

The Producer's Role

in Cultivating a Successful Relationship with Custom Operators

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Cultivating a positive working relationship with the custom operator(s) that you hire will help each party build respect and trust for the other. It is important that you, as a producer, know what job it is that you want done, understand what the custom operator has been hired to do, and create an environment that will allow the custom operator to perform successfully.

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

CONTACTING THE CUSTOM OPERATOR

- Information to ask for:
 - Services the custom operator provides
 - Cost of their services
 - References from producers they've done work for and input suppliers/dealers
- Be prepared to provide this information:
 - Your complete needs—don't spring additional work on later or you may be disappointed if the custom operator doesn't have the time or capacity to do more
 - References—the custom operator may be interested in finding out what type of a client you are

SELECTING AND HIRING THE CUSTOM OPERATOR

- Inform both the custom operator you've selected and those you didn't of your decision
- 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

PREPARING FOR THE CUSTOM OPERATOR'S ARRIVAL

- Have fields and field access prepared
 - Remove tree limbs, large rocks, fencing materials, etc.
 - Mark fallow areas or other areas where irremovable obstacles are
- Provide status reports on crop development/maturity
 - Inform the custom operator of fields that are not ready (too wet, delayed maturity, etc.)
 - Let custom operator know if crops are maturing more quickly than expected
- Provide a simple map with field notes if necessary

WHEN THE CUSTOM OPERATOR COMES

- Avoiding disputes
 - Review the contract
 - Ask and/or answer any questions that may have come up since the last time you spoke with the custom operator
- Resolving disputes
 - Keep disputes private
 - Use a mediator if necessary
- If you are providing labor and/or equipment
 - Ensure availability when the custom operator arrives
 - Make sure equipment is in good working condition
- Be available to answer any questions that come up
- Let them do the job they were hired to do
 - Don't micro-manage

AFTER THE WORK IS FINISHED

- Payments
 - Have your payment(s) ready at agreed upon dates and times
 - If you are not able to make a scheduled payment, let the custom operator know as soon as possible
 - Offer alternative arrangements for late payments
- Contracting for next season
 - Were you satisfied with the custom operator's work? If so, consider contracting for next season now

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Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences research, extension, and resident education programs are funded in part by Pennsylvania counties, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

This publication is available from the Publications Distribution Center, The Pennsylvania State University, 112 Agricultural Administration Building, University Park, PA 16802. For information telephone 814-865-6713.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, Acts of Congress May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Pennsylvania Legislature. T. R. Alter, Director of Cooperative Extension, The Pennsylvania State University.

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Produced by Information and Communication Technologies in the College of Agricultural Sciences

CAT UA389 2.5M703ps ICT 4623b