Section 3: Location

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

Location Assessment

There are two important areas in location assessment: the first is the location of the farm in relation to the community, and the second is placing orchards on sites that will allow trees to thrive and produce high yields of high quality fruit. We often refer to the latter as site selection.

Site Selection: Protection against low temperatures

Productive fruit trees are usually located near bodies of water that moderate temperature – particularly in the spring and fall. Apple trees located near large bodies of water are often delayed in development in the spring which allows bloom to occur after spring frosts. In the same way, large bodies of water delay fall freezes which allows apple harvest before a hard frost which can cause apples to drop or become damaged. Large bodies of water also protect fruit trees from very low winter temperatures which could damage trees and fruit buds.

Site Selection: Air drainage

It is important that orchards be planted on sloping ground. This allows cold air to flow downhill, away from the orchard. Areas in which cold air accumulates are often referred to as "frost pockets." Orchards planted in these areas often do not produce or have limited production. Sometimes trees in low areas produce fruit on the upper parts of the tree but the fruit may have "frost ring" which eliminates it from the fresh apple market.

Site Selection: Deep, adequately drained soils

The investments in planting an orchard today require that growers do more than consult a soil survey before planting. In New York State, many orchard sites have multiple soil types. Stone fruits require very well drained soils without high seasonal water tables. It is important to observe a site throughout the year to identify wet spots, seasonal springs and drainage patterns as well as what may be interfering with drainage. Most fruit growers install drainage tile before planting an orchard. Water holding capacity of a soil is also important where it is not possible or difficult to install irrigation.

Site Selection: Adequate water supply

New York State often has water deficit periods over the summer months. All apple varieties, peaches and sweet cherries as well as small fruits benefit from irrigation – both in overall yield and sizing of fruit. The ability to irrigate an orchard is especially critical when trees or small fruits have been planted during a drought year. If there is no adequate water source, growers should avoid planting small fruited apple varieties, fresh stone fruits and all small fruits, particularly on soils with low water holding capacity.

Location Assessment

Today, the public in general, has many more concerns about how their food is produced and how that production may effect the environment, workers and wildlife than in past generations. It is important to assess how many of these concerns may effect your farming operation in the future. What practices will you need to consider? Will farming be more difficult in your present location in the future? Can community concerns about how their food is produced be parlayed into a marketing opportunity? Should you consider moving your operation to a new location rather than investing more in the present location?

In some regions of the state farmland is often sought for housing development. While in other regions people seek to live in the country close to where farm activity takes place. These situations cause tensions for neighbors and farmers.

Neighborhoods in which development pressures are acute, present challenges for fruit growers. However, ecological management if observed and understood by neighbors, can be a real asset—especially for growers who are engaged in a progressive management system that seems to protect the environment and respond to consumers' concerns about food issues. In some neighborhoods, suburban consumers can comprise an important component of the fruit consumers' base for direct marketing; and in other instances, neighbors might be important allies in trying to keep agriculture viable and keep open space open in a rural community. How can you position your business to take advantage of the concern of potential customers and supporters for the preservation of viable agriculture in rural communities?

Answer the following site selection questions:

1. Is the site I am considering for my next planting frost free every year? Yes No
2. Is the site I am considering for my next planting free from possible hail events? Yes No
3. Does the site have adequate air drainage? Yes No
   Is air drainage blocked by topography or woodlands? Yes No
4. Have I placed a min-max thermometer in the orchard to record winter low temperatures? Yes No
5. Does my min-max thermometer read above 0 degrees Fahrenheit over the winter? Yes No
6. Does this site have adequate soils for the type of fruit or variety of apple or planting system I am considering? Yes No
7. Is there anything limiting about this soil – water holding capacity, depth of topsoil, fragipan, or a high seasonal water table? Yes No
8. Is this site adequately drained? Yes No
9. Is it possible to install adequate tile drainage on this site? Yes No
10. Does this site have an adequate water source for trickle irrigation? Yes No

Answer the folowing location assessment questions:

11. Are there designated wetlands on my farm or bordering my farm? Yes No
12. Is my farm located in a critical watershed? Yes No
13. Do I need to be concerned about run-off from my farm contaminating a water supply? Yes No
14. What conservation practices am I using? _____
15. How do I control wildlife damage to my crops? _____
16. Are these practices considered acceptable? Yes No
17. Has my town considered noise ordinances, which might affect me in the future? Yes No
18. How many non-farming neighbors currently border my farm? _____

19. How many complaints have I had in the past four years from DEC, neighbors, the town, etc.? _____

20. Have neighbors expressed concerns about pesticides at town meetings, to me personally, to other neighbors or public officials? Yes No

21. How many underground fuel tanks are on my property? _____

22. How many old junk piles are there on my property (old equipment, spray oil barrels, etc.) _____
and are they visible to hikers, horse riders, snowmobilers, ATV riders? Yes No

23. Are my spray and fertilizer storage areas secure at all times? Yes No
Are these facilities well kept, painted and in good repair (not an eye-sore)? Yes No

24. Do all current on-farm fuel tanks meet government regulations? Yes No

25. Is my farm kept neat and clean? Yes No
Is it an asset to the community? Yes No
Does it provide rural amenities that are valued by neighbors? Yes No

26. Am I perceived as a good employer in the community? Yes No

27. Do I have a plan to address any of the major concerns above for my farm? Yes No

28. Are any of the above concerns affecting my ability to farm in a timely and efficient manner? Yes No

29. Do my neighbors represent a potential asset for direct marketing/agri-tourism/support for maintaining a rural environment? Yes No

30. Do my neighbors support changes I make to my farm (ie. build a farmstand, add employee housing, replant orchards, etc.? Yes No

Location Assessment Planning Summary

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

Location Assessment for Improvements
1.
2.
3.
4.