

## Chapter XI

### Planning for the Future

Our first year is complete. We have done as we ought and have stayed out of debt. We have produced that which we set out to do and are ready to look ahead. It is December and our garden is put to bed. The garlic is now in the ground, awaiting spring and the time to grow again. Our chickens are still laying, though sparsely with the shorter periods of daylight while our ducks pick up the slack for the chickens in the egg laying department. They have no drop of production with the coming of winter. Our livestock is on their winter feed, letting our pastures rest until spring. Even our rabbits have moved into winter quarters with the chickens in the Raken House. Now is the time to plan...



[\(2\) Joel Salatin - Polyface farm - YouTube](#)

It is time now to design our plan... Check the video above and see how this can apply to our farm. I will be showing it at one level... perhaps my level, but this will show so much more!

The first step in our new plan is to see what we did in this, our first year. Below is the chart of our production for the year. Fortunately, we found homes for all of our meats and what vegetables we decided to raise for market. In addition to all that is listed below, we have our three freezers filled with our fryers, ducks, pigs and an entire beef that we managed to rear in our first year by buying a yearling feeder steer to put on our pasture. In fact, knowing that cattle like to be around like aged others, we bought three of them and reared and finished them together. The other two we marketed by the side and by the split side. We did not fool with quarters because of the pricing hassles. We simply took a full side and divided it into two equal parts and sold them separately.



Below is a chart of our retail activity...

### Sales Chart

#### Meats and Other Proteins

<u>What</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>At</u>	<u>Received</u>
Broilers	100	5 lb	\$6	\$ 3,000
Ducks	50	3.5	6	1,000
Turkeys	20	18	5	1,800
Rabbits	25	3.5	6	600
Steers	3	500	10	15,000
Hogs	2	200	10	4,000
Eggs	100	Doz	5	500
Duck Eggs	100	Doz	7	<u>700</u>
Total Meat and Eggs				26,600

#### Produce

Corn	3600	ears	.50	1,800
Tomatoes	250	lbs	4	1,000
All Else				<u>600</u>
Total Vegetables				3,400

Grand Total: **\$30,000**

As we can see, in addition to providing all necessary meats and eggs, plus 60-70% of our vegetable and fruit needs, we have our three freezers full of the most delicious and highest quality meats in existence and our pantry shelves are filled to capacity with the finest in canned fruits, sauces, juices, jams, jellies and vegetables. Plus, we have generated a gross income of roughly \$30,000! This will pay for all we grew this

year but will capitalize what we need to move into next year. (Remember, we said we were not taking ANY money out of our business for the first two years.) This means it is time to start planning what we will do with next year... and into the future.

The first thing we need here is a game plan... or in our case, a business plan for our homestead! It is fairly commonly known that a farm such as ours will be able to keep around 30% of the gross



income with the other 70% going to the cost of running our business. Believe me when I say, our homestead is a business in all ways just like any other business on the boulevard. It requires our constant care and attention to detail and careful planning so as not to out run our markets or overproduce our products.

The first step to a successful business is a successful business plan. In order to realize this, we are going to examine seven questions that we must answer in order to formulate a plan to generate \$130,000 in gross sales annually. Why this figure? Very simply put, if we can manage to keep 30% of our gross, this \$39,000 per year will afford us, being debt free, our food provided and living frugally on our homestead, a very comfortable lifestyle.

## 1. Why?

Why are we doing this? And our answer cannot be “money” for there are a thousand ways to generate this level of income while not requiring the time commitment a farm requires. It must be remembered that those chickens need to be feed and watered and moved EVERY day. Our cattle need new pasture, under our system, EVERY day. The eggs need to come in every day and our cow and/or goats need to be milked daily! So, why are we on this homestead?

## 2. Who?

Who is my market? How am I going to market the product that are going to produce that \$130K? This is our primary concern! Once we have asked ourselves why and are satisfied that our answer has meaning to us, now we need to identify our markets and what we need to do to expand that market??

