Crew Assistant Description

Against the Grain

**Overview:**

Against the Grain is a small-scale diversified farm located 15 minutes from downtown Boone in Zionville, NC.  The farm is situated on 35-acres and raises a broad spectrum of certified Biodynamic and Organic vegetables on a little under 2 acres, as well as Animal Welfare Approved, GMO-free, grass-fed beef.  We focus on four main market channels, including a weekly farmer's market, a 20 week/115-member vegetable CSA, several area restaurants, and a local food hub.

The 2024 season will be our thirteenth year in crop production and eleventh year in animal production at our current farm place.  We are continuing to refine our crop rotation, cover crop management, harvesting and composting techniques.  Our focus at Against the Grain is to nurture the soil in order to grow high quality, nutritious food for our local community.

All members of the farm crew work at large on all aspects of vegetable production and harvest. In addition, each crew member is also a member of one or more teams, which address special areas of focus on the farm.  These teams include production, harvest, Biodynamic/compost, livestock, greenhouse and community.

**Production Methods:**

Our vegetables are certified Organic by One Cert, using the NOP standards and by the Real Organic Project. Approximately three quarters of our beds are transplanted every season, and the remaining beds are direct seeded.  We plant a diversity of crops and successions in order to have produce for our year-round markets.  Our production system involves reduced tillage methods, so we use a flail mower, rotary harrow and silage tarps to prepare our beds.  We control weeds predominantly with hand tools, in addition to the use of a Farmall Super-A cultivating tractor.

We choose to build the soil by planting cover crops, spreading compost and mulching with straw.  We also add organically approved single source inputs (alfalfa meal, rock phosphate and lime).  True to Biodynamic methods, we view our farm as an organism; therefore, our focus is on building and feeding the microbial life of the soil, generating fertility on the farm and preserving sensitive ecological aspects of this land.  We apply all of the Biodynamic preparations each season, and typically make a few of the preparations on farm.

In order to remain profitable as a small farm it is a must to work quickly and efficiently.   We believe that sustainability involves more than just methods of production.  Financial sustainability is essential to the success of small farms. We are committed to keeping thorough production records and expect our crew members to participate.  We are not a homestead or hobby farm, and therefore must keep the bottom line in mind.  However, we also believe in sustainability of agricultural communities, and fully support the artistic, cultural, and social aspects of producing nourishing food.

**Farm Crew Position Summary:**

For the 2024 season, we are hiring full time crew positions who will work with farmers, Holly and Andy, as well as farm manager, Anthea and crop manager, Monica. If you are looking to gain more experience growing organic vegetables, we welcome you to apply to work at ATG!

Crew members will fill specific positions and roles, determined by both the farm’s needs and crew members interests and skill set. Positions include production assistant, greenhouse assistant, BD and compost assistant, CSA manager, livestock assistant, pack shed coordinator, crop assistant, documentation assistant and marketing assistant. A complete list is available upon request.

**Crew Position Requirements (general):**

**-Extensive experience:**  A minimum of one full main growing season (or equivalent experience) on another Biodynamic or Organic farm(s). We anticipate that applicants will have some experience in some areas of small-scale agriculture including seeding and transplanting, soil fertility, pest management, irrigation, harvesting, marketing and livestock management. Less experience considered, with an appropriate adjustment in the starting monthly stipend.

-A passion for growing vegetables and a love for agricultural labor.

-The ability to crouch, squat, bend and kneel for extended periods of time.

-The ability to lift 30lbs frequently and 50lbs regularly.

-A valid driver’s license and clean driving record for the past 5 years.

-**The ability to engage in self-care.**  Farming can be very challenging both physically and emotionally.  It is imperative that crew members have the ability to care for themselves in ways that enable them to contribute constructively to the crew and community.

-**The capacity to contribute to and maintain a collaborative and cooperative work environment**, including strong communication skills as well as a constructive approach to problem solving.

-**A commitment to work at ATG for full growing season (at minimum).**  The growing season ramps up in mid to late February and winds down in October/November.  Modified work schedules and equivalent income through the winter is an option for crew members who are staying for another season.

-**Adaptability and flexibility are key**.  The vegetables are the economic engine of ATG, and as a result they require a lot of time and attention.  All crew members will participate in vegetable field production and harvesting in addition to their responsibilities associated with specific positions.

