A SWOT analysis is a term used to describe a tool that is effective in identifying your <u>S</u>trengths and <u>W</u>eaknesses, and for examining the <u>O</u>pportunities and <u>T</u>hreats you face. While it is a basic, straightforward model, it has been a popular business practice for many years because it helps provide direction and serves as a basis for the development of business plans. It accomplishes this by examining the strengths (what an operation does well) and weaknesses (what an operation does not do well) in addition to opportunities (potential favorable conditions for an operation) and threats (potential unfavorable conditions for an operation). Once completed, the SWOT analysis can help determine if the information indicates something that will assist the operation in achieving its objectives (a strength or opportunity), or if it indicates an obstacle that must be overcome or minimized to achieve desired results (weakness or threat).

Why is the SWOT Analysis so Popular?

The SWOT analysis has been a popular business tool for many years. While business planning does require some time and knowledge, most planners agree that a SWOT analysis should be completed at the beginning of the planning process. Here are a few reasons why performing a SWOT analysis has been a popular planning activity.

- While not an easy task, performing a SWOT analysis does not require any special training, software, or skills. The only requirement for performing a SWOT analysis is being truly honest about your own operation.
- Most managers and workers have expertise in areas that are not known by other members of the group. Organizing the expertise in a SWOT analysis helps in making informed decisions and provides better results.
- A SWOT analysis provides a brief but complete summary of the operation.
- While the finished results are important, the process of building a SWOT analysis is almost as valuable. Often times when a SWOT analysis is performed, all people involved with the operation become more aware of the performance and goals of the operation.
- Finally, completing a SWOT analysis allows you to immediately see where you can take action to improve your weak areas, capitalize on your strengths and opportunities, and defend against threats.

What are the elements of a SWOT Analysis?

The SWOT analysis stands for the analysis of internal strengths and weaknesses of an operation and external opportunities and threats to the operation. Below is a description of each of these elements that should be considered when performing a SWOT analysis.



Strengths

The first element of a SWOT analysis describes the strengths of an operation. These strengths include what an operation does well, and should be viewed from both your point of view as well as the point of view of people with whom you come in contact. In some cases, an organization's strengths are obvious, for example, being a low cost producer. In other cases, it is a matter of perspective, for instance our product is of high quality. It is important to note that operations that are in a bad position also have strengths. Whether or not these strengths are adequate should be determined through further analysis.

Weaknesses

The other internal element of the SWOT analysis describes the weaknesses of an operation. Examining weaknesses include identifying what an operation does not do well. As with the strengths, weaknesses should be examined from both your perspective and from the perspective of those outside your operation. It is also possible for weaknesses to be obvious such as a limitation of resources or be more of a perspective issue such as a lack of teamwork. All operations, regardless of size or profitability have weaknesses. How badly these weaknesses will affect the operation should be left to further analysis.

Opportunities

The first external element of the SWOT analysis is opportunities. The opportunities include any favorable situation in the business's environment that the operation may realize gains from. These could range from diversification and the use of new technologies to market trends and relationship developments. It is important to note that all operations have some opportunities: identifying these opportunities is the sign of a good analyst.

<u>Threats</u>

The final element of the SWOT analysis is the external threats that the operation faces. Regardless of size or profitability, all operations face threats. These threats could range from lower international prices to key relationships that are not going well. Whatever the threat, the operation should have a plan in place to resolve the problem.

How do I complete a SWOT Analysis?

There is no fixed way of completing a SWOT analysis. The manager of the operation (or whoever else will be using the analysis) should be comfortable with and understand the analysis. The objective of the analysis should always be to place the business in a position where the manager can determine a strategy for the future to improve its overall performance or maintain it if the results are favorable. Below is a set of questions for each of the elements that will assist you in completing a SWOT analysis for your operation. Like all lists, these are incomplete. You may not answer every question listed and may even have a few additional questions that you would like to address. However, you can use these questions as a starting point for your SWOT analysis.

