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**Part 1: Identifying a Location**

**Slide 4: Opening Discussion:**

What are the steps you would need to take to find new land? Has anyone looked for land in your home countries or here in the US? What did you do?

**Slide 5: Finding Land Overview**

* Select a target location
* Group conversation: where are you interested in finding land?
* Know what you’re looking for
* Sharing: Call on a few participants to ask them to name 1 thing they are looking for in finding land.
* Find out about real estate/rental values
* Identify resources that might provide access to suitable land
* Group conversation: ask people how they might find this information of the above 2 points.
* Develop a plan!

This module will help you develop a plan for finding land based on these things.

*Notes from AFT: Finding land can be challenging! But it is also an adventure. There is great value in networking: Work with friends, organizations and other farmers. Consider different kinds of landowners who might have land available for lease or purchase and what their motivations might be. Maximize search strategies and techniques. Develop a plan!*

*When you are selecting a target location, think about agricultural and business factors that will affect your operation. What are the main types of crops being grown? What are the natural resource conditions? What kind of transportation infrastructure is available? What are the market opportunities in and demographics of the places you are looking at?*

*Highlight stories and examples of ways that the BFRs you work with have located land.*

**Slide 6: How to Choose a Target Location**

**Discussion:**

* What do you think the local agricultural and business conditions are here? What does that mean?
* Do you think the community you are in is “farm friendly?” Why or why not? Do you know any communities that are farm friendly? What makes you think that?

*It is good to find out if the community is “farm friendly” Think about your quality of life as well as the needs of your business.*

**Slide 7: Know the Local Regulations**

Trainers should update this slide with local information on regulations and be ready to explain the meaning of the photos.

*Trainer notes:*

*In our local area, for example, Ada County has much more relaxed regulations surrounding farming than unincorporated Ada County, with Ada being much easier for farming. Hoop houses are allowed without a permit in Ada County, while Boise City requires building permits for structures over 200 sq ft and will not permit a hoophouse. Boise city has stricter and sometimes confusing regulations about the number of livestock permitted. In our area, neighborhoods in the city and county can look very similar but have very different policies in place, so it’s important to identify these specific boundaries.*

**Slide 8: Personal and Business Goals**

**Discussion:** Ask group to share examples of their personal and/or business goals.

Example personal and business goals include:

* Rural vs urban locations
* Commuting time
* Farming activities (ex: vegetables or livestock)
* Distance to market
* Working the land with family members
* Interest in renting or buying
* etc.

*LP1 discussed business and personal goals, lifestyle goals, rural vs. urban locations, commuting to farmland, distance to markets, etc.*

**Slides 9 and 10: Things to Know!**

*Trainer notes: Refugee growers are mostly likely to look for land close to where they already live and be familiar with the local farming scene. Here in Idaho, elevation, soil type, and growing season can change pretty quickly within a small geographic area, and even for urban ag within Boise, there are neighborhoods whose soil types are significantly better. So, it’s good to know this info for your local area.*

*AFT notes: These factors may or may not have already been considered in developing their personal, financial, business goals. They should be prepared to view these at a variety of scales and continue to reevaluate as they narrow the search or are unsuccessful in a particular location.*

*Those with land in the family may already feel committed to a parcel but should consider other land if family land doesn’t meet their needs.*

*Remind them we will get more specific in LP5- Site Assessment.*

**Slide 11: Climate/Growing Conditions**

*Trainer notes:*

*Pretty graphic provided by AFT. Only really relevant if growers are exploring moving to a different area altogether.*

*USDA Agricultural Research Service Plant Hardiness Zone Map*

[*http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/*](http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/)

*This web page provides information about plant hardiness zones nationwide. The interactive maps enables users to find their own plant hardiness zone.*

**Slide 12-13: Census**

Trainer should update slide 13 for their state and local information.

*Trainer Notes: AFT provided some census of ag info. I chose a few data points that I thought would be interesting to the farmers, listed here. Update with local info. Trainers could further explore this website with individual farmers working on their land search.*

*AFT notes: The Census of Agriculture provides a wealth of information about farms and farmers. The Census of agriculture is available online at: https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/*

*2012 Census of Agriculture Highlights: https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Online\_Resources/Highlights/*

*State Information: https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Full\_Report/Census\_by\_State/*

*County Information:* [*https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Full\_Report/Volume\_1,\_Chapter\_2\_County\_Level/*](https://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_2_County_Level/)

**Slide 14: Websites can tell you about Land Prices**

Share a few websites farmers can use to look at land prices. Share that you will be exploring these websites in the following activity.

