

CAREER GUIDE FOR AGRICULTURAL GRADER & SORTER

SOC Code: 45-2041

Pay Band(s): 4, and 5 ([Salary Structure](#))

Standard Occupational Description: Grade, sort, or classify unprocessed food and other agricultural products by size, weight, color, or condition.

Agricultural Grader & Sorter positions in the Commonwealth are assigned to the following Roles in the [Agricultural Services Career Group](#):

[Agricultural Specialist IV](#)

[Agricultural Specialist V](#)

While Agricultural Graders & Sorters within the Commonwealth are all located within the Agricultural Services Career Group, individuals may want to pursue other opportunities within the Commonwealth depending upon individual training, education, knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests.

Other Career Group(s) that may be of interest are:

[Environmental Services](#)

[Laboratory Research Technicians and Specialists](#)

[Natural Resources Specialists](#)

[Administrative Services](#)

[Stores and Warehousing Operations](#)

SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, ABILITIES AND TASKS

(Technical and Functional Expertise)

Skills

Note: *The technical and functional skills listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Agricultural Graders & Sorters commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the skills listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

1. Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
2. Conducting tests and inspections of products, services, or processes to evaluate quality or performance.
3. Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
4. Using scientific rules and methods to solve problems.

Knowledge

Note: *The technical and functional knowledge statements listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Agricultural Graders & Inspectors commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the knowledge listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

The **Knowledge** of:

Raw materials, production processes, quality control, costs, and other techniques for maximizing the effective manufacture and distribution of goods.

Abilities

Note: *The technical and functional abilities listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Agricultural Graders & Sorters commonly recognized by most employers. Typically, you will not be required to have all of the abilities listed to be a successful performer. Recruitment and selection standards for an individual state job must be based on the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for that job as indicated in the job announcement and job description in the Employee Work Profile.*

The **Ability** to:

1. Generate or use different sets of rules for combining or grouping things in different ways.
2. Arrange things or actions in a certain order or pattern according to a specific rule or set of rules (e.g., patterns of numbers, letters, words, pictures, mathematical operations).
3. Quickly and accurately compare similarities and differences among sets of letters, numbers, objects, pictures, or patterns. The things to be compared may be presented at the same time or one after the other. This ability also includes comparing a presented object with a remembered object.
4. Quickly move your hand, your hand together with your arm, or your two hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble objects.
5. Make precisely coordinated movements of the fingers of one or both hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble very small objects.
6. Make fast, simple, repeated movements of the fingers, hands, and wrists.
7. See details at close range (within a few feet of the observer).
8. Tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.
9. Apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense.
10. Quickly respond (with the hand, finger, or foot) to a signal (sound, light, picture) when it appears.

Tasks

Note: *The following is a list of sample tasks typically performed by Agricultural Graders & Sorters. Employees in this occupation will not necessarily perform all of the tasks listed.*

Tasks

1. Grades and sorts products, according to factors, such as color, length, width, appearance, feel, and smell.
2. Segregates products on conveyor belt or table, according to grade, color, size, fiber quality, species, deformities, and sex.
3. Estimates weight of product visually and by feel.
4. Pulls product sample apart between fingers to determine fiber quality.
5. Examines product fibers through microscope to determine maturity and spirality of fibers.
6. Records grade on tag or shipping, receiving, or sales sheet.
7. Weighs and places products in containers, according to grade and marks grade on containers.
8. Discards inferior or defective products and foreign matter and places acceptable products in containers for further processing.

INTERESTED?

Like people, occupations have traits or characteristics. These characteristics give important clues about the nature of the work and work environment, and give you an opportunity to match your own personal interests to a specific occupation. When you choose a job in an occupation that matches your own interests you have taken an important step in planning a successful and rewarding career.

The occupation of Agricultural Grader & Sorter has **Realistic** and **Conventional** characteristics as described below:

Realistic — Realistic occupations frequently involve work activities that include practical, hands-on problems and solutions. They often deal with plants, animals, and real-world materials like wood, tools, and machinery. Many of the occupations require working outside, and do not involve a lot of paperwork or working closely with others.

Conventional — Conventional occupations frequently involve following set procedures and routines. These occupations can include working with data and details more than with ideas. Usually there is a clear line of authority to follow.

LICENSURE, REGISTRATION, OR CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Generally this is required for Agricultural Grader & Sorter positions in state government. Nearly all graders require some type of licensing, certification or special training by USDA. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services offers additional information on licensure/certification: <http://www.vdacs.state.va.us/>

EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Department of Labor provides the following information:

Graders and sorters of agricultural products examine agricultural commodities being prepared to be packed for market and classify them according to quality or size guidelines. They grade, sort, or classify unprocessed food and other agricultural products by size, weight, color, or condition and discard inferior or defective products. For example, graders sort eggs are by color and size and also examine the fat content, or marbling, of beef, assigning a grade of “Prime,” “Choice,” or something else, as appropriate. The grade that is assigned determines the price at which the commodity may be sold.

Graders and sorters may work with similar products for an entire shift, or they may be assigned a variety of items. They may be on their feet all day and may have to lift heavy objects, whereas others may sit during most of their shift and do little strenuous work. Some graders work in clean, air-conditioned environments, suitable for carrying out controlled tests. Some may work evenings or weekends because of the perishable nature of the products. Overtime may be required to meet production goals.