Strengths

- What does your operation do well (production, marketing, etc)?
- What do other people see as your strengths (production, marketing, etc)?
- What are the major sources of your operation's revenue and profit?
- What is the major focus of your operation?
- What is the market share of your organization?
- Is your marketing/advertising effective?
- Why did you decide start your operation?
 - What were the motivating factors and influences?
 - Do these factors still represent some of your strengths?
- Why do your customers buy from you?
- What differentiates your operation in the market?
- What have been your most notable achievements?
- What relevant resources do you have?
- Is the moral of your employees high?
- Are there incentives in place to reward your employees for good work?
- Does your operation manage its inventories efficiently?
- To what do you attribute your success?
- How do you measure success?
- What is your greatest asset?

Weaknesses

- What does your operation not do well (production, marketing, etc)?
- What do others see as your weaknesses (production, marketing, etc)?
- What should you avoid?
- What are the least profitable enterprises?
- What is the market share of your organization?
- Is your marketing/advertising effective?
- Is the operation "wondering"?
- What is the biggest expense of the operation?
- Will the operation be able to stand price decreases?
- Why do customers not buy from you?
- What relevant resources do you need?
- Do your employees perform at their best?
- Are there incentives in place to reward your employees for good work?
- Does your operation manage its inventories efficiently?

Opportunities

- What new technologies are available that the operation can use to lower costs?
- What market trends am I observing?
- What new relationships could I develop?
- Are there new business strategies that I could use in my operation?

- Can quality of operations, products, and inventory management be improved without incurring serious costs?
- Can I create a competitive edge over my competitors?
- Is there an opportunity to demand better prices from suppliers?
- Is there an opportunity to receive higher prices for production?
- Can profitability be increased through the production of other commodities?
- Can the operation get cash flows that are more predictable? If yes, how?
- What can I do that I am not currently doing to improve my operation?
- What new governmental policies or programs are available?
- What interesting social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle changes, etc are occurring that could benefit my operation?
- What are interesting local events that might be used to benefit my operation?

Threats

- Have there been any significant changes in the industry in which you operate?
- What obstacles do you face?
- What is your competition doing?
- Are there any, or do you anticipate new competitors in your market?
- Are there any new regulations in your industry making it difficult to be profitable?
- Is changing technology threatening your profitability?
- Is the operation keeping up with technological changes?
- Have margins been under pressure?
- Are international competitors taking market share?
- What other changes in the market could damage the profitability of the operation?
- Do you have bad debt or cash-flow problems?
- Are employees adequately trained and motivated?
- Is the operation producing too many different commodities?
- Could any of your weaknesses seriously threaten your operation?

Once all strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of your operation have been listed, the information should be combined so that strategies can be developed. Examine the weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the operation and draw up plans to take advantage of the opportunities, counter the threats, and improve the weaknesses. Pay close attention to strengths of the operation that may help you achieve your plans. The strategy chosen will depend on the original goals and objectives of your operation, but the whole process will certainly give an overall look at the current position of your operation.

Completing a S.W.O.T Analysis Lesson Plan

I. Goals

- A. The participant will understand the need for examining the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing their operation.
- B. The participant will be able to complete a S.W.O.T. analysis for their operation.

II. Lesson Highlights

- A. S.W.O.T. analysis is an acronym for examining the internal strengths and weaknesses of an operation and the external opportunities and threats faced by an operation.
- B. Performing a S.W.O.T. analysis helps provide direction and serves as a basis for the development of business plans.
- C. It accomplishes this by examining the operation's:
 - 1. Strengths (what an operation does well)
 - 2. Weaknesses (what an operation does not do well)
 - 3. Opportunities (potential favorable conditions for an operation).
 - 4. Threats (potential unfavorable conditions for an operation).
- D. Once completed, the SWOT analysis can help determine if the information indicates something that will assist the operation in achieving its objectives (a strength or opportunity), or if it indicates an obstacle that must be overcome or minimized to achieve desired results (weakness or threat).

