

# Assessing Land Resources

## Farm History & Current Situation

# 7

### Task 2: What have you got?

The second task in Building a Sustainable Business Plan is: Farm History and Current Situation- What Have You Got? This section deals with identifying what the marketing, operations, human resources and financial plans are currently in place. Since we were starting from scratch our primary goal was to understand the land situation we were entering into. Later we would address the areas of marketing, operations, human resources and finances from a perspective that looked and weighed various options in those areas.

The first section we addressed was "A Brief History of Our Farm Operation", this was easy for us because a student had written a newsletter article that addressed this topic, so with minimal revisions that section was complete (See Master Plan: Student Farm History the Beginning).

For this task we focused on the farm history and current situation in terms of soil type and nutrient levels, land area, history of both crops grown there in the past and in terms of history over time (when the area was first farmed etc.) and other considerations. Given that none of the instructors really knew what the "right" answers were to those questions we invited Mike McClellan, the executive assistant in charge of the research plots on the St. Paul Campus where our farm plot is located, to help shed some light. Even before Mike came to class we knew we needed to establish a good relationship with him in order for our farm to succeed. Inviting him into our class to meet with the participants, let us know what he expected of us and gave us the opportunity to ask him all kinds of questions. This was helpful both in establishing a good relationship and in gaining meaningful knowledge about the land.



The Student Farm acre is plot A-9 on the Twin Cities Campus Agricultural Experiment Station, which coincidentally is directly behind this sign on the corner of Cleveland and Larpentuer.

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## Assessing the Land Time Table

| Week of Class     | Activities  |
|-------------------|---|
| 2<br>(10 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brainstorm lists of information needed for Farm History &amp; Current Situation</li> </ul>   |
| 3<br>(3 minutes)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students sign up for groups</li> </ul>   |
| 4<br>(45 minutes) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In groups students revise questions and delegate who will be responsible for which questions</li> <li>Mike McClellan, executive assistant in charge of experimental research plots visits</li> </ul> |
| 5<br>(5 minutes)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quick Updates, identify responsible party for Master Plan Submission</li> </ul>  |
| 6                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Master Plan Submissions Due</li> </ul>   |

### Brainstorming Lists

To identify the information we needed to complete this task we started out with 5 large sheets of paper taped up with the headings:

- Field Size & Map
- Soil Types & Analysis
- Cropping History & Institutional Considerations
- Field History
- Other

We had students take turns adding items to each list. From those lists the assignment sheets were generated.

### Identifying Groups

Before students could begin this project we had them identify their top two choices for groups to work in. At this point it was still early in the semester and we wanted students to work with new people and experience some of the different possible small group dynamics. Students identified their top two choices for groups and were then assigned a group to work as part of a team to both identify the questions and answers that pertained to that area.

### Current Situation & Farm History Groups:

1. Field Size & Map: with & without Buffers, size of field, buffers etc.
2. Soil Types & Analysis & Drainage Situation: N,P,K, Organic Matter, for past 4-5 years
3. Cropping History & Institutional Considerations (p. 71 Worksheet 2.4): Spring, Summer, Fall Crops, Planting & Harvest Dates, Planting Rates, Yield, Chemical Inputs for past 4-5 years
4. Field History: When was the field first farmed? (Check with Gibbs Farm?) Previous Owner? Original / Pre-settlement vegetation?
5. Other:

### Results:

The results of this assignment can be found in the Master Plan Farm History & Current Situation section in the

Group #1: Field Size & Map  
 WK3: Current Situation and Farm History

Your group is responsible for the information related to the Field Size and Map; this includes the following information and any additional information that your group deems falls into this category.

The following information is basic information that is either predetermined from our textbook, "Building a Sustainable Business" as part of Task 2: Farm History and Current Situation (feel free to delve into the textbook for more info p.27 –86) or was brainstormed during week 2 in our large group.

Your group will need to determine the following information and either create or procure a base map plan of our site that includes buffers and borders drawn to scale

|              | Without Buffers | With Buffers |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| E-W          |                 |              |
| N-S          |                 |              |
| Total Acres: |                 |              |

Width of Grass Border on \_\_\_\_ Side

N  
 S  
 E  
 W

Who maintains the buffer zone?

Size & location of City Right of Way (along roads)

Background information on the city right of way- is there a history of city / university cooperation?

Other Questions:

Please delegate within your group the responsibility of determining, gathering and reporting this information back to the large group. Who will be responsible for what?

Group #2 Soil Types & Analysis  
WK3: Current Situation and Farm History

Your group is responsible for the information related to the Soil Types & Analysis; this includes the following information and any additional information that your group deems falls into this category.

