

Summary of Discussions with Focus Groups from the Veterinary-Agriculture Science Occupational Groups

(Note: This is a summary for Agriculture Science Occupations only. The Veterinary Science Occupations had no representation at the focus group meeting.)

Overview of Findings

The employees in the agriculture science occupations perform duties as farmers, agricultural assistants, graders, inspectors, and commodity specialists. The agencies which had employee representation at the focus group for agriculture science occupations generally are not utilizing entry level classes. Therefore, there is only one role or one level of work for the different occupations for employees who pursue careers in this group of occupational disciplines.

While specific techniques and products differ among the occupational disciplines, a common thread of three levels of difficulty exists among the duties performed by these occupations. The least difficult level, assignments involve providing sanitary conditions and caring for animals in educational environments and in research units, or planting and maintaining plants in greenhouses, nurseries, and farms. Due to the narrow scope of well-defined duties, employees' decision making and judgment is limited to clearly defined procedures. Employees work is seen as non-skilled or semi-skilled work. An intermediate level of difficulty, assignments involve proper care of livestock and plants supports effective farm operations and management, or the production of agricultural products; including proper operation of farming, commodity production, and extension service equipment. The emphasis is on applying knowledge and skill of agricultural techniques and procedures to the care of livestock and plants, and the use of farm tools/equipment to produce work according to detail specifications or directions; or knowledge and skill of plant operating procedures to produce dairy foods or grain products. The most difficult assignments require involves performing inspection, sampling or commodity grading to ensure compliance with established guidelines, policies and/or statutory laws and regulations. The impact of actions may affect agriculture businesses operations, government entities laws and regulations, consumers' health and safety, or grain producers' financial protection.

Minimum Qualifications

The participants who are classified as an Agricultural Inspector or Grain Warehouse Examiner agreed that the current minimum qualifications should require bachelor's degree in an agriculture science field and have knowledge in bookkeeping and auditing principles. The Plant Science Technicians and Dairy Food Assistant agree that a Certified Driver License is required in addition to the experience requirement. In addition, some of the reoccurring comments from the participants for all the agricultural science occupations are as follows:

- Some experience in the agriculture is essential.
- Most of the work is learned on the job.

Full Performance

Amount of Time to Reach Full Performance

Participants indicated that it takes anywhere from six months to a year to reach full performance as an entry-level person and between one and three years to be capable of full performance work as an experience technician or inspector. The distinction between an entry-level and full performance technician is primarily based on the employee's aptitude with a range of processes and procedures, as well as the level of independence in the performance of the employee's duties.

In almost all cases, the time increments mentioned above reflect the experience acquired through on the job training. However, some positions require persons to complete specific certification or training requirements before being able to complete full-performance work.

Advanced Full Performance Level

In the agriculture science occupation group there seems there is not a clearly defined level of work that is higher in complexity and responsibilities than a person who is seen as performing independently at full performance. The persons in advanced levels are those individuals who have demonstrated their skills in an assignment or seen as a supervisor or manager.

There are some work areas where a person or persons are identified as a lead worker due to their advanced expert knowledge on procedures and operations or due to their expertise in a particular specialty or sub-discipline. These individuals are generally classified in same class as less experience person but are paid at a higher rate. Example: Dairy Food Assistant – All individuals who work at the dairy production plant at KSU are classified in same classification. One individual at the dairy production plant is seen as a lead worker due to length of service at the plant.

Type of Supervision Received

Technicians generally receive limited supervision and the work requires employees to use independent judgment or act on their own discretion, requiring the use of initiative and creativity to complete projects. As employees obtain more experience, direction becomes more general and employees have greater and greater independence and accountability. Major work assignments are examined for soundness or technical judgment and for general effectiveness towards the assignment given. Supervision exists to provide administrative direction and oversee the budget responsibilities of the program or research area, and to see to human resource issues. In general, the supervisors and managers handle the more potentially controversial matters, ordering materials and supplies, and other administrative/managerial types of problems.

What Criteria Should Compensation be Based? There seemed to be a consensus that performance and other personal characteristics that the employee brings to the job (such as initiative, artistic abilities, meeting deadlines, ability to work well with others, etc.) should be one of, if not the primary criteria for the basis of compensation. The participants indicated that this would be especially important criteria during the period of time when a new employee is working toward the full performance level. There was also consensus that, due to the importance of experience and on-the job training, longevity was also important criteria on which employees' pay should be based, especially after the point when an employee becomes capable of full performance of his or her job duties. Longevity coincides with an employee's continued career growth and additional responsibilities. Pay for an employees' certification or completion of

specific training, where such accomplishments enhance the employee's ability to perform the duties of their position or allow the employee to perform additional duties associated with their position, was also agreed to be something that would be a benefit to positions in the inspector occupations.

While performance and other personal characteristics were thought to be the most important criteria on which pay should be based, the participants expressed concern with the ability to fairly administer a system that bases pay on those qualities. The primary concern was favoritism.

In addition, the participants indicated that they were all in favor of a system that would allow an employee to progress in pay as they progressed in their career. Employees in those classes that have a career ladder expressed their appreciation of the system of progression, while those employees in agencies that do not have automatic progression expressed frustration for having to wait for a "slot" to open or move to another occupation before they could receive an increase in pay.

Occupational Survey Summary on the Media and Communication Fields

Participation Rate: 22%

SUMMARY BY ROLES

	Technicians
<u>Participation Rate:</u>	45 of the 206 Whole
<u>Time Worked in Occupation:</u>	Approximately 93% of the employees in this field have over 1 year or more work experience; 67% have five or more years; and 40% have ten or more years.
<u>Education, Training and Experience:</u>	Participants who are classified other than an inspector indicated new hires must possess a high school education. Participants in inspector classifications say you need a bachelor's degree and additional one year on-the-job training to become fully proficient.
<u>Skills:</u> (Extremely or Very Important)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communicating with Supervisors, Peers, or Subordinates 2. Getting Information 3. Establishing and Maintaining Interpersonal Relationships 4. Identifying Objects, Actions, and Events 5. Organizing, Planning, and Prioritizing Work
<u>Behavioral:</u> (Core)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achievement Orientation 2. Building Relationships 3. Communication 4. Problem Resolution
<u>Work Context:</u> (Every Day)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact with Others 2. Decisions affect other people 3. Face to face Discussions 4. Interaction with external customer/public 5. Work in teams 6. Exposed to hazardous conditions
<u>Level of Complexity:</u> (Level 4 or Higher)	64% - Level 4 - You evaluate the relevance and importance of theories, concepts, and principles. You develop different approaches or tactical plans to fit specific circumstances. Guidelines may, exist, but are flexible and open to considerable interpretation. Independent judgment, personal direction, and resourcefulness are needed to interpret and apply guidelines
<u>Supervision Received/Independence:</u> (Level 4 or Higher)	83% - Level 4 - Receive limited supervision and the work requires employees to use independent judgment or act on their own discretion. Requires the use of initiative and creativity to resolve problems or

	interpret policy to develop solutions. A manager may be available to provide general direction or advice, but employees usually act independently based on their own judgment.
<u>Supervision Given:</u>	33% - Have supervisory responsibilities.
<u>Decision Making:</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 31% - Decisions generally affect own job or specific functional area. 2. 17% - Decisions may affect a work unit or area within a department/division. May contribute to business and operational decisions that affect the department/ division. 3. 39%- Decisions have major implications on the management and operations of an area within a department/division. Job may contribute to important strategy, operational and business decisions that affect the department/division.
<u>Problem Solving:</u>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 67% - Problems are varied, requiring analysis or interpretation of the situation. Problems are solved using knowledge and skills, general precedents and practices. 2. 20% - Problems are highly varied, complex and often non-recurring, requiring novel and creative approaches to resolution. New concepts and approaches may have to be developed.
<u>Fiscal Responsibility:</u>	Only 30% of the positions require assisting in planning, monitoring and/or managing budget in functional area of a program.
<u>Licenses/Certifications:</u>	Only 36% of position requires a licenses or certification.