- E. There is no fixed way to complete a S.W.O.T. analysis.
 - 1. The manager of the operation (or whoever else will be using the analysis) should be comfortable with and understand the analysis.
 - 2. The objective of the analysis should always be to be in a position where you can determine a strategy for the future to improve your operation's overall performance or maintain it if the results are favorable.
- F. Some general questions to answer to assist in completing a S.W.O.T. analysis (note: not all questions may be answered, and more questions may be added).
 - 1. Strengths.
 - a. What does your operation do well (production, marketing, etc)?
 - b. What do other people see as your strengths (production, marketing, etc)?
 - c. What are the major sources of your operation's revenue and profit?
 - d. What is the major focus of your operation?
 - e. What is the market share of your organization?
 - f. Is your marketing/advertising effective?
 - g. Why did you decide to start your operation?
 - i. What were the motivating factors and influences?
 - ii. Do these factors still represent some of your strengths?
 - h. Why do your customers buy from you?
 - i. What differentiates your operation in the market?
 - j. What have been your most notable achievements?
 - k. What relevant resources do you have?
 - 1. Is the moral of your employees high?
 - m. Are there incentives in place to reward your employees for good work?
 - n. Does your operation manage its inventories efficiently?
 - o. To what do you attribute your success?
 - p. How do you measure success?
 - q. What is your greatest asset?

- 2. Weaknesses
 - a. What does your operation not do well (production, marketing, etc)?
 - b. What do others see as your weaknesses (production, marketing, etc)?
 - c. What should you avoid?
 - d. What are the least profitable enterprises?
 - e. What is the market share of your organization?
 - f. Is your marketing/advertising effective?
 - g. Is the operation "wondering"?
 - h. What is the biggest expense of the operation?
 - i. Will the operation be able to stand price decreases?
 - j. Why do customers not buy from you?
 - k. What relevant resources do you need?
 - 1. Do your employees perform at their best?
 - m. Are there incentives in place to reward your employees for good work?
 - n. Does your operation manage its inventories efficiently?
- 3. Opportunities
 - a. What new technologies are available that the operation can use to lower costs?
 - b. What market trends am I observing?
 - c. What new relationships could I develop?
 - d. Are there new business strategies that I could use in my operation?
 - e. Can quality of operations, products, and inventory management be improved without incurring serious costs?
 - f. Can I create a competitive edge over my competitors?
 - g. Is there an opportunity to demand better prices from suppliers?
 - h. Is there an opportunity to receive higher prices for production?
 - i. Can profitability be increased through the production of other commodities?
 - j. Can the operation get cash flows that are more predictable? If yes, how?
 - k. What can I do that I am not currently doing to improve my operation?

- 1. What new governmental policies or programs are available?
- m. What interesting social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle changes, etc are occurring that could benefit my operation?
- n. What are interesting local events that might be used to benefit my operation?
- 4. Threats
 - a. Have there been any significant changes in the industry in which you operate?
 - b. What obstacles do you face?
 - c. What is your competition doing?
 - d. Are there any, or do you anticipate new competitors in your market?
 - e. Are there any new regulations in your industry making it difficult to be profitable?
 - f. Is changing technology threatening your profitability?
 - g. Is the operation keeping up with technological changes?
 - h. Have margins been under pressure?
 - i. Are international competitors taking market share?
 - j. What other changes in the market could damage the profitability of the operation?
 - k. Do you have bad debt or cash-flow problems?
 - 1. Are employees adequately trained and motivated?
 - m. Is the operation producing too many different commodities?
 - n. Could any of your weaknesses seriously threaten your operation?

- C. Creating operational plans based on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified.
 - 1. Examine the weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the operation.
 - 2. Draw up plans to take advantage of the opportunities, counter the threats, and improve the weaknesses.
 - 3. Pay close attention to strengths of the operation that may help you achieve your plans.
 - 4. The strategy chosen will depend on the original goals and objectives of your operation.
 - 5. The whole process will certainly give an overall look at the current position of the operation.
- D. Who can help complete the S.W.O.T. analysis?
 - 1. The producer.
 - 2. Immediate family members.
 - 3. Other close contacts that might have knowledge of the farming operation or agricultural industry.
- E. What are the benefits of completing a S.W.O.T. analysis?
 - 1. Helps provide direction and serves as a basis for the development of business plans.
 - 2. Once completed, the SWOT analysis can help determine if the information indicates something that will assist the operation in achieving its objectives (a strength or opportunity), or if it indicates an obstacle that must be overcome or minimized to achieve desired results (weakness or threat).

III. Potential Speakers

- A. Extension Agents
- B. Extension Specialists

IV. Review Questions

- A. What are the internal factors analyzed during a S.W.O.T analysis?Answer: Strengths and Weaknesses.
- B. What are the external factors analyzed during a S.W.O.T analysis?Answer: Opportunities and Threats.