*Trainer notes:*

*AFT gives a lot of information on how to find out about land prices in different geographic areas. Most refugees won’t be considering moving to a different state or area to farm. This graphic from* [*https://www.nass.usda.gov/Charts\_and\_Maps/Land\_Values/*](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Charts_and_Maps/Land_Values/) *briefly shows that land prices are different in different places, and that web resources can help people find out about this. If an individual is more interested, trainers can access the resources in the AFT notes below. This map shows prices of land for sale (not lease prices).*

*AFT notes:*

*For state and county averages:*

*Land Values 2017 Summary, USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, 2017*

[*https://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1446*](https://usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/viewDocumentInfo.do?documentID=1446)

*This report summarizes information from the annual June Area Survey, which collects data on crop acreage, land use, grain stocks, farms, rents, and the value of land and sales. NASS estimates national*

*and state agricultural land values and rental rates paid by producers (cash rents) from that survey.*

*Information about land values in chart and map format is posted at:* [*https://www.nass.usda.gov/Charts\_and\_Maps/Land\_Values/*](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Charts_and_Maps/Land_Values/)*.*

*For more drilled down information:*

*Real Estate Listing Services There are many online real estate listing services under the umbrella of the National Multiple Listing Service (MLS). These services provide a listing of homes, farms and land available for sale or rent plus information on demographics, average sale prices, trends, tax rates, and community services. http://www.mls.com/*

*Check in with the local assessors and real estate agents and others in the community.*

**Part 2: Finding Land Strategies**

**Slide 16: How can I find land to rent or buy?**

**Discussion:** Ask participants how they might find out about land to rent or buy.

Possibilities:

* Word of mouth – Talk to people you know (especially other farmers or landowners)
* Real estate agents
* Online resources like Craigslist or FarmLink programs
* Community networks
* Agricultural or Conservation Agents (Extension)
* For Rent signs
* Find land, identify the owner, and ask them.

*Trainer notes:*

*Point out that lease values may or may not be related to how much the land would cost if it were sold, since landlord motivations vary a lot and lease prices vary a lot from location to location. Many growers in our area pay relatively low rent on farmland even though that same land would be really expensive to purchase. Many Global Gardens farmers borrow land for free from churches and other landowners, or pay only the cost of water and other amenities.*

*AFT notes:*

*There are lots of ways to find land, but it’s not always easy. Think of it as a journey and consider both usual and unusual Lots of possibilities – maybe some that you have not considered. For example, many states have land trusts and farmland protection programs that have permanently protected land for agriculture and may be looking for new owners or tenants to keep that land in production.*

*NYFC guide on working with land trusts:* [*http://www.youngfarmers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/NYFC-Finding-Affordable-Farmland.pdf*](http://www.youngfarmers.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/NYFC-Finding-Affordable-Farmland.pdf)

*Public sector landowners may make land available – from federal grazing land to state and local governments, park departments, military bases*

*The National Ag Statistics Service publishes a Cash Rents Report by region. You also can search for cash rents using the NASS Quick Stats tool: https://www.nass.usda.gov/Quick\_Stats/*

*Cash Rent Survey Web Page, National Agricultural Statistics Service: https://www.nass.usda.gov/Surveys/Guide\_to\_NASS\_Surveys/Cash\_Rents\_by\_County/ provides data about cash rents by county. The Cash Rents Survey provides the basis for county estimates of the cash rent paid for irrigated cropland, non-irrigated cropland, and pasture. NASS conducts the county-level Cash Rents survey every other year in all states except Alaska. U.S. and state estimates are released in August every year using the June Area Survey.*

*State Cooperative Extension offices often publish regional reports for various farm enterprises which include rental rates.*

*For example: Iowa Flex Lease Calculator:* [*https://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/html/c2-21.html*](https://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/html/c2-21.html)

*We go into more depth on finding out about rental rates in LP 6.*

*The key point is that figuring out a good rental rate is tricky and can vary a lot based on the type of lease. While the marketplace plays an important role, so does your relationship with the landowner whose motivations are not always financial. Often it is easier to find out about rental rates in parts of the country where a lot of farmland is rented, like the Midwest. In areas where rental rates are not published on a regular basis, word of mouth becomes an especially important source of information.*

**17: Who owns land?**

* Farmers and homeowners
* Cities, states and the federal government
* Institutions like churches and schools

