



HARVESTING CHANGE

A Planning Workbook for Apple Growers

INTRODUCTION

The world is changing at a breakneck pace and altering the way we do business. Practices and strategies that worked for previous generations may not work in today's global marketplace. For many growers, these changes have caused economic, personal and family stress as they struggle to understand the shifts in production, competition, consumer preferences, markets and marketing that have taken place and try to put together a successful plan for the future.

The right plan varies from grower to grower and there is not one plan that will be suitable for every fruit business. You need to take a careful look at the aspects of your business for which you have decision-making control, and focus on those aspects when developing a plan. For some, the plan may include increasing the size of a business and making new capital investments. For others, it may lead to a joint venture with other growers, sharing resources and expertise. Some may want to develop a value-added product, diversify into other crops, or increase direct marketing or processing. The best plan for some may be to transfer the business. And for others still, the right plan may be to exit the business, while trying to preserve equity.

Using This Workbook

This workbook is designed as a tool to help you pull together the necessary information and ultimately create a plan that is right for you and your family. The workbook helps you use this information for business analysis, decision-making and strategic planning. Every farm that grows fruit can benefit from using this workbook. Whether you are operating a small farm and direct-marketing fresh fruit, producing value-added products, or operating a large farm growing processing fruit, or a combination of any of these, this workbook can assist you with your planning. Use the workbook in whatever way that makes it valuable for you. You can use it on your own, with your family and/or business partners, with your lender or with a consultant. If you would like to work with a consultant, free and confidential consulting is available to New York growers through New York FarmNet by calling 1-800-547-3276.

Chapter One asks you to consider the trends going on in the world, the United States, and New York apple industries that are affecting your farm now and in the future.

Chapter Two is divided into four major areas and 12 sections. The four areas are: Physical Resources, Marketing, People and Finances. Each section asks you to analyze different aspects of your business, including: Machinery, Orchards, Location, Product Quality, Markets, Goal Setting, Labor, Involving Others, Balance Sheet, Income Statement, Cash Flow and Business Performance. Within each section there are assignments denoted in color where you answer questions or complete a worksheet. At the end of each section is a summary sheet for you to identify areas of possible improvement. This chapter is designed for you to go through at your own pace, moving between sections—you do not necessarily have to follow the chapters in order.

Chapter Three is a collection of grower stories that illustrate decisions various people have made in preparing for, and responding to change. The stories demonstrate how others switched markets, replanted orchards, created value-added products, reduced or expanded acreage, cooperated with other growers, used information and support resources, changed careers or retired.

Chapter Four asks you to work on a plan for your future. Use the information you gleaned from chapters one and two, and what you learned from the growers' stories.

Chapter Five provides additional resources for use in completing the workbook and for developing and achieving your plan.