Strengths Worksheet List all the Internal Strengths of the Operation (Use additional Pages if Necessary)

Question Number	Question	Answer
S_1		
S_2		
S ₃		
S ₄		
S 5		
S_6		
S ₇		
S ₈		
S ₉		
S ₁₀		
S ₁₁		
S ₁₂		
S ₁₃		

Weaknesses Worksheet List all the Internal Weaknesses of the Operation (Use additional Pages if Necessary)

Question Number	Question	Answer
W ₁		
W ₂		
W ₃		
W4		
W5		
W ₆		
W ₇		
W ₈		
W9		
W ₁₀		
W ₁₁		
W ₁₂		
W ₁₃		

Opportunities Worksheet List all the External Opportunities of the Operation (Use additional Pages if Necessary)

Question Number	Question	Answer
O ₁		
O ₂		
O ₃		
O ₄		
O ₅		
O ₆		
O ₇		
O ₈		
O ₉		
O ₁₀		
O ₁₁		
O ₁₂		
O ₁₃		

Threats Worksheet
List all the External Threats of the Operation
(Use additional Pages if Necessary)

Question Number	Question	Answer
T_1		
T ₂		
T ₃		
T ₄		
T ₅		
T ₆		
T ₇		
T ₈		
Т9		
T ₁₀		
T ₁₁		
T ₁₂		
T ₁₃		

Strategic Plan Worksheet Identify plans (Use additional Pages if Necessary)

	Internal Strengths	Internal Weaknesses
Internal Factors External Factors		
External Opportunities		
External Threats		

S.W.O.T. Analysis

Identifying Your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Overheads

 $\sqrt{S.W.O.T.}$ analysis is an acronym for examining the internal strengths and weaknesses of an operation and the external opportunities and threats faced by an operation.

 $\sqrt{}$ Performing a S.W.O.T. analysis helps provide direction and serves as a basis for the development of business plans.

 $\sqrt{1}$ It accomplishes this by examining the operation's:

- 1. Strengths (what an operation does well)
- 2. Weaknesses (what an operation does not do well)
- 3. Opportunities (potential favorable conditions for an operation).
- 4. Threats (potential unfavorable conditions for an operation).

 $\sqrt{}$ Once completed, the SWOT analysis can help determine if the information indicates something that will assist the operation in achieving its objectives (a strength or opportunity), or if it indicates an obstacle that must be overcome or minimized to achieve desired results (weakness or threat).

 $\sqrt{}$ There is no fixed way to complete a S.W.O.T. analysis.

- 1. The manager of the operation (or whoever else will be using the analysis) should be comfortable with and understand the analysis.
- 2. The objective of the analysis should always be to be in a position where you can determine a strategy for the future to improve your operation's overall performance or maintain it if the results are favorable.

 $\sqrt{}$ Some general questions to answer to assist in completing a S.W.O.T. analysis (note: not all questions may be answered, and more questions may be added).

- 1. Strengths.
 - a. What does your operation do well (production, marketing, etc)?
 - b. What do other people see as your strengths (production, marketing, etc)?
 - c. What are the major sources of your operation's revenue and profit?
 - d. What is the major focus of your operation?
 - e. What is the market share of your organization?
 - f. Is your marketing/advertising effective?
 - g. Why did you decide to start your operation?
 - i. What were the motivating factors and influences?
 - ii. Do these factors still represent some of your strengths?
 - h. Why do your customers buy from you?
 - i. What differentiates your operation in the market?
 - j. What have been your most notable achievements?
 - k. What relevant resources do you have?
 - 1. Is the moral of your employees high?
 - m. Are there incentives in place to reward your employees for good work?

- n. Does your operation manage its inventories efficiently?
- o. To what do you attribute your success?
- p. How do you measure success?
- q. What is your greatest asset?
- 2. Weaknesses
 - a. What does your operation not do well (production, marketing, etc)?
 - b. What do others see as your weaknesses (production, marketing, etc)?
 - c. What should you avoid?
 - d. What are the least profitable enterprises?
 - e. What is the market share of your organization?
 - f. Is your marketing/advertising effective?
 - g. Is the operation "wondering"?
 - h. What is the biggest expense of the operation?
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- 3. Opportunities
 - a. What new technologies are available that the operation can use to lower costs?
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 - i. Can profitability be increased through the production of other commodities?
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 - k. What can I do that I am not currently doing to improve my operation?
 - 1. What new governmental policies or programs are available.
 - m. What interesting social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle changes, etc are occurring that could benefit my operation?
 - n. What are interesting local events that might be used to benefit my operation?

