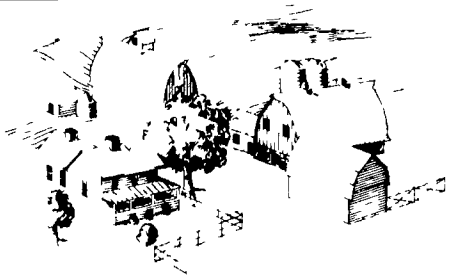


FARM MANAGEMENT



WORKING TOWARD FARM FAMILY GOALS

Patricia L. Powley
Extension Home Economist

It is so true that no two people spend their money in exactly the same way.

The way you and your family spend money depends upon the way you want to live, the things you want to do and have. Your expenditures reflect your personal attitudes, values — what you consider to be most important. Setting goals can help you get what you want for your farm family.

What do you and your family want to accomplish with your time, your talents, your money, and your other resources in the coming year? What is your answer to such a question? Have you and your family really thought about this question recently? Where are you heading, how are you going to get there, and when will you reach this target?

The answer to these questions are a critical part of the management plan for your family. Without clear future targets, families may "wander" toward their goals in a much less efficient way.

Setting goals and selecting small steps to take in reaching them can give a family a sense of progress. These goals are so very important in the management of both home and farm business operations.

Family members have goals for themselves which are very individual. There are also goals for the family as a unit. Periodically, it is essential that each family member think about the aims or goals they have for themselves. It is also important to think about and discuss what goals are held for the family as a whole. The goals chosen can provide direction to your work within the family and on the farm.

Goals are very personal. Each family is different, so there is no prescription of one "right" set of goals. Each family has a differing number of members, ages, interests, abilities, needs, and wants. It is therefore important that each family set its own unique goals.

Values

For the individual, for the farm family, values help provide direction and meaning to life. They influence our behavior in the sense that they help give a basis by which to make decisions, to choose goals to work toward, and to make choices about paths to a goal.

Shared values serve as a bond among members of a family. They help provide the family with a common direction and some common goals.

What values do members of your family hold? Ask these questions:

- What do we believe is good and right behavior? These values — such as respect for life, for truth, for justice — are called moral values.

- What is beautiful? That which

- What is fashionable? Prestige values are expressed through possessions and activities that have high status in society. Owning or doing the "in" thing reflects prestige values.

- What is beyond man? Spiritual values are those expressed through religion and activities that give meaning in an individual's life.

What are your family goals, your personal goals, your household goals?

Clearly establishing farm family goals can be a large challenge because family, business, household, and personal goals are all rolled up together in the day-to-day life and decisions of your family. For example, farm families may ask the goal question, "Shall we roof the barn or the house this year?" In the beginning it will be useful to think of the family, business, household, and personal categories separately, make some

lists of goals, and begin discussion. Some of the goals will support each other, others may be in conflict. Resolution and priority setting comes later.

Long- and short-term goals

Goals vary by how long it takes to achieve them. Those that can be attained in relatively short periods of time are called short-term goals.

Short-term family goals might include learning a new skill such as re-upholstery of furniture, saving for a trip to visit relatives, or spending more time as "family time." A short-term goal for the family might be that of working out a plan to divide time between parenting and farm work, and yet finding time for you as a couple.

In farming, short-term goals focus on hoped for achievements such as renting additional land this year or increasing dairy production.

Goals that will be achieved over many years, a decade, are called long-term goals. Examples include debt-free ownership of a farm, addition of a family room, transferring farm ownership to children, and saving for adequate retirement income.

Experts recommend that in setting goals we consider the following:

- Short-term goals should be reachable. They should describe situations that you believe are possible to achieve in the designated time.

- Long-term goals should be believable. They should describe situations or conditions that you think you can achieve over the years. Avoid the "pie-in-the-sky" goals that you neither believe in nor find possible to achieve.

There are four steps to managing with goals. These are 1) Decide what you want or need. Set your goals. 2) Plan ways to reach each

