



Farm Opportunities Primer

Getting Ready to Share Your Land

If you're thinking about sharing your land, it's important to put the time and effort into preparation before your search for a land user even begins. The information below will help you in preparing to look for land and engage with Farm Seekers.

Assess Your Readiness:

Before you invite someone to use your land, ask yourself how ready you are. You need to have a clear sense of

1. your vision and goals in land sharing
2. the suitability of your land for agriculture
3. the type of activity and agreement that is best aligned to your opportunity.

1. ARTICULATE YOUR VISION & GOALS:

A. Why are you thinking about land sharing?

The following are common goals that can help you establish your reasons for, and interests in, making your land available.

- Continue seeing the land used for farming
- Protect the land, water quality and natural habitat
- Preserve/improve the scenic character of the land
- Support farmers by providing access to land
- Mentor a farmer into your farm business on the land
- Enjoy a small stream of income from the land*

These are all valid reasons to consider land sharing and there may be others. What's critical is that you understand why it is important to *you*.

** It is advisable that revenue generation should not be the primary motivation to share land. If income generation is essential, other or diversified revenue streams should also be considered.*

B. What's your CHEAPVIEW??

You should capture your thoughts and feelings about the following. If, upon reflection, you aren't feeling ready tuck your answers away and revisit in 6 months' time.

- **C**oncerns: about land sharing, risk
- **H**opes: about relationship, for the land
- **E**xpectations: of Farm Seeker
- **A**ssumptions: about use of land & land user
- **P**riorities: what is most important for you?
- **V**alues: what is nonnegotiable?
- **I**mpacts: ones you might have on land user & vice versa
- **E**motions: how do you feel about all of this?
- **W**orries: what are you worried might happen?

C. What role do you want to play in the farming operation?

There is a full range of possible roles for the landowner in a farm seeker's operation. It could be that you

- co-own the farm business
- provide mentoring
- offer volunteer/labour to help
- lend equipment
- share ownership with a lease-to-own arrangement
- till fields annually
- receive rent and remain uninvolved
- hire a farmer and work with them daily



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What is most important is for you to decide what your role will be; this will help you in your search for the right Farm Seeker. For example, if you want to mentor and a Seeker meets all your other criteria but does not want any landowner involvement this disparity can be the difference between success and failure. Be aware that your level of involvement may influence your tax liability. If a landowner materially participates in the production of crops or the management of the farming operation, they must include the rental income in earnings that are subject to self-employment taxes. Landowners who do not materially participate in the operation pay no self-employment taxes. Check with CRA guidelines.

1. LAND SUITABILITY:

D. Characteristics Assessment

It's crucial to assess all aspects of land for suitability for food provisioning and farming before making the land available. Read the FarmLINK post on [Assessing Land for Agricultural Suitability](#) and evaluate your land, noting key observations. Be prepared to talk about all aspects about how it measures- the more information you are clear about, the more efficient your conversation with a prospective land user will be.

E. Land Use Options

Once you understand the characteristics of your land, consider what options are possible on it. If you're currently farming, you know what works on your land. If you're a non-farming landowner, think through the following. A common complaint from land users is that landowners don't understand what farming looks like. If your image of farming is an impeccable, weed-free field, and your tenant practices don't match your image, you are in for complications. It's ok if you are unfamiliar with farming what's important is being open to learn and identify the most suitable option for your situation. Agricultural operations are as diverse as the types of food we eat; they can include animal production, poultry for meat or eggs, dairy farms, mixed market gardens, greenhouse, flower, hay or grain, or fruit/berry production to name a few.

- What types of farming are you familiar with? Unfamiliar?
- Do you want animals on your land? If so, what types (e.g. chickens, turkeys, sheep, cattle, pigs, etc.) and what quantity do you have in mind?
- What is your perspective or preference for organic farming practices, including the use of fertilizers and pesticides?
- How private or public do you imagine a farm business being? E.g. on-farm market, large CSA pickup, farm tours okay?

You also should consider the extent to which you are comfortable allowing a land user to use improve or change your property and your willingness to cost share. Potential aspects this could include are fencing, water, temporary structures, planting of perennials, soil and drainage improvements.

F. Determine Price

There are lots of factors that go into setting price and every property and region in which the property is located is different. Some aspects to consider in price setting include, though are not limited to, the following:

- Is the land especially suited to one purpose in any way?
- What other uses do you have for the land? Is there an opportunity you are giving up that you would otherwise pursue?
- What investment do you have in the land?
- How are you valuing social and ecological goals of land stewardship?
- Are there other similar properties in the area to use as guideposts?
- What do you need for income and why?
- How do the DIRT 5 (**D**epreciation, **I**nterest, **R**epairs, **T**axes, **I**nsurance) of purchasing apply?