## 3. What?

There are two “what” questions, this is the first...

What do I have to start with? It need not be much, but it does need to be identified. Do I have acreage available to me? If I do, is it fenced? Does it have water to the entire plot?



Are there roads? How is my access? Are there existing buildings I can convert to my uses? All of these resources are important and the more that we begin with, the less we have to pay for later.

#### 4. What am I going to farm?

Be flexible in this and match our resources to our crops. If I have no fences, then goats would probably not be



a good option. If I have only 5 acres, perhaps grass fed beef would not be a great option. This, next to developing our markets, is probably the most important question we

have to answer.

#### 5. How much?

Basically how much do I have to raise/grow/produce to reach my monetary production goal? As can be seen from the above chart, we are only 30% of the way to our production goal of \$130,000 so we have to ramp up our production. How are we going to do that? Do we have enough property and necessary resources currently to increase our herd size?

If we utilize the 20 acres introduced at the end of the last chapter, we have the ground to rear 30 cow/calf pairs or steers plus 30 hogs. Do we have the water system to do that? Will we need to irrigate at all? How are we going to do that? If our homestead doesn't have this much ground, can we lease some nearby? Do we need to increase our produce output? Do we have the resources, including time, to achieve this end?

If we rear our cattle to sell as finished beef, do we have the market for it? Alternatively, we could sell our calf crop annually and have no need for that extra marketing effort, but if we do,



our income will take a major hit as we will sell one finished beef animal for what we would sell 10-15 yearling calves.

How We Meet Our Goal

Broilers	500	5 lb	2500 lb X \$6	=	\$ 15,000
Ducks	400	3.5 lb	1400 lb X 6	=	8,400
Rabbits	100	3.5 lb	350 lb X 6	=	2,100
Turkeys	100	18 lb	1800 lb X 4	=	7,200
Beef	10	500 lb	5000 lb X 10	=	50,000
Hogs	20	200 lb	4000 lb X 10	=	40,000
Eggs	1200	Doz	1200 dzX 5	=	<u>6,000</u>
Total Meat					128,700

Corn	3600	ears	3600 X .50	=	1,000
Tomatoes	250	lb	250 lb X 4	=	1,000
All Else					<u>300</u>
Total Vegetables					2,300
Grand Total:					<u>\$131,000</u>

Here we have identified a plan for generating our income goal. We now know how many animals we need to have to achieve our goals. Maybe we will find other combinations



with time that will serve out purposes better, but, at least, we have a plan.

## 6. Timeline

What is our time allotted to reach our \$130,000 goal? Can we do it in 10 years? Can we make it in 7 years? Remember, in 7 years, our fruit orchard will be producing heavily as well. Is this chart doable in 5 years? Actually, the only thing limiting us is our resources going in and our market. If we can market to this level and we can raise the money to stock our range, we are there!



## 7. Where?

Where is the money coming from to establish our working stock? How are we going to finance the implements needed to rear our animals?

Truly, it need not be that much, but we will need structures on our homestead. We do need greenhouses for our garden. One or more of these structures can be put into service in the winter to house our laying hens and ducks. Of course, all of our broiler chickens, meat ducks and turkeys are gone for the year and won't be back until the chicks arrive in the spring, but we still have 100 laying hens and 50 Khaki Cambell or other laying ducks to house. Using the greenhouse has the serendipity of generating mulch for our garden as well.

We will need a barn or at least a roofed area for the large stock. Again, keeping our cows and steers under cover is



very useful as well when they are kept on deep mulch. These large guys will generate 50 lbs of waste per day. By keeping them on deep mulch, this will provide the carbon needed to neutralize the nitrogen in the waste, so it will compost and there will be no odor to it. Further, if we add corn to the mix regularly and as soon as the cows return to pasture in the spring, hogs are put on that mulch, they, in rooting out the corn, will mix our compost for us and when the hogs are ready to go to pasture, our compost is ready for our pasture!

