



Land Transfer Options: Virginia Farm Link & the Certified Farm Seeker Program



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- ❧ **For Owners:** Farmers and landowners who are facing retirement and want to see their businesses continue and their land stay in production
- ❧ **For Seekers:** Beginning and aspiring farmers who are in search of business arrangements through which they can acquire land, equipment, experience and access to the knowledge of seasoned producers



- ❧ Virginia Farm Link established in 2001 along with the Office of Farmland Preservation (OFP)
- ❧ Database: Online tool to connect farm owners and farm seekers in Virginia: www.vafarmlink.org
- ❧ 300 +farm owners and 3,000+ farm seekers have signed up since 2008



Owner Sign-up: About You...

- ❧ Provides an opportunity for a farm seeker to learn about the farm owners values goals and ultimately can help with finding a viable farm seeker
- ❧ As an owner, what is your experience in agriculture? What are your goals for utilizing Farm Link? Does a change in your family status necessitate a change?



Owner Sign-up: About the Farm

- ❧ Where is the farm? What farm operations exist on the farm? What is the size of the farm?
- ❧ What is the status of the farm?
- ❧ What type of farm transition arrangement is preferred?
- ❧ Add photos that showcase your farm!



Seeker Sign-up: About You

- ❧ What are your values, life experience, farming experience etc.
- ❧ What region of Virginia are you interested in, what type of farm operation(s) you want and the what type of farm transition arrangement is desired?



Virginia Farm Bureau Young Farmers



- ❧ Began working together in 2010 to address concerns over effectiveness of Farm Link program
- ❧ Collaborated on several workshops to enhance relationships between farm seekers and farm owners in 2011 & 2012
- ❧ Resulted in the Certified Farm Seeker (CFS) Program funded in part by a grant from Va. Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition Project (VBFRCP)
- ❧ Continued funding through VDACS, Farm Bureau & VBFRCP partnership through 2016





What is the Certified Farm Seekers Program?

- ❧ Partnership to promote the Virginia Farm Link database
- ❧ Designed to help farmers plan for their future farming operation - Provides tools to demonstrate farming commitment & vision to farm owners





What is the Certified Farm Seekers Program?

- ❧ **Free** - help producing a business plan, a resume as well as to demonstrating on-farm experience
- ❧ Eligible to receive up to \$500 in cost share funding & additional assistance in meeting farm owners
- ❧ Full-time CFS Coordinator & new website!



Who can become a Certified Farm Seeker?



The program is designed for farmers at all levels:

- œ Beginning
- œ Established
- œ Transitioning





Requirements



Professional Resume

Business Plan

On-Farm Experience

If you already have any, or all, of the three program requirements, you are that much closer to becoming a Certified Farm Seeker!

If you need help completing any of the requirements, there are modules available as resources.





Benefits of the CFS Program



- ❧ Elevation on Farm Link website – only seekers farm owners can search on Farm Link website
- ❧ One-time professional business plan review at no cost
- ❧ Networking/social opportunities
- ❧ Cost-share towards time with a transition mediator or attorney
- ❧ Landowner matching assistance/facilitation



Whole Farm Planning Modules



- ❧ **Introduction to Whole Farm Planning**
- ❧ Business Management
- ❧ Land Acquisition and Tenure
- ❧ Marketing
- ❧ On-Farm Experience



Introduction to Whole Farm Planning

- ❧ Determine the reality of establishing a farm enterprise by exploring motives, resources, and personal goals relating to the farming industry
- ❧ Brainstorm why, what, and where you want to farm
- ❧ Helps the CFS coordinator better match you with a landowner

**Virginia Whole
Farm Planning:
An Educational Program
for Farm Start-up &
Development**

Intro to Whole Farm Planning



Introduction to Whole Farm Planning



- ❧ Brainstorm why, what, and where you want to farm.
- ❧ Determine the reality of establishing a sustainable farm enterprise by exploring:
 - ❧ motives,
 - ❧ resources, and
 - ❧ personal goals relating to the farming industry.
- ❧ An alternative version of module is available for farmers that already have demonstrated on-farm experience



My Ideal Farm is...



- ❧ What kind of enterprise is it? (i.e. what will you grow or raise?)
- ❧ Where is it located?
- ❧ Will you have jobs in addition to farming?



I think a successful farm is...



- ❧ How do you define success?
- ❧ What would a successful farm look like?
- ❧ What is your ideal agricultural success story?



Intro. to Whole Farm Planning Overview



- What are your motivations to start a farm?
- What resources do you have to make this farm a reality?
- How much capital are you able to invest?
- Do you have suitable farmland?
- Do you want to farm full or part time?
- What kinds of production practices do you need to know?
- How and where will you market what you will grow or raise?
- Do you have the skill, knowledge, and networks to be successful?
- What does a successful farm look like to you?



