A Checklist of Factors to Consider When Adopting
A Row-Crop and Forage/Livestock Rotation System

Land

- Identify land suitable for row-crop production via soil testing
- Allow adequate time to purchase/finance/close on newly purchased land.
- If the land has a mortgage, be sure to include payments in the projected budget
- If the land is leased, be sure to have a written lease agreement that documents and describes the elements of the lease and allows a reasonable length of time for you to recoup your capital investment
- Determine the potential acreage suitable for irrigation
- Evaluate alternatives to improve the land (drainage, leveling, amendments, etc.)
- Determine if a long-term commitment to use the land in the rotation system is feasible
- Determine a use for the non-cropped acreage (pasture, trees, wildlife habitat, etc.)

Water Source

- Determine the most economical source of water (deep well or reservoir)
- Determine if a water source can be established
- Determine the quantity of water needed by month
- Evaluate water quality on the site
- Estimate the potential water quantity on the site
- Evaluate the investment cost to develop the water source (deep well or reservoir)
- Consult with professionals and/or regulators (NRCS) to ensure that you follow legal guidelines (permits) and use accurate information to make decisions

Irrigation System

- Determine the type of irrigation system and power source to be used
- Determine the location of the pumping station, pipe lines and central outlet
- Evaluate the investment cost of the irrigation system
- Evaluate the operating cost of the irrigation system
Pump/Power/Piping

- Evaluate the size of pump necessary to deliver the quantity of water desired
- Estimate the cost of the pump and installation
- Estimate the cost and installation of the power source
- Estimate the cost the installing the piping to deliver water to the irrigation system

Soil and Water Conservation

- Determine if and where ditches and canals are needed
- Estimate the cost of ditches and canals
- Evaluate land leveling costs
- Estimate the quantity and costs of soil amendments
- Estimate root and rock removal costs
- Estimate disking costs

Row-Crops

- Determine types of row-crops to produce
- Evaluate pros and cons of rotating selected row-crops with forages
- Determine recommended production practices for selected row-crops
- Evaluate breakeven prices of each commodity
- Evaluate costs and returns of each row-crop

Fencing/Forage Establishment

- Determine the type(s) of fencing needed (perimeter and interior)
- Identify the location/lines where the fences should be erected
- Clear the right-of-way for fence construction
- Evaluate the costs of building and maintaining the fences
- Determine Bahiagrass establishment practices (site preparation, inputs, timing, etc.)
- Select which sites to be planted to Bahiagrass
- Evaluate Bahiagrass establishment costs

Labor/Management

- Determine the labor requirements to implement the row-crop and forage/livestock rotation system (crop and livestock management practices, irrigation, fencing, etc.)
- Evaluate the labor costs of implementing the rotation system
- Determine the labor requirements to operate the sod-based rotation system by month
- Evaluate the operating labor costs of the rotation system
- Assess needed management capabilities and limitations
o Consider educational programs/training that aid in skill building (financial, machinery & equipment, row crops, livestock, etc.)

Livestock

o Determine the type of livestock enterprise (cow-calf, goats, sheep, etc.) to be utilized on the sod-based rotation system.
  o Determine your livestock production and marketing plans
  o Determine the seasonal needs of forage production for various classes of livestock
  o Determine when adequate forage will be available to initiate grazing on the sod-based rotation system
  o Determine when you would like to start grazing on the sod-based rotation system
  o Determine the stocking rate (acres/head or head/acre) that you would like to achieve
  o Determine the type, quantity, and source of supplemental feed
  o Determine where and when you plan to procure the livestock
  o Estimate the investment cost of livestock
  o Determine how to handle on farm animal welfare issues (4Ds-Dead, Dying, Diseased, Disabled)
  o Determine where to locate water and feed troughs, shade, area for breeding bulls, etc.

Barns/Buildings/Structures

o Determine the type of structure needed
  o Determine if building permits are needed
  o Determine the location of where to erect the structure
  o Determine the size of the structure
  o Evaluate the costs to construct and maintain the structures

Capital

o Determine the total investment costs of the sod-based rotation system
  o Determine the source(s) of the capital to be invested (owner equity, banks, lending institutions, etc.)
  o Determine the financing parameters (interest rate, years, payments, etc.)
  o Develop a temporary backup payment plan in case adverse situations occur
  o Monitor expected versus actual investment costs during the development of the sod-based rotation system

Tax Management

o Consult with tax accountant about current tax rules on land improvement expenditures (land clearing, ditching, leveling, soil amendments, etc.)
- Evaluate machinery and equipment (tractors, implements, irrigation system, etc.) purchases for tax management strategies
- Evaluate the tax implications of adopting a sod-based rotation system on your overall farm operation

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