



LESSON 5

The Farmer in the Web

Concepts of Business and Economics

FOCUS

Student Objectives – Kentucky Performance Standards 2.18, 2.36

Students will:

- Define the farm as an economic unit
- Understand the farmer is an entrepreneur
- Demonstrate the farmer's interdependent role in the economy
- Define and analyze the concept of interdependence
- Apply the concepts of natural, human and capital resources

BACKGROUND

Where would we be without farmers? We often think that food comes from a store or restaurant. We all should stop to ponder where food really comes from and all the effort that goes into our dinner! Half of Kentucky's land is farmland, and we have 150,000 farms!

Farmers buy everything from feed, fertilizer, machinery, and equipment to computers, office supplies, and miscellaneous services from thousands of businesses throughout the state. This link between farmers, consumers, and suppliers has created a huge interdependence of farm-related businesses, with about 422,000 jobs in Kentucky linked to agriculture!

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS

- Farmer in the Web Game: Large ball of yarn, 7 signs (1 each for each 7 students) & Direction Sheet
- Lyrics to "Farmer in the Web" song
- Farmers are "Resourceful" Sheet (one per student)
- "Hats Off to Farmers" Sheet – one per student or group of students (optional)

Activities:

1. Where does Food Come From?

- a. *Ask students where food comes from.* Responses may include “the store,” or “restaurants.” Ask where the stores and restaurants get the food. Answer: Farms/farmers!
- b. *Explain that EVERYTHING we eat traces back to the farm!!* Using your lunch, dinner, or a fast-food meal as an example, ask students to list everything they ate, tracing its origin back to the farm (e.g. French fries from potatoes, hamburger from a cow). Use a graphic organizer such as a web!

2. What is a Farm?

- a. *Ask students to describe (orally, in writing, or by drawing a picture) their idea of what a farm is/looks like (especially if your students are from an urban setting).* Define a **farm** as an economic unit with a gross revenue of \$1,000 or more annually.

3. Who are Farmers?

- a. *Tell students they are going to take a “farmer quiz” to check their perceptions about farmers –* This will be particularly interesting if your student population is urban. Ask the following questions:

- (1) Do farmers have high school and/or college educations? (Many farmers are very educated and deal with complex issues such as economics and weather.)
- (2) Do they know how to operate complicated machinery? (Farmers today operate complex, expensive machinery, as well as office equipment.)
- (3) Do they have jobs other than farming? (Some farmers do have supplemental careers in agriculture such as production, satellite technology, or marketing.)
- (4) Do they use technology? (Technology is a major part of farming, particularly on large farms. Computer weather tracking and use of satellites for determining planting are methods used today.)
- (5) Are most farmers women? (It may surprise students to know that many of today’s farmers are women!)

- b. *Read aloud “Hats Off to Farmers” to your students, or copy one for each student/group of students.* Discuss any misconceptions or stereotypes about farmers.

4. Old Mac Donald had a Farm, but was he an Entrepreneur?

- a. *Explain that an **entrepreneur** is a human resource who takes risks and organizes human capital to produce goods or services for profit. **Goods** are tangible items that people buy. **Services** are things people do for each other such as teach, baby-sit, clean teeth, style hair, wash cars, etc. Explain that a farmer is an entrepreneur, and he/she must make many impor-*

tant decisions (what equipment to buy, what crops to plant and how much, whether to hire help, etc.) in order to make the best profit and best use of resources.

- b. *Explain that there are three types of resources: **natural** (things we get from nature such as soil, water, trees, or coal); **human** (person who uses their skills to produce goods and services such as a farmer); and **capital** (tangible items used to produce goods and services such as tractors or combines). List the definitions on the board or overhead. Then give each student a “Farmers are Resourceful” sheet and have them fill in the blanks with the correct resource (natural, human, or capital).*
- c. *List characteristics a good farmer may possess (energetic, informed, problem solver, etc.)*
- d. *Brainstorm, research, and list some natural and capital resources farmers use to produce corn.*