Your Farm Goals Are...



Whole Farm Goals:

- ❧ Quality of Life
- ❧ Forms of Production
- ❧ Future Resource Base

Example Farm Goals Worksheet

	Short Term (1-3 years)	Medium Term (3-10 years)	Long Term (10+ years)
Infrastructure			
Land	Maintain all leased land		Transfer land to daughter
Buildings	Repair barn roof	New hay shed	
Equipment	Replace tractor	Purchase ridge-till equipment	
Other	Concrete compost pad		
Ecological/Landscape			
Cropland	Develop rotations for all land	Retire erodible land to grass	
Grassland	re-seed back pasture		
Woodland	Increase wildlife, deer		
Wetlands/Ponds, etc.	Fence ponds		
Water courses	Add buffer strips to stream		
People			
Skills	Attend borrower's training	Learn Fin-pak, use at home	
Labor	Hire one person during summer	Begin retirement, cut back hours	
Communication	Have monthly meetings with family		
Family/Quality of Life	Set family goals sheet		
Financial			
Production/Enterprise	Diversify crops		
Cash Flow	Monthly cash flow of xx\$		
Debt/Asset	Reduce debt by xx%		
Marketing	Direct market beef locally		



Quality of Life Considerations



1. Do you prefer to integrate your work and personal life as much as possible, or to keep them separate? Why?
2. Do you enjoy working with others (partners, family members, employees), or do you prefer working alone? Why?
3. Is it important that what you do for a living have a positive impact on others? The environment? If yes, describe.
4. Do you enjoy contact with customers? Why or why not?
5. Do you value your privacy? Explain.
6. What part of farming are you most passionate about? (example: production, selling, education, handling animals)



Personal Resource Inventory & Goals



1. Knowledge, Skills, and Experience:

- ❧ What knowledge, skill base, and prior experience do you already possess?
- ❧ What knowledge and skills are needed to produce specific agricultural product(s) you are interested in?
- ❧ What communication & marketing skills?
- ❧ What additional resources and information do you need in order to learn more about the production, processing, and marketing related to your product(s)?
- ❧ Where and how can you access these resources and learning opportunities?



Personal Resource Inventory & Goals



2. Time, Energy, Health, and Labor:

- ❧ Do you work off farm?
- ❧ If so, how many hours will you be able to devote to the overall farm enterprise?
- ❧ Given the proposed farm enterprise idea, how much time and energy is required to carry out your enterprise successfully?
- ❧ When will you work (i.e. days, evenings, weekends, seasonal, etc.)?
- ❧ Overall, do the time and energy demands required fit your personal availability and abilities?



Personal Resource Inventory & Goals



2. Time, Energy, Health, and Labor con't:

- ❧ Any health-related issues that may impact running the farm business, and that need to be addressed and planned for before moving forward?
- ❧ Do you know what the demands, risk factors, and safety requirements are of certain farming vocations, types of machinery, chemical uses, etc.?
- ❧ Do you know what resources are available if you should need assistance, guidance, intervention, etc., to allow you to be able to farm safely, effectively, and productively? (eg. AgrAbility; Farm Bureau Safety)
- ❧ How much labor is required for the enterprise?



Personal Resource Inventory & Goals



3. Family Considerations:

- ❧ How much family involvement will the farm entail; i.e. will all family members participate with the farming operation?
- ❧ If children are involved, how will their school and after-school activities dovetail with the farm?
- ❧ Given your overall whole farm, how will your farm enterprise fit within the larger context of family life?



Assessing Your Financial Resources



1. Land & Infrastructure:

- ❧ How much land is necessary to carry out your farm enterprise?
- ❧ Are there specific infrastructure needs?



Assessing Your Financial Resources



2. Capital:

- ❧ What available capital do you have to get started?
- ❧ What start-up costs are needed to establish your farm enterprise?
- ❧ Apart from your own available capital, how much more capital do you need?
- ❧ What funding, such as grants, loans, etc., might be sources of capital, and where can it be obtained?



Assessing Your Financial Resources



3. Legal Considerations:

- ❧ What costs are associated with liability and other insurance?
- ❧ If you hire off-farm labor to help with the farm, what costs are involved with insurance and workman's compensation?
- ❧ If you own the land, are there any factors that are important to consider related to legal issues?
- ❧ Are there any zoning restrictions and/or covenants that might prohibit certain land uses?



Assessing Your Financial Resources



4. Family:

- ❧ Will this business support your family on its own, or will one or several family members be working off the farm at a job?
- ❧ How will you handle health insurance and other related health costs?
- ❧ How will you save for retirement?



