



# FACT SHEET

## PRO-FARM Leadership and Management

Fact Sheet 668

### Focusing Your Dreams: Creating a Mission Statement

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Mission statements are popular in today’s business world. In many companies they are the driving force behind high productivity, quality products, customer satisfaction, and substantial profits. In other organizations they are lofty aspirations proposed by top brass and viewed by employees as senseless gimmicks to promote worker dedication and enthusiasm. But if mission statements are crafted effectively, they can be a foundation for assessing needs, determining objectives, setting goals, and making the daily decisions that will propel an individual, a business, or an organization toward success.

A good mission statement succinctly defines a person or an organization. It describes what they are trying to accomplish and what they value. It explains “who we are, what we do, where we’re headed” (Figure 1). Mission statements

provide those involved in their creation with a vision of the future and a basis for strategic long-term planning. *They provide a foundation for effective leadership and efficient management.*

Are mission statements useful for you as a farmer in managing your business? They are if you will make the effort to think deeply about your future and the future of the farm. Consider the following questions as you contemplate your mission statement: What are your ambitions? What would you like to see happen over the years as you work toward retirement? What economic standard of living do you seek? How long do you want the farm business to continue? Do you want to transfer it to the next generation? How much time do you want for nonfarm activities? How much leisure time do you want for your family? What contributions do you



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### **PRO-FARM Mission**

*To empower farm and agribusiness managers to proactively apply effective leadership and management principles and practices to improve productivity, increase profitability, and fulfill long-term aspirations.*

### **Mission of the Cooperative Extension Service**

*To educate citizens to apply practical, research-based knowledge to critical issues facing individuals, families, communities, the State, and our global partners.*

### **Sample Farm Mission Statement\***

*Continue the family dairy business at a sufficient scale and efficiency, producing quality milk and employing superior dairy genetics to*

- *provide adequate compensation to all workers,*
- *guarantee retirement security,*
- *manage the transfer of the dairy business assets to succeeding generations,*
- *plan opportunities for personal achievement in the farm business with time planned for family and community involvement, and*
- *exhibit pride in ownership of the farm business that is reflected in a positive community image.*

\*Drafted by a group of Washington County, Maryland, farmers at a PRO-FARM Leadership and Management Seminar, February, 1994.

**Figure 1.** Sample mission statements

want to make to the community? What values do you live by?

As you express the answers to these questions in the form of a mission statement you will crystallize your thinking and create a clear picture of what you want your future to look like. You should review your mission statement often, at least weekly. You may want to add to it or revise it occasionally. Many people develop both a personal mission statement and a mission statement for their business.

Discuss the concept of a mission statement with all those directly involved in the operation of the farm. This could be your spouse, parents, children, and employees. Find out what their long-

term goals and ambitions are. Encourage them to think about what should be included in the mission statement.

After following the steps in Developing a Mission Statement, choose a time to sit down and write a rough draft of your mission statement. Summarize in this draft your thoughts and those of family members and employees. Let the others involved in the farm review and edit the draft. Do not be concerned with the quality or length of the draft; you will make improvements over time. A mission may be concisely stated in a couple of sentences or thoroughly detailed in a lengthy paragraph. Most important, it should reflect your perceptions of the end result of all endeavors invested in

your business. When you feel the mission statement is in final form, have it printed, framed, and mounted in the farm office and other places on the farm where business is conducted.

The value of a mission statement is in its frequent use. Review it when you are conducting a needs assessment, determining objectives, and setting goals. Over time it will become ingrained in the minds of all involved in the business and will be a positive force in furthering the success of the organization.

## **Developing a Mission Statement**

The following steps will help you develop your mission statement:

### **First**

Envision yourself in your retirement years. Think about the things you would like to have accomplished in your life or the things you would like people to remember and respect you for. The following are important areas to consider: your principles and values; your family; your farm business; your friends and neighbors; your church and civic organizations. As you reflect on these things, think broadly and do not limit your ideas. Take notes on a small notepad that you can carry around with you, but make no effort to organize your thoughts at this stage. Simply write down ideas as they come to you.

### **Second**

Begin to think more specifically and make additional notes in your notepad. Answer the following questions about your business and personal life.

Business:

- What values do I choose as a foundation for my business?