For graders and sorters, training requirements vary on the basis of their responsibilities. For those who perform tests on various agricultural products, a high school diploma is preferred and may be required. Simple jobs requiring mostly visual inspection may be filled by beginners provided with short-term on-the-job training.

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services offers additional information on career opportunities: <http://www.vdacs.state.va.us/>

The State Council of Higher Education lists Virginia State University and Ferrum College as Virginia educational institutions offering a program in agricultural science.

COMMONWEALTH COMPETENCIES

Competencies are a set of identified behaviors, knowledge, skills, and abilities that directly and positively impact the success of employees and the organization. Competencies can be observed and measured. When consistently demonstrated, competencies make employees particularly effective in their work. Competencies help lay out a road map to career success. You can use the Commonwealth Competencies to help improve your individual performance by adopting behaviors that make high performing employees successful in their jobs. In this way, you can use the Commonwealth Competencies for your further professional development.

The Commonwealth Competencies are:

1. Technical and Functional Expertise
2. Understanding the Business
3. Achieving Results
4. Serving the Customer
5. Teamwork
6. Interpersonal and Communication Skills
7. Leadership and Personal Effectiveness

The above competencies may be applied to employees throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. They can be rank-ordered by agencies and hiring managers to represent the needs of a specific job. The rank ordering will change depending upon the occupation, an organization's priorities, the actual job requirements, and the supervisor's preferences.

Career success is both about what you do (applying your technical knowledge, skills, and ability) and how you do it (the consistent behaviors you demonstrate and choose to use) while interacting and communicating with others. Hopefully, by studying the Commonwealth competencies, identifying your developmental opportunities, and working to refine your own competence, you can take charge of your career!

For additional information about the **Commonwealth Competencies** go to: http://jobs.state.va.us/cc_planningctr.htm. For the competencies, we first list the competencies and then define each. Finally, we list competency indicators; to describe what successful performance looks like.

COMMONWEALTH CAREER PATH

Career opportunities in the Commonwealth are not limited to moving "up" to the next highest role and pay band, changing positions, or to becoming a supervisor. That's because most roles describe a broad group of occupationally related positions that perform a range of work that requires increased knowledge and skills. For that reason, Commonwealth roles describe the career paths within the same or higher-level role for the same or different Career Group. The

broad salary range and the Commonwealth’s pay practices provide flexibility in recognizing career development and advancement. ([Salary Structure](#))

For example: **Agricultural Grader & Sorter**

PAY BAND	PRACTITIONER ROLES
4	Agricultural Specialist IV
5	Agricultural Specialist V

PAY BAND	MANAGER ROLES
4	Agricultural Manager I
5	Agricultural Manager
6	Agricultural Manager
7	Agricultural Manager

Sample Career Path

Agricultural Specialist IV

The Agricultural Specialist IV role provides career tracks for graders whose responsibilities range from journey level inspections to leading staff in grading a product to see if it meets an already established grade. Duties include performing sampling and grading of a variety of agricultural products and services or implement research and teaching protocols and programs.

Agricultural Specialist V

The Agricultural Specialist V role provides career tracks for agricultural specialists who serve as experts coordinating and/or as a supervisors supervising complex agricultural regulatory programs or commodity programs in marketing.

Agricultural Manager I

The Agricultural Manager I role provides career tracks for managers of correctional farm or a research, extension or and/or teaching farm. Responsibilities include planning and directing program operations; managing and scheduling work activities; coordinating planting, harvesting and delivery of crops and livestock. Employees may manage administrative functions of farm programs including budget, procurement and record management in addition to supervision of operational work units/teams of full-time staff, student or inmate labor.

Agricultural Manager II

The Agricultural Manager II role provides career tracks for managers who manage and coordinate complex agricultural programs and/or services such as plant and pest services, and marketing services; or agricultural research operations in support of research, extension or teaching activities. Responsibilities include planning and directing program objectives to ensure quality customer service, development of internal (staff) and/or external (industry) training programs; and uniform enforcement of statutory laws, regulations, procedures and/or quality control standards. Employees serve as technical experts providing consultation to other program areas or to businesses and consumers as needed.

Agricultural Manager III

The Agricultural Manager III role provides career tracks for managers of a major statewide agricultural compliance program with multiple work units, offices, or sub-divisions, such as plant and pest services, product and industry standards, food distribution, or commodity grading services. Provides program direction and coordination of services and resources for the

protection of the economic, health, safety, and other interests of the agricultural industry and the general public.

Agricultural Manager IV

The Agricultural Manager IV role provides career tracks for managers who serve as division directors for multiple statewide agricultural and consumer services programs including meat and poultry, pesticide services, plant and pest services, consumer affairs, product and industry standards, and dairy and foods. Develops and implements strategies, policies, and legislative initiatives that support economic growth and consumer protection.

ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND AT:

O*NET (Occupational Information Network)

http://online.onetcenter.org/gen_search_page

Virginia Employment Commission

<http://www.alex.vec.state.va.us/>

Career One Stop

<http://www.careeronestop.org/>

Virginia Career Resource Network

<http://www.vacrn.net/>