Our greenhouses need not be anything super fancy to begin with... simply anchoring cattle panels and arcing them with a greenhouse plastic laid over the top will work very well for our purposes. In subsequent years, when our income is sufficient to support it, larger, more permanent structures can be constructed, but to begin with, we can construct a serviceable greenhouse for less than \$300.

We can use a greenhouse for our Raken House... rabbit/chicken winter house as well then plan on



building a permanent one when we are sure we are where we want to stay.

We will need a structure for our brooder house, but a 10 ft X 20 ft shed will serve nicely for this. We can either use our individual brooder boxes that will be described in the next chapter or we can built it for a permanent brooder structure, depending on our goals and needs.

Our first year, with the stocking levels we have discussed, we will need 2 brooder boxes, 7 chicken tractors and 4 rabbitats. The cost of materials for these structures are as follows, if we have to buy all the lumber new... brooder boxes should cost about \$100 each. The chicken tractors will cost approximately \$200 each and the rabbitats approximately \$250 each. This means the structures we will need to pasture raise our livestock will total about \$2,500 first year.



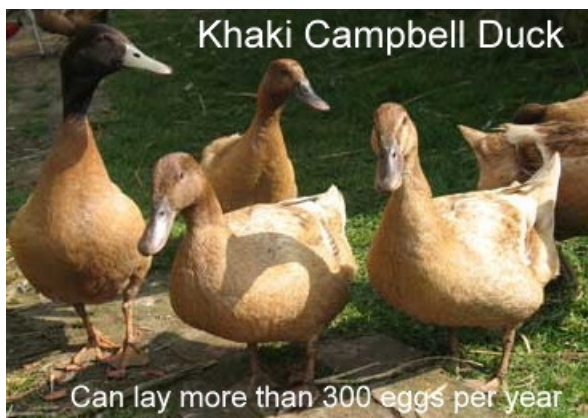
In addition to the wooden structures, we will be needing fencing and chargers. For our laying hens, ducks and turkeys, we will need a minimum of 600 ft of Premier 1 Poultry fencing. This fencing can be charged with a solar charger, removing the need for an electrical line to the site. Since this fence will be moved daily in some cases, the portable charger is a good thing to have.

Water is another important consideration. If we have a point of elevation on our homestead, we can erect a tank there, fill it from rainfall run-off from the roof of each of our structures, then feed it by gravity to our farm. If we don't have this luxury, there are other solutions to this problem up to and including pumping from our well to fill our cistern.

For our ducks, a pond is very beneficial. Chicken waterers will not work for ducks as they need to be able to dunk their

entire head to keep their eyes washed. This means an open basin which ducks will soil early and repeatedly. A pond does away with this need and is a point of pleasure for the birds as well.

To keep our ducks safe from predators, it is necessary they be contained in a tractor of their own. It is, however, very easy to train them



to come back to the tractor on command. The secret is to feed them ONLY at the tractor. Doing this will assure them that after a day of ranging and grazing, they will find fresh food and water waiting at home! It is actually amazing how they learn to be called to tractor in the afternoon.

My first choice for our farm in laying ducks would be the Khaki Campbell... a duck, obviously, bred from a mallard. The species comes to us from Scotland and they are a very



hardy and prolific breed. Our flock of 50 hens could well provide us with 1200 dozen eggs per year. Also, they do not drop off production in the winter molt as

chickens do, but will continue to provide us with a steady protein supply. 1200 dozen duck eggs selling at \$6 per

dozen will provide us with a gross income of \$7200 from a mere 50 Khaki Campbell hens.

The Pekin Duck, another species bred from the Mallard would still be my top choice for a meat bird because they mature so rapidly. A Pekin Duck should be harvested at 49 days old.



That is 7 weeks from egg to freezer!! Believe me, that is difficult to beat!

Our duck tractor is basically another chicken tractor but since they don't spend full time in it, it is possible to house 100 birds per tractor whereas, it is designed for not more than 75 chickens per tractor.

