

TRAINING TEACHERS FOR FARM AND HOME PLANNING

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It is well recognized that farmers and ranchers today are receiving much help and advice in the production phases of their farm operations.

However, it is evident that little help is available to them in planning sound business operations, efficient and balanced for maximum production. It was with this situation in mind that the staff in Agricultural Education at this institution developed materials and procedures for the training of teachers in this vital phase of Farm and Home Planning.

A plan and procedure for conducting young and adult farmer courses on planning was developed by the Agricultural Education Section of the Department of Vocational Education at Colorado State University in 1959. After three years of experience with such courses being conducted in vocational agriculture departments, the following suggested procedure has evolved:

The first step in Farm and Home Planning is taking an inventory of the resources available to each of the class members. The three basic resources available to the farmer are land, labor, and capital. When the farmer knows the amount of each resource that is available to him, he has the tools upon which all future planning may be based.

After an inventory of the three main resources referred to above is completed, the next step will be for each farmer to take a more detailed look at the actual capability of his land. With the help of the Soil Conservation Service and its resource material, each farmer in the class will obtain a picture of what his fields or areas of his farm are capable of producing. This step also gives the farmer an idea of what crops he can raise within the limits of good conservation practices. Some class activities would be a study of land classes, the reading of soil maps and aerial photographs, the preparation of soil map overlays, and taking soil samples and interpreting results.

The next step deals with the laying out of fields and rearranging the farmstead. Each class member will draw up a proposed field layout, taking into consideration the conservation of the soil, decreasing the labor requirements, improving the land and other factors which will help to make his field layout more efficient.

An efficient crop rotation system is necessary to maintain the fertility and productivity of a farm. The next step deals with each farmer planning a crop rotation system that will fit into his present farming program and which can be changed or modified to fit into his proposed long time plan. To accomplish this each farmer must consider the capability of his land, requirements for livestock feed, cash grain, and other factors which affect the amount and types of crops to raise in order to realize maximum production.

While each farmer is planning a cropping system he must keep in mind the balance between the crops produced and the feed that the livestock on the farm will consume. In most instances the most efficient way to market crops is through livestock. The purpose of this step is to insure that the cropping system and the plan for the number and kind of livestock are kept in balance so that the farmer will not have excessive surplus feed on hand or find it necessary to buy feed at high prices.

The next step is setting the long time goals for developing the farm home and the family. As this step involves the farm wife as much or more than the farmer, both will be brought into the class to work as a team in completing the planning of this phase. Goals will be set in terms of recreation, home improvements, clothing, furnishings, health, education, insurance, savings, and any other needs of the farm home and family. The farming unit must provide for these needs if the farmer and his family are to have the standard of living they desire.

With the facts, ideas, and principles given in the preceding steps, the farmer is now ready to compile them into a long time farm plan which will picture what his ambitions and goals are for the next five years. He charts his farm improvements, home improvements, and family expenses, balances his projected crop and livestock programs, and checks his anticipated working capital against proposed machinery and other capital expenses. This is a total farm and home projected annual plan, a look into the future, and a charting of his course.

Budgeting is very important to the success of any operation. One of the most important steps in farm and home planning is to have each farmer prepare a budget as a tool for evaluating his proposed plans. By preparing a budget of proposed monthly income and expenses he calculates the amount of capital needed and available to meet the necessary farm and home expenditures. The farmer will need to compute his monthly labor requirements to see if his proposed plans can be handled by the farm family or if additional labor will be required. This will be necessary in order to arrive at the labor expense for the budget.

The final step in farm and home planning is to have each class member compile an annual farm and home plan. This annual plan represents the first step in reaching for the goals established in the long time farm and home plan. Using the budget as a tool for control of his farm business he can make adjustments on his proposed plan and come up with the yearly plan which will prove most efficient to the farm.

If farmers are led through this farm and home planning program and they develop the annual and long time plans based on the facts, ideas, and principles discovered, they will have the controls of their operation within their grasp. They will picture their goals in a realistic manner and will have the first leg of their journey to their goals well charted and planned. They will also be anxious to continue the young or adult farmer classes from year to year in order to gain knowledge and skills in implementing the plan and make the necessary revisions in their annual and long time plans. They will thus make much faster and more efficient progress towards realizing the standard of living they have set as their goal.