



LEASING

Preparing to Communicate with a Farmer

First impressions are important, especially when trying to find the right farmer for your land. A great first conversation can set the tone for a strong relationship. You want to prepare to communicate the right information, ask the right questions, clarify as many details as possible, and build the relationship on a strong foundation.

As a Community Development Financial Institution, we invest in the prosperity and well-being of farmers, ranchers, and fishers who have limited access to financial resources. Our programs center communities of color, and promote just and resilient economies and natural resource conservation. We offer fair financing, business education, and support for owning or managing agricultural land. For more about California FarmLink, see: cafarmlink.org

1) Prepare some background information about yourself and your land.

About you:

- Your name
- What you are looking for in a farmer
- Your approach to being a landlord
- Any relevant skills and abilities, education, and knowledge

About your land:

- A description of the property
 - How many acres are available
 - Where it is located
 - What is unique about this land
 - Any easements or regulatory considerations
- Your history with the property
 - How long you have owned or managed the land
 - Do you live on the property? If not, how often do you want to visit it?
 - Are your family and/or community currently, or wanting to be, involved with the property?
- Your short & long term goals for your land and this lease
 - What can the farmer do to add value to the land?
 - What do you absolutely NOT want to see happening on the land?
 - What kind of production do you envision on the land? (Products, Schedule, Traffic, Conventional/ Organic?)

2) Prepare some questions for the farmer.

You ultimately want to know that the farmer will be a good tenant, take good care of your land, pay your rent on time, and be easy to communicate with in the future. Here are some common questions you should ask:

- Farming Business
 - What is your farming history and background?
 - How long have you been in agriculture?
 - Do you have a written farm plan? What is your current business model?
 - What kind of production do you envision on the land? (Products, Schedule, Traffic, Conventional/ Organic?)
 - What will you raise?

- Where do you plan on selling your products?
 - How reliable are your markets?
 - Do you have other income sources?
- Relationship Management
 - What is your general approach to communicating with others?
 - How do you manage your business records?
 - Do you have good history of sales?
 - Do you have a list of references?
- Land
 - ***How will you take care of the land?***
 - ***How will you help add value to the property?***
 - What is your leasing history? Have you rented land before? Where? How was that experience?
 - Are you currently renting other land?
 - How many employees/workers will you have on the property?
 - Will you need to have deliveries come to the property? How often?
 - How you will ensure my privacy and needs will be respected?
 - How much privacy/autonomy do you want?
 - Do you want or need to live on the property?
 - How many acres do you want to lease?
 - What interests you about this land?
 - How soon would you like to have a lease signed?
 - How many years would you like the lease to be?

3) Communicate with the farmer.

Now that you have some background information and a list of some common questions, you are ready to communicate with a farmer. Whether you send an email or call (whichever is more comfortable for you), when you are in touch, you should ask the following:

- Are they still interested in the property?
- Can they schedule a time to come out and look at the property?
- Do they have any other questions for you at this time?
- Thank them and let them know you are looking forward to being in touch.

4) Other things to consider

Understand that the farmer might be nervous. Be prepared to explain aspects of being a landlord that may seem obvious to you. Also understand that the farmer may have plans that might not be aligned with your vision for your land, and so might not be a good fit.

Do your own due diligence. California FarmLink does not perform background checks, credit reports, or do any research into the farmers and landowners who come to us. Make sure you perform whatever level of scrutiny you deem necessary to feel comfortable about who you are entering into a contractual relationship with.

Don't be afraid to walk away. If you have a bad feeling about the farmer, regardless of how wonderful the situation may seem in theory or on paper (or how desperate you feel), know that deciding not to lease your property to them might be the best choice for you. You should also know that if you do sign a lease agreement, and then later decide that things don't feel right, you always have the right to walk away, but you have to do it the right way. Please reach out to California FarmLink if you have problems with a leased property and are considering walking away. We can connect you with an attorney for some advice, if necessary.