



Agricultural businesses and employees use many types of written documents.

Formal Communication and Written Documents

When something is written down, it is less likely to be recalled or understood differently by the sender, the receiver, or third parties. A written record can be referred to and serve as a benchmark for similar communications in the future. Agricultural businesses and employees use many types of written documents to convey information, ranging from letters, memos, I-9 forms, job descriptions, and pay stubs to budgets, equipment instructions, ranch production records, and performance appraisal reports.

Communicating the Employment Contract

Employment is a contract relationship. On some farms, the employer-employee relationship is explicitly spelled out at the time of recruitment. Traditionally and still commonly, however, a grower and workers agree orally on terms and conditions, either in a hiring interview or shortly afterward. Their informal agreements tend to be much less detailed than written ones, omitting such key items as duration of employment or a seasonal layoff procedure.

Even where no written agreement exists, the employer's statements, company memos, written policies, application forms, and other communications imply terms of the employment contract. In addition, labor laws give workers many rights (for example, to work under safe conditions and to receive no less than a set minimum wage) that are not contained in written or oral agreements between employer and employee. All employment agreements, written or oral, expressed or implied from company actions or the law, are enforceable

A type of document that agricultural employers commonly use at or shortly after hire is an employment understanding. While not a substitute for a good handshake, a written understanding helps clarify basic terms of the employment exchange from the outset in one page or less. It normally specifies position type, days and hours, start date and duration (or at-will), wages, paid time off, and other benefits.