- 4. Threats
 - a. Have there been any significant changes in the industry in which you operate?
 - b. What obstacles do you face?
 - c. What is your competition doing?
 - d. Are there any, or do you anticipate new competitors in your market?
 - e. Are there any new regulations in your industry making it difficult to be profitable?
 - f. Is changing technology threatening your profitability?
 - g. Is the operation keeping up with technological changes?
 - h. Have margins been under pressure?
 - i. Are international competitors taking market share?
 - j. What other changes in the market could damage the profitability of the operation?
 - k. Do you have bad debt or cash-flow problems?
 - 1. Are employees adequately trained and motivated?
 - m. Is the operation producing too many different commodities?
 - n. Could any of your weaknesses seriously threaten your operation?

 $\sqrt{}$ Creating operational plans based on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified.

- 1. Examine the weaknesses, opportunities, and threats facing the operation.
- 2. Draw up plans to take advantage of the opportunities, counter the threats, and improve the weaknesses.
- 3. Pay close attention to strengths of the operation that may help you achieve your plans.
- 4. The strategy chosen will depend on the original goals and objectives of your operation.
- 5. The whole process will certainly give an overall look at the current position of the operation.
- $\sqrt{}$ Who can help complete the S.W.O.T. analysis?
 - 1. The producer.
 - 2. Immediate family members.
 - 3. Other close contacts that might have knowledge of the farming operation or agricultural industry.
- $\sqrt{}$ What are the benefits of completing a S.W.O.T. analysis?
 - 1. Helps provide direction and serves as a basis for the development of business plans.
 - 2. Once completed, the SWOT analysis can help determine if the information indicates something that will assist the operation in achieving its objectives (a strength or opportunity), or if it indicates an obstacle that must be overcome or minimized to achieve desired results (weakness or threat).

S.W.O.T. Analysis

Identifying Your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats Case Study Application

Below is an example of a SWOT analysis for the case farm. Crops produced on the farm include sweet corn, onions, tomatoes, and cantaloupe. Also, the farm produces cattle from its cow/calf herd. First, the elements of the SWOT analysis (the farming operation's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) are addressed followed by the plans that will take advantage of the strengths and opportunities, counter threats, and improve weaknesses.

SWOT Analysis Elements of the Farming Operation

As with any business, this farming operation has many strengths to draw upon. Table 1 presents the strengths listed for the example farm. From this list, it can be seen that this operation grows high quality vegetables and markets most of them at a roadside stand at reasonable prices. This type of marketing takes advantage of the owner's strength of interacting with people. The effectiveness of the marketing is evident in the fact that all the vegetables are sold soon after harvest. Finally, the moral of the people who work on the farm is good.

Table 2 presents the weaknesses of the farm. From this outline, we can see that many of the internal problems faced by the operation come from the cattle operation. Specifically, the calving season appears to be one of the biggest weaknesses and could be leading to lower profitability. Also, several pieces of equipment are beginning to show signs of age and wear and may have to be replaced soon. Finally, even though the moral of the employees is good as described in the operation's strengths, the operation does have some employee weaknesses. Specifically, the owner's son has responsibilities off the farm (mainly school) that do not allow him to devote large amounts of time to the farming operation. His wife is also the only person who deals with the financial responsibilities of the operation.

There are several opportunities (Table 3) that can be identified for the farm both in terms of vegetables and cattle. In terms of cattle, the owner has identified organic beef as a growing market. Observations also indicate higher prices are paid to producers selling large quantities of cattle in a group. A more seasonal calving season may help get cash flows that are more predictable. In terms of vegetables, organic vegetables appear to be a growing market, and taking advantage of the newly opened farmers market may help get higher prices for the vegetables. Finally, with the population growing in the local area, a pick-your-own vegetable plots may be a marketing alternative.

