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A continuity of business (C.O.B) plan is created to outline business functions in the event of a major disruption. It addresses issues such as loss of income, protecting employees and essential business activities. Businesses large and small should develop a plan and create a document that shares essential business operations in preparation, during and following a major disruption in business operations.

For farms this is especially important because of contributions to the food supply and the essential function of taking care of crops and animals. This publication outlines a very brief but practical guide to operating your farm during a disaster, disruption and otherwise uncertain time.

There are three major issues that a C.O.B would address. These are:

- Prevention Strategies - Risks to the farm, Actions to prevent before the disaster occurs
- Response Strategy - Detailed response for potential disasters for different parts of the business
- Recovery Strategy - After the event how to get the farm back on track



A Continuity of Business plan can be divided into sections. Much of this plan will include lists, contact information and steps before, during and following a major business disruption or disaster.

- 1) Identify the scope of the plan.
 - a) This is a summary to the plan and the goals of the document. Examples could be from a production, employee, financial and/or technology perspective. All areas and activities of the farm should be considered from daily tasks to regular maintenance.
- 2) Risk and Prevention Strategies
 - a) What are ways that the farm mitigates risk? This could include biosecurity activities, security and fire protection, secondary suppliers and less dependency on a single point of contact, technology back up, communication, cross training of employees, splitting critical functions.
 - b) Consider farm compliance and regulatory requirements, essential employees, agility of employees and resources needed during a disruption. Consider employee and contractor policies. Employee safety considering such as farm vehicles, equipment and materials. Travel

with government mandated travel restrictions, protocol for the safe evacuation or quarantine of employees who are traveling.

3) Response Strategy and Continuity Plan

- a) This is the largest section and includes the process and plan for disasters. Consider breaking it down by roles, managers or farm enterprises.
- b) A checklist that includes supplies and equipment, the location of data backups and backup sites, and contact information for emergency responders, key personnel and backup site providers.
- c) An inventory of essential farm activities to ensure the safety and health of crops and animals. This could include necessary operations for the farm such as scouting, feeding, health and irrigation.
 - i) General Farm ID - Fields and acres under control of farm (including rented property), USDA FSA maps, insurance policies, key markets/customers for farm products, next of kin or trusted person to be in charge,
 - ii) Crop-based COB based on enterprise - Planned crop rotation by field, nutrient management, IPM program (including pesticide records/license/storage, weed control), key workers for seasonal work (harvest), equipment location for both owned and leased equipment, plan for leased or custom help to the farm (harvesters, etc)
 - iii) Animal based COB based on enterprise – grazing rotations, barn layouts and functions, animal inventory and age, major services for each enterprise (e.g. health, hoof trimming, vaccinations), breeding records location and plans, location of materials, health records location and veterinary relationship record (including vet contacts), feeding and nutrition records, feeding plan by age group and life stage, processing and hygiene programs and supplies, biosecurity plan / visitor plans for farm, key workers including part time who work on farm.
- d) Include a list of internal and external stakeholders for conveying communication, could be by email, social media or phone calls. Be able to communicate with employees, customers, consumers and the media.
- e) Review supplier service level agreements, contracts and other legal expectations.

4) Recovery strategy to get the business back to normal operations. What are some activities that may need to take place to get the business back on track following a disruption in business? This could include markets, employees and communications.

5) Share, Implement and Train, Test and Review

- a) It will be important to communicate business decisions to partners, employees and other appropriate audiences. Consider training needed and responsibilities during a disruption
- b) Test the business continuity plan this could be done through getting feedback from others or looking at the “what ifs” of the external environment.
- c) Be sure to review the plan as the business, environment and world changes.

Farm Business Continuity Plan Template

Company Name:	
Address:	
Phone:	
Last Revision Date:	

Scope of the Plan and Goals

List what this plan covers and the goals for business continuity. (Example: This plan includes key production activities, financial, employee, and technical operations of the farm.)

Farm Risk and Prevention

- Farm Production activities - biosecurity, alarms, security systems, suppliers, supplies, customers, crop and animal protection
- Financial activities - security, back up data and access, records
- Employee activities – policies, protection, communication, training
- Business activities – contact lists, licenses, insurance

Organization Chart

Important to identify the responsibly and team during a major disruption. In farm situations the team may be very small however think of friends and family that might need to be included. An example is the support team. In a major disruption are their individuals that could help make food, deliveries or calls outside of normal activities.

1. Production Team
2. Technology Team
3. Support Team

Response Strategy

- Checklist of supplies and equipment (see also vendor supply chart)
- Data backups, backup sites, passwords (financial, websites, social media)
- Emergency contact information, responders, employees, key personnel
- Inventory and listing of essential farm activities and responsibilities (primary and secondary)
 - General Farm ID - Fields and acres under control of farm (including rented property), key markets for farm products, next of kin or trusted person to be in charge,
 - Crop – scouting, irrigation, plant, harvest
 - Livestock – feeding, care, health
- Communication activities and who needs to be contacted this could be financial advisor, insurance, employees, customers or media
- Any contractual obligations and consequences for not meeting them

Contact Information

Member Name	Cell	Email	Responsibility

Vendors, Contractors and Suppliers

Company	Supplies Purchased (name, frequency, amount)	Contact Name	Contact Info and other details

Plan Distribution and Access

The plan will be distributed to owners of the farm. A master copy of the document will be the responsibility of _____. A print copy of this plan will be located _____ and an electronic copy will be located _____.

Date Written:

Revision Dates: