

Farm Dreams Workshop Prework

Exercise 1: Document Your Farm Dream

Instructions Before attending a Farm Dreams Workshop, dedicate time to imagine and document your farm dream as if it's 5 to 10 years from now.

An ideal form of documentation is something you can keep for a long time: a napkin sketch, handwritten lists assembled on a page, a vision board with magazine cut-outs pasted to tag board, a drawing or painting, a form of narration. The form doesn't matter, so long it's something you can keep and look back on in 2- or 10-years' time.

After using the following prompts to think about and document your farm dream, draft a short, 3-5 sentences, which you can share during the Farm Dreams workshop.

- **Imagine the physical place that occupies your farm dream.**
Consider: Where is your farm? How much land does your farm need? What kinds of spaces? Are there buildings or other facilities? Like a barn, greenhouse, or fencing? What storage do you have for tools, equipment, and supplies? Do you have special equipment? Are you using draft animals? Where does your water come from? Do you source fertility/compost?
- **Visualize all that your dream farm produces.**
Consider: What do you produce—vegetables, fruits, livestock, fiber, flowers? Do you start your own seeds or purchase seedlings? Do you have a processing facility with cold storage or a certified commercial kitchen for producing prepared milk, cheese, honey, meats, herbs, or other value-added products?
- **Think about your farm dream customers.**
Consider: Who are your customers and what are they like? Where does your produce go? Is it sold to market and what kind of market—a farmer's market, grocery store, wholesale, restaurants, direct to consumer? Do you give some of your produce away? To whom and how? How close is your farm to other people, community and/or market? How do transport things from the farm to the market?
- **Vision your farm dream lifestyle.**
Consider: How does it feel to be on your farm at different times of day and in different seasons? What does a day look like in your farm dream? Who is involved in your farm dream? What kinds of challenges are you excited to face?

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Exercise 2: Farming Readiness Assessment

Instructions Assess your farm readiness by grading yourself using the following rubric:

A = Absolutely, this statement describes me perfectly.

B = This statement is only partially accurate.

C = No, this statement does not describe me at all.

Once you have assessed yourself using these statements, please follow the instructions on page 4 to complete the activity.

Traits Assessment

_____ I am comfortable working outside, even if it's burning hot, freezing cold, or pouring rain.

_____ I don't have a problem with bugs, dirt, slime, poop, and other things many people think are gross.

_____ I am a good observer, and generally see details that a lot of other people miss.

_____ I am happy to work by myself for long periods of time.

_____ I make careful buying decisions, and when I do buy things, I seldom regret the purchases I've made, making do with what I have available.

_____ I'm not easily frustrated, and don't get too upset when things don't go as I hoped.

_____ I like hard, physical work, and don't mind repetitive tasks or being dog-tired at the end of each day.

_____ I like to get up early, get going with my day, and don't tend to stop until I've accomplished all the things I wanted to get done.

_____ I am always trying to understand how to do things more effectively and efficiently.

_____ I learn from my mistakes rather than wallowing in failure.

_____ My definition of success is based on whether I am happy with the work I do.



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Skills Assessment

- ___ I feel comfortable setting goals for myself and creating plans to accomplish them.
- ___ I am able to look at the big picture of a project.
- ___ I am good at identifying what needs to be done and prioritizing tasks in order of importance.
- ___ I know how to acquire land, either through purchase, rental, or other arrangement.
- ___ I am good at taking notes, keeping records, and crunching numbers.
- ___ I know how to write an enterprise budget and monitor cash flow.
- ___ I know how to develop a marketing plan, do market research, and create publicity materials.
- ___ I know how to find employees and let people go if needed.
- ___ I am comfortable supervising employees and delegating work.
- ___ I know how to assess my equipment and supplies needs.
- ___ I am comfortable doing my own basic maintenance and repairs on equipment and infrastructure.
- ___ I can feed and water animals, manage pastures and fencing, and manage manure.
- ___ I can monitor and treat animal health problems, breed and birth animals, and milk and slaughter livestock as necessary.
- ___ I can evaluate and manage soil fertility.
- ___ I have knowledge of pest, weed, and disease management.
- ___ I know how to implement a crop production and rotation plan.

Resources Assessment

- ___ I have time and energy to spend on farming and farm business management.
- ___ I am able to balance farm work, off-farm work, family time, and time for relaxation.
- ___ I have access to or own land that is suitable for farming.
- ___ I have some savings or investments that I could put towards a farm or use as collateral.
- ___ I have good credit and access to capital.
- ___ I own or have access to a vehicle that could function as a market vehicle.

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_____ I own or have access to a tractor and some implements.

_____ I have access to other farm resources such as water infrastructure, a barn or shed, processing equipment, storage buildings, and/or tools and other farm equipment.

Evaluation Instructions

Look back at your answers and determine which grade was most prevalent. Use the notes below to assess your farm readiness.

Mostly A's: You have all the makings of a future farmer! With your set of traits, skills, and resources, you could get a farm business up and running in short order. A course like our Farm Beginnings class would be a great fit for you, to take all of your assets and create the plan for your farm business.

Mostly Bs: Your farm dream has a lot of potential. With further work to address some of the gaps you noticed while filling out this assessment, you could soon be ready to make a plan for your farm business. Check out the workshops offered by The Land Connection and Extension, look into farm internship or volunteer positions, take a good look at your finances and current work situation, and we'll get you on a farm sooner or later!

Mostly Cs: So you've got some work to do. That's okay! It's important to know what you don't know. If you want to realize your farm dream, it's time to start taking some classes, getting familiar with the resources you need to gather, and finding out how you might make room for a farm business in your life. Look into finding some work on a farm or getting more serious about gardening in your backyard, attend some workshops offered in your area, and start thinking about how you might acquire the resources you'll need to fulfill your farm dream.

For the B's and C's you gave yourself, put a star next to the items that are most urgent for you to address. If you have marked more than three, put a circle around the star next to your top three.