

An Analytical Review of State and Regional Strategic Agriculture Plans

Overview of Strategic Planning

Healthy industries require constant attention and nurturing. A strategic plan helps to lay out a blueprint for desired change within an industry or organization. Strategic planning within an industry context is a process by which firms and organizations can strategically plan regarding certain coordinated actions to improve industry competitiveness, performance and economic viability. A common approach is for representatives from firms, industry organizations, and other interested groups to meet together periodically in a leadership roundtable format to synergistically discuss overall strategies and to set the stage for the future success of the industry. Key to expected outputs from this process is a set of prioritized strategies or action alternatives where industry action can help improve performance.

Industry strategic planning is focused on five questions. These questions appear deceptively simple, but within a complex global environment answering them requires considerable thought, commitment and communication among industry participants.

- Who should be involved in the effort?
- What do we want to do?
- What is the current environment—internal and external—that we face?
- Where should we put our efforts, and why?
- How do we implement the plan and measure our progress?

Basic Analytical Framework: Elements of strategic planning and coordination

Strategic planning consists of developing a strategy, implementing the chosen strategy, controlling the outcomes of the strategy implementation, and adjusting the chosen strategy over time as conditions change. Strategic planning involves the articulation of an overall vision, identification of stakeholders, selection of goals and objectives; analysis of both the external and internal environment, and crafting of the best strategies for the industry in its current environment (Table 1).

No strategic planning effort is complete when the document is drafted. The difficult work of implementation involves designing the organizational structures and procedures needed for the selected strategies, directing the resources needed to put the chosen strategies into action, and establishing benchmarks and evaluation procedures for progress. Finally, evaluation of the strategic plan involves comparing actual results with goals and objectives, monitoring the external environment, and modifying the plan as needed to meet goals and objectives.

Table 1. Basic Elements of Strategic Planning and Coordination

<u>Strategic planning</u>
Identification of stakeholders
Development of vision and mission and goals and objectives
Analysis of external and internal environment
Crafting strategy—strategies and actions
<u>Implementation of strategic plan</u>
Organizing and directing resources to specific work programs
Establishing a timeline
Setting benchmarks and evaluation procedures
<u>Evaluation of strategic plan</u>
Marking progress and review
Monitoring external changes

Source: After Olson, 2001 and Porter, 1994.

Strategic Planning in Agriculture—Recent Examples

Recent strategic plans in agriculture have been reviewed for this report. Strategic agriculture planning has been oriented toward two separate but similar tracks: strategic planning as a state department of agriculture; and strategic planning for agriculture. Several states¹ have conducted strategic agriculture plans through the lens of their own state departments of agriculture. For many states (typified here by New Jersey and Oregon), strategic planning undertaken by state departments of agriculture view the agency's program and service delivery as inextricably linked with strategic direction of the state's food and agriculture industry. Thus, for example, Oregon Department of Agriculture's destination is viewed as the economic future for Oregon agriculture. Strategic planning within the agency is broadly consistent with strategic agriculture planning.

In contrast to those state departments of agriculture that have established strategic plans for their respective interest or for the good of the whole agriculture industry, other states have chosen a more unified focus in strategic agriculture planning. Most of the recent strategic agriculture plans reviewed here are within this category.² Such plans are largely organized around broad themes and overarching strategies that can help advance all of the agricultural producers, processors, supporting agribusinesses, and (for most plans) its rural dependent communities.

Review of Recent Strategic Agriculture Plans

- Vision for Illinois Agriculture. Illinois Farm Bureau. April 2008
- Possibilities Unbound: The Plan for 2025 Indiana Agriculture's Strategic Plan. Indiana State Department of Agriculture. 2005
- A Vision for Agriculture and Rural Iowa in 2015. Iowa AgSTATE. December 2005
- A Pathway for Kentucky's Agriculture and its Rural Communities: 2007 to 2012 Strategic Plan. Kentucky Agricultural Council: Task Force on the Future of Agriculture. December 2007
- A Statewide Plan for Agricultural Policy and Resource Management. Maryland Agricultural Commission, June 2006.
- Strategic Plan, New Jersey Department of Agriculture, New Jersey Department of Agriculture, December 2004.
- Ohio Agricultural Roadmap: Establishing a 25-year Vision for Ohio's Agbioresource Sector. Ohio Farm Bureau Federation. September 2005
- Strategic Roadmap 2005. Oregon Department of Agriculture.
- Future of Farming and Rural Life in Wisconsin. 2007. Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts and Letters, August 2007.

Process of Planning

Strategic planners, business managers, and community developers underscore the importance of the planning process in strategic planning. In many ways, the process matters as much as the content of the strategic plan. For a number of states, the strategic planning effort emerged from a

¹ An electronic mail survey of state agriculture departments was conducted with the majority of states indicating that the extent of strategic planning was within the confines of the agency.

² Besides Washington State, California (AgVision) and Colorado (future of agriculture) are currently in the midst of statewide strategic planning for agriculture.

directive issued by the State Legislature and/or Governor. In most cases, the state department of agriculture was the lead organization or sponsor that convened a steering committee to oversee the strategic planning process. Besides the state department of agriculture, the composition of the steering committee generally included members from farmer representative organizations (such as the farm bureau), agribusiness concerns, and government agencies and universities. Other groups and people were involved in the planning process through roundtable meetings, focus group sessions, and public gatherings. In many cases, strategic planning efforts in agriculture became springboards for mobilizing its constituencies and leadership for action. Most strategic planning processes took place over a six to twelve month timeframe.

Rationale for Planning

Critical forces...restructuring industry...long-term trends and changes...increasing competition...globalization...sustainable development...preparing for the future—these are the typical phrases surrounding the impetus for strategic agricultural planning.

Strategic Planning Elements

The strategic agriculture planning efforