

# Agriculture Risk Advisor

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## 3 TIPS FOR HIRING FARM LABOR

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With some farmers struggling to find reliable farm labor, it is important to invest some thought in the hiring process. Here are some tips for finding the right help:

1. **Examine your needs.** You might have a general idea in your head of what work needs to be done, but it's best to be specific. Narrow down broad processes into specific jobs so you can determine how much help you truly need.
2. **Think about desired traits.** Do you need someone to fill a temporary need, or are you hoping that person can go on to fill a managerial role? You'll have to determine whether people skills are more important than manual labor or machinery skills, and list those traits in your job description.
3. **Consider hiring for a trial period.** If you're hesitant about a candidate but need immediate help, consider hiring them for a short-term trial period. This saves you from high employee turnover while buying you time to recognize your needs. It allows both you and the worker to communicate any frustrations and expectations after the trial period before considering whether the working relationship is worth investing in long term.

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## RISE OF ROBOTICS IN FARMING

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Producers are increasingly considering using farming robots to replace human workers who either can't or aren't interested in picking crops. Agriculture is a prime market for robotics since it is less regulated than other industries.

### ROBOTS NEEDED TO FILL UNWANTED JOBS

Farming's labor crunch is a global problem, and industry experts expect things to get worse in the years to come. Produce growers are struggling to man the fields, and higher wages aren't persuading people to perform the physically demanding tasks.

According to the Department of Labor, the 2017 median pay for an agricultural worker was \$11.41 per hour. In California, farm wages can top \$20 per hour. But this is still not enough to attract laborers at a sufficient level.

### ADVANCES IN FARMING TECHNOLOGY

Driscoll's, one of America's largest produce distributors, has been testing a robot made by Harvest CROO Robotics, a Florida-based startup. The robot is capable of covering 8 acres in a single day and replacing a team of more than 30 human pickers.

Another emerging farming technology is a "no-touch" vineyard developed by researchers at UC Davis, which waters vines and picks fruit while improving yields, quality and costs. It costs about 7 cents in labor per vine to manage the touchless vineyard, compared to \$1 per vine in a conventional vineyard.

Although robotics isn't expected to steal all of the farming labor jobs, experts believe it could still be a disruptive technology, requiring a change in the way traditional growers operate.