

Firm ID: \_\_\_\_\_  
Also record on pages 3 and 5

**Rice and Steele Counties  
Agriculture Business Retention and Enhancement Program  
Interview Guide**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TOWNSHIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PERSONS INTERVIEWED: 1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

DATE OF VISIT: \_\_\_\_\_

VOLUNTEER VISITORS: 1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

**Note to Coordinator:**

**After placing the ID number on this cover sheet and on pages 1 and 3, remove the cover sheet and file separately to ensure confidentiality of results.**

## **Rice and Steele Counties**

### **Agriculture Business Retention and Enhancement Program**

#### **Program Mission**

The Rice/Steele Business Retention and Enhancement Program for Agriculture will assess and seek to solve immediate and long-term concerns of agricultural producers and agricultural businesses in Rice and Steele Counties. To accomplish this, we will:

- identify a range of options for long-term survival of agriculture in the two counties.
- identify and capitalize on the strategic advantage of Rice and Steele Counties
- retain, strengthen and develop agricultural enterprises to enhance the local economy
- find creative solutions to old problems

**Cooperative Effort** -- This survey is a cooperative effort involving volunteers drawn from agriculture, other local businesses, local government, and educational institutions. Technical and research assistance for this program is provided by the University of Minnesota and the University of Minnesota Extension Service.

**Guidelines** -- There are two important guidelines we will follow for completing this survey: confidentiality and the “skip it rule”. Here’s what they are about:

**Guideline 1: Confidentiality** - Your individual answers to this survey are confidential and will not be released. Your responses will be summarized with those of others to form an overall result in percentages or averages.

**Guideline 2: The "Skip It Rule"** - If there is a question that you feel might be best to skip, we will do that; just let us know. There is no need to explain your reasons.

**Copy of Final Report** -- Copies of the summary will be provided to all producers who participate in this survey.

© 2001 Business Retention and Expansion Strategies Program

University of Minnesota Extension Service, Saint Paul, Minnesota 55108

**Rice and Steele Counties  
Agriculture Business Retention and Enhancement Program**

1. Where does most of your gross farm income come from?
  - a. Livestock
  - b. Crops
  - c. Equally from crops and livestock
  - d. Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. What are your main crops? (please list)

3. If you raise livestock, how many of each type did you have this year? Of each, do you expect to have none, the same amount, a significantly expanded, or significantly reduced size? (Please circle accordingly for each)

Number of livestock <u>In 2001</u>	Number of livestock <u>In 2006</u>			
a. Dairy Cows _____	none	about the same	significantly expanded	significantly reduced
b. Beef Cows _____	none	about the same	significantly expanded	significantly reduced
c. Swine sows _____	none	about the same	significantly expanded	significantly reduced
d. Finishing hogs _____	none	about the same	significantly expanded	significantly reduced
e. Poultry _____	none	about the same	significantly expanded	significantly reduced
f. Other _____	none	about the same	significantly expanded	significantly reduced

4. How much land—tillable acres, pasture and other—is included in your operation? How much will be in your operation in five years? (Please list the acreage)

	2001	2006
A. Number of Tillable Acres Owned	_____	_____
B. Number of Tillable Acres Rented	_____	_____
C. Number of Pasture Acres Owned	_____	_____
D. Number of Pasture Acres Rented	_____	_____
E. Number of Other Acres Owned	_____	_____
F. Number of Other Acres Rented	_____	_____

5. Of the acres owned, how many are financed and how many are owned free and clear (no debt)?
  - a. Number of acres currently financed in some way \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Number of acres owned free and clear (no debt) \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. How many landlords do you have?
  
7. Of these landlords, how many live in Rice or Steele counties?
  
8. If all your land rents increased to the highest rates you hear rumored being paid right now, would you continue to rent the land or farm at all?
  
9. How many years have you and your spouse derived income from farming? \_\_\_\_\_

10. How old are you? (Circle one)

Self

Spouse

- a. Younger than 25
- b. 25-34
- c. 35-44
- d. 45-54
- e. 55-64
- f. 65-74
- g. 75 or older

- a. Younger than 25
- b. 25-34
- c. 35-44
- d. 45-54
- e. 55-64
- f. 65-74
- g. 75 or older

11. How many full-time, part-time, seasonal workers, and/or family members did you employ on your farm this year? Please note whether you expect the numbers of employees you have to increase, decrease, or stay the same over the next three years.