*Trainer notes:*

*These are the kinds of landowners we usually end up leasing from. The AFT gives a much more detailed description of who landowners are.*

*AFT notes:*

*The USDA Farmland Ownership, Tenure and Transfer (TOTAL) report describes three types of landowners: “owner-operator” refers to agricultural landowners who operate some or all of the land they own. Second, the phrase “operator landlord” describes farm operators who rent a portion of the land they own to other farm operators. A given farm operator who rents out land is both an owner-operator and an operator landlord. “Non-operator landlord” describes landlords that own and rent out agricultural land but are not actively involved in farming. In addition, the term “operator landowner” is used to collectively describe both owner-operators and operator landlords, or the land owned by them. https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/74672/60298\_eib161.pdf?v=42607*

*Whether you are looking to rent or buy land, you can find it from many different kinds of landowners. So it is good to think broadly about who might have land available and to understand the different types of people or entities you may be negotiating with. They will have different motivations for making land available to you. These usually are financial, but money may not be the driving force. Some may have a public purpose to fulfill and others may just want to see their land put to good use.*

*When we think about these, we often think about people who have a direct relationship to agriculture – including retired farmers or families who may be nonoperators as well as operators – vs. those who don’t. Those who don’t have a harder time understanding what’s involved with farming or ranching.*

*Still, it helps to think about Government agencies (federal, state or local), utility companies, religious institutions, civic groups, conservation organizations like land trusts and Native American Tribes as they all may have suitable land. But it can be a challenge to know what’s available.*

*Many farmers and ranchers lease or buy land from each other. But there are many non-operator landowners as well – ranging from individuals to business entities to conservation organizations like land trusts. Governments and government agencies also own a lot of land. So keep your options open and don’t limit your search just to farmer and ranchers.*

**18: Why do Landowners Lease Their Land?**

* To earn money
* Help maintaining property
* Tax savings
* To help farmers and support local food production
* To care for the environment

*AFT notes:*

*Let’s explore in a little more detail what some of their motivations might be. This affects how you might approach them to rent or purchase their land, or even to barter for a lease. For example, a retired landowner who wants to see their land stay in agriculture, but does not have an identified heir to take over their operation, may be willing to help you with more than a lease to get started.*

*ALSO The type of owner and their interests/motivation will also influence lease or sales terms, length of and complexity of the process, methods to advertise properties for sale/leased.*

**Slide 19: How can I find Land near me?**

Ask participants if they have ever used Google Maps. For what purposes? Using the image in the slide, show how they might use Google maps to find open land.

*Trainer notes: This is a strategy I often suggest for refugee growers, and a strategy we’ve used to identify incubator farm sites. Determine the geographic area you prefer, usually close to home to minimize driving. Notice a piece of farmland that seems unused and suitable for farming, or use Google Maps to find parcels of undeveloped land. Use the tax assessor website to determine who owns the land, and contact them about whether they’d be interested in a lease agreement.*

**Slide 20: I see some land I like. Who owns it?**

Go to tax assessment website to find out.

Link to local tax assessment website(s). Trainer note: for some locations there might be more than one website--one for county and one for city.

**Slide 21: Find lease or sale ads online**

Enter on this slide a list of local websites for your area.

*AFT notes:*

*Outside of farm country most real estate agents lack knowledge about agriculture, so be specific on your needs. Use the online MLS site features to customize your search, then cross reference with other information such as soils, climate.*

**Slide 22: What is FarmLink?**

*Trainer notes:*

*If available, find the FarmLink website in your state. Idaho’s FarmLink lets land seekers advertise what they are looking for and landowners advertise the land they have available. Full contact info isn’t given nor is specific location, so some information is missing but interested parties can contact each other through this website. Land seekers can consider posting a land seeker ad with their land criteria. Trainers will want to make sure that someone is checking the site or the associated email address regularly, as many refugee farmers don’t email on a regular basis so it would be easy to miss messages.*

*AFT notes:*

*FarmLink (LandLink) programs connect land seekers with landowners. Most include a listing service; some include a matching service as well.*

[*http://landforgood.org/resources/faqs/farm-link-programs/*](http://landforgood.org/resources/faqs/farm-link-programs/)

*For a list of FarmLink programs:*

[*http://www.farmlandinfo.org/special-collections/4439*](http://www.farmlandinfo.org/special-collections/4439)

**Part 3: Let’s make a plan and find some land!**

For the next Activity in our module, we are going to practice connecting to some of these sites and provide a demonstration