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G. Agreements

A good agreement is the foundation of a mutually rewarding relationship between the landowner and the land user; a handshake isn't enough when your land & livelihood is at stake. Leases, licences and MOU's are the most common agreements, learn about each option and decide what the best fit for your opportunity is. Check out FarmLINK's resources for guides, templates and definitions. Also review the [70 Considerations In Making A Land Share Agreement](#) to understand the types of information you will want to capture.

H. Prepare Questions for Farm Seekers

You ultimately want to know that the Farm Seeker will take good care of your land, be reliable, and committed to the agreement and your relationship. Prepare questions for potential applicants, thinking through the answers yourself and what you want to hear. Let these help shape your criteria for selecting someone, remember to be realistic! Common questions you may want to ask include:

- What's your farming experience and farm plan (including labour)?
- Do you have other income sources outside of your farm business?
- What is your general approach to communicating with others?
- Do you have a list of references?
- How will you take care of the land?
- Have you rented land before? Where? How was that experience?
- What level of involvement are you looking for with a landowner and why?

Create Your Listing

The Farm Opportunity profile questions on FarmLINK are specifically designed to pull key information about you and your opportunity into one place. As you work through the multiple choice questions, be mindful of to complete each as best you can. For the short answer questions provide as much detail as possible to illustrate to a Farm Seeker your land history, characteristics, facilities and your desired level of involvement, and anything else you want to convey that captures the opportunity and your readiness to share land.

Now you are ready to Connect!

USE THE MATCHMAKER FILTER FUNCTIONS.

Use the filters to apply your broadest criteria and see what profiles appeal to you. Review profiles of interest and take notes on why a particular Farm Seeker may be aligned with your opportunity, review against your criteria.

USE FARMLINK'S MESSAGE SYSTEM TO REACH OUT.

The message system allows you to connect and share information without disclosing personal contact details. Send a clear message of what in their profile may be aligned to your offering. Ask if they are still looking and share a few questions. Respect that not everyone will not want to share their personal information right away.

BE PATIENT, BUT ALSO FOLLOW-UP.

Be patient, Farm Seekers may or may not respond immediately. If a week or more has gone by you may want to send a follow up message. We all get busy and don't always respond promptly, it does not necessarily mean they are not interested. But also, don't be pushy - if you don't hear back after a follow-up, they are probably not interested. If a Farm Seeker is serious, they will respond to you regardless of if the opportunity is a fit.



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Prepare to meet with a Farm Seeker

Think of the exploration of a land match as a job interview; get prepared, be professional, prepare questions and share your passion. If things seem promising, it is best to suggest connecting on the phone, and ask your prepared questions and answer any they might have. A follow up action may be sharing additional information or planning to meet in person. Here's what to prepare

DO DUE DILIGENCE

One suggestion is meeting in a public place first and then plan a follow up site visit. Keep safety in mind; encourage the Farm Seeker to bring someone with them to your property and consider having someone with you as well. Remember, FarmLINK does not perform background checks on users, so be sure to sure to take whatever precautions you feel necessary.

KNOW WHAT TO ASK:

Have any questions prepared that have come up in conversation and/or as you worked through the [70 Considerations In Making A Land Share Agreement](#). Build yourself a checklist of all the criteria you are looking for in a Farm Seeker, with space for comments that you can use when meeting a Farm Seeker.

In a face to face meeting make time to:

- Discuss any changes that have come up for either of you since listing your opportunity
- Exchange information about what the opportunity and if it meets your criteria and need
- Get a sense of synergy of potential match
- Walk to the land and document with photos
- Take notes. Offer to share you notes with the farm seeker and/or ask them to share theirs with you. Having notes gives you a launching point to see what the other has understood.
- Decide on a next action, who is doing what and appropriate timeline. This could include further research, scheduling a next meeting possibly involving others that may be involved, sharing additional information, or drafting the beginnings of an agreement.
- Remember body language communicates over 50% of our messages! Throughout the meeting be mindful of your body language, avoid interruption, respond with empathy and listen to understand before you speak to be understood.

If all parties are aligned and interested in pursuing an arrangement schedule times to meet and work on an agreement that serves your need. Be sure to get everything in writing, don't make assumptions and consider including your communication commitment so you both are held accountable to dialogue. Also get legal advice/approval as needed make sure both parties have a copy of the final document.

Don't be afraid to walk away.

If at any point in the process you have doubts or bad feelings about the opportunity or Farm Seeker, regardless of how wonderful the situation may seem, know that deciding not to proceed can be the best course of action. This is harder after an agreement is signed so be sure to trust your intuition along the way.