

## The Farm at Sunnyside - Employee Information

### **About the Farm:**

**The Farm at Sunnyside** is located in the foothills of the Shenandoah National Park in Rappahannock County, VA. We are a certified organic farm and grow about 15 acres of vegetables and cover crops and we dabble in grains. We also manage 10 acres of fruit orchards, 1 acre of blackberries, a flock of 400 laying hens and an on-site compost making operation. We generally employ 6-8 seasonal full-time and part-time workers and 3-5 permanent employees. We sell our produce primarily through farmer's markets, but also a local CSA program and some wholesale relationships with restaurants.

We are extremely interested in regenerative agriculture, environmental conservation and inspiring new growers. We strive to use methods that improve soil health like cover cropping, reducing tillage and making our own compost. We have the desire to make agriculture a viable career for more individuals on our farm. We believe sustainable farming includes the ability to support and retain employees.

The farm property is owned by a non-farming family, the Laphams, who have placed the land in conservation easement and hired a conservation manager to restore and preserve native habitat outside of the agricultural areas. In 2019, the farm business will be jointly owned by the farm owners and the farm managers.

### **About the Managers:**

The farm is managed by Stacey Carlberg and Casey Gustowarow. Stacey and Casey have been farming for 12 years. They met as interns at The Farm at Sunnyside after a couple seasons of farming on other farms. They previously managed Potomac Vegetable Farms in Loudoun County for 4 years before returning to The Farm at Sunnyside in late 2014. Stacey and Casey both have backgrounds in ecology and biology and have found farming to be a way to mesh their careers with a desire to improve the environment. Stacey loves to set up artistic market displays, improve farm systems for efficiency and train new workers. Casey is interested in growing a wide diversity of crops (esp. HOT PEPPERS!) which compliments his love of cooking. He also cooks at two annual beer festivals at our local brewery, Pen Druid (and you could help him if you want!). Casey also is continually learning about soil health and methods we can employ at the farm to deal with and mitigate climate change.

You can learn a bit more about Stacey and Casey on the Farmer-to-Farmer Podcast.

(<http://www.farmertofarmerpodcast.com/episodes/sunnyside>)

### **Job Description for Seasonal Workers**

Seasonal workers will help with most aspects of vegetable production including planting, weeding, covering, staking, mulching, harvesting and marketing produce. These can be difficult and tedious jobs done in all weather conditions.

The crew meets with the managers at the beginning of every work day and the jobs of the day are explained. The growing areas are spread out, so we generally split into teams to complete tasks and we use walkie-talkies to answer questions or communicate any changes in the plans. We meet again after lunch to revisit what has been completed and share what we want to

accomplish before the end of the day. These meetings are a good time for us to explain why we do what we do and answer your questions. It's also a good time for employees to report any issues with equipment or observations from the fields (irrigation leaks, pest issues, etc.).

We will show you how to do jobs the way that we want them done. At the beginning of the season, we will work with the crew more to teach you and share our systems. When we are confident that you know how to do a job, you will work without us at times and you may even teach your co-workers how to do the task. If there is confusion amongst the team on our instructions, we want the crew to call us on the walkie-talkie. We will not always be working with you - as we're trying to stay two steps ahead of the team (*and make sure the bills are paid!*).

Full-time seasonal workers generally work 5 or 6 days each week. I.E. You will have one day off a week twice a month and you will have two days off twice a month. Days off are generally Sunday or Monday. If you have two days off, it will be Sun-Mon or Mon-Tues. Other days may be requested off for vacation or special occasions (*we don't want you to miss your best friend's wedding!*). Seasonal workers can use as many vacation days as months of work commitment (if you are here for 6 months, you get 6 vacation days off.)

Our schedule is fairly routine - as we'll start between 7:30 and 8:30 and end between 5:00 and 6:00 pm throughout the season. We take an hour to an hour and a half lunch break depending on the month and the temperature. Market days are longer with no long break. But, Mother Nature can sometimes throw a curveball into our plan - so it's good to have some flexibility and patience.

We think of the season as a bell curve. We have the least workers and work the least hours at the beginning of the season and the end of the season (35-40 hours per week with 3 or 4 employees). We will have the most workers and most hours in the middle of the season from the end of May to early October. At the height of the season from late July and until mid September, employees can anticipate working up to 60 or 65 hours per week.

First year workers receive some individual areas of responsibility which may include: high tunnel management, CSA management, wholesale packing, wash and pack room oversight, poultry care. Returning workers receive more responsibilities including market management, wholesale management, tractor driving and field management.

