

Farm Vision and Goal Setting

People make decisions that affect their future every day. Most of us typically react to events as they arise, changing our course of action to cope with the present crisis and survive. Yet this approach can be unsatisfying, and, in the long run, not get you where you want to go. Thinking about your goal enables you to make decisions based on reaching that goal.

Defining your vision and goals is the first step in planning a farm business. This helps you to be proactive rather than reactive and to monitor your progress toward your goals. First, envision what you want your future to look like. How do you intend to operate or behave on a daily basis as you pursue your vision? What values will drive your decision-making? You may find it helpful to read books about others' philosophies of farming, or of their relationships to the land. Many people who have made intentional decisions to pursue farming tell us that reading about someone else's experience helped them "crystallize their thinking" and create their own personal vision.

The next step is to translate your vision into a series of definable and attainable goals. Goals help establish where you are going, how to proceed, and when you will arrive. They are benchmarks that help you monitor your progress. It can be useful to post your written goals where you can see them often. Regularly look at your goals and match them up against your daily activities.

Finally, think about what strategies will help you achieve success. Developing strategies, setting priorities, and identifying specific tasks will help you reach your goals. What specific tasks must be done, and when, in order to reach your goals or vision?

Identifying your vision, goals, and strategies and writing them down will help you formalize what you have probably thought about many times but never put together as part of a clear, organized plan. Doing so will help guide you on your exploration of the other issues presented in this publication, and help you maintain your focus once you get started.

Publications

Identifying Goals and Values

The Cornerstones Model: Value-Based Planning and Management, Jerry Aaker and Jennifer Shumaker, 1996, Heifer Project International, 155 pages.

This publication presents a holistic approach to participatory planning and management. It contains many worksheets and a lot of discussion. Available from Technical Information Services • Heifer Project International • 1015 Louisiana Street • Little Rock, AR 72202 • phone: (800) 422-0474 • fax: (501) 376-8906 • e-mail: info@heifer.org • website: www.heifer.org

Farmers for the Future, Dan Looker, 1995, Iowa State University Press, 198 pages.

This book explains programs available to entry level farmers. It emphasizes economic and political issues, and offers stories of people who have successfully entered farming in these difficult times. Available from Iowa State University Press • 2121 South State Avenue • Ames, IA 50014 • phone: (800) 862-6657 • fax: (515) 292-3348 • e-mail: aross@isupress.edu • website: www.isupress.edu

Holistic Management: A New Framework for Decision Making, Allan Savory with Jody Butterfield, 1998 (second edition), Island Press, 550 pages.

This is one of the most comprehensive texts on holistic goal setting, planning, and decision-making. Available from the Allan Savory Center for Holistic Management • 1010 Tijeras NW • Albuquerque, NM 87102 • phone: (505) 842-5252 • fax: (505) 843-7900 • e-mail: center@holisticmanagement.org • website: www.holisticmanagement.org

How to Establish Goals: A Group Project for Farmers and their Families, John Lamb, 1998, The Minnesota Project, 14 pages.

This is a hands-on workbook that explains the importance of setting goals and lays out a process for setting them. The workbook will

help you create goals that will guide and motivate you to produce a successful whole farm plan for your farm. Available from The Minnesota Project • 1885 University Avenue West, Suite 315 • St. Paul, MN 55104 • phone: (651) 645-6159 • fax: (651) 645-1262 • e-mail: mnproject@mnproject.org • or see the full text on-line at: www.mnproject.org/pdf/wfpbook2.PDF

I Could Do Anything if I Only Knew What It Was: How to Discover What You Really Want and How to Get It, Barbara Sher and Barbara Smith, 1995, Dell Publishing Company, Inc., 336 pages.

This book deals with finding renewed direction in life, refocusing on and recapturing lost goals, and overcoming roadblocks that inhibit success. Available from bookstores, or check your local library.

Whole Farm Planner, The Minnesota Project, published several times annually.

This informative newsletter includes articles about local farm planning projects, technical information, comments on policy issues, and



John Kaiser, a Farm Beginnings™ livestock loan recipient (left), with Loel Gordon, a retired farm business management instructor and livestock loan committee member.

stories about individual farmers and their planning experiences. Available from The Minnesota Project • 1885 University Avenue West, Suite 315 • St. Paul, MN 55104

- phone: (612) 645-6159
- fax: (651) 645-1262
- e-mail: mnproject@mnproject.org • or see the full text on-line at: www.mnproject.org/wfp/index_page0002.htm

Whole Farm Planning: Combining Family, Profit, and Environment, Dave Mulla, Les Everett, and Gigi DiGiacomo, 1998, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture and the University of Minnesota Extension Service, publication no. BU-06985-GO, 30 pages.

