

THE FARM PROSPERITY PROJECT: IMPROVED FARM PROFIT WITH FARMLAND PROTECTION & HIGH VALUE CROPS

Jeanine M. Davis, PI, Department of Horticultural Science, North Carolina State University
Tom Elmore, Project Manager, Land of Sky Regional Council



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INTRODUCTION

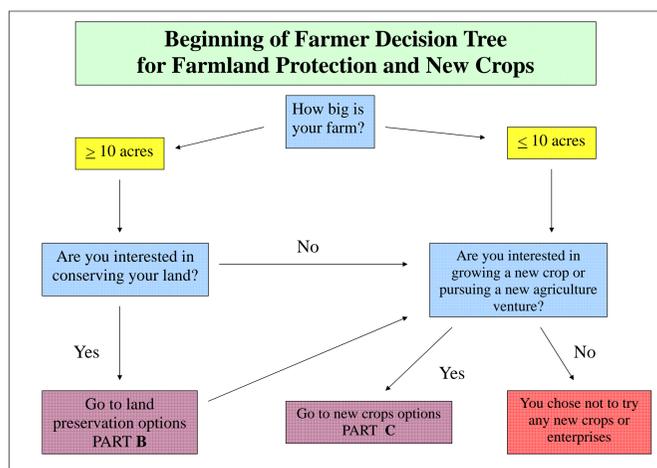
Farms in western North Carolina and across the country are threatened by pressure from development and shifting agricultural markets. The Farm Prosperity Project is composed of a diverse group of people from different organizations working together to help farmers evaluate their situations, increase profitability, and ultimately, save their farms.

GENERAL APPROACH

Funding from this project put staff members in two of the cooperating land trusts. They and representatives from the other five organizations collaborating on this project formed three teams focused on new crops, farm protection, and modeling. Thirty-five farmers interested in being part of this study were recruited from a five county study area in western North Carolina. The farmers are participating in numerous interviews, surveys, and focus groups. In return, they receive free publicity for their farms through the ASAP "Local Food Guide", technical assistance on new crops and farmland protection methods, free attendance at workshops and conferences, and assistance with grant and loan identification and applications.

HIGH-VALUE CROPS AND FARM PROTECTION

As markets shift globally, some crops remain competitive while others must be replaced by higher value crops. The new crop team studied and selected six high-value crops and agricultural enterprise categories appropriate for the region and developed a decision tree to match the unique resources of each farm with appropriate alternative crop opportunities for their individual situations. The farm protection team selected a number of farm protection methods that are appropriate for farmers in the study area. They are developing a guide to help farmers know what they can expect if they select any of these options. Both of those teams are working with the modeling team to develop decision making tools to help growers choose the crops and farm protection methods best for their situations.

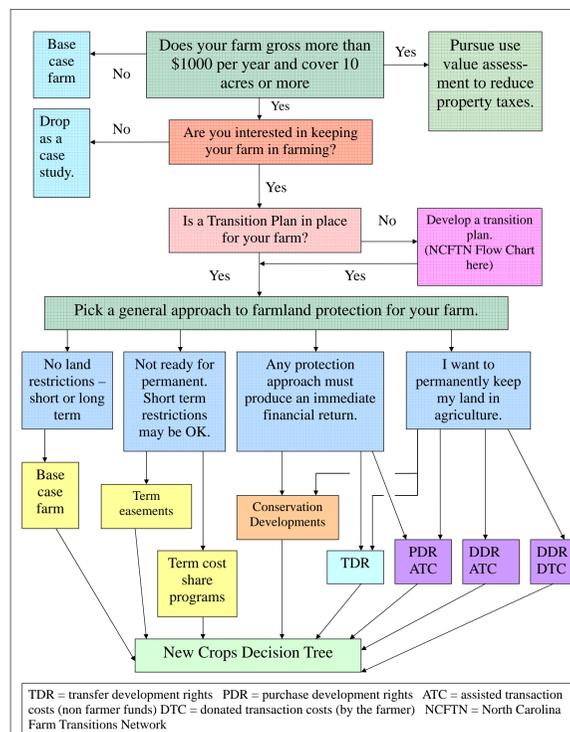


An example of a section of the decision making tool to help farmers decide which farm protection methods and new crops to use.

Crops Decision Tool					
Agronomics	Nursery	Value-Added Products	Specialty Meats & Cheeses	Organics	Specialty Fruits & Vegetables
Are you willing to do something new and different?	Are you willing to do something new and different?	Are you willing to do something new and different?	Are you willing to do something new and different?	Are you willing to do something new and different?	Are you willing to do something new and different?
Do you like to work with people?	Do you have capital to start a new enterprise?	Do you have good artistic/presentation skills?			
Do you have good artistic/presentation skills?	Do you have good physical stamina?				
Do you have a good knowledge of plants or are willing to learn it?	Are you willing to be able to irrigate?	Are you willing to be able to irrigate?	Are you willing to be able to irrigate?	Are you willing to be able to irrigate?	Are you willing to be able to irrigate?
Are you willing to attend trade shows to sell products?	Do you like to cook or follow a detailed process?	Do you like to cook or follow a detailed process?	Do you like to cook or follow a detailed process?	Do you like to cook or follow a detailed process?	Do you like to cook or follow a detailed process?
Are you willing to attend trade shows to sell products?	Are you willing to attend trade shows to sell products?	Are you willing to attend trade shows to sell products?	Are you willing to attend trade shows to sell products?	Are you willing to attend trade shows to sell products?	Are you willing to attend trade shows to sell products?
Agronomics	Nursery	Value-Added Products	Specialty Meats & Cheeses	Organics	Specialty Fruits & Vegetables

Instructions: Working in columns, put a check mark next to each question that you can answer yes to. If you answer yes to every item in the column, put a star in the box at the bottom. Those categories that receive a star are enterprises that you are probably well suited for.

An example from the new crops section of the decision making tools.



An example from the farmland protection section of one of the decision making tools.

DECISION ASSESSMENT MODEL

The modeling team created and tested a decision model for use by farmers in a whole farm planning context. The model uses established sustainability indicators and decision analysis techniques to help farmers make sustainable choices for their farms and to monitor the impact of those choices over the long term through engaging in an iterative do-it-yourself process. This tool has the potential to improve confidence in management decisions designed to enhance the well-being of the farm family and farming community as a whole.



An educational event for farmers on growing heirloom and organic tomatoes as new crop opportunities for local farms. Along with the decision making model and tools created in this project, events such as these help farmers make choices about what to produce to keep their farms profitable.

Project Cooperators:

NC STATE UNIVERSITY Jeanine Davis



Gerry Cohn



Charlie Jackson



John Bonham



Tom Elmore



William Hamilton



Susan Kask
Laura Lengnick

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