

## Creative farming by family agreement

**A**GRICULTURE becomes more creative and attractive if there is a written agreement on cooperative management among family members.

Agriculture itself is a creative and attractive job, but it can be made more so by an agreement on cooperative management of farming among family members.

### Adaptability of the technology

This technology is best suited to family-based farming. A large family with more than two generations is preferable as a user of this technology, rather than a small family with one generation.

### The technology

This is a cost-free know-how technology based on the mutual and clear understanding of family objectives, roles and responsibilities of family members for attaining common objectives. In family farming, daily communication among family members may be effective for mutual understanding. However, a written agreement after an intensive and through discussion is more effective, and

helps families plan their farm activities in the future. To get a written agreement, the following procedures are needed.

### Step 1: Initial discussion

First of all, family members should get together to discuss each others' perception of how farm operations should be carried out, and the life-style each member wants to pursue. This step will clarify the family's realities and pending issues, as well as the members' wishes. This process offers the basis for the family's farming plan that affects each member.

The following topics, for instance, might be discussed.

- Current earnings and expenses from family farming.*
- Remuneration for work.*
- Roles assigned to each member, including farm work and household work.*
- Working hours of each member.*
- Target income of the family.*
- Agriculture and household expenditure.*
- Future property succession.*
- Post-retirement life.*

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*FFTC: An international information center for  
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## Step 2: Drafting the details of the agreement

Based on the initial discussions, the family members should develop the details of an agreement on farm management. Some of the items that should be included in the proposed agreement are as follows.

- ❑ Assigning farm work and household tasks to each member, taking into account the ability and desires of each member.  
For example, if the owner's wife is good at accounting, she may be assigned bookkeeping in addition to rice growing. Greenhouse horticulture may be assigned to the son who will inherit the property. The wife of the son may be responsible for general household duties until her children reach school age.
- ❑ Determining the remuneration that each member is entitled to as the reward for his/her work, and method of payment.  
For example, US\$1,500 may be transferred every month to the bank account of the owner's wife, US\$ 1,000 to that of the son, and US\$ 800 to that of his wife.
- ❑ Determining the share that each member should incur of the common household expenditures, considering his/her income.  
For example, the owner's wife might incur US\$ 1,000, while the son and his wife might jointly incur US\$ 1,000.
- ❑ Determining the holidays for each member.  
For example, everyone may be entitled to one day off a week, but the holidays of the owner and his wife should be on different days to those of their son and his wife. For the two busy months in fall, holidays may be determined on a case-by-case basis. Each family member may be allowed to take a summer vacation of three days or more.

Thus, all issues discussed and agreed to by the family members will be put into a written form.

## Step 3: Finalizing the agreement

All the points agreed on by the family members will be compiled into a draft written agreement, which may be reviewed by an appropriate government officer or agricultural cooperative personnel. The draft agreement will be then be refined to become a formal written agreement, taking their advice into consideration.

## Step 4: Execution and review of the agreement

The agreement may need to be revised and/or expanded to meet changes in farming practices and the family situation.

### Effect of the technology

This technology makes family farming more creative and attractive through;

- ❑ The increase of revenues by better organized and more efficient performance of the work load.
- ❑ An increased awareness of:
  - The roles and responsibilities of each family member
  - A mutual respect and sense of partnership
  - The pleasure of accomplishing the jobs allocated to each member.
- ❑ A mutual understanding of what kind of life-style each member wants, and sharing the family's plans for its future.

### The role of cooperatives and government

Signing a family management agreement may be seen as a change in the traditional relationship among the members of a family. Some farm owners, therefore, may be resistant to the new agreement. Here, agricultural cooperatives and local governments can play an important role as an arbitrator or advisor for developing a family management agreement. It is recommended that some meetings to discuss this subject should be held in the community.