Examining the threats faced by the operation (Table 4) suggest that the vegetable enterprises of the farm are the most at risk. Specifically, the newly opened farmers market may take (or be taking) some of the market share. His competition has effectively increased because growers from several miles away are beginning to sell at this market. There is added competition from international vegetable growers that are selling their produce at lower prices to the local grocery

store. Also changing regulations, concerning chemical use on vegetables and the demand for safe food, is making it harder to grow vegetables for a profit. The owner has also identified that the profit margins of cattle have been very tight.

Operational Plans

The operational plans for the farm are drawn from the list of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that were identified and are presented in Table 5. The internal strengths and weaknesses are summarized in the top row in the last two columns of the table. The external opportunities and threats are summarized in the first column in the bottom two rows of the table. The plans to take advantage of the opportunities, combat the threats, and improve the weaknesses are described in the middle of the table. A description of how to interpret the information provided in Table 5 is described below.

Examining this table shows that the first strength listed (S_1) is that the farming operation grows high quality vegetables. With the first opportunity (O_1) being a growing organic market demand, the plan (S_1/O_1) would be to investigate the possibility of growing organic vegetables. Likewise because the first weakness (W_1) concerns the problems the farm has had with managing calving season and the second opportunity (O_2) is that large quantities of cattle being sold at the same time typically are bringing a higher price, the plan for the operation (W_1/O_2) is to manage the calving season to increase the number of cattle being sold at the same time.

In an attempt to minimize the threats faced by the operation, we first turn to the strengths of the farm. Specifically, we notice that the farm has effectively sold vegetables at their roadside stand (S_3) while there exists a threat to the farm in terms of increased competition from growers at the new local farmers market (T_2) . To minimize this threat, the farm has decided it can attempt to compete with the farmers market given its established market share (S_3/T_2) . Examining the weaknesses and threats together, it was observed that the operation's marketing of cattle has not been adequate (W_7) and they also face the threat of tight cattle margins (T_4) . The plan is to evaluate different markets for their cattle (W_7/T_4) . Similar interpretations can be derived from the remainder of the plans presented in Table 5.

Conclusions

Completing a SWOT analysis will help you to evaluate the current position of your operation to determine management plans for the future. It helps in determining future plans by identifying strengths and opportunities that can be used by the operation and pointing out weaknesses and threats that should be managed. Those beginning a SWOT analysis should remember that there are no set guidelines for completing the analysis. Users of the final analysis should be comfortable with the format and should understand the results. For the analysis to be most effective, though, it must be carried out fairly and thoroughly. This will then put the management in a position to accurately forecast and prepare for the future to meet the farms objectives and goals.

Question Number	Question	Answer		
S_1	What does your operation do well?	My farm grows high quality vegetables.		
1 1 9		I am good at talking to people and selling my products.		
S ₃ Is your marketing/advertising effective?		My farm effectively sells most of its vegetables at our family roadside stand.		
S_4	Why do customers buy from you?	My customers say that the quality and price of my vegetables are better than local grocery stores.		
S_5	Is the moral of your employees high?	My son, wife, and brother say they enjoy working on and for my farm.		
S_6	Does your operation manage its inventories efficiently?	Yes. We sell our entire inventory of vegetables in at least two weeks after harvest.		

 Table 1. Example farming operation's strengths.

Question Number	Question	Answer	
W ₁	What does your operation not do well?	We do not manage our calving season very well. We calve throughout the year.	
W_2	What does your operation not do well?	We do not have enough time to devote to the marketing of our vegetables.	
W_3	What do other people see as my operation's weaknesses?	Our calving season is not adequate.	
W_4	What is the least profitable enterprise?	Cattle.	
W ₅	What relevant resources do you need?	Several pieces of equipment may have to be updated in the near future.	
W_6	Do your employees perform at their best?	My wife is the only person who handles the finances.	
W_7	Do your employees perform at their best?	With school, my son does not have the time to work enough on the farm.	
W ₈	Is your marketing/advertising effective?	The current marketing of our cattle is not adequate.	

Table 2. Example farming operation's weaknesses.

