

## Frequently Asked Questions



**1. What is the apprenticeship season? Is it flexible?**

The program is 6-months (25 weeks), starting at the end of April and going until mid-October. This is to correspond with the general growing season in New Brunswick. The official start of the program is the Pre-Season Welcome Packages (*check the 2008 NBOFAP Calendar for dates*), and official end is the Season Graduation. In 2006/07, some apprentices arrived to their farms before the program start, others left before the end. In 2008, apprentices and farmers are requested to participate for the full duration of the program.

**2. Our farm hosts Willing Workers On Organic Farms (WWOOFers). How is hosting an apprentice different?**

WWOOFers generally visit farms for short periods (1-4 weeks), and then move on. Time invested in training them to the task at hand takes a lot of effort, and sometimes even slows down the farm's productivity. An apprentice commits to staying on the farm for a 6-month season. At first, the learning curve is steep (much like WWOOFers) as each task is new with lots to figure out. The initial training investment pays off as the season progresses. Tasks become more familiar, and the apprentice becomes part of the rhythm of the farm. Not only does farm productivity increase, but apprentices are often capable of taking on greater levels of responsibility.

**3. Does the program offer a stipend to apprentices or a mentor honourarium to farmers?**

This program does not offer monthly stipends to apprentices or farmers. If farmers offer stipends or other forms of compensation for work, this is through their own ability to do so.

**4. I don't live in Canada. Can I still participate in the program?**

The NBOFAP is intended to build and support the development of the organic community in this region, and people that are based in the area already are more likely to stay. Apprentice applications are prioritized in the following way: 1) Atlantic Canada, 2) Canada, 3) International. Selection of apprentices is done by FBC and farmers reviewing applications and talking with applicants. If someone outside of Canada is selected, they are entirely responsible for travel and entry (ie. visa, passport) fees and requirements. Farmers must be within New Brunswick to participate as farmer mentors, although we do hope that this program will grow to encompass the other Atlantic provinces.

**5. When do I have to have my application complete?**

Farmer Mentor applications should be completed and submitted as soon as possible, as we need to post the farm descriptions on the website in January. Apprentice applications are encouraged to be sent in before the end of January, but will be accepted until February 29, 2008

**6. Why is there an application and participation fee?**

Both farm mentors and apprentices are requested to submit \$35 with their application fee to cover administrative costs associated with processing the applications. Once farmers and apprentices have confirmed a placement for the season, the apprentices are required to pay a \$250 participation fee. This fee covers part of the cost of the program coordination, activities, resources and workshops. The funding that the NBOFAP received in 2006 and 2007 has ended and for the program to continue it has to become self-sufficient and for this to happen successfully we must charge a fee to cover costs. Bursaries may be available for apprentices that express financial need.

**7. Do I have to be in college or university to be an apprentice?**

No. This program has been purposely kept accessible to people that are not in school. Not everyone finds the formal classroom is the best way to learn, and instead find their skills and talents shine through hands-on learning.

**8. As a farmer-mentor, how much “work” can I expect from an apprentice?**

Apprentices are on your farm to learn-by-doing. Their labour should be effectively contributing to the productivity of your operation. While the first few weeks or attempts at a task will require some orientation and work will slow down, the time spent teaching the skills will quickly pay off. We know that farming doesn't work on a 9-5, Monday – Friday schedule, and the weather usually dictates when the work needs to be done. But remember – an apprentice is NOT cheap labour! They should be given adequate time for rest and relaxation. Research projects are estimated at 3 hours per week – this is considered part of their work. It is strongly advised that work expectations are clearly defined by the farmer and apprentice when starting to communicate. Creating a contract with work hours, vacation, living arrangements, etc. will help when challenges arise later on.

**9. How will the on-farm learning/teaching take place?**

Each farmer has unique skills, knowledge and teaching/sharing styles. Some may schedule a specific time each week for a dedicated discussion, others may teach as the opportunity arises. What is important is a good match between the farmer and apprentice to meet the learning goals of each. A trial period or farm visit before or at the beginning of the season is highly advised.

**10. As a farm mentor, am I required to attend the workshops each month?**

No, attendance is not required, but very welcome! In previous years, we found that the farmers that attended workshops added a lot to the discussion and seminars at the workshops, speaking from their experience. As well, the farm tours gave farmers a chance to see how they approached tasks and challenges differently – a great time to see how the other guy is doing it. Apprentices said they really benefited from the farmer-to-farmer discussion, overhearing what the concerns and issues were. Workshop registration fees for farmers and apprentices are covered by the program, plus a travel allowance is provided.

**11. My farm is not certified organic. Can I still be a farm mentor?**

The NBOFAP is open to certified organic, non-certified and transitioning organic farms. It is important to foster the development of the organic sector in NB, which takes shape in many different ways. The more diversity in farm experiences we can offer, the more apprentice opportunities we create.

**12. What is FBC's role in the program?**

FBC is responsible for coordinating the participation of a variety of project partners, including farmers, apprentices, government reps, research advisors, college faculty, outside consultants, funders, and other project partners. We play a major role in advertising and promotion, soliciting supporting funds, and coordinating monthly field days and workshops.

**Please direct any other questions to:**

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