



ORGANIC FARMING APPRENTICESHIP

APPRENTICESHIP DESCRIPTION

The Vilicus Farms Apprenticeship is for highly motivated professionals with a demonstrated desire to pursue farming as a profession. Vilicus Farms apprentices will be leaders, and their future farms will serve as examples. Through this intensive training experience Apprentices become an integral part of the Vilicus Farms' team and will participate in both the physical labor of the operation as well as the mental challenges of the farm business.

After the immersion season apprentices have the opportunity to commit to a long-term relationship that ultimately leads to farm ownership. This partnership and skill development will be tailored to the skills of individual apprentices.

“When we see land a community to which we belong. We may begin to use it with love and respect... That land is a community is the basic concept of ecology, but that land is to be loved and respected is an extension of ethics. That land yields a cultural harvest is a fact long known, but latterly often forgotten.”

- Aldo Leopold, 1948

1 Immersion:

Learning the “Nuts and bolts” of organic farming.

Responsibilities will generally include:

- Large-scale machinery operations & maintenance
- Field and crop scouting
- Record-keeping
- Planning and implementing conservation practices
- Weeding, mowing, and facility upkeep
- Participation in field days, farm tours, and conferences

After the immersion experience apprentices have the opportunity to commit to a longer term relationship.

2 Growth & Development:

Maturing farm management skills & land stewardship ethic.

Begin building farm business plan that will evolve into an independent enterprise. This phase could include online university coursework, expansion of initial capstone project and continued skill development.

3 Launch:

Honing business plan & graduate into managing independent operation. Implement business plan with mentorship support from the Vilicus Farms network of like-minded farmers.

Apprenticeship Partners & Organic Opportunities

Vilicus Farms recognizes that the Farm is part of the Food System. Partnership with organic food companies who share our vision is integral to the existence of the program. Through relationships with sponsors apprentices will gain exposure to the entire food system; including visits to food production, distribution, and marketing facilities.

PROGRAM SPONSORS





Stewards of the Land

Wanted: New Stewards on the Northern Plains 2015 Farm Apprenticeship

**Vilicus Farms
Havre, MT**

Vilicus Farms is a first generation, organic, dryland crop farm located in northern Hill County, Montana. Established in 2009, Vilicus Farms grows a diverse array of heirloom and specialty grains, pulse, oilseed and broadleaf crops within a 5-year rotation on approximately 4,600 acres. Vilicus Farms practices advanced land stewardship at a scale that matters. Integral to Vilicus Farms' mission of land stewardship is an aspiration to also steward new organic farmers. To that end Vilicus Farms is recruiting highly motivated individuals with demonstrated desire to pursue farming as a profession.

Apprenticeship Description

The 2015 positions are an initial 6-8 month professional development commitment. Ideally after this immersion experience apprentices will be ready to commit to shaping a longer-term arrangement that further develops their farm management skills, and prepares them to launch their own farm enterprise. Our vision is a 3 - 5 year program tailored to the individual apprentice's skills and learning needs that subsequently cultivates a successful new land steward in the northern plains ecosystem. Each year will come with increasing responsibility and independence, culminating in an opportunity for the apprentice to move into ownership and operation of their own farm enterprise. Opportunities are significant given decreasing acres in organic grain production, the increasing age of farmers in the state of Montana and expanding markets for organic products. Vilicus Farms apprentices will be leaders, and their farms will serve as examples, furthering the understanding that land stewardship must be integral to food production.

Duties and Capstone Project

This first year position is designed to provide an immersion experience in all facets of the dryland organic crop farm enterprise. Apprentices will work under the direct supervision of the farm managers. Specific training will be tailored to the skill sets and needs of the apprentice. Apprentices will be an integral part of the Vilicus Farms team and are expected to participate fully in the daily work planning sessions, weekly/monthly team meetings and visioning discussions. Apprentices will participate in the physical labor of the operation as well as the mental challenge of all aspects of the management of the farm business. Specific activities will be dependent upon the operations needed for any given season. Responsibilities and tasks will generally include:

- Large-scale machinery operations, tillage, seeding, cultivation, cover crop termination, green manure incorporation, swathing, combining, and crop storage/delivery.
- Field and crop scouting to monitor crop conditions, weed, pest, disease incidents, and soil health.



