

Student Workbook

What is a Farming System?

Just for fun, let's pretend that all of you live in the town of Tasmania, which is a very small town in a poor third-world country. The town receives most all of its income from farming and livestock production. The main agricultural crop grown is wheat, and cattle, sheep and goats are used to graze areas of grassland that have not yet been converted to farm land. Farmers in Tasmania have access to a very small amount of irrigation water when the nearby river is flowing; other than that they must rely solely upon natural rainfall. When the wheat is harvested, farmers must use oxen to haul the crop to a town 15 miles away so that it can be sold.

What are some of the components of the Tasmania farming system that you saw in the activity?

What other components of this farming system were not mentioned in the role playing that you can think of?

Definitions of farming systems:

Farming systems relates to the whole farm rather than individual elements of the farm. The farming system is driven more by overall

farming household welfare than yield and profitability goals. Farming systems are closely linked with livelihoods, as agriculture remains the single most important component of rural people's living (NRI.org, 2004).

Farming systems are a complex combination of inputs, managed by farming families, influenced by environmental, political, economic, institutional, and social factors (NRI.org, 2004).

Basically, a farming systems is the complex combination of all of the factors that influence the farm and the family.

What are some of the constraints of the farming system?

If you had the power to eliminate three of the above constraints of this

farming system, which three would you eliminate and how?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

How would you eliminate constraint #1?

How would you eliminate constraint #2?

How would you eliminate constraint #3?

What might be the intended and unintended consequences of eliminating these constraints?
