



NRCD FARM TEAM Owner/Manager Self-Assessment

This is a tool for use by farm owners and managers to evaluate their farms across a broad range of management areas. Items scoring 2 or less are prime targets for change and should become topics to be discussed at Farm Team meetings. Assess the various management areas of your farm with 1 - 4 score to the left of each item. Be critical – it's your assessment of your business!

1 = Needs improvement 2 = Fair 3 = Good 4 = Excellent

Farm Overview

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Facilities – condition & efficiency of buildings and structures
- Land – sufficient acreage and productivity for current land uses
- Machinery and Equipment - variety and condition
- Livestock - genetics, health, longevity, productivity
- Water availability & quality
- Labor to meet operational needs (including family and employees)
- Labor pay & benefits (Fair pay? Health or other insurance? Other benefits?)
- Environmental – environmentally sound practices with water quality protection
- Climate Resilience – farm is well adjusted to impacts of changing climate (droughts/floods/severe weather)
- Farmer/Farm family quality of life, satisfaction with lifestyle
- Current written Farm Mission - Vision - Goals
- Relationships of “the farm” with town/village and neighbors
- Current farm business viability - profitability, debt, ability to make improvements, etc.
- Prospects for the future operations of the farm

Comments:

Landbase - Cropping - Grazing Management

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Land-base is sufficient for desired crops
- Crops performances meet soil and site potential
- Land-base is sufficient for desired grazing
- Pasture productivity and quality meets soil and site potential
- A current grazing plan is followed
- A current Nutrient Management Plan is followed
- Rainfall soaks into the soil where it lands (infiltration)
- Soil surfaces are covered by live and/or dead plant materials - minimal bare soil
- Cropping systems maintain and improve soil health
- Crop rotations are optimized
- Crop chemical applications follow IPM and perform as expected
- Crop fertility inputs are targeted to crop & soil demands
- Cropping & grazing systems meet all your goals for the future

Comments:

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Environment/Conservation

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Compliance with Vermont RAPs and other environmental regulations
- Farmstead/building sites: runoff control and drainage systems
- Waterways: protected from pollution and erosion
- Groundwater: protected from pollution and excessive demand
- Management of Organic & Mineral materials (compost, manure, lime/ash, fertilizers, commodities, etc.) prevents off-site movement or concentrations
- Management & Storage of Pesticides & other Ag Chemicals prevents off-site movement or concentrations
- Pollinators and wildlife are well supported in planning and management
- A current conservation plan is being followed
- Wetlands are protected in planning and management

Comments:

Farm Business

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Recordkeeping
- Financial and Tax Management
- Farm Labor - employee numbers, employee skills & performance, efficiency, etc.
- Human resource management – scheduling and time off, insurance, benefits, etc.
- Resiliency (e.g., adjust to market changes, severe weather, diversification, etc.)
- Crop or revenue insurance
- Access/Utilization of support services (e.g., business and technical advisers/consultants, access to grants, federal services and programs, etc.)
- Compliance with business regulatory requirements
- Business management (price setting, customer service, marketing & promotions, distribution, shipping, etc.)
- Current written Farm Business Plan
- Branding/Farm name recognition
- Access to and Security of markets
- Long-term plans – 5 years, 10 years, succession planning, etc.
- Other farm enterprises that contribute to total farm income (e.g., sugarbush/sugaring facilities, farm stand, guest/farm-stay accommodations, etc.)

Comments:

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Dairy and Other Livestock

1 = Needs improvement 2 = Fair 3 = Good 4 = Excellent

Livestock General

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Body condition
- Animal cleanliness
- Breeding performance
- Drinking water access & cleanliness
- Sufficient time and space to access feed and water
- Fecal scores – Manure condition

Comments:

Livestock Health & Vigor

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- During pregnancy & birthing
- Newborn to next age group
- Youngstock to breeding or production status
- Breeding/Brood stock
- Growth rate/ rate of gain/ milk production
- Foot health and lameness

Comments:

Animal Housing

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Location of buildings
- Ventilation (air flow, odor, moisture, condensation)
- Animal Grouping
- Traffic flow (alleys, floor surface, animal flow)
- Water system (access, quantity and quality, etc.)
- Lighting
- Animal handling facilities/equipment (head locks, hospital/treatment pens, etc.)
- Space – sufficient for number of animals and groups
- Bedding
- Other health/comfort features (i.e., foot bath, insect control, misting system, etc.)

