



Evaluating a Rural Enterprise

Marketing and Business Guide

Abstract: Evaluating an enterprise boils down to asking a series of good questions. Among these questions are: Do I have the resources to do this? Do I really want to do this? Do I have the experience and information to do this? How much profit can I make? How will I market the products? This publication seeks to provide enough information to help you judge whether a new enterprise is right for your operation. Additionally, we provide a resource section of additional information on relevant topics.

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INTRODUCTION

This publication is for people who already live in rural areas and want to add new enterprises to their operations. New farm enterprises today are often non-traditional – everything from adding pastured poultry to a beef operation to starting a bed-and-breakfast in the barn to making a cornfield maze to attract tourists.

This publication won't tell you what will make the most money. Every person and every piece

of land is different and there is no single prescription to tell you what enterprise is right for you. Any new enterprise will, however, require an investment of your time, money, and other resources. And there will always be risks involved.

There are thousands of books, Extension materials, and people who can tell you *how* to produce something, whether it's baskets, bison, or blueberries. But these resources can't help you decide whether that enterprise is right for you and your farm.

We reviewed many enterprise planning guides and have condensed their salient points in this publication. Most of these guides ask entrepreneurs to assess their personal and family objectives. They all stress the importance of having a business plan, a financial plan, and a marketing plan. The business plan will outline how the business should work and generate plans for operation. Perhaps the best thing about a detailed business plan is that it causes you to think in detail about what you are getting into. The **Resources** section at the end of this publication provides titles and ordering information for several useful guides to help determine the feasibility of your new enterprise.

Two of the very best of these publications are *Farming Alternatives: A Guide to Evaluating the Feasibility of New Farm Based Enterprises*, a work-

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