- What is the purpose of my business? What products and services will I provide?
- What would I like my business to be?
- What position will it have in the community and industry?
- What will its strengths be, and what level of growth do I expect for the business?

Personal:

- What principles do I choose as a foundation for my life?
- What would I like to accomplish and contribute?
- What would I like to be?
- How do I fit into my family and community?
- What are my strengths?

### **Third**

Use your notes to fill out Worksheet 1. (Two copies are provided so you can complete Worksheet 1 twice if you wish: once for a business mission statement and again for a personal mission statement.) If other members of the business or family are involved in writing the business mission statement, then compile your notes on the worksheet.

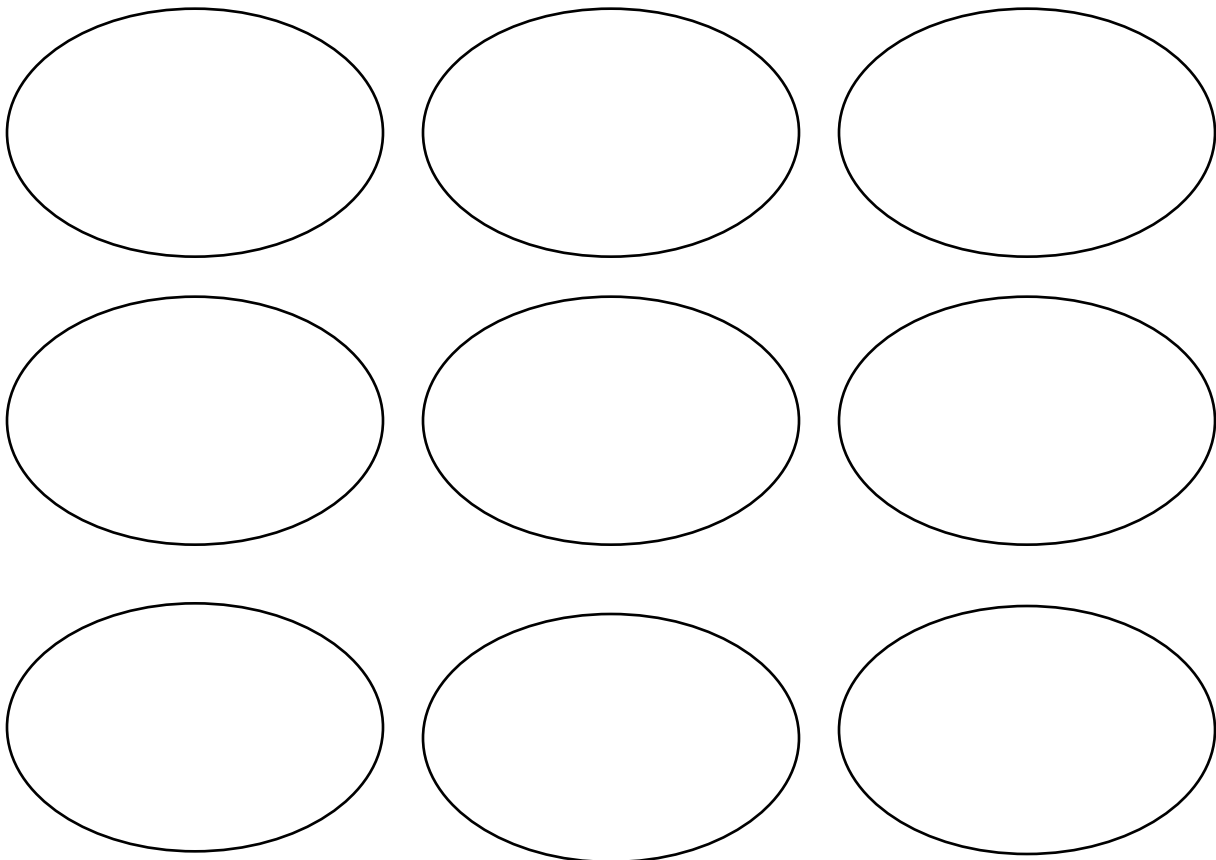
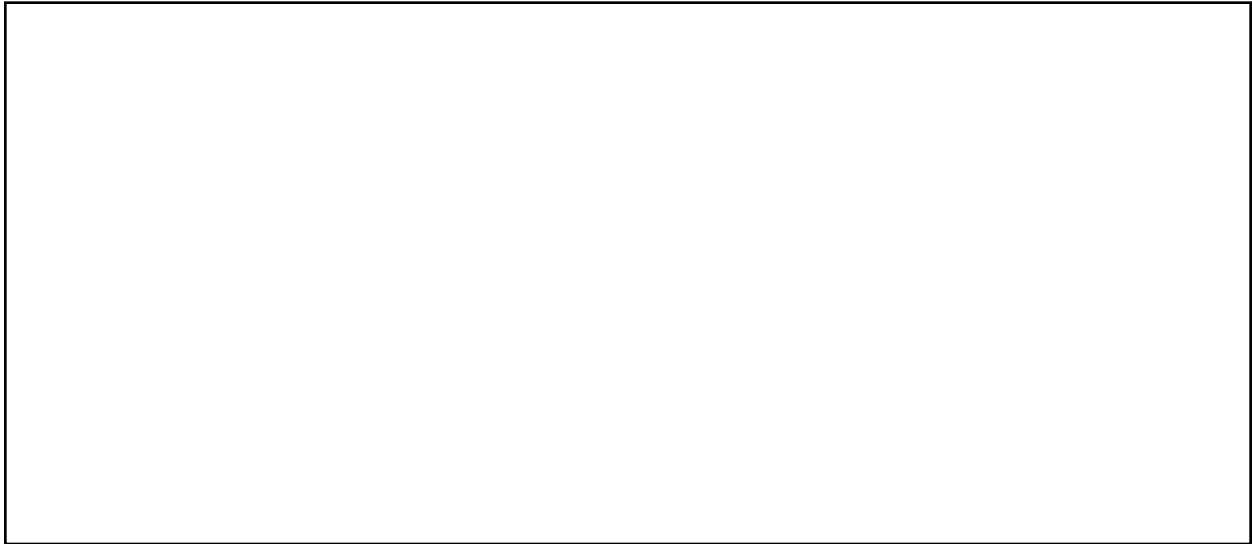
### **Last**