Comments:

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Dairy and Other Livestock (continued)

1 = Needs improvement 2 = Fair 3 = Good 4 = Excellent

Livestock Waste Management

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Daily waste management
- Waste transfer and storage
- Waste application system

Comments:

Feeding System

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Sufficient feed
- Feed quality
- Feeders provide space and time for animals to eat
- Cleaning management of feeders & feeding area

Comments:

Silo(s) and Silage Storage/Management

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Adequate capacity
- Packing Density
- Covering
- Odor / pH/ moisture
- Silage Particle size (can use forage shaker box)
- Corn Kernel evaluation (hard, soft, grind size)
- Face area management & removal rate

Comments:

Other Feed Storage & handling

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Harvest Timing and quality
- Losses to spoilage
- Storage Capacity and Efficacy
- Stored feed handling & management system

Comments:

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Dairy and Other Livestock (continued)

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Young Stock Management

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Young stock housing & environment
- Young stock health & growth rate
- Grouping by age and size
- Young stock cleanliness
- Body condition

Comments:

Dry Cow Management

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Housing facilities
- Maternity facilities
- Dry cow cleanliness
- Body condition
- Dry cow health & nutrition
- Freshening and fresh cow health & performance

Comments:

Milking System/Milk Quality

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Milking facility
- Milking equipment
- Milking system maintenance
- Parlor/Barn routine
- Milking procedure SOP
- Mastitis is minimal
- Milk quality optimizes quality payments

Comments:

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Specialty Crop (Vegetable, Fruit, Berry, Nursery and Other) Enterprises

Assess all areas that apply to your operation. Skip or cross out items that do not apply to your enterprise.

1 = Needs improvement

2 = Fair

3 = Good

4 = Excellent

The Farm, Layout and Buildings

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Location (e.g., proximity to markets, transport to processors, accessibility for customers/patrons, etc.)
- Building Ventilation / Climate control
- Working space – Sufficient space? Efficient layout?
- Traffic flow (for Employees and Customers)
- Washing/sanitizing area for employees
- Irrigation Water system (access, quantity and quality, etc.)
- Lighting
- Washing area
- Packing area
- Product storage system
- Processing area

Comments:

Customers on site for U-Pick, Farm Stand, etc.

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Parking
- Signage –parking area(s), hours of operation, where to pick, amenities, etc.
- Accessibility and Safety on premises
- Public restroom
- Accessibility to staff/personnel for information / assistance

Comments:

Food Safety and Traceability

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Risk analysis plan completed
- "Seed to sale" or "feed to sale" product tracking system in place
- Consequence management plan (how to deal with food safety or traceability problems)
- Food safety record keeping archive (with digital or paper backups to prevent data loss)
- Food/product sanitizing or cleaning practices appropriate to type(s) of production
- Appropriate and safe storage/refrigeration of products on farm

Comments:

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Occupational Health and Safety

**This applies to ALL who work on this farm,
including the owner/operator, family members and outside employees.**

Assess all areas that apply to your operation. Skip or cross out items that do not apply to your enterprise.

1 = Need improvement 2 = Fair 3 = Good 4 = Excellent

1 2 3 4 Rank each statement in the check box

- Adequate employee housing
- Adequate employee pay
- Benefits (time off, health care, etc)
- Training (pesticide application, equipment operation, job responsibilities, ergonomics)
- Worker conditions (air quality, safety, personal protective equipment (PPE), ergonomic equipment)
- Stress management

Comments:

Other

Information or Details that you think need more attention than this assessment allows, and that may be helpful for the best use of the advisors on your Farm Team.