The following information is basic information that is either predetermined from our textbook, "Building a Sustainable Business" as part of Task 2: Farm History and Current Situation (feel free to delve into the textbook for more info p.27 –86) or was brainstormed during week 2 in our large group.

Your group will need to determine the following information:

Soil Testing results:

| Date Sampled: | N | P | K | Organic Matter | Depth Tested at: |
|---------------|---|---|---|----------------|------------------|
| 2004          |   |   |   |                |                  |
| 2003          |   |   |   |                |                  |
| 2002          |   |   |   |                |                  |
| 2001          |   |   |   |                |                  |
| 2000          |   |   |   |                |                  |

Drainage Situation? Are there drain tiles? Where do they go?

Irrigation capabilities?

Electricity availability on site?

Tasks / Labor available through grounds maintenance, that is included in land rental fee?

Road Salt issues?

Other toxic substances in soils? History of testing?

Other Questions:

Please delegate within your group the responsibility of determining, gathering and reporting this information back to the large group. Who will be responsible for what?

Group #3 Cropping History  
 WK3: Current Situation and Farm History

Your group is responsible for the information related to the Cropping History; this includes the following information and any additional information that your group deems falls into this category.

The following information is basic information that is either predetermined from our textbook, "Building a Sustainable Business" as part of Task 2: Farm History and Current Situation (feel free to delve into the textbook for more info p.27 –86) or was brainstormed during week 2 in our large group.

Your group will need to determine the following information:

YEAR: 2004            Spring            Summer            Fall  
 Crop  
 Planting Date  
 Planting Rate  
 Harvest Date  
 Chemical inputs (Dates & Applications of fertilizer, manure, pesticides)  
 Yield

YEAR: 2003            Spring            Summer            Fall  
 Crop  
 Planting Date  
 Planting Rate  
 Harvest Date  
 Chemical inputs (Dates & Applications)  
 Yield

YEAR: 2002            Spring            Summer            Fall  
 Crop  
 Planting Date  
 Planting Rate  
 Harvest Date  
 Chemical inputs (Dates & Applications)  
 Yield

YEAR: 2001            Spring            Summer            Fall  
 Crop  
 Planting Date  
 Planting Rate  
 Harvest Date  
 Chemical inputs (Dates & Applications)  
 Yield

YEAR: 2000      Spring      Summer      Fall  
Crop  
Planting Date  
Planting Rate  
Harvest Date  
Chemical inputs (Dates & Applications)  
Yield

## Assignment

Surrounding Fields: Who are our neighbors?

Other Questions:

Please delegate within your group the responsibility of determining, gathering and reporting this information back to the large group. Who will be responsible for what?

## Group #4 Farm History

### WK3: Current Situation and Farm History

Your group is responsible for the information related to the Farm History; this includes the following information and any additional information that your group deems falls into this category.

The following information is basic information that is either predetermined from our textbook, "Building a Sustainable Business" as part of Task 2: Farm History and Current Situation (feel free to delve into the textbook for more info p.27 –86) or was brainstormed during week 2 in our large group.

Your group will need to determine the following information:

When was the field first farmed? (Check with Gibbs Farm for when the area was first farmed)

Previous Owners? When did the University acquire this land?

Original / Pre-settlement vegetation?

Surrounding Fields: Who are our neighbors?

Other Questions:

Please delegate within your group the responsibility of determining, gathering and reporting this information back to the large group. Who will be responsible for what?

## Group # 5 Other issues

## WK3: Current Situation and Farm History

Your group is responsible for the information related to the Other Issues; this includes the following information and any additional information that your group deems falls into this category.

The following information is basic information that is either predetermined from our textbook, "Building a Sustainable Business" as part of Task 2: Farm History and Current Situation (feel free to delve into the textbook for more info p.27 –86- we will deal with potential Products, Customers, Distribution, Pricing, Market & Industry, Promotion, Operations, and Partner Organizations later-promise) or was brainstormed during week 2 in our large group.

Your group will need to determine the following information:

What are the University's expectations for our group on the land?

Institutional Considerations (See worksheet 2.4 in Building a Sustainable Business)

What is the technical duration of the lease on the land we have? Who determines if we can renew it?

What are the restrictions on what and where we can plant: Buffers, perennial crops, woody species, etc.?

What is the current situation with composting on campus? Can we create a compost pile? Where can we compost, where can't we compost?

What are the university's policies regarding building structures? What is the current situation with the house/structure currently out there- is there any chance we could use it?

Can we put up fencing?

Is there space available elsewhere on campus for storage of tools or products and space for processing? Refrigeration anywhere? If you're not the person to ask who is?

Is there Greenhouse space available? How do we get greenhouse space?

Who do we deal with for maintenance crew work? We plan to become organically certified, are there any potential problems with that? How do we convey our needs to the maintenance crew?

Other Questions: