

# Ideas and questions



## Economic

\*A question for cattle feedlots: What is their average cost per pound of gain? This will allow us to compare to cost of gain grazing

\*Wonder if the crop associations need a meeting by themselves to vent/explain outside of (sustainable ag) judgement. This is not their usual venue and as such, they may feel inhibited = counterproductive for the larger goals.

\*Wonder if the ag print media in all 6 states would run a short press release with the survey link?

I like to shoot for \$50 to \$100 per acre. There are a lot of incremental costs that always creep into the equation that lower our profit picture. The fewer acres you have the higher return you need to cover costs.

**\*What profit per acre would a farmer need to achieve to consider starting a grazing enterprise?**

\*Are feedlot owners interested in owning cattle and hiring custom graziers to feed them for a few months?

I have a feedlot and using \$6 corn our cost of gain would be around \$1.05 per lb. I just bought some yearlings at 800 lbs @ \$1.60/lb costing \$1280. We will put on 650 lbs of gain at a cost of  $\$1.05 \times 650 = \$682$ . Add that to our original cost of \$1280 gives us a total cost of \$1962 divided by 1450 lb finish wt gives us a breakeven of \$1.35.

\*On the survey, maybe we shouldn't assume what "profitability" means - maybe a question could try to get at what it means to respondents. Example: women landowners often trade some financial gain for something of 'value' like quail habitat. Perhaps that's not the audience we want? Yet women own much of the farmland that will trade hands in the next generation of years and as such, hold a key to how that land will be managed

## Engaging broader audiences

**Pick one of these and start typing!**

# Existing resources & Information needs

## Getting started

\*More resources, budgets, management ideas for backgrounding cattle

\*Need an ongoing list of creative ways to “do” this, small scale and bigger. Ex Josh Payne’s summer annuals, Jared’s cattle/pasture sharing, Ron S’s custom grazing...a survey question could capture others.

\*What is a bare bones, starter pack of supplies would be needed for a crop farmer to start from scratch (eg polyreels, step in posts, or others)

## Environmental

\*Simple ways to measure and put a value on environmental benefits to cover and grazing.

\*Comparison of environmental benefits of annual forages vs perennial forages

## Economic

\*Lease language to share the risk, costs

\*It could be helpful to have a database similar to FINBIN to understand what costs will be, to provide some comfort to making adjustments to an enterprise. Such as feeling your price on certain breed of animals or supplemental mineral is reasonable and not overly high because you are inexperienced.

\*Cost share opportunities

\*More resources, budgets, management ideas for backgrounding cattle

## Existing

\*UW Extension Crops and Soils program have developed several workgroups focusing on issues related to this project.

\*Clean River Partners (Northfield, MN) released a Kernza grazing/grain study through SARE in 2021:  
[https://cleanriverpartners.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/clean-river-partners-crowp\\_final-sadg-progress-report-section-i\\_fy18\\_kernza-dual-use\\_final-10-6-21.pdf](https://cleanriverpartners.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/clean-river-partners-crowp_final-sadg-progress-report-section-i_fy18_kernza-dual-use_final-10-6-21.pdf)

\*UMN WCROC had focus groups a few years ago and asked farmers about crop-livestock integration. See more <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/10/12/4606>

\*SFA has a set of soil health case studies, some of which include livestock/crop farmers. Ask Jared Luhman, look for Kaleb Anderson’s case study

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Pick one of  
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# Audiences

Non-farming  
land owners

\*Can't forget  
landlords  
here.

\*And  
non-operating  
landowners incl  
women

Conventional ag

\*Confined  
Livestock  
Operations

\*Conventional grain  
farmers we can sell  
on the value of  
environmental  
benefits

Everyone

\*Maybe any and all  
farmers and landowners.  
Will need a bzillion  
surveys out to get 1-3%  
response rate.

Ag service  
providers, input  
suppliers

\*Wonder if ag agency  
community? Some of  
them genuinely know  
barriers and they  
themselves are one.

\*Lenders, farm  
agency staff,  
input suppliers

Pick one of  
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# Benefits of integration

## Production

\*Improved soil fertility and function with or without livestock ownership

\*Reduce weed, disease & insect pressure due to long term crop rotations including forages

## \*Soil Health

\*Livestock is a powerful tool for soil management incl erosion control, free fertility, water infiltration, and layered income.

## Economic

\*Diverse income streams to reduce risk

\*Creating multiple income streams for farmers

## Community

\*Bringing livestock back on the land. Rejuvenates local communities

\*Opportunity to work with a neighbor

\*Bring next generation into a farm

## Other

\*If you are borrowing livestock, what a lovely way to get to know if you want some of your own! And what that would look like, infrastructure-wise.

\*Changing climate (severe storms) demands the buffers of continuous living cover - livestock helps pay for and pave that road

Pick one of these and start typing!

# Obstacles and Barriers

## Attitudes and perceptions

\*Out of sight out of mind if it's your land and someone else's animals. Those benefits only go so far to compensate for well-meaning but absent livestock owners.

\* Livestock owners who basically want to off-farm the expenses of managing their animals on your pasture or cropland.

\*Fear of what the neighbors will think

\*Public perception: What are the neighbors going to say at the coffee shop

\*Farmers' desire for fall tillage

\*If you don't want to or can't farm more than a few months each year.

## Lack of infrastructure, labor

\*No livestock infrastructure left in croplands (fence, water, ect...)

\*Lack of equipment to handle livestock

\*Short on labor to handle added work

\*Time and Labor requirement for integrating livestock and crops

## Logistics and skills

\*Logistics of when croplands are available and when livestock need additional feed

\*Interest in and knowledge of livestock

**\*It's hard to be creative even when the status quo isn't working**

## Economics

\*Very narrow profit margins in livestock production and large expenses to get started

\*Lease agreements that don't share the risks and/or hog the benefits

\*Access to funding, whether that's actual pools of \$\$ or just visibility and navigating that process

\*Farm subsidies and related cost share opportunities

Pick one of these and start typing!