

To Whom It May Concern:

Please consider the following for publication as a letter to the editor:

The Harper government, in attempting to defend the closure of federal prison farms, misses the point in claiming that few inmates in the farm programs eventually find work in the agricultural sector.

For one thing, neither he nor anyone else knows. Correctional Service Canada doesn't keep track; there are no statistics. We do know that, as of 2005, agriculture itself accounted for eight per cent of Canada's GDP and provided 2.1 million jobs. And that's without considering the manufacturing and retail jobs between the farm and the consumer.

Successful rehabilitation goes beyond training inmates for any one particular job in one particular industry. Whether an individual succeeds in reintegrating into society is much more dependent on his or her *social skills*.

The farm programs breed character and develop strong work habits. They teach early-rising, hard work, the value of timeliness and self reliance. All this leads to a sense of self-worth that is critical to overcoming the many real challenges former inmates find upon their release.

In point of fact, the farm programs excel at providing inmates with a wide range of personal skills that increase the likelihood of their finding work in any number of occupational fields.

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