5. Farmer in the Web Game

- a. *Explain interdependence to students: Farmers depend on consumers to buy their corn. Consumers depend on the farmer to supply them with the corn. Consumers include companies that make products such as corn meal, corn syrup, marshmallows, cosmetics, and soap. They all depend on truck drivers, planes and trains to deliver their goods; bankers to finance their operations; and stores, restaurants, and consumers to buy the final goods. When people depend on each other for goods and services, this is called interdependence.*
- b. *Play the Farmer in the Web Game.*
Directions for Farmer in the Web Game
 1. Cut apart the signs on Activity Sheet and distribute to seven students.
 2. Punch holes and insert yarn or string so that signs may be worn around neck.
 3. Have the seven students come to the front of the class and form a circle to demonstrate.
 4. Holding the end of a ball of yarn, one student states who they are as named on their sign and who they depend on, while passing the ball of yarn to that person they depend on (note: continue holding your end of the yarn while passing the ball). That second person then states who he or she is and whom they depend on, and the yarn is passed in this manner until each person is connected in the web.
 5. When all players have formed a web with the yarn, the activity is over.

Listed below are various ways web could be connected:

FARMER depends on:	Banker for financing Truck driver for transporting corn Chef to order/buy corn to make food dishes Food Distributor to buy/distribute the corn
TRUCK DRIVER:	Farmer to have corn for them to deliver Banker to finance the business and invest profit
UPS PILOT:	Banker to finance planes and fuel
CHEF:	Consumer to dine/eat the food made from corn Farmer to provide the resources Food distributor to provide resources Truck driver to deliver corn and supplies UPS Pilot to deliver corn and supplies
CONSUMER:	Chef to prepare dishes made from corn
BANKER:	All of the above for profit on interest from loans

- c. *Research other businesses interdependent with corn farming such as machinery, food distributors, groceries/markets, etc.*
- d. *Sing the “Farmer in the Web” song (to the tune of the “Farmer in the Dell”).*

6. Community Connections

- a. *If possible, take a field trip to a local farm to see natural, human and capital resources.*
- b. *Invite a farmer to class, or let students conduct individual research/interviews. Have students generate their own list of questions. Questions may include (resources he/she uses to grow corn, problems they encounter, what type of corn they grow, personal use of corn (livestock, food for family, etc.), if corn is their only crop (why/why not), what they do with their corn at the end of the season, how they environmentally rid their crop of pests, if they have another side job in addition to farming, etc.) *See “Hats Off to Farmers.”*

NOTE: If you need help in finding a farm or a farmer to visit with, please consult the KyCGA web site at www.kycorn.org and select the “Corn Curriculum” link.

- c. *Invite a representative from a local farm machinery equipment company such as John Deere or Case to talk with students about the types of machinery used in corn production and the costs. Or better yet, visit the store in person to get a close-up look at the equipment! (John Deere also sells models of their equipment).*

CONNECT

Language Arts

Write a diary entry or personal narrative as if you were a corn farmer. What would you do day to day to prepare for harvest? What would your concerns be? What would you do with your corn? What would your typical day be like?

Write a letter to a farmer thanking him for his contributions to our world.

Science/Economics

Research satellite farming: What it is, how it's done, benefits, etc.

Social Studies

Research and compare/contrast Native American corn farming methods with our methods today.

Research the history of farming from the first plow to modern satellite farming.

Literature

Fowler, Allan. (1993). *Corn On and Off the Cob*. Danbury, CT: Children's Press.

Fowler, Allan. (1993). *If it Weren't for Farmers*. Danbury, CT: Children's Press.

Halley, Ned. (1996). *Farm*. NY: Eyewitness Books.

Locker, Thomas. (1988). *Family Farm*. NY: Puffin Pied Piper Books.

Rhoads, Dorothy. (1993). *The Corn Grows Ripe*. NY: Puffin Books.

Sabin, Francene. (1985). *Ecosystems and Food Chains*. New Jersey: Troll.

(1994). *On the Farm*. Ltd. London: Covent Garden Books.

ASSESSMENT

Using any good (capital resource such as a pencil, tennis shoes, or soft drink) or service (hair stylists, dentists) have students list the human, natural, and capital resources used to produce that good or service.

As an Open Response Question, make a graphic organizer (e.g. web) showing the farmer's interdependent role in the economy. Describe the effects on the farmer if one of the components from the web is missing (e.g. trucker's strike, bank denies loan).