



## Goal Setting

### Why Set Goals

Why set goals? Consider starting on a long awaited family vacation without any plan. Or, buying a train ticket without any known destination. You may end up where you didn't want to be. Each of us lives out the philosophies of our belief and value systems. We occasionally need to systematically reflect, analyze, and synthesize plans for our personal and business lives. Otherwise, we may wander through life aimlessly, only to lose much of what life has to offer.

Farmers need to set business, family, and personal goals that direct activities and decisions. Many influences -- like the weather, markets, and global issues -- impact the daily operation of a farm business. Without a well conceived set of plans, it is easy to change the direction of the business; changes that may produce unwanted and unnecessary conflicts within the family and business. It is also important for the priorities and plans to be consistent with an overall plan for the family and business.

### Goals Defined

*A goal is the end which a person intends to reach or attain.*

### Why Don't People Set Goals?

If goals are such a good idea—why don't more farmers use them? There are a variety of reasons why people don't set goals:

- They don't know how
- It's too much trouble
- They don't have faith in their goals and plans after they have developed them
- They begin on a long range basis and this prevents them from seeing immediate results, therefore they become easily discouraged

### Short Term Goals

Not all goals are the same. To be useful, goals are classified as short, intermediate, or long term.

Short term goals are goals that can be attained in less than a year. In order to establish short term goals, recognize the resources, such as available capital, business size, available labor, and discretionary capital, that are available for achieving them. In addition, persons setting short term goals need to identify who will be involved in the business -- family, business laborers, consultants, or other resource people -- and when they are available for involvement in the business. It is important that participants understand the relationship among short, intermediate, and long term goals.

### Short Term Goal Examples

*Increase the number of weaned pigs per sow per year to 18 in the next 12 months.*

*Reduce annual dairy % calf death loss from 14.25% to 12% within the next twelve months.*

### Intermediate Goals

#### Intermediate Goal Examples

*Increase the milk production of the farmer's herd from 16,000 to 19,000 pounds within the next three years.*

*Reduce annual average chemical cost for the corn crop from \$20.60 to \$16.00 per acre*

Intermediate goals are goals that can be attained in less than ten years. Short and intermediate goals enable the long term goals to be achieved.

### Long Term Goals

Long-term goals, on the other hand, are goals that are attainable in ten or more years. Long term goals keep the focus on the future. They ensure that you don't become overwhelmed with short range frustrations. An example of a long term goal may be to bring a son or daughter into the business within 12 years.

### Questions

It is important that each farmer needs to recognize the relative differences in the time needed to accomplish each type of goal. Short, intermediate, and

long-term goal statements should answer several questions:

- (1) Where are you going?
- (2) How will you get there?
- (3) Why is this goal worthwhile pursuing?
- (4) When will you accomplish the goal?
- (5) How will you know when you have completed the goal?

### Long Term Goal Example

*Bring a son or daughter into the business within 12 years*

### Getting Ready to Set Goals

Prior to planning and setting goals, the participants should gain whatever assistance in regards to the process and factual information from FBM instructors, creditors, ASCS personnel, hired laborers, family members and business advisors. Input from each source is invaluable in setting goals of various durations. In addition, each of these sources can provide information

needed to determine realistic goals. Realistic goals can be established by looking at area analyses, past performance, and area research data. A broad base for acquiring information that leads to realistic goals is imperative to set short, intermediate, and long term goals.

In summary, goals may be likened to the various major highways one travels when going on that long awaited family vacation. One realizes that there may be various detours and incidents along the way requiring you to use alternate highways from time to time. However, you know its in the family's best interest to stay on or very close to the highways that are initially agreed upon by the decision makers.