



# Digging into Farming: Farm Readiness Workbook



The first step to business planning, and to set yourself up for success is to define your goals, values and outline your financial priorities. This workbook was designed to guide you through the process of goal setting, providing questions for reflection and support you into moving into formal business planning and implementation.

## **Getting Started**

First take a step back and determine what stage you are at;

### **Are You...**

- dreaming about changing careers and farming for a living?
- wondering if you could run your own operation after working on a farm?

#### **You're an *Explorer***

*You are likely still on the fence and are “exploring” farming as a potential career or lifestyle change.*

*Try the exercise on **page 2** to assess your alignment with agriculture.*

**OR**

### **Are You...**

- renting land and want to buy a farm?
- looking to buy a farm?
- actively working on starting a farm business?

#### **You're a *Planner***

*You have likely already made the commitment to farm as a career and are ready to begin a business plan.*

*Skip ahead to **page 3**.*



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## Explorers: Step 1

### Q. Is farming a good fit for you?

Answer the following on a scale of 1-5 where

1 = No, doesn't describe me at all

2 = Not usually true

3 = Okay but not all the time

4 = Yes, usually true

5 = Absolutely, describes me perfectly

	I'm okay working outside no matter what the weather is like
	I am not grossed out by thing like bugs, manure, compost, rats etc.
	I'm good at figuring out what needs to be done and prioritizing
	I'm good with financial planning, evaluating income, expenses, budgeting
	I am a good observer, & generally see details that a lot of other people miss
	I'm inclined to tinker, build & hack things to make them work for me
	When I need to buy things, I make solid purchases and maximize use
	I'm persistent, adapt when things don't work out & move on from a failure
	I value accomplishment, process, quality of life not purely in a monetary way
	I like hard, physical work, & don't mind being tired at the end of the day
	I am not easily bored, restless, or frustrated by mundane tasks
	I am good at giving direction, communicating expectations & explanations
	I can do a lot of varied tasks well versus only one or two to perfection
	I don't mind being alone, am happy working by myself for long hours
	I'm comfortable taking risks and accepting I can't always control everything
	I'm constantly looking for new info & trying to be more effective, efficient
	I don't need feedback to be satisfied with what I accomplish
	I'm a good long-term planner, but can change my vision when necessary
	I love growing plants/taking care of animals, and am generally good at it

### Ask yourself;

1. How do I feel about my answers?
2. Does this reveal anything to me?
3. What concerns come up that I hadn't thought about before?

Skip ahead to **page 4**.



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## Planners: Step 1

### Q. Where are you at with developing a business plan?

*Try following the steps outlined below to get started...*

### Step 1: Define your financial goals

1. What total household income do you need and how do you plan to generate it while you build your farm business? Plot a timeline that shows what sources of income you have and how they add up over time to meet your needs. You can use this chart as a template.

INCOME SOURCES	20__	20__	20__	20__	20__
farm business	\$				
job					
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>					

2. Do you have the ability to invest capital in the farm at the same time as you generate the income you need above?
3. Are you comfortable with debt?
4. How would you plan to save for retirement?
5. What kind of credit or capital do you need? What do you know you can access?



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## **Step 2: Identify “Quality of Life Factors”**

*Try working through the following questions to reflect on factors that can impact your farm dream...*

- 1. How much time can you afford/do you want to commit to farming? (e.g. hours per week).**
- 2. Do you value getting away for vacations?**
- 3. Do you enjoy working with others (family members, partners, employees) or do you prefer to work alone?**
- 4. Are you comfortable with face-to-face marketing?**
- 5. Are personal health/fitness issues important in guiding your farm business decisions?**
- 6. How highly do you value privacy? (e.g. would you enjoy having customers/employees on the farm daily?)**
- 7. What are the pros and cons for you to begin farming at this stage of your life?**
- 8. What would you have to change in your current lifestyle to make it happen?**



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## Step 3: List your “Core Values” to develop mission statement

**A.** *Core values clarify who you are and what you stand for. A great exercise to help you clarify and communicate your values is to;*

1. **Brain Dump:** Write out all the things that are of importance to you, aiming to get as many captured as possible.

**Example:** *community, quality product, working outdoors, low impact on environment, continuous learning and teaching, financial sustainability, beauty, time to rest, commitment*

2. **Identify Highlights:** Look at your list and pick four or five points that are of high importance and can act as an umbrella for others

**Example:** *community, quality, sustainability, balance*

3. **Clarify & Expand:** Try to narrow down these points to clarified value statements that can help guide your vision, mission statement and decisions.

**Example:** *community = connection to people and learning  
quality = consistently the best  
sustainability = for people and the planet  
balance = seasonal rhythm*

**B.** *From your values you can start to narrow down your list with respect to your business ideas and work to develop your mission statement coming from a place of your core values.*

**Example:**

**Values:**

- *I love nature and organic flowers, being outside*
- *I value quality, consistent workmanship and beauty*
- *I want everyone to be able to afford my products and feel involved*
- *I want to sell right from my farm so I can market only half time in season*

**Business Concept,**

- *I plan to make hand-tied, organic flower bouquets selling them roadside at my farm, using materials grown on the property.*

**Business statement:** *Bee's Flowers is dedicated to creating organic flower bouquets that are hand-tied for quality and long lasting beauty. We will provide our customers with superior products at affordable prices through roadside sales. We will be open from late spring through early fall with workshops on flower arranging, bringing customers to our farm and enhancing their knowledge of sustainable flower production.*

1. **What are your values? What ideas do you have for a business idea? Try drafting them into a mission statement and see what you come up with**



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## **Step 4: Evaluate your “Strengths and Experience”**

*Try working through the following questions to reflect on where your strengths and experiences are...*

1. What business experience do you have? Is it formal, informal or both?
2. Have you worked in a business environment? What business skills did you acquire (e.g. *marketing, managing people*)?
3. What kind of production skills have you learned?
4. Do you have a “mentor” relationship with a farmer (e.g. *parent, relative, neighbor*)?
5. Do you already own a farm?
6. Do you already own a business?
7. Do you have capital saved? Do you know your credit rating?
8. Do you have connections in a particular market?
9. What other strengths do you feel you bring to running your own business?
10. What information do you need to develop production & marketing plans?
11. How does land figure into your business plan short and long term?



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To conclude, try this analysis to pull your insights together- reflect back on all the above questions as you work through your farm business planning and revisit often.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Foundational Goals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Quality of Life Factors</i></li> <li>• <i>Financial Goals</i></li> <li>• <i>Core values (who you are, what you stand for)</i> <i>e.g. environmental stewardship, community engagement</i></li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Weaknesses (internal)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Lack of farming experience</i></li> <li>• <i>Lack of capital to invest</i></li> <li>• <i>Not like marketing side of business</i></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Strengths</b></p> <p><i>What strengths &amp; skills do you have that will be helpful?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Threats (external)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Cost of land increasing</i></li> <li>• <i>Dependence on weather</i></li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Risk Management:</b> Brainstorm some risk management strategies.</p> <p><i>Examples:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Take time to do an internship or work on a farm</i></li> <li>• <i>Keep an off farm job and save for a few years</i></li> <li>• <i>Start small or part time and grow over time</i></li> <li>• <i>Consider taking on a business partner who enjoys marketing</i></li> <li>• <i>Diversify operation (crops and enterprises)</i></li> </ul>	