, farm tours, and other events that complement your learning objectives. **Attendance at learning or social events isn't mandatory; however interns appreciate the value and importance of farmer training, networking, and community-building events to their farm success.



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TRAINEES

MFM receives countless inquiries. Among them, “Toe-dippers” exploring farming, new farmers building their operations, and established farmers re-strategizing their farms. The backgrounds and needs of these individuals are extremely diverse, but what Trainees have in common are questions... lots and lots of questions. Mentor farmers are an important part of helping these people toward their farming dreams.

Toe-dippers are interested in farming commercially or for their own consumption, but due to work, school, family, or other obligations, they are unable to make a long-term commitment to on-farm training. They may have a lot of research to do before they know whether they are ready to make the whole-hearted transition to a farming lifestyle. Some are looking for short-term working farm stays from a few hours to a few weeks. Others will have specific questions that can be answered by phone or email. Still others are exploring the diversity of farm operations in Manitoba and would like to visit or tour a number of farms.

New and Re-strategizing farmers generally already have land (owned or rented), and have specific questions related to production techniques, organic certification, accessing markets, business planning, and many more. They want to connect with mentor farmers who can answer their questions by phone, email, or in person. They may want to visit farms to check out what works and what doesn't. Generally, they don't have time to spend more than a few hours on a mentor farm – they prefer to get answers to their questions and take the knowledge back to their own operations.

Trainees must be willing to undertake the following:

- Complete MFM Intern/Trainee Questionnaire and submit \$30 for personalized mentor listing
- Contact mentor farmers to discuss your learning objectives and needs.
- Choose an appropriate mentor farm (one or more), and complete the selection process with the mentor farmer – communicate with farmer/family, negotiate arrangements for your mentoring relationship, complete any requirements of mentor farm family, etc.
- Uphold your end of the mentorship agreement. Return phone calls and emails from your mentor, show up for in-person meetings or visits. If you have made arrangements for a farm stay of any length, commit to it and participate in farm tasks as agreed with farm mentor.
- Participate in MFM evaluations (once or twice yearly).

We highly recommend all interns and trainees read/complete the following documents.

Links to these files can be found online

(www.organicfoodcouncil.org/resource_guide.php), or sent to you via email.

- For Interns and Trainees
- MFM Learning Objectives Resource

All MFM participants are strongly encouraged to attend relevant courses, workshops, farm tours, and other events. These learning and social events complement farm mentorship and build the sustainable agriculture community in Manitoba. Sign up to our email list by contacting manitobafarmmentorship@gmail.com to learn about events as soon as they are publicized.



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MFM SCREENING PROCEDURE

1. Having read through the above descriptions, we ask applicants to self-select their category: Intern or Trainee (and further, "toe-dipper", new farmer, re-strategizing farmer). If you have difficulty selecting a category, our screening questions should help to clarify which category you fall into.
2. All applicants are required to fill in our questionnaire, which includes questions about your farming background, interests and needs. This questionnaire helps us to personalize a mentor listing for you.
3. On receipt of the \$30 fee, MFM will provide a mentor farm listing including profiles and contact information for mentor farms that match your interests and needs.
4. You are then required to contact mentor farmers directly and you and the mentor(s) work out the arrangements of the farm mentorship together. It is up to you to do due diligence on each mentor you contact. We hope that every experience on every mentor farm is fantastic. We screen mentor farmers prior to placing them on our listing and offer resources to help you further screen your chosen mentors and ensure you will achieve your learning objectives. We are here to help, but **MFM takes no responsibility for the quality of farm mentorship experiences.** If you feel uncomfortable with a particular mentor, please listen to your gut and/or call us! You have the right to discontinue negotiations with a mentor if you are not comfortable with him/her. If your mentorship experience has already begun and you need to end it sooner than planned, there are ways to discontinue the relationship without burnt bridges. We have resources available, please ask.

CONTACT US

If you have questions or would like to become an MFM Intern or Trainee, please contact us:

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