

Why do you want to farm? What are your goals?

Worksheet #1

Have each partner in the farm answer the questions below. You can print off separate sheets or fill it out together. The point is for each person to discuss their answer to ensure that everyone is aware of their reasons for farming.

Ask yourselves these questions:

- 1.) What are the things I want in life that farming will help me achieve? Please write your name beside your top 3 reasons for wanting to farm:
 - a. I love being/working in the outdoors
 - b. I want a job where I can work with my family
 - c. I want to own my own business and be my own boss (and have the flexibility to do things like pick up children from school)
 - d. I grew up farming and it's what I know best
 - e. I see farming mainly as a way to make money
 - f. I want to grow healthy food for my family and community
 - g. I want to nurture and improve the natural environment of my farm
 - h. Achieve self sufficiency/provide my own food
 - i. Other:
 - j. Other:

- 2.) What are your income goals for the farm? (choose one or all that apply)
 - a. I want to break even in my first year
 - b. I want farming to supply all of my income
 - c. I want to provide supplemental income while holding a full time job
 - d. I want the farm to supply enough income to work only part time.
 - e. I want farm income to support my family in the present and the long term—e.g. retirement and college tuition
 - f. I want to make enough money farming to bring my children into the farm eventually as partners
 - g. I want the farm to supply enough money for health insurance
 - h. Other:
 - i. Other:



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With your partner, compare your list of goals and answer the following questions:

Write down the ways they are different:

Write down the ways they are compatible:

How will you reconcile the differences?

How do your goals and plans affect your family?

Describe your farm goals in 2-3 sentences. This will be the beginning of your farm mission statement.

*The development of this material was supported through USDA/NIFA/Outreach to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (OASDFR)
(Project # 2009-00705) • www.outreach.usda.gov/oasdf*



Determining your skills and resources:

Worksheet #2

This worksheet will help you assess your skills or resources in areas which are important to operating a farm. The next worksheet, #3, will help you outline some practical steps to take in order to strengthen areas which "Need attention" that you identify in this worksheet.

For each skill or resource area, check the column which is most appropriate to your skills or resources. For example, if you enjoy working and interacting with people, you might check "Excellent" on the "People skills" line. However, if you are shy, and find working with people challenging, you might check, "Needs attention" on the "People skills".



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Personal Skills & Resources:	Rating:	Needs attention	Acceptable	Excellent	Don't Know
A clear sense of your goals (see Worksheet 1)					
"People skills" (do you interact easily with your customers, financiers and service providers?)					
Language skills (can you communicate with your customers, financiers and service providers effectively?)					
Computer skills (for financial management & marketing)					
Financial backing or resources					
Savings					
Business management skills (managed a business in the past?)					
Mechanical/ construction/ maintenance skills					
Access to Land--own or rent					
Equipment, Hand tools					
Equipment, Machines (tractors, coolers, discs, etc)					
Produce transport vehicle					
Farm supplies for your enterprise in close proximity					
Production Experience:	Rating:	Needs attention	Acceptable	Excellent	Don't Know
Garden experience—specific to the region your farm is located					
On-farm experience—specific to the region your farm is located					
Experience with Livestock					
Experience operating equipment					
Personal Traits:	Rating:	Needs attention	Acceptable	Excellent	Don't Know
I like hard work					
I like taking risks					
I am a good problem solver					
I enjoy an outdoor and physical lifestyle					
I enjoy working alone					
I enjoy working with people					
My current (non-farm) job is flexible					