Change in Employees within the Next 3 Years

Number of Employees		(Please note expected number in appropriate space)		
<u>This Year</u>		<u>Increase</u>	<u>Decrease</u>	<u>Keep same #</u>
a. full-time	_____	_____	_____	_____
b. Regular part-time	_____	_____	_____	_____
c. Seasonal	_____	_____	_____	_____
d. Family (not spouse)	_____	_____	_____	_____
e. Migrant workers	_____	_____	_____	_____

12. Do you grow crops or livestock under contract for someone else? If yes, please describe.

YES            NO

Please Describe.

If no, would you consider doing this at some point in the future? If not, why not?

13. Where do you purchase the majority of your farm supplies? (Circle one for each)

	Outside <u>Minnesota</u>	Elsewhere <u>in Minnesota</u>	Neighboring <u>County</u>	Rice or Steele <u>County</u>
a. Feeds	1	2	3	4
b. Forages	1	2	3	4
c. Fertilizer	1	2	3	4
d. Chemicals	1	2	3	4
e. Seed	1	2	3	4
f. Farm Machinery	1	2	3	4
g. Equip. repair and service	1	2	3	4
h. Livestock	1	2	3	4
i. Veterinary services	1	2	3	4
j. Banking	1	2	3	4
k. Insurance	1	2	3	4
l. Accounting	1	2	3	4
m. Gas, fuel, and oil	1	2	3	4

14. What could local suppliers of the goods and services just listed do to get you to spend more of your money locally?

15. What could be done in the community to improve the marketing of your crops and livestock?
16. How long do you plan to continue farming? (circle one)
- a. Plan to stop farming within a year
  - b. 1–5 more years
  - c. 6-10 more years
  - d. 11-20 more years
  - e. more than 20 years
17. If you said you plan to stop farming within the next one, five, or ten years, why will you stop?
- a. Retirement
  - b. Personal reasons
  - c. Financial reasons
  - d. Health reasons
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_
18. If you plan to stop farming within the next one, five, or ten years, what do you plan to do with your farm after you stop farming? (Circle all that apply)
- a. Transfer farm to a relative
  - b. Sell farm to a non-family member who wants to farm
  - c. Rent out some or all of the land
  - d. Sell some or all of the land for non-agricultural purposes
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_
19. Is lack of access to markets affecting your crop or livestock decisions? If yes, please describe.
20. Is lack of competition among buyers of your product causing you to receive lower prices? If yes, please describe.

21. Is lack of competition among those you buy from (seeds, fertilizers, chemicals, etc.) causing you to pay higher prices? If yes, please describe.

22. Consider each of the following trends. Rate each one as to its impact on your operation.

	Potential <u>Threat</u>	No <u>Impact</u>	Potential <u>Opportunity</u>
a. Increase in the county's population	1	2	3
b. Changing consumer tastes	1	2	3
c. Biotechnology revolution in agriculture	1	2	3
d. Growth in larger-sized farms	1	2	3
e. Increased concern over the environment	1	2	3
f. Increased cost of healthcare	1	2	3
g. Increased free trade globally	1	2	3
h. Mergers among ag supply companies	1	2	3
i. Contracting for crops and livestock	1	2	3
j. Phasing out of gov commodity programs	1	2	3
k. Rising land prices	1	2	3
l. Other _____	1	2	3

Please rank the three trends you think impact your operation the most. (Put 1 by the highest, 2 by the second highest, 3 by the third)

23. Please describe why you see some of the trends just listed as potential threats or opportunities.

24. To what degree are you interested in augmenting or changing your operation by undertaking the following practices? For each category, please describe why you answered the way you did. Also, please explain what could be done to increase your interest in these practices. (On the next page)

	Not <u>Interested</u>	Mildly <u>Interested</u>	Seriously <u>Interested</u>	Already <u>Involved</u>
a. Organic production Why?	1	2	3	4
What could be done to increase your interest?				
b. Value-added cooperatives Why?	1	2	3	4
What could be done to increase your interest?				
c. On-farm processing Why?	1	2	3	4
What could be done to increase your interest?				
d. Direct marketing Why?	1	2	3	4
What could be done to increase your interest?				
e. Agri-tourism/recreation Why?	1	2	3	4
What could be done to increase your interest?				
f. Alternative livestock production Why?	1	2	3	4
What could be done to increase your interest?				
g. Forming business partnerships Why?	1	2	3	4
What could be done to increase your interest?				

