Many would not leave home on a trip to an unfamiliar destination without a road map. They would want to know where food, gas, and lodging were available. An arrival time would be estimated to inform family and friends. What about business? A well-developed “road map” for a farm or ranch is needed. Steps for generating goals to guide farm/ranch decision making follow.

What Are Goals?
A goal is a statement of what an individual or family want to achieve. Through goals, each person, family, or business unit identifies its aspirations for the future. Goals change with circumstances and time, and they must be reevaluated and updated periodically.

How To Use Goal Setting
Goals provide focus and direction for management. Attaining high priority goals takes precedence in management decisions. They serve as reference points to monitor how well a business is doing and as a motivation if deadlines are specified. Goals help aid decision making in the face of uncertainty. Finally, achieving goals can serve as a rallying point for the family or farm management team.

Steps in Goal Setting
Goal setting requires creative thinking. Goals can be tangible and intangible, short-term and long-term, monetary and non-monetary. Goals are personal and unique to the family since they reflect values and beliefs, the resources available, and the opportunities and limitations faced. Because achieving goals often requires the cooperation of family, the goal setting process should involve discussion and compromise among family members. Seven steps for setting goals follow.

• Assess where operation was in the past.
• Assess family and farm resources (including self) and planning restrictions.
• Develop a general management plan.
• Identify and establish specific goals or objectives.
• Prioritize goals.
• Develop plans for action and implementing goals.
• Measure progress and reassess goals.

Developing SMART Goals
A way of remembering tips for goal setting is to make them SMART: Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Reason-
## Goal Setting Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goals</th>
<th>Priority (High, Med., Low)</th>
<th>Potential Conflicts or Restrictions</th>
<th>Ways to Resolve Conflict</th>
<th>Resources Needed</th>
<th>Assigned Person(s)</th>
<th>Deadline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most important goal?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Second most important goal?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other goals?</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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• Making goals too lofty
• Trying to do too many things at once
• Overemphasizing quantitative aspects
• Vulnerability to unexpected events
• Failing to use all information or include all decision makers
• Ignoring good plans

Using the Goal Setting Worksheet

Provide each family member or person involved in farm management with a copy of this worksheet. Ask each person to complete it, without input from others initially. When everyone has completed the worksheet, discuss it with family and/or business associates, as appropriate. Use additional copies of the worksheet to document your family or farm management team’s best thinking and mark it as such. Short-term goals should include those that will allow you to attain your long-term goals. An additional sheet detailing activities necessary to achieve a goal may be needed, along with an associated time line.

Summary

Goal setting, although important for all individuals and families, is especially important for farm families because of family and farm business interrelationships. The development of individual goals, discussion and negotiation of family goals, and farm and family priority setting gives structure to the management process. Setting goals as a family at least annually (or whenever circumstances change significantly) should become part of the farm management routine. By helping individuals and families work smarter, goal-directed management can improve farm efficiency. Achievement of goals should result in a feeling of accomplishment and pride. Use the following worksheet to begin specifying goals for family and business.
The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
Bringing the University to You!

The Cooperative Extension Service is the largest, most successful informal educational organization in the world. It is a nationwide system funded and guided by a partnership of federal, state, and local governments that delivers information to help people help themselves through the land-grant university system.

Extension carries out programs in the broad categories of agriculture, natural resources and environment; family and consumer sciences; 4-H and other youth; and community resource development. Extension staff members live and work among the people they serve to help stimulate and educate Americans to plan ahead and cope with their problems.

Some characteristics of the Cooperative Extension system are:

- The federal, state, and local governments cooperatively share in its financial support and program direction.
- It is administered by the land-grant university as designated by the state legislature through an Extension director.
- Extension programs are nonpolitical, objective, and research-based information.
- It provides practical, problem-oriented education for people of all ages. It is designated to take the knowledge of the university to those persons who do not or cannot participate in the formal classroom instruction of the university.
- It utilizes research from university, government, and other sources to help people make their own decisions.
- More than a million volunteers help multiply the impact of the Extension professional staff.
- It dispenses no funds to the public.
- It is not a regulatory agency, but it does inform people of regulations and of their options in meeting them.
- Local programs are developed and carried out in full recognition of national problems and goals.
- The Extension staff educates people through personal contacts, meetings, demonstrations, and the mass media.
- Extension has the built-in flexibility to adjust its programs and subject matter to meet new needs. Activities shift from year to year as citizen groups and Extension workers close to the problems advise changes.

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