

WORKSHOP ON ECOLOGICAL FARM INTERNSHIPS: MODELS, EXPERIENCES AND JUSTICE

**October 13, 2016, 9:00am-5:00pm
Toronto, Ontario**

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Over the past decade, growing numbers of interns, apprentices and volunteers have been working on ecological farms across North America and Europe. Increasingly, farmers are looking to young people seeking hands-on farm experiences as a way to train the next generation of ecological producers and meet the labour demands of their operations. Interns often exchange their labour for room and board, a stipend and importantly, training in agro-ecological and/or organic production methods. This is a relatively new and potentially defining trend within the ecological farming sector with considerable significance for farm operators, interns and the broader food movement.

Recently, public attention has been focused on the ethics and legalities of internships across the economy, and throughout political offices and the non-profit sector. At the same, several legal cases around ecological farm internships have transpired in the US and in British Columbia as interns/workers have sought and received back-pay for their 'unpaid' or 'underpaid' work. This heightened public attention has thrown into question the viability, legality, and potentially the fairness of the exchanges taking place between farm hosts and aspiring farmers.

This workshop brings together farmers, interns, food and agriculture activists, researchers and legal experts to participate in an interactive discussion about the opportunities and challenges associated with emergent forms of farm work and training. The goal is to assess the possible trajectories that the issue may take while examining what 'just food labour' might mean for interns, farm workers, farmers and for those advocating for socially just and ecologically sustainable agriculture and food systems. We invite you to join us to examine these themes from a series of different vantage points that cut across organizations, geographical spaces and positions in the food system.

The workshop will be broken down into three sequential 'sessions' organized as follows:

I. Models of Farmer Training and Farm Internships

Representatives of CRAFT, ACORN and Soil Association, who are all engaged with farmer training and internships will describe the various models they have developed across Canada and the United Kingdom. The panelists will discuss what has and has not worked in the various contexts in which they operate and why. Additionally, speakers will share their thoughts on where the farm internship issue is headed and what can be done to create arrangements that might work best for all involved.

II. Perspectives and Experiences on Farm Internships

What insights on farm internships can be gleaned from those uniquely positioned in relation to the issue? This session investigates the politics and practicalities of farm internships from the perspective of a past intern, a farmer who hosts interns and an owner-operator that has moved away from internships and towards paid employees. The panelists will discuss the realities of staffing farms with interns and paid workers and the quandaries around fair compensation, training, and the potential for exploitation.

III. Justice, Law and Social Movements

Building on the previous discussions, this session tackles some of the thornier questions around farm internships. Panelists will take on issues of justice, legal considerations and movement building. What does just labour mean in a context in which many producers persist in a state of financial precarity? Who gets to be a farmer? Are internships legal in the context of various agricultural exceptions to labour laws? Are farm internships part of emerging alternative economies and movements?

Lunch will be served and a final report will document the presentations and discussion. A \$10 fee will be collected at the beginning of the day to cover the cost of lunch. Register by September 20 at <http://goo.gl/forms/92Y1cwiRccOy9FAx2>. For more information please contact foodandlabour@gmail.com or at www.foodandlabour.ca.