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- Record keeping, maintenance, review, development and analysis. Including documentation of field operations, organic certification records, and conservation practices.
- Machinery maintenance, periodic service, cleaning and repairs as needed.
- Planning and implementation of conservation practices such as wildlife and pollinator habitat, windbreaks, field border establishment.
- Weeding, mowing and facility upkeep.
- Participation in field days, farm tours, and conferences to further develop knowledge of dryland cropping systems, organic production and grow connections with the network of organic producers in the northern plains.

Apprentices will be required to complete one capstone project during his/her appointment. This project will be chosen based on the interests of the Apprentice and the current needs of the farm enterprise. Possible projects could include, but are not limited to: transition to biobased oils and lubricants, soil health monitoring protocol, specialty crop management, cover crop documentation, technology streamlining of in-field record keeping, wildlife/pollinator habitat and conservation practice implementation, energy in/out analysis, creating an annual sustainability report, or working with one of our buyers to explore increasing sustainability and risk sharing through the entire food system value chain.

Apprentices may have the opportunity to attend at least one off-season conference/learning forum and provide a presentation about their apprenticeship experience. Apprentices will be compensated for travel expenses associated with conference attendance.

Minimum Requirements

Applicants must have a keen interest in farming and becoming a farmer. They must be self-starters, have the ability to work independently, appreciate the challenges and joys of working outside in all conditions, be a solid problem solver, with an open creative mind, and embrace diversity. The chosen applicants must be mature individuals and excited to engage in their own learning process. Ideally, candidates should have a minimum of a Bachelors degree (or be close to finishing) or provide proof of success in an academic setting. Formal training in agriculture or farm management isn't required but an ability to apply whole systems thinking, curiosity, and a broad ability to learn and be reflective is a necessity. However, candidates do need to have had agricultural experiences that are sufficient to have led them to know they want to pursue a life of farming. Candidates must have a valid US drivers license with a good record, and a passport allowing travel to Canada.

Compensation

This first year apprenticeship will be approximately 6-8 months. Depending on the level of skills, abilities and desire at the end of the first term, the apprenticeship could be extended for future years each with subsequent deeper development of farm management skills. Our desired longer-term outcomes would include not only mentoring new stewards but also supporting them in developing a farm business plan that leads to establishment of a new, successful independent organic farmer in the northern plains. The first year apprenticeship is \$1,000 stipend/month. Full room and board is provided. Meals are nearly 100% organic with a focus on eating what is grown on the farm. There is an expectation that the apprentice will participate in all the household duties of cooking, cleaning



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and caring for the farmstead. Work schedule will be dependent upon farming activities, but anticipate periods of long days, 6 days a week during the growing season. We strive to provide 1 day (or two partial days off) a week off during the growing season. The farm is located 40 miles from the nearest town in a very rural location with limited population. Candidates should be willing to embrace this lifestyle and understand there is limited access to services.

Applicants must be able to provide their own health insurance.

Application Requirements

For additional information contact:

Anna@Vilicusfarms.com 406-459-9944

The farm landline phone number is 406-394-2469.

Applications will be accepted until January 30th, 2015. Interviews will be conducted by Skype or in person at the applicant's expense in early 2015. Start date of the apprenticeship is negotiable but ideally will cover an entire working season. For the right candidate we will accommodate university commitments. Fieldwork and seeding preparations can start as early as March.

Applications should be submitted to anna@vilicusfarms.com (Apprentice 2015 in the subject line). Application packages should include:

- 1) A cover letter
- 2) A current resume.
- 3) A list of at least three references.
- 4) A narrative no longer than 3 double sided pages, 12pt font .5" margins answering the following questions:
 - A. There are many ways to be engaged in creating a more sustainable agriculture. How do you know you want to become a farmer?
 - B. What does organic mean to you?
 - C. It's spring of 2020. Describe your vision of your typical day. Don't tell us what you think we want to hear. Tell us where you really want to be doing.
 - D. Describe an experience where you responded to changing priorities, and/or worked in an environment where you learned to expect the unexpected.
 - E. What skillsets, knowledge and abilities would you bring to Vilicus Farms? What skillsets, knowledge and abilities do you want to grow?
 - F. If you were hiring an apprentice for your farming operation what would be most important to you?



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**Growing Heirloom Wheat, Cover Crop Termination
Seeding Operations, Native Pollinator Plant Borders, Harvesting Beluga Lentils,
Northern Great Plains, Farm Headquarters**