

Section 1: Machinery, Equipment and Bins



There is a set of questions after each topic in this section designed to help you examine and evaluate the equipment component of your business.

Inventory Assessment

You have a significant investment in trucks, machinery, bins, ladders, picking bags and miscellaneous equipment required to operate your fruit farm. Planning for the replacement of that investment is a must. For example, if you have \$250,000 worth of machinery to run the farm, you should plan on allocating \$25,000 a year toward replacing that machinery if its average life is 10 years. This is only an example, since some equipment may need replacing after 5 years and some may not need to be replaced for 15 years or

more. You need to evaluate your equipment annually and estimate how soon a major repair or replacement will be necessary. It is also a good idea to have an "equipment wish list" constructed at the end of the year. This list can include both equipment that needs to be replaced, purchased used, and new equipment. The wish list can then be discussed among those involved in the business to decide if indeed equipment is needed, what equipment it is, what priority each item on the list should be given, and whether or not there are other important issues and needs not addressed on the list.

EXERCISE: Complete **Worksheet #1 Equipment Evaluation** found in the appendix to evaluate the condition and need of repair or replacement. Here are some suggested groupings:

Trucks	Fresh-apple bins	Tree planters
Tractors	Process-apple bins	Pruning equipment
Tow motors/forklifts	Cherry tanks	Brush removal equipment
Sprayers	Ladders	Coolers
Mowers	Picking equipment	Personal safety equipment
Spreaders	ATV's /snowmobiles	Updated Office Equipment
Tillage equipment	Shop equipment/tools	Computer
Trailers/wagons	Cherry harvester	Computer Software
Bin trailer or sled	Post pounder	Miscellaneous
Updated office equipment	Computer hardware/software	

You may be hesitant to move to higher density apple plantings because of the size of the equipment you currently own. High-density plantings often require tractors and sprayers to be 60 inches in width or less, and mowers to be 10 feet in width. Many growers are now also faced with purchasing another sprayer in order to control insects and diseases with more selective pesticides (which require more frequent applications). Nar-

rower equipment should now be a major consideration for all growers purchasing new equipment to allow for closer spaced plantings.

Also do not overlook planning for bin purchases and replacement. It is very important to project bin needs, particularly as high-density plantings come into full production. Owning your own apple bins is critical to a timely harvest of apples and increasing your marketing options.

Answer the following questions:

1. Did I have problems with worms or apple scab this year because of spray timing?	Yes	No
2. Do I need another sprayer in order to protect fruit in a timely manner? Or to prevent contamination of stone fruits by spray materials only registered for apples?	Yes	No
3. Do I have enough bins to harvest fruit in a timely manner?	Yes	No
4. Do I currently have equipment that needs immediate replacement or major repair?	Yes	No
5. Can I finance replacement and repair costs?	Yes	No
6. Do I have enough tractors to efficiently move from one task to another?	Yes	No
7. Do I have the financial resources for equipment purchases for current farm business operational needs?	Yes	No
8. Can I rent some equipment or hire a neighbor or service rather than purchase some equipment for current farm operations?	Yes	No
9. Do I need to purchase equipment for new enterprises I am considering?	Yes	No
10. Do I have the financial resources to purchase equipment for a new or additional enterprise?	Yes	No
11. Have I put together an equipment "wish" list?	Yes	No

Equipment Planning Summary

Refer back to your responses to the questions in this section and complete this summary. List below the areas of improvement you have identified pertaining to equipment.

Equipment Areas for Improvement
1.
2.
3.
4.