### **Ideal Candidates for Employment at T.F.A.S.:**

We are most interested in candidates who:

- Are excited to work outdoors (*and don't shy away from sweating*)
- Have experience living in a communal setting and like it! (*You must have some patience for roommates.*)
- Want to learn about agriculture and why we've chosen our methods
- Can follow instructions (*even if you have your own ideas on how to do something*)
- Have previously worked in team settings (restaurants, trail crews, farms, sports)
- Maintain a positive attitude and want to do a good job (*and ask "What else can I do?"*)
- Have some agricultural experience (*not mandatory*) and have decided this is a career they want to pursue.
- Are ready to "unplug" (*i.e. don't need to 'gram every hour - but you can at home.*)

- Are excited to live in a rural setting
- Have patience for some change in routine (*i.e. unreliable weather. Mother Nature does what she wants - and she's only getting more crazy.*)

We enjoy having a mix of brand new folks on the farm and returning workers. It is our long term goal to create a business that supports multiple folks in a year round capacity - should we all like working together and you like living in the area. First year employees receive hourly pay, free shared housing (4-5 roommates) with utilities included and an overall intro to life on a farm in Virginia. Second year employees receive hourly pay, free shared housing (with only 1 roommate) and paid registration for a farming conference of your choice. Third year employees are eligible for salary, health care and retirement benefits. Each year, returning employees receive more responsibilities and training.

### **Some of our philosophies:**

We have 10 years experience of managing crews and think we are humane bosses. If it's going to be super hot and muggy, we try to do the harder tasks in the morning. If it's going to rain cats and dogs, we try to harvest before the deluge. HOWEVER, this is a farm job - and you should be prepared to be out in all weather conditions to help the team finish its tasks.

We anticipate a learning curve – and you will get better, more efficient and more confident as the season progresses. It can be humbling to not immediately be great at a task. We will correct you and teach you so the team can be more efficient overall. We don't want to waste your time or ours.

It takes the whole team working together to keep the farm running efficiently and we want you to think about how your actions impact others. We look for folks with positive attitudes, but realize we all have bad days (*including the managers*). We want crew members to help each other out if someone is having a bad day. But, also keep the big picture in mind - this tough task or moment will pass! And, I'll eat some delicious tomatoes - cucumbers - carrots (*fill in whatever you like*) at the end of the day.

Farming is unique, as you typically live and work in the same community. This is tough for some folks to see the same faces day in and day out. But, it's also an opportunity to build long-lasting friendships as we've seen many a time in the past. We share lots of stories, insights and good meals with each other throughout the season. We typically find this quite rewarding.

Our most successful workers also make the time to take care of themselves. Knowing when you need alone time or time to clean your room and reset yourself is important. Setting a routine to eat well, hydrate and sleep well is key. Also, scheduling time off to get off the farm is important, too - use that vacation time!

We like to eat together every other Friday night. It's a way for us to be together - not working - and enjoying the fruits of our labor. It's a time that Stacey and Casey are not telling you what to do, but just having conversations. If you're lucky, Casey will cook a big Indian or Thai dinner. But, cooking is on a voluntary basis - folks usually take turns when they feel ready for it.

### **Compensation:**

We pay hourly (depending on experience) and provide housing and access to produce & eggs. First year workers will have a private bedroom in a 5 bedroom, 2 bathroom house with shared living, dining and kitchen spaces. (*No pets allowed in group house. This is firm.*) There is internet, laundry and a phone line (your cell won't work here unless its Sprint). Starting wage with no previous farm experience is \$8.00 per hour.

You may be asking "But, how do I live on \$8 per hour?" That's a good question. Typically, folks do save money here because expenses are so low (unless you have loan payments). Do the math for the avg hours per week and see if that will work for you. (40 hours in low season = \$1,280 per month , 60 hours in high season = \$1,920 per month) Employees are paid twice a month - on the 15th and the last day of the month via direct deposit.

We prefer paying folks hourly so there is no ambiguity to whether you are working or not. If we ask you to stay later to finish a task, but we've sent two other folks home - you will earn more money. If we ask you to take care of the chickens on a Sunday because no one else is around, you will earn more. We like this system more as managers.

### **About the surroundings:**

Rappahannock County is a beautiful, rural county with rolling hills inhabited by an interesting mix of artists, farmers, DC area commuters and small business owners (*but population is only 7,000!*). It borders the Shenandoah National Park, so is a good destination for outdoor enthusiasts. It is about 1.5 hours from Washington, DC and 1 hour from Charlottesville. There are no stoplights, no commercial chain stores and spotty cell coverage in the county. There are some interesting small local businesses (two breweries, an apothecary, a yoga studio + gym, a wood-fired pizza kitchen). The towns of Front Royal, Warrenton and Culpeper have more commercial shopping centers and are all about ½ hour away. We highly suggest bringing a car for getting off the farm and running errands.

### **Hiring process:**

If you've read all this and still want a job here, fill out your application and return to Stacey ASAP! After reviewing applications we will set up a time for an interview if we are interested. After the interview, we highly suggest a farm visit if you are able - just to get a sense of who we are and where we are. Then, we'll make a job offer.

Please visit our Facebook page ([The Farm at Sunnyside](#)) or Instagram ([The Farm at Sunnyside](#)) for more information and photos from the farm.

You can also check out our website. [www.thefarmatsunnyside.com](http://www.thefarmatsunnyside.com)

If you have further questions, please contact Stacey [stacey@thefarmatsunnyside.com](mailto:stacey@thefarmatsunnyside.com).