

Farm Planning: Must for Profitable Farming

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Farm planning in agriculture is a pre-planned thinking to properly utilize the available resources to maximize the income. To be able to compete in the national and international market there is need to reduce cost of cultivation as well as to improve the quality of produce which is possible only through proper farm planning. Farm planning becomes more important as the farmer has to face emerging challenges of globalization, depletion of under-ground water table, decline in influx of migrants, increasing cost of production, etc. Various surveys revealed that there is a lack of proper planning at farmers' level. Proper planning must have provisions for proper use and conservation of natural resources (like use of leaf color chart for nitrogen management, zero-till cultivation of crops, growing crops having less water requirement, etc.), judicious use of agro-chemicals (like integrated approach for pest control, using insecticides on economic threshold level, etc.) and increasing net income from the farm. Domestic needs of farming family in terms of vegetables, pulses, oil seeds, fruits, etc. should also be kept in view so as to have a least dependence on market. In brief, farm-planning is an act of proper analysis from all possible angles about the activity/enterprise to be started and to make it a success.

Farm-planning depends upon

- Selection of crops to be grown and concerned subsidiary occupations to be started.
- Area to be allocated under each crop and the size/volume of the selected enterprise.

- Quantity of inputs needed such as seed, fertilizer, pesticides, labor, etc.
- Source and time of procuring inputs.
- Way to dispose of the farm produce. Whether to store the harvested produce or to sell it immediately after harvest?
- Marketing of the produce at the right time and right market place.
- Price volatilization of commodities during the year/season.

Successful farm planning needs

- Complete knowledge of recommendations for all the crops which can be acquired by reading farm literature, through discussions with agricultural experts, through TV, Radio and internet programs, by attending seminars and farmers' training camps, etc.
- Knowledge about soil type and fertility status of the soil.
- Knowledge about the quantity and quality of irrigation water available at the farm is also very important as under-ground water of some of the districts of the state is brackish and due attention must be given while selecting the crops to be grown under such situations.
- Keep in mind the available scarce resources such as land, labor, FYM, animals, machinery, irrigation water, capital, etc. to decide the possibilities about the quantum of area to be put under different

crops/enterprises. Care should be taken to include rented-in and rented-out resources.

- Preparation of different improved alternative farm plans while keeping in view the weaknesses of the existing plan, available resources, profitability of different crops and possible risks (which may be due to price fluctuations or decline in yield). These plans can be compared on the basis of net returns and the plan providing higher net returns can be accepted for implementation. There should be a scope for making changes (which may be required due to adverse weather or changes in prices) in the accepted farm plan.
- Assessment about the required inputs like seed, fertilizer, pesticide, capital, labor, machinery, etc. for the accepted farm plan should be made in advance. Quantity of inputs and place from where to procure these inputs must also be taken care of.
- Proper maintenance of farm records for the preparation of optimum farm plan. This enables the farmer to have accurate information about the costs and returns from different crops/enterprises. Farmer can give priority to the activity providing higher net returns. The activity producing lower net returns can be reduced or eliminated from the plan to make farming more economical.
- Maintenance of farm records enables the farmer to assess whether added costs have increased the returns or not and if increased, then to what extent? Farming remains economical so long as the added returns are higher than the added costs which are the base for the expansion of farming/enterprise.

- National and international marketing structure, import and export possibilities also needed to be kept in view.

How to plan for horticulture

Planning for enterprises other than crops must be there to adjust the work force spared due to decreasing size of the holdings and continuous mechanization in agriculture. In horticulture, both vegetable and fruit cultivation can be added in the agriculture plan. Vegetable crops are of short duration, risky but highly profitable whereas fruit cultivation is long duration and less risky enterprise. The following points must be kept in mind while planning the establishment of fruits orchards as it requires long run decisions to make it a sustainable business.

- Locality survey to assess the already existing area and the possible markets for horticulture crops is must for a good start.
- Quality seedling, soil, water and labour availability including family labour is perquisite for this enterprise.
- To face the volatile prices in vegetables and fruits, their processing and value addition must also be planned so as to sustain this business over long time. For this purpose, continuous interaction with the agri-experts of Punjab Agricultural University and Department of Horticulture, Punjab is necessary.
- To increase the farmer's share in net returns, the concept of self-marketing in both fruits and vegetables must be added in the farm planning.

Advantages of farm planning

- Beneficial to assess the gap between potential yield and yield realized by the farmer which

enables him to find remedial measures. Profitability of subsidiary occupations can be worked out and planning can be modified to reduce the losses or to improve the profits.

- Comparison of different crop rotations and subsidiary occupations can be easily made which is pre-requisite for proper planning.
- Farmer can assess the amount of capital required and the loan to be taken. Farmer can implement the plan by taking loan well in advance and from the right institute of his choice.
- Weaknesses in the existing farm plan can be identified which is very useful in preparing improved plan.

- Useful for government for making various policies.
- Useful for providing feed back to the research system.

The farmer needs to prepare the plan well in advance to take full advantage of the existing resources. In view of the swift changes in technology, farming has not remained an easy task. Majority of the farm activities are dependent upon weather; therefore, they have to be carried out at a specific period of time. So, success in farming lies on proper farm planning. This will not only help in optimum utilization of the limited resources but will improve the income level and living standard of the farmer also.

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