This publication provides a definition of whole farm planning and outlines the four steps in whole farm planning and how to do them. It also describes whole farm planning tools, where to find them, and how they differ from regular farm planning tools. Available from the

University of Minnesota Extension Service Distribution Center • University of Minnesota • 405 Coffey Hall • 1420 Eckles Ave. • St. Paul, MN 55108 • phone: (612) 624-4900 or (800) 876-8636 • fax: (612) 625-6281 • e-mail: order@extension.umn.edu • or see the full text on-line at: www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/businessmanagement/DF6985.html

Wishcraft: How to Get What You Really Want, Barbara Sher and Annie Gottlieb, 1983 (reissue), Random House, Inc., 278 pages.

This is a practical, effective, and fresh approach to strategy planning and development. It covers many topics, including discovering strengths and skills, turning fears and negative feelings into positive tools, diagramming paths to reach goals, and setting and meeting target dates. Available from bookstores, or check your local library.

Books to Inspire Your Vision

The Contrary Farmer, Gene Logsdon; Chelsea Green (editor), 1995, Chelsea Green Publishing Company, 237 pages.

Part philosophy and part practical advice, this book is geared toward the small and part-time farmers. It advocates development of the “cottage industry” in agriculture and other rural endeavors. It also includes a memorable parable on the “bigger is better” theory of economics. Available from Chelsea Green Publishing

- c/o Resolution, Inc. • P.O. Box 2284 • South Burlington, VT 05407 • phone: (800) 639-4099
- fax: (802) 295-6444
- website: www.chelseagreen.com

Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century, George Sessions (editor), 1994, Shambhala Publications, Inc., 448 pages.

This is an extensive anthology containing almost 50 articles by prominent writers and thinkers in the field. It offers a broad range of perspectives on the environmentalist movement, humans’ relationship with nature, and deep ecology’s history and implications. Available from Shambhala Publications, Inc.

- P.O. Box 308 • Boston, MA 02117
- phone: (617) 424-0030 • fax: (617) 236-1563
- e-mail: editors@shambhala.com
- website: www.shambhala.com

Epitaph for a Peach: Four Seasons on My Family Farm, David Mas Masumoto, 1996, Harper San Francisco, 233 pages.

This is a memoir of an organic peach grower in the San Joaquin Valley. It deals with saving a peach (Sun Crest variety), saving a farm, saving a family, and saving a way of life. It is described as a story about finding “home.” Available from bookstores, or check your local library.

First Person Rural: Essays of a Sometime Farmer, Noel Perrin, 1990, Godine, David R., 124 pages.

This book describes Perrin’s transition from city life (New York) to rural life (a Vermont farm). Originally published in 1978, it may be difficult to find. He also wrote *Second Person Rural* (1980) and *Third Person Rural* (1985). All titles available from David R. Godine, Publisher • 9 Hamilton Place • Boston, MA 02108-4715 • phone: (617) 451-9600

- fax: (617) 350-0250 • e-mail: info@godine.com
- website: www.godine.com

Future Harvest: Pesticide Free Farming, Jim Bender, 1994, University of Nebraska Press, 159 pages.

The book describes the author's experience in making the transition to a farming system that uses no commercial fertilizers or pesticides. It includes some philosophical discussion of alternative or sustainable agriculture, as well as practical advice on farming without chemicals. Available from University of Nebraska Press • 233 N 8th St • Lincoln, NE 68588-0255

- phone: 402-472-3584
- e-mail: pressmail@unl.edu
- website: www.nebraskapress.unl.edu

A Garlic Testament: Seasons on a Small New Mexico Farm, Stanley Crawford, 1998, University of New Mexico Press, 256 pages.

This is a memoir of Crawford's work as a farmer in northern New Mexico. It is an excellent resource, relating the author's experience in garlic, small-scale farming, and direct marketing. The writer gives his philosophical perspectives on life, family values, farming, and the relationship between the farm and the community. Available from bookstores, or check your local library.

The Good Life: Helen and Scott Nearing's Sixty Years of Self-Sufficient Living, Helen and Scott Nearing, 1990, Schocken Books, Inc., 448 pages.

This is a one-volume edition of *Living the Good Life* and *Continuing the Good Life*. It describes Nearings' lifetime experiment at establishing and sustaining an alternative lifestyle to avoid the waste, materialism, and corporate climate of mainstream society. The Nearings abandoned the city for rural life in 1932. Available from bookstores, or check your local library.

On Good Land: The Autobiography of an Urban Farm, Michael Ableman, 1998, Chronicle Books, 144 pages.

This is a narrative covering the 15 years Ableman spent developing Fairview Gardens, a 12.5-acre organic garden in the midst of tract homes, strip malls, and other suburban conveniences. It chronicles his experience learning

how to operate an organic farm, countering community opposition, and ultimately gaining widespread support. This is practical reading for anyone seeking to save farmland from suburban sprawl. It includes 50 color photographs. Available from Chronicle Books

- 85 Second Street • San Francisco, CA 94105
- phone: (415) 537-3730 • fax: (415) 537-4460
- e-mail: frontdesk@chroniclebooks.com
- website: www.chroniclebooks.com

Permaculture: A Designer's Manual, Bill Mollison; Andrew Jeeves (illustrator); Reny Mia Slay (editor), 1997 (reprint), Tagari Publications, 576 pages.