Farm Site Characteristics:	Rating:	Needs attention	Acceptable	Excellent	Don't Know
<i>Note: If you are looking for land this can be used as a check sheet when you are evaluating each property OR rate the importance of these characteristics to your future farm operation.</i>					
Soil Quality (Important!!!: drainage, slope of land, soil depth and type (clay, loam, sand), organic matter content)					
Length of growing season/ frost susceptibility					
Availability and access to irrigation water					
Structures on the farm-for storage, sales and washing					
Accessibility to major roadways					
Prior land use (soil fertility, water quality, on-site wastes)					
Wildlife pest problems					
Market Potential/ Demographics	Rating:	Needs attention	Acceptable	Excellent	Don't Know
For beginning famers: Evaluate the following criteria according to how strongly you feel each element has influence on the success of your (future) farm operation					
Metropolitan areas within 60 miles					
Relative income level of this population					
Nearby farmers markets, co-op, grower co-ops, restaurants					
Potential for market niches (organic, pick-your-own, specialty crops/ livestock)					
Proximity to meat processing facility?					
Infrastructure and information support	Rating:	Needs attention	Acceptable	Excellent	Don't Know
For beginning farmers: Rate the importance of each of these criteria to the success of your (future) farm operation.					
Availability and quality of labor					
Affordability of local property taxes					
Land zoned for agriculture?					
Proximity of farm supply stores, dealers, and ag agencies veterinarians, equipment repair, processors, etc.					
Support from local grower organizations (RCDs, grower groups)					
Supportiveness of nearby farms and neighbors					

If you checked “Needs attention” on a skill or resource, it may indicate that:

1. You may need additional training;
2. Improvements should be made or alternative plans developed to address this skill/resource;
3. Different farming sites should be explored

The next worksheet, *Worksheet 3*, will provide an opportunity for you to outline steps to take to address those areas which you noted “Needs attention”.

Skills and Resources: What are your next steps?

Worksheet #3

Keep Worksheet # 2 with you. Once you have completed assessing your skills and resources in worksheet #2, summarize your results below. For each skill area, list ideas that come to mind about how you might address the things that you wrote, "Needs Attention". Putting this summary in writing will help you order your thoughts and prioritize the actions you can take to increase your chances of success. For the items that you "didn't know" on Worksheet 2, make a note to follow up by finding out about this topic, or discussing with your farm partner(s). (HINT): It helps if you describe a month or season by which you will take a particular step.

Example: On worksheet 2, "Computer Skills" under Personal Skills & Resources was marked as "Needs Attention"

Personal Skills & Resources:

Step 1: Computer skills	I will take lessons this fall at the local library about using the computer.
Step 2: Computer skills	By next spring, I will learn how to create a budget on a computer so I can track my finances.

List your next steps for each category (You can just type these in if you like):

Personal Skills & Resources:

Step 1:	
Step 2:	
Step 3:	

Production Experience:

Step 1:	
Step 2:	
Step 3:	



Personal Traits:

Step 1:	
Step 2:	
Step 3:	

Farm Site Characteristics:

Step 1:	
Step 2:	
Step 3:	

Market Potential/ Demographics:

Step 1:	
Step 2:	
Step 3:	

Infrastructure and Information Support:

Step 1:	
Step 2:	
Step 3:	

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Tying it all together

Worksheet #4

This worksheet ties the information from all the other worksheets together. Go back to your worksheet #1 and write down what your financial and big picture goals are, so you have them here. If this process has helped identify any new goals write them down as well.

GOALS	Write down your goals from questions 1 and 2 Worksheet # 1
Goal 1	
Goal 2	
Goal 3	
Goal 4	
Goal 5	

Steps to achieve your goals in year 1:	Write down your next steps that you outlined in worksheet 3 that you can accomplish and that are a high priority for year 1
Examples	Implement a soil management and rotation plan. Put up a hoop house
Step 2	
Step 3	
Step 4	
Step 5	
Step 6	
Step 7	
Step 8	
Step 9	



Steps to achieve your goals in year 2:	Write down the steps that you identified in worksheet 3 that were not year 1 priorities
Example:s	Find additional markets
	Explore NRCS cost share opportunities—such as hoophouse cost share
Step 1	
Step 2	
Step 3	
Step 4	
Step 5	
Step 6	
Step 7	

Medium term goals (3-5 years)

Where do you want your farm to be to be in 5 years? Think about the acreage, the production and markets and your financial goals from worksheet #1. *For Example:*

- Farm will support one person in household
- Buy tractor with PTO and primary tillage
- Start CSA marketing system

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Long Term Goals (5-10 years)

For Example:

- Retirement account started
- Health insurance for all farm partners

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Congratulations! The information on this sheet is your first step towards making your business plan. The next lesson will help you develop your marketing plan, which is another important piece of your business plan.

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