Inventory of Resources and Preferences



Production and Stewardship Preferences:

- ☞ scale of operation
- ☞ degree of diversity and how components will be integrated
- ☞ how you will reach your stewardship goals given what you know about the land and resources at your farm site.



Production & Stewardship Preferences



1. What are you interested in producing?

- ❧ Horticultural Products
- ❧ Crops
- ❧ Livestock
- ❧ Fisheries/ Aquaculture
- ❧ Other



Production & Stewardship Preferences



2. The type of management production system that best fits your whole farm planning vision is a:

- ❧ Conventional system (high input, high spray)
- ❧ Hybrid Conventional system (low-input, low spray)
- ❧ Alternative system
- ❧ Organic system
- ❧ Other system



Production & Stewardship Preferences



3. For each of your product(s) grown or raised, how do you envision that product will be processed after harvest?

- ❧ No processing (will be sold for fresh market)
- ❧ Minimal processing
- ❧ Extensive processing



Inventory of Resources and Preferences con't



Marketing Options and Preferences:

- ✧ direct vs. wholesale?
- ✧ consider location of farm, accessibility of markets, marketability of your product, associated marketing costs, legal issues, and your personal/family characteristics and values



Accessing Market Options & Preferences



Identify the venues to market your product(s):

- ❧ Direct Markets
- ❧ Wholesale Markets
- ❧ Retailers
- ❧ Institutions



Accessing Market Options & Preferences



Personal preferences:

- ❧ Are you a “people” person?
- ❧ Do you want to market your product yourself, or do you want someone else to do it for you?
- ❧ How might the market you choose affect your family life?
- ❧ Do you prefer a 9-to-5 Mon. to Fri. schedule, or are you happy with the off times that something like a farmers market, CSA, or agritourism venue would demand?



Accessing Market Options & Preferences



Personal preferences con't:

- ❧ Are you comfortable with sacrificing some of your privacy?
- ❧ What is the distance from your farm to local markets (direct or wholesale)?
- ❧ How easy it to get from the farm to the market (i.e. roads, time)?
- ❧ If you are considering on-farm venues, how accessible is your farm? If it is remote, will this limit “buy-in”?
Parking? Neighbors? Ordinances?



Define Your Action Plan- With Timeline!



- What technical skills need to be acquired?
- How can suitable farmland be obtained?
- What land resources are available?
- How can the necessary financial resources be acquired?
- What business management skills and resources are needed?
- What kind of market research needs to be completed?
- What personal farming network exists?
- How do your family lifestyle goals fit into your farm enterprise timeline?
- How do your personal/community goals fit into your farm enterprise timeline?



Simplified Whole Farm Planning Application for Experienced Farmers...



Shortened for those with farming experience:

- ∞ Describe your current farming situation...
- ∞ Describe your ideal farm...
- ∞ Knowledge, Skills, and Experience...
- ∞ Time, Energy, Health, and Labor...
- ∞ Land & Infrastructure...



Business Management



Establishing Strategies for your financial matters:

- ❧ Develop and implement early financial and resource management goals!
- ❧ Best type of business structure for your farming enterprise?
- ❧ What farm business management strategies apply to your farming enterprise?
- ❧ Become proficient in human resource management through interactive activities.
- ❧ Identify current and future risks and employ appropriate risk management, including succession management.



Business Management



- What resources do you have? What resources do you lack?
- Is your enterprise sized appropriately?
- What type of farm records system will you use?
- What business structure is most appropriate for you?
- Who involved in your business and what roles do they play?
- What are your unique skills? What skills do you lack?
- Will your labor situation change in the near future? Will someone enter or leave the operation?
- To what type of risk is your business exposed?
- What is your plan for the farm business if/when you are no longer able to farm?



Land Acquisition and Tenure



You will explore the range of options under ownership and non-ownership tenure for new farmers and evaluate options to determine the best fit for your individual scenario. You will understand the relationship between tenure options and sustaining agriculture.

- How do you acquire good farmland?
- What zoning regulations will you be faced with?
- What kinds of professionals should you consider to help you purchase or lease land?



Option 1: Farm Succession for Transitioning Farmers



- ❧ Designed for farmers who have access to an established farm that will undergo a transition within the next 20 years and whose whole farm plan does not include leasing
- What do farm families need to consider when transferring the farm?
- Compare and contrast transferring to a family member versus a transfer to a non-family member.
- How do different entrant stages/tenure arrangements affect the long-term and succession goals of the farm?



Option 2: Leasing



☞ Designed for farmers whose primary source of land will come from leasing

- Why is a written lease agreement important to both parties?
- What basic information is necessary for developing an effective farm lease?
- What factors are important to the farmer/tenant and the landowner in the lease agreement?