Question Number	Question	Answer		
01	What market trends am I observing?	People are beginning to buy organic vegetables and beef in the local area.		
O ₂	What market trends am I observing?	Large groups of cattle sold together are bringing higher prices.		
O ₃	What market trends am I observing?	Tele-markets for cattle are growing in popularity.		
O_4	What market trends am I observing?	Group cattle selling is growing in popularity and getting better prices.		
O ₅	Is there an opportunity to demand better prices for production?	Increasing the number of cattle sold at one time.		
O_6	Can the operation get cash flows that are more predictable?	Yes. Through a tighter calving season rather than calving throughout the year.		
O ₇	What interesting social patterns, population profiles, lifestyle changes, etc are occurring that could benefit my operation?	The local population has increased. Some of this population is looking to experience agriculture first-hand. Pick-your-own vegetable plots are gaining in popularity.		
O ₈	Is there an opportunity to demand better prices for production?	I may be able to sell vegetables at or to the local farmers market for higher prices.		
O9	What can I do to improve my financial knowledge?	Gain financial knowledge through educational programs or hiring the work done.		
O ₁₀	What are interesting local events that might be used to benefit my operation?	A new farmers market opened in the area last year.		

Table 3. Example farming operation's opportunities.

Question Number	Question	Answer
T_1	What is your competition doing?	Local vegetable growers are selling at the new farmers market.
T ₂	Are there any, or do you anticipate new competitors in your market?	Producers from several miles away are selling at the new farmers market.
T ₃	Are there any new regulations in your industry making it difficult to be profitable?	Constantly changing chemical regulations and the customers concern for food safety are making it harder to produce vegetables that are safe and profitable.
T ₄	Have margins been under pressure?	My cattle margins have been very tight.
T ₅	Are international competitors taking market share?	Yes. Local grocery stores are buying from lower cost international vegetable producers.

Table 4. Example farming operation's threats.

	<u>ter ma</u>	l opportunities and th		Internal Strangtha	Īm	ternal Weaknesses
				Internal Strengths		ternal Weaknesses
Internal Factors External Factors		 S1 Grow high quality vegetables S2 Talking to people & selling S3 Effectively sells vegetables at roadside stand S4 Vegetable quality & price S5 Happy employees S6 Quickly sell vegetables 		 W₁ Don't manage calving season well W₂ Time limitation to market vegetables W₃ Calving season is not adequate W₄ Cattle is least profitable enterprise W₅ Old/worn equipment W₆ Limited financial knowledge W₇ Son's work schedule 		
						Cattle marketing not
						sufficient. Financial Profitability.
	O ₁ O ₂	Growing organic market demand Large quantity of cattle sales get higher	S_1/O_1 S_2/O_7	Look into growing organic vegetables Sell <u>at</u> farmers market	W_1/O_2 W_1/O_4	Manage calving season Manage calving season
External Opportunities	$\begin{array}{c} O_3\\ O_4\\ O_5\end{array}$	prices Tele-markets Group cattle sales Increase cattle sales numbers	S ₂ /O ₉ S ₆ /O ₈	Establish a pick-your- own vegetable Increase vegetable acreage	W ₁ /O ₆ W ₂ /O ₇ W ₂ /O ₇ W ₆ /O ₉	Manage calving season Use farmers market Use pick-your-own Gain financial
ternal Op	O ₆	More predictable cash flow through calving season			11 8 0 9	knowledge from other sources or hire it done.
Ex	O ₇ O ₈	Pick-your-own Sell at the new farmers market				
	O ₉	Gain financial knowledge New farmers market				
	O ₁₀ T ₁	Local vegetable	S_1/T_1	Sell at farmers	W_{7}/T_{4}	Use different
its	T_2	growers selling at farmers market Increased	S_3/T_2	market Compete with farmers market	W_2/T_2	markets Sell <u>to</u> farmers market
External Threats	T_3	competition from farmers market Chemical regulations/food	S_3/T_5 S_4/T_3	Compete with international growers Promote high quality	W_5/T_5	Consider purchasing more cost effective equipment Sell at farmers
Exter	T ₄ T ₅	regulations/food safety Tight cattle margins International vegetable grower competition		& price of vegetables	W ₆ /T ₂	sell at farmers market

 Table 5. Strategic plans developed from the internal strengths and weaknesses and the external opportunities and threats.