Laying capability in chickens varies widely. With the Leghorns, a smaller chicken, we could attain 80% laying per day, which means that with 100 laying hens, we could



receive as much as 80 eggs per day for 8 to 9 months per year.

In fact, the large, factory type setups use the leghorn. For our purposes, where our strength is marketing "farm to you" eggs, the pure white leghorn eggs are

not as desirable. For our purposes, we need a colored egg. Of course, those chickens that lay the most colorful eggs, lay the least. Araucana, a South American breed lays only about 160 eggs per yer. However, I would suggest for our homestead that we set our goal at 100 laying hens, including



10 Araucana or Cream Legbar, or, perhaps, 10 of each along with the remainder being either Black Astrolops or one of the other heirloom breeds, Rhode Island Red, Buff Orpington or Barred Rock. This would give us a very nice mix of colors and a strong laying stock.

This level of stocking would give us about 1500 doz eggs per year to market, after we have taken our 100 dozen out for our own use. Of course, this will



not happen in our second or third year unless we really get onto our marketing program. But, at this level, this would provide us with an annual income of more than \$7,500 per year from our hen's eggs alone.

A second source of income comes to us from our laying hens at the end of their second year. Layers need to be replaced biannually which means that we will have 50 laying hens to market as stewing chickens each year. These hens will be large... probably about a five pound average dressed weight.



Therefore, 50 hens weighing 5 lb each would provide us with 250 lbs of stewing hens that will sell for \$4 per pound. This yields us \$1,000 in extra income, which pays for their replacements and

much of their feed!

Some other structures we will need early on is a loafing shed for our cattle if no trees are available. We will also need a similar structure for our pigs as they do need shade, since they do not perspire and heat will affect them more surely than will cold.



A pole barn for winter housing of our cattle will benefit us in several ways, not the least of which is by providing top grade mulch for our pastureland from their wastes. The secret of this structure is to keep a deep bedding of carbon based material in their area. Periodically, spread corn throughout the loafing area then apply a new layer of bedding. This way, while the bedding serves to eliminate odor by carbon balancing the nitrogen in the waste, but, with the addition of the corn, we have set up a system whereby we can have our mulch turned for us as soon as the cows are returned to pasture in the spring after their winter in the loafing area, under cover by bringing in pigs to the shed. The pigs, in their rooting for the corn do this service for us admirably. After a few weeks of their rooting, we will have the finest compost available to apply to our pastures.

Any number of substances will do admirably as the carbonaceous diaper for this area such as wood chips or shavings, but my choice is old hay. It breaks down easily and can be obtained very cheaply just by finding haystacks that didn't get sold or didn't get used and wintered over outside in the elements. Another source is hay that got rained on in the bailing sequence and is, hence, worthless as feed. This commodity can be obtained for very low cost as it

is mostly worthless and is taking up space that is needed for other things.

We now have our homestead well underway. We have our cattle and pigs started. Our laying chickens and ducks are producing. We have meat chickens and meat ducks being harvested as well as rabbits and turkeys. Our garden is in and producing as well.

Our berries are beginning to produce and we will have our fruit trees bearing soon as well. Even our bees are doing well and beginning in the early summer of our second year, they will provide us with about 50 lbs of honey per hive! At an average of 12 lbs per gallon for honey, we are generating over 4 gallons of honey per hive. Our six hives are producing us 24 gallons of honey annually. This means our hives are generating over \$2,500 per year in honey



sales alone. If we are diligent in locating and trapping swarms and are careful to split out hives when the time is right, we can generate another \$3,000 plus in Queen and hive sales.

While we may not have all the knowledge we need to start with, virtually every area in our country has bee-keeping organizations and clubs which are a fund of knowledge. This is a hidden cash source that can be lucrative, if limited.





At this point, we will leave the topic at this level until we get into the next chapter where we shall revisit our homestead in full production after a minimum of seven years. At this point, we will have exceeded our five year, \$130,000 gross income goal and we will reexamine our

status there. We shall also delve deeper into the mechanics of how we will proceed with our permaculture process on our farm.