Use the copies of Worksheet 2 (or your own paper) to draft business and personal mission statements. When these mission statements are in final form, have them professionally printed or use a computer to print them. Frame your business mission statement, and hang it in your business office or in another prominent location in your business. Put your personal mission statement where you can refer to it often.

# Worksheet 1

## Organizing Your Notes to Write a Mission Statement

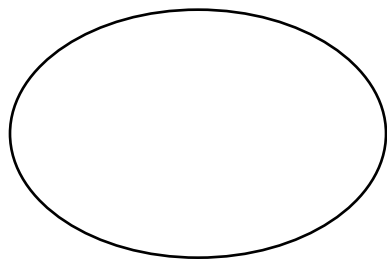
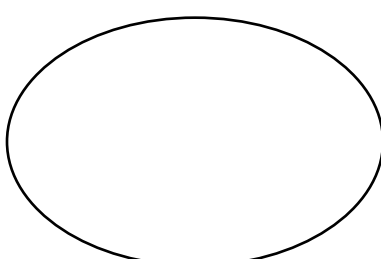
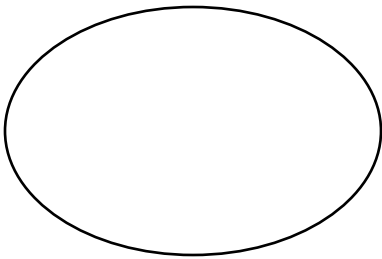
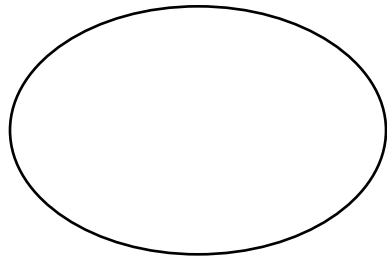
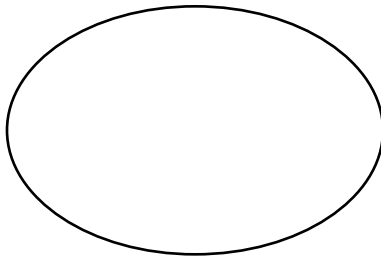
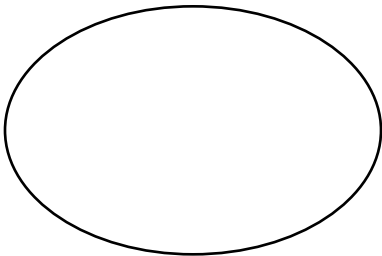
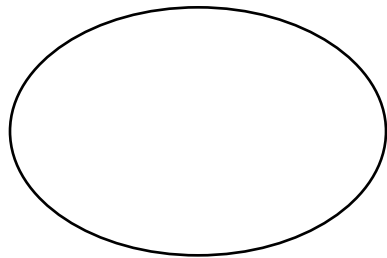
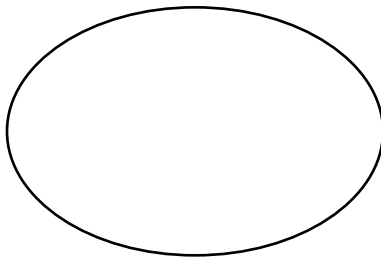
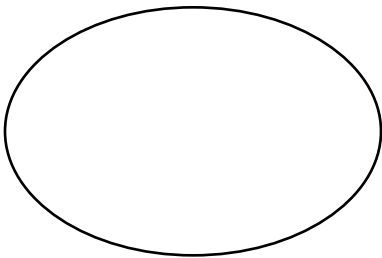
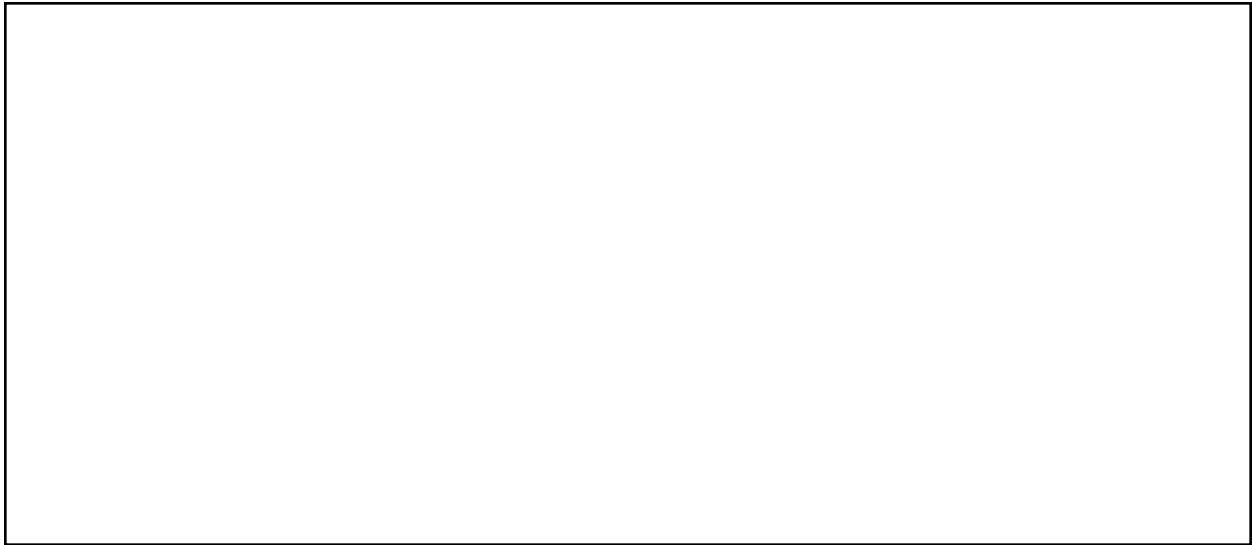
1. In the square, write a phrase or paragraph that describes your farm business (for a business mission statement) or you as a person (for a personal mission statement).
2. In the ovals, write the things that are important to you, that you value, or indicate your future direction.



# Worksheet 1 (extra copy)

## Organizing Your Notes to Write a Mission Statement

1. In the square, write a phrase or paragraph that describes your farm business (for a business mission statement) or you as a person (for a personal mission statement).
2. In the ovals, write the things that are important to you, that you value, or indicate your future direction.





**Worksheet 2 (extra copy)**

**Writing Your Mission Statement**

Draft and refine a mission statement that will reflect the your values and long-term aspirations.

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