

CAREER GUIDE FOR AGRICULTURAL INSPECTOR

SOC Code: 45-2011

Pay Band(s): 3, 4, and 5 ([Salary Structure](#))

Standard Occupational Description: Inspect agricultural commodities, processing equipment, and facilities, and fish and logging operations, to ensure compliance with regulations and laws governing health, quality, and safety.

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

[Agricultural Specialist III](#)

[Agricultural Specialist IV](#)

[Agricultural Specialist V](#)

While Agricultural Inspectors 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](#)

[Public Safety Compliance](#)

[Veterinary Science](#)

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 Inspectors 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. Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.
2. Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.
3. Talking to others to convey information effectively.
4. Conducting tests and inspections of products, services, or processes to evaluate quality or performance.
5. Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.
6. Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
7. Using scientific rules and methods to solve problems.

8. Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
9. Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.
10. Identifying complex problems and reviewing related information to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions.

Knowledge

Note: *The technical and functional knowledge statements listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Agricultural 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:

1. Techniques and equipment for planting, growing, and harvesting food products (both plant and animal) for consumption, including storage/handling techniques.
2. Structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.
3. Raw materials, production processes, quality control, costs, and other techniques for maximizing the effective manufacture and distribution of goods.
4. Laws, legal codes, court procedures, precedents, government regulations, executive orders, agency rules, and the democratic political process.
5. Plant and animal organisms, their tissues, cells, functions, interdependencies, and interactions with each other and the environment.

Abilities

Note: *The technical and functional abilities listed below are based on general occupational qualifications for Agricultural Inspectors 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. Tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.
2. Read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.
3. Communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
4. Communicate information and ideas in writing so others will understand.
5. Apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense.
6. Listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.
7. Speak clearly so others can understand you.
8. Combine pieces of information to form general rules or conclusions (includes finding a relationship among seemingly unrelated events).
9. Identify or detect a known pattern (a figure, object, word, or sound) that is hidden in other distracting material.
10. 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.

Tasks

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

Tasks

1. Inspects facilities and equipment for adequacy, sanitation, and compliance with regulations.
2. Collects sample of pests or suspected diseased animals or materials and routes to laboratory for identification and analysis.
3. Testifies in legal proceedings.
4. Advises farmers and growers of development programs or new equipment and techniques to aid in quality production, applying agricultural knowledge.
5. Writes reports of findings and recommendations and advises farmer, grower, or processor of corrective action to be taken.
6. Inspects horticultural products or livestock to detect harmful disease, infestation or growth rate.
7. Examines, weighs, and measures commodities, such as poultry, eggs, meat, and seafood to certify wholesomeness, grade, and weight.
8. Inspects livestock to determine effectiveness of medication and feeding programs.

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 Inspector has **Realistic**, **Investigative** 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.

Investigative — Investigative occupations frequently involve working with ideas, and require an extensive amount of thinking. These occupations can involve searching for facts and figuring out problems mentally.

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 not required for Agricultural Inspector positions in state government.

EDUCATIONAL, TRAINING, AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The Department of Labor provides the following information:

Agricultural inspectors are employed by Federal and State governments to ensure compliance with laws and regulations governing the health, quality, and safety of agricultural commodities. Inspectors also make sure that the facilities and equipment used in processing the commodities meet quality standards.

The agricultural inspectors' duties often require working with sharp knives, moderate lifting, and walking or standing for long periods. Many inspectors work long and often irregular hours. Inspectors may find themselves in adversarial roles when the organization or individual being inspected objects to the inspection or its potential consequences. Some inspectors travel frequently to visit farms and processing facilities. Others work at ports, inspecting cargo on the docks or on boats.

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) expects nearly all inspections to result in certificates being issued upon completion of the inspection to determine compliance or non-compliance with the grade or other specifications. VDACS requires inspectors to have the ability to understand and interpret various contract specifications, attend Industry and USDA meetings and understand Import and Export requirements of other countries. Individuals must be able to work under stressful situations. The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services offers additional information on career opportunities: <http://www.vdacs.state.va.us/>

Becoming an agricultural inspector requires relevant work experience or some college course work in a field such as biology or agricultural science. Inspectors are trained in the applicable laws or inspection procedures through some combination of classroom and on-the-job training. In general, people who want to enter this occupation should be responsible, like detailed work, and be able to communicate well.

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 Inspector**

PAY BAND	PRACTITIONER ROLES
3	Agricultural Specialist III
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 III

The Agricultural Specialist III role provides career tracks for entry level inspectors that perform inspection, sampling or commodity grading services with limited variability to ensure compliance with established guidelines, policies and/or statutory laws and regulations; or, implement teaching and/or research protocols.

Agricultural Specialist IV

The Agricultural Specialist IV role provides career tracks for inspectors whose responsibilities range from journey level inspections to leading staff in inspections and research including planning and development activities for the assigned program. Duties include performing inspections, sampling and grading of a variety of agricultural products to determine one of several grades for 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/>