



TEACHING/DEMONSTRATION FARM FOR SMALL FARMERS: SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Community Resource
Development

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Objectives

Q. WHAT IS THE OVERALL GOAL OF THE TEACHING/DEMONSTRATION FARM FOR SMALL FARMERS?

A. To increase the income of small farmers and rural communities.

Q. WHAT IS THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF THE TEACHING/DEMONSTRATION FARM FOR SMALL FARMERS?

A. To teach farm management skills and new enterprise knowledge to small farmers.

Q. WHAT IS THE SECONDARY OBJECTIVE OF THE TEACHING/DEMONSTRATION FARM?

A. To teach basic information needed by entry level agricultural labor to help them be worth more as hired farm labor.

Definitions

Q. WHAT IS A TEACHING/DEMONSTRATION FARM FOR SMALL FARMERS?

A. It is a farm that will focus on demonstrating the production of new or supplemental farm enterprises and teaching the management skills to make the new enterprises profitable.

Q. WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF A SMALL FARMER FOR PURPOSES OF THIS PROJECT?

A. For purposes of this project, a small farmer is one who has about 100 to 150 total acres with 15 to 30 suitable for cropland. He can be full time or part time desiring to become full time, and needing or desiring to increase farm income.

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Q. MUST ALL PARTICIPANTS IN THE SMALL TEACHING/DEMONSTRATION FARM PROJECT MEET SMALL FARM CRITERIA?

A. No. Anyone who wishes may participate, but the seminars, workshops, demonstrated crops, and marketing will focus on small-farm situations.

Origin

Q. HOW DID THE VIRGINIA TEACHING/DEMONSTRATION FARM FOR SMALL FARMERS ORIGINATE?

A. It was recommended in October, 1982 by a committee appointed by the Virginia Rural Development and Capacity Building Council to study and recommend ways to help rural communities increase income.

Q. WHAT IS THE VIRGINIA RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING COUNCIL (VRDCBC)?

A. It is a council whose membership represents various agricultural and other rural interests: it is tasked to make recommendations and act when appropriate, and is designed to solve problems and pursue opportunities in rural Virginia. The VRDCBC is presently chaired by Mr. S. Mason Carbaugh, Commissioner, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS).

General

Q. WHAT IS THE RATIONALE FOR THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION TO ESTABLISH A TEACHING/DEMONSTRATION FARM FOR SMALL FARMERS?

A. There are several reasons for establishing the farm. The major ones are that small farmers in Virginia need to increase their incomes, rural areas need increased income, small farmers offer one of the greatest potentials for rural economic development, research shows that the two key variables needed to increase small farm income are management and the addition of new enterprises, and small farmers are interested in exploring new farm enterprises.

Q. WHERE IS THE TEACHING FARM LOCATED?

A. It is located in Nottoway County on land owned by the Virginia Department of Corrections.

Q. WHY WAS NOTTOWAY COUNTY CHOSEN OVER OTHER VIRGINIA LOCALITIES?

A. Suitable land is available, there are a large number of small farmers in Nottoway and the surrounding counties, and there is an interest in and potential for introducing new farm enterprises in the area.

- Q. HOW MUCH WILL IT COST TO OPERATE THE TEACHING/DEMONSTRATION FARM?
- A. The concept from the beginning was to maximize the use of existing resources. The land is owned by the Virginia Department of Corrections, and Corrections provides the manpower needed for day-to-day operation. The Virginia Cooperative Extension Service (VCES) provides the technical information and overall coordination of the educational responsibilities. The VDACS provides the marketing analysis and the leadership for obtaining the necessary start-up monies.
- Q. WHO WILL CONTROL THE TEACHING/DEMONSTRATION FARM?
- A. A teaching farm advisory board, whose membership represents a wide range of private, public, and agricultural related interests, will recommend general overall operating policies for the farm.
- Q. DOES THE TEACHING/DEMONSTRATION FARM MEAN THAT THE SMALL FARMERS HAVE NOT BEEN GETTING HELP BEFORE?
- A. No. Many small farmers have been and are getting help and all have access to help sources. However, this project focuses on small farmers, and is expected to attract the interest of more small farmers and be an additional specialized effort to help increase their incomes.
- Q. IS THE TEACHING FARM PERMANENT?
- A. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Virginia Department of Corrections, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, the three agencies with major responsibilities, has been signed for five years (until October, 1988). The project will be evaluated and the decision to continue or discontinue will be made at that time.
- Q. ARE THE NEEDED FACILITIES AVAILABLE FOR SUCH A PROJECT?
- A. Yes. The Corrections farm provides the land and the nearby Virginia Tech Southern Piedmont Research and Continuing Education Center provides the classrooms for seminars and workshops.
- Q. WHAT TYPES OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES WILL BE A PART OF THE TEACHING/DEMONSTRATION FARM PROJECT?
- A. Farmers will be able to visit the farm and actually view production. Seminars and workshops will be conducted, focusing on potential new enterprise crops and the management skills needed to succeed.

- Q. WHAT IS A REALISTIC SCHEDULE FOR GETTING THE TEACHING/DEMONSTRATION FARM INTO FULL OPERATION?
- A. The land has been cleared, lime has been applied, and a preliminary crop to condition the soil has been planted. The Virginia Division of Forestry has already begun a forest management and Christmas tree demonstration on a portion of the land. The first full crop demonstration year will be 1985. A series of classroom workshops are scheduled to begin in October, 1984.
- Q. WHAT DOES A SMALL FARMER NEED TO DO TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE TEACHING/DEMONSTRATION FARM PROJECT?
- A. Be interested in increasing farm income, be willing to explore new farm enterprises, obtain the management skills needed to produce and market them at a profit, and contact the local Extension Agent.
- Q. ARE THERE ANY RESIDENT REQUIREMENTS FOR THOSE DESIRING TO ATTEND THE ACTIVITIES OF THE TEACHING/DEMONSTRATION FARM?
- A. No. The only limitation is the distance a participant is willing to travel. It is anticipated that a majority of the participants will reside in Nottoway and the adjoining counties.
- Q. IF A FARMER HAS A QUESTION WHOM CAN HE CALL?
- A. Contact the local Extension Agent or Wayne Compton, Extension Teaching Farm Education Coordinator, P. O. Box 154, Appomattox, Virginia 24522-0158. Telephone 804-352-7114.
- Q. IS THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS FROM ONE FAMILY LIMITED?
- A. No. Wives are encouraged to participate with their husbands. Older children interested in the farming operation are also invited to participate.
- Q. WHERE CAN ADDITIONAL COPIES OF THIS QUESTION AND ANSWER SHEET BE OBTAINED?
- A. Your local Extension Office.

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