This book is a comprehensive treatment of permaculture covering its philosophy and applications to land-use design, systems analysis, climatic factors, patterns in nature, legal strategies and trusts, money and finance, plus much more. There are 129 color photographs and many illustrations throughout. It includes bibliographical references. Available from bookstores, or check your local library.

Pigs, Profits, and Rural Communities, Kendall M. Thu and E. Paul Durrenberger (editors), 1998, State University of New York Press, 208 pages.

This book focuses on swine production to illuminate the processes of agricultural industrialization and its consequences for the social, economic, human, environmental, and political health of the rural United States. It includes diverse perspectives from politicians, farmers, anthropologists, economists, a medical psychologist, a biological ecologist, and a veterinarian. Available from bookstores or check your local library.

Renewing the Countryside—Minnesota, Jan Joannides, Sara Bergan, Mark Ritchie, Beth Waterhouse, and Okechukwu Ukaga (editors), 2001, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy and the Great Plains Institute for Sustainable Development, 160 pages.

Renewing the Countryside features stories and photos of forty-three individuals, families, and communities in Minnesota who are putting their landscapes to work. These people are

generating wealth in their communities by generating personal income, improving their quality of life, and enhancing the state's natural and cultural resources. Available from the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy • 2105 1st Avenue South • Minneapolis, MN 55404

- phone: (612) 870-3400 • fax: (612) 870-4846
- email: rtc@iatp.org
- website: www.mncountryside.org

Sustainable Management Practices for the 21st Century, Carmen Fernholz, 1995, A-Frame Press, 122 pages.

This is a primer on how to get started down the road to less dependency on purchased inputs. It contains additional ideas about alternative weed and soil nutrient management practices. Available from Carmen Fernholz

- Route 2, Box 9A • Madison, MN 56256
- phone: (320) 598-3010
- e-mail: fernholz@frontiernet.net.

This Organic Life. Confessions of a Suburban Homesteader, Joan Dye Gussow, 2001, Chelsea Green Publishing, 273 pages.

In this combination memoir and gardening manual, nutritionist Joan Gussow discusses the joys and challenges of growing organic produce in her own New York garden. Available from Chelsea Green Publishing • c/o

- Resolution, Inc. • P.O. Box 2284 • South Burlington, VT 05407 • phone: (800) 639-4099
- fax: (802) 295-6444
- website: www.chelseagreen.com

The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture, Wendell Berry, 1996, Sierra Club Books, 256 pages.

This book is a classic testament to the value of the family farm dealing with Americans' divorce from the land and its consequences. It covers modern agriculture's relationship to American culture—health, economy, personal relationships, morals, and spiritual values. Available from bookstores, or check your local library.



Willard Cochrane and the American Family Farm, Richard Levins, 2000, University of Nebraska Press, 96 pages.

This is an account of the intellectual development of Willard Cochrane, an agricultural economist and a self-professed “unreformed liberal” who has fought to save the family farm in the face of globalization, high technology, and corporate control of the food supply. It brings to life the true spirit of farming. Available from the University of Nebraska Press • 233 N 8th Street • Lincoln, NE 68588-0255 • phone: (402) 472-3584 • e-mail: pressmail@unl.edu

- website: www.nebraskapress.unl.edu

The 2002 Farm Beginnings™ class on the Zephyr farm in Rushford, Minnesota.

Educational Opportunities

Allan Savory Center for Holistic Management

The Center offers courses in Holistic Management and helps communities and families practice goal-based planning and decision making. It is a nonprofit organization working to restore the vitality of communities and the natural resources on which they depend.

Nationally, for more information contact the Center for Holistic Management • 1010 Tijeras NW • Albuquerque, NM 87102

- phone: (505) 842-5252 • fax: (505) 843-7900
- e-mail: center@holisticmanagement.org
- website: www.holisticmanagement.org

Or in Minnesota, contact Land Stewardship Project • 103 W. Nichols • Montevideo, MN 56265 • phone: (320) 269-2105 • fax (320) 269-2190

Small Farm Program: U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperative State, Research, Education, and Extension Service

The Small Farm Program at the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is dedicated to addressing the needs of those involved in small-scale farming. The CSREES Small Farm Program's mission is to improve the income levels and the economic viability of the small farm enterprises through partnerships with the Land Grant System, public and private sectors by encouraging research, extension, and education programs to meet the specific needs of small farmers. They provide a number of useful publications to those planning for, or already engaged in, a small farm operation. The website includes numerous links to other related sites as well. For more information contact the Small Farm Program • U.S. Department of Agriculture • Cooperative State, Research, Education, and Extension Service

- Stop 2215 • Washington, DC 20250-2215
- phone: (800) 583-3071
- e-mail: smallfarm@reeusda.gov
- website: www.reeusda.gov/smallfarm