25. What do you think are the specific strategic advantages for agriculture in Rice and Steele counties?

26. What do you think are the specific disadvantages for agriculture in Rice and Steele counties?

27. Please rate each of the following community services. (Circle one for each)

		Very				
		<u>Poor</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Excellent</u>
a.	Elementary and secondary schools	1	2	3	4	5
b.	Area tech and community colleges	1	2	3	4	5
c.	Day care	1	2	3	4	5
d.	Recreational facilities	1	2	3	4	5
e.	Healthcare/hospitals	1	2	3	4	5
f.	Ambulance services	1	2	3	4	5
g.	Fire protection	1	2	3	4	5
h.	Road maintenance	1	2	3	4	5
i.	Planning and zoning	1	2	3	4	5
j.	Building code	1	2	3	4	5
k.	Telecommunications	1	2	3	4	5
l.	Other _____	1	2	3	4	5

Is poor quality of any of the above having an impact on your business? Or, would improvement of any of the above enhance your business?

28. Rate the following groups as to how much you think they care about your survival in these difficult economic times.

	Don't care	Indifferent	Somewhat	Very
	<u>at all</u>	<u>or unaware</u>	<u>concerned</u>	<u>concerned</u>
a.	1	2	3	4
	Local agriculture-related businesses			

	Don't care <u>at all</u>	Indifferent <u>or unaware</u>	Somewhat <u>concerned</u>	Very <u>concerned</u>
b. Local non-agriculture businesses	1	2	3	4
c. Local officials	1	2	3	4
d. State Environmental agencies	1	2	3	4
e. Minnesota Dept of Ag.	1	2	3	4
f. Agribusiness interests (e.g. Monsanto, Cargill, etc.)	1	2	3	4
g. University of Minnesota	1	2	3	4
h. Rural non-farm residents	1	2	3	4
i. City residents of region	1	2	3	4
j. Livestock farmers	1	2	3	4
k. Crop farmers	1	2	3	4
l. Small farmers	1	2	3	4
m. Large farmers	1	2	3	4
n. Other _____	1	2	3	4

29. How would you rate various governmental production agricultural programs?

	Very				
	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Excellent</u>
a. Federal programs	1	2	3	4	5
b. State programs	1	2	3	4	5
c. Local/County programs	1	2	3	4	5

30. How would you rate various governmental conservation agricultural programs?

	Very				
	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Excellent</u>
a. Federal programs	1	2	3	4	5
b. State programs	1	2	3	4	5
c. Local/County programs	1	2	3	4	5

31. How do you think government agricultural support programs could be improved?

32. Do you think there is a good alternative to a government supported agricultural safety net? If so, describe briefly.

33. How would you rate the following business factors? (Circle one for each).

	Very				
	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Poor</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Excellent</u>
a. Availability of financing	1	2	3	4	5
b. Availability of health insurance	1	2	3	4	5
c. Availability of labor	1	2	3	4	5
d. Availability of housing	1	2	3	4	5
e. Availability of farm land	1	2	3	4	5
f. Availability of markets	1	2	3	4	5
g. Property taxes	1	2	3	4	5
h. Wage rates	1	2	3	4	5
i. Zoning	1	2	3	4	5
j. Other _____	1	2	3	4	5

34. Which of the factors just listed are most critical to your operation?

35. How optimistic or pessimistic are you about the economic outlook for agriculture in the county?

<u>Very pessimistic</u>					<u>Very optimistic</u>
1	2	3	4	5	

36. What do you believe needs to be done to maintain or enhance agriculture's role in Rice and Steele counties?

37. What are your communities doing to help you stay in agriculture and be productive?

38. What more would you like to see your communities do to support your agricultural activities?

39. What land use/zoning options would benefit your operation?

40. Which of the options you listed above would be most likely to be implemented and to succeed?

41. Are there any other issues you would like to see addressed?

*Thank you for your cooperation with our Agriculture Business Retention and Enhancement program.*

The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status or sexual orientation.