Option 3: Hybrid



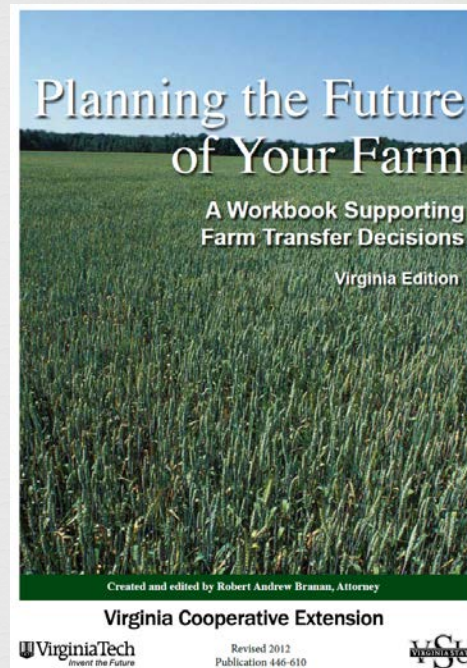
- ☞ Designed for farmers whose whole farm plan contains both transitioning an established farm and leasing and/or buying land
- What percentage of the farming operation will be leased or purchased?
 - What percentage, if any, of the farming operation will be derived from a farm transfer?
 - What do farm families need to consider when transferring the farm?



Action Plan!



- ❧ Develop a farm entrant “career pathway plan: steps from education to internship, early jobs, share or lease agreement to purchase.
- ❧ Talk to family members about their succession plans or experiences or develop a list of techniques that could be used to improve the communication between landlord and tenant.
- ❧ Complete “Planning the Future of Your Farm” Workbook.





Marketing



Answers pricing, promotion, and distributing questions. Its main objective is to create a market strategy based on original goals and plans in order to specifically address production needs.



Marketing



- œ developing and fostering relationships within the agricultural community to increase local marketing & networking
- œ What is our product?
- œ What markets do we serve?
- œ What are the unique features that distinguish our products?
- œ How do we distribute our products?



On-Farm Experience

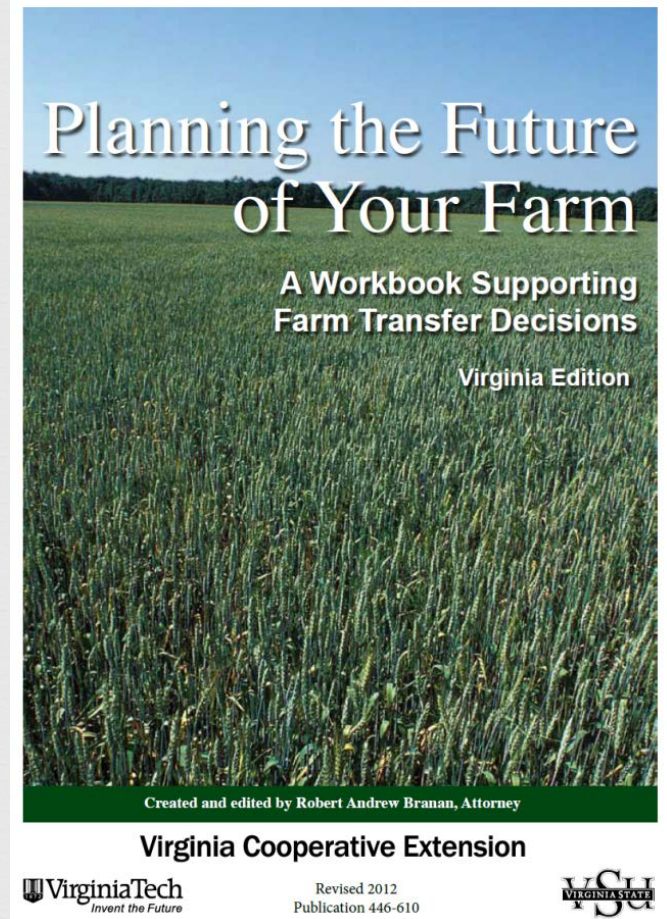


- ❧ Demonstrated ability to raise a sampling of the crops and/or livestock they have included in the whole farm plan.
- Develop a resume with references that showcases both conceptual and practical skills.
- Develop a business plan from information generated in previous modules.
- Create a definition and show proof of “sustainability” that incorporates environmental best management practices, economical viability, and farm safety/health methods.



Additional Programming

- ❧ OFP plans to deliver additional workshops in partnership with other agricultural organizations/sectors over the next year
- ❧ Planning for the Future of Your Farm workbook



Get Your Very Own Agricultural License Plate!



Questions?

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