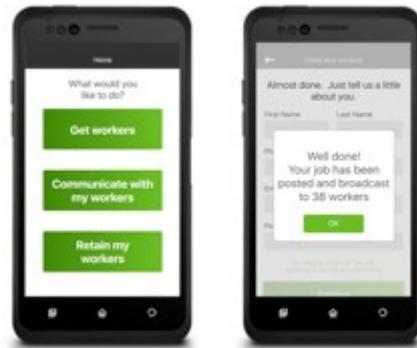


A U.S. technology startup has launched an app aimed at providing a solution to the agricultural sector's widespread labor shortage.



Ganaz provides technology tools to help growers recruit, engage and retain their labor force. Workers can search for jobs in their area and share jobs with their network.

After successful testing this summer with tree fruit and berry growers in Oregon, Ganaz is now available nationwide.

Ganaz co-founder Hannah Freeman told *Fresh Fruit Portal* farm labor recruiting was often inefficient and opaque, saying it was time to disrupt that system with an affordable alternative that benefits both parties.

After 14 years of working at Fair Trade USA alongside growers and farmworkers in several countries, Freeman started to see how simple technology could make it easier for growers to recruit workers directly and for workers to find the best employers.

"I also saw how much of a challenge it is for a farm owner to really know what's going on at the field level in order to improve labor conditions and increase employee retention," she said.

"Our app helps bridge that divide to help farmers and workers connect."

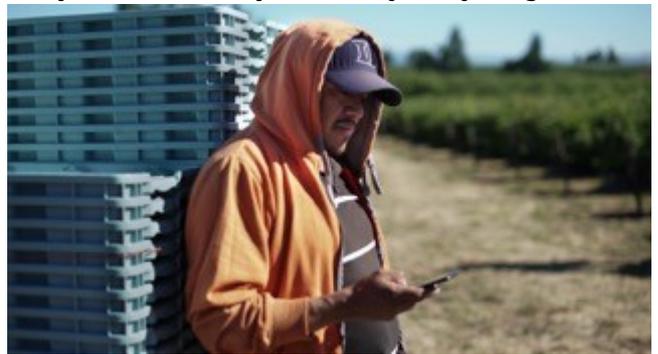
For a small fee, growers can post jobs on the company's website and on the app, which Freeman said was designed to be as easy-to-use as possible. Ganaz then pushes those job announcements out to farmworkers both on the app and on social media.

"Then our app allows growers to message with potential applicants, and even builds in

translation from English to Spanish and vice versa," she said, highlighting the language barrier was a common issue in the sector.

Freeman also explained a big challenge for farmers was many workers frequently changed their phone numbers, making it difficult for seasonal growers to find the same people again when the harvest rolls around.

"Our app lets growers keep in touch during the off-season, and it also will allow growers to survey their workers anonymously to understand why workers stay and why they might leave," he said.



"It's hard to retain your best workers if you don't know what they really think about their jobs."

Growers are also using the Ganaz app to simplify communication with their whole workforce.

"Rather than calling 50 people at 4am to say there's a frost or to meet at a different field, they can draft, translate and blast their message to their whole workforce—even workers that don't have the app yet—in just a few seconds," she said.

Freeman started developing the app with the company's other co-founder Sri Artham, who also worked at Fair Trade USA, around April this year, with testing beginning in June.

"We had a great summer testing with workers and growers in Oregon. We made changes to our design to make it easier for people to use, and we now have a thriving marketplace of growers and workers making connections," she said.

"Workers love having job information in their language and tailored for them, and growers have been pleasantly surprised how easy it is to find workers this way."

Ganaz will be focusing most of its efforts in the regions with intense growing operations

during the winter - Arizona, California and Florida.

There are also plans to test the app in Mexico to make the technological changes necessary to work in that market in 2018.

While Freeman said the app was focused on farmworkers who already reside in the U.S., in the future the company hopes to build a tool to help employers manage workers in the H-2A visa program.

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