-**Ability to work independently and as well as on a team.**  Crew members will be working side-by-side with farmers and farm manager frequently at the beginning of the season.  But as the season progresses, the farmers have tasks around the farm that are their responsibility alone, which leaves crew members to work more independently.  However, because ATG is a relatively small farming operation, we place a strong emphasis on teamwork and group dynamics.

-**The drive for independent learning and innovation.**  It is imperative that crew members have a passion for knowledge around both general and specific aspects of growing food for body, soul and spirit.  We will support this with access to the on-farm library as well as facilitated evening discussions (based on interest and crew motivation).  Additionally, there are two CRAFT networks, hosted by Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture and Organic Growers School, which host field days on farms in our area, and we strongly encourage crew members to attend.

**-Willingness to engage in community building and shared space upkeep.**  The work of the farm does not happen in isolation to the dynamic of our core community.  Attendance at a monthly meeting/potluck is required in addition to chores surrounding living in community. The inability to equitably contribute to keeping the shared living spaces clean will result in a reconsideration of employment at ATG.

**-Ability to work quickly and efficiently while keeping an eye on details.**

-Covid vaccinations are not required and there is no mask mandate on the farm.

**Compensation, Schedule and Time-off:**

-Hourly wage will be based on experience and is negotiable, but generally, we will start full time crew members at $8.50.

-Compensation for full time crew also includes housing, produce and meat from the farm.  The housing includes on-the-grid, insulated sleep sheds and a common kitchen for cooking. There are composting toilets and a four-seasons insulated shower with hot water.  Crew members also have access to an abundance of vegetables (seasonal and dependent on specific crop yields) and meat.  The farm values room and board at $350/month.  The tiny house with board is valued at $450/month.

-We generally work Monday through Friday, 7:30am to 4:30pm (with an hour off for lunch) during the height of the season.  We anticipate that one crew member (can be either part time or full time) will work Tuesday through Saturday (with an hour off for lunch).

-The farm will offer a 40 hour paid week off during the months of June or July for all full-time crew.  Sunday to Sunday is the best vacation schedule (which allows for an 8-day break), but if starting one’s break on a weekday is necessary, the farm can only offer 7 days (ie Tuesday through Monday off and Tuesday back on the farm).  Additionally, if crew members need additional time for family emergencies or other personal situations that arise, the farm will do its best to accommodate.  However, the time away will most likely result in a reduction in the weekly stipend (prorated only for the week when the time was missed).

-The farm offers 4 hours of paid sick/personal leave for every 173 hours worked (or approximately 1-month of full-time work). Sick leave can also be used for personal errands and appointments.

-We have a rotating Sunday chore schedule for all crew who live on the farm.  These chores will include opening and closing tunnels, livestock chores and watering seedlings/fresh transplants.  This schedule will result in crew members being responsible for weekend chores every third or fourth weekend, depending on how many crew members live on the farm. The time commitment for weekend chores will vary as the chore list varies, but expect a 3-4 hour time commitment.  We ask that the crew member responsible for weekend chores to stay on the farm for the day in case any unforeseen weather or other events occur.

-There is opportunity for crew members who are interested in participating in the market team and the community team.  The farm will offer additional compensation to crew members who would like to go to market on a regular Saturday rotation, either in addition to the Monday-Friday schedule or on a Tuesday-Saturday schedule.

-For full time crew members who return for subsequent seasons, year-round work is available with reduced hours, alternate schedules, and paid or unpaid winter vacation (2-6 weeks in December, January, or February and depending on the crew member’s commitment to the farm).

**Notes on Part Time Crew:**

-Hourly wages for part time crew start at $8.50/hour.

-Typically, the farm is not able to offer housing or a meat stipend for part time crew.

-We expect part time crew members to commit to approximately 3 full days of work per week.

-School credit is an option, and priority is given to students who express a desire to work additional hours outside of their school credit internship requirements.  If crew members only work enough hours to fulfill their internship credit, no cash compensation is offered, as they are considered interns.

-We work 6 days a week, so we can accommodate a variety of schedules for part time crew members, with preference given to folks who can work on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays.

-Part time crew members are not offered paid vacation leave, but the farm’s schedule can typically accommodate requested time off.  Typically, part time crew will either make up their missed time in the weeks leading up to or following their vacation OR accept a reduced pay check.

Please contact Holly Whitesides 828-406-4439 or atgfarm@gmail.com for an application.