

# The Custom Operator's Role

## *in Cultivating a Successful Relationship with Producer Clients*

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Cultivating a positive working relationship with the producer(s) that hired you will help each party build respect and trust for the other. It is important that you, as a custom operator, know what jobs you have the capacity to take on, understand what the producer has hired you to do, and create an environment that will encourage communication with the producer.

This fact sheet provides a checklist that you can follow to make the working relationship with a producer as successful as possible. We've focused on improving communication between you and the producer client.

### MARKETING YOUR SERVICES

- Attracting Potential Clients
  - Present a professional image both when working and while out in the community
  - Attend professional meetings/conferences
  - Use services such as the Custom Operators Database and regional extension directories
- Providing Service Information
  - Brochures
  - Services provided
  - Cost tables
  - Types of equipment used
  - Have a knowledgeable contact person who can answer producers' questions

### MAKING THE DEAL

- Types of contracts
  - Written
  - Verbal
- Items to include or discuss
  - Methods of payment
  - Payment schedule
  - Responsibility for providing supplies such as seed, baler twine, ag bags, inoculants, etc.
  - Responsibility for providing labor and equipment
  - Anticipated schedule of work
  - How delays will be handled

### BEFORE WORK STARTS

- Have all equipment and machinery in good working condition
- Have a supply of commonly needed parts
- Make sure all supplies such as seed or chemicals are ready
- Make sure all labor is available

### DURING YOUR WORK

- Avoiding disputes
  - Review the contract
  - Ask and/or answer any questions that may have come up since the last time you spoke with the producer
- Resolving disputes
  - Keep disputes private
  - Use a mediator if necessary
- Work Schedule
  - Keep producers informed
  - Let producers know when you expect to arrive at their farm—both day and time
  - Inform producers if you must make an adjustment to your schedule
  - Don't make promises you can't keep
- Provide information
  - If harvesting, provide information such as tons per acre, dry matter, and length of chop
  - Provide relevant information for other activities performed
- Delays
  - Let producers know quickly
  - Weather
    - Adjust work schedule if possible
  - Equipment/Labor
    - Find/have replacement labor available if needed
    - Quickly repair equipment or obtain replacement equipment while broken equipment is being fixed

## WHEN THE WORK IS COMPLETED

- Getting paid
  - Work with the producer to find a payment schedule that is acceptable to both of you
- Contracting for next season
  - Offer early contracting
  - Possible incentives for contracting early
- Seek ideas for improvement
  - Ask how your services could be more valuable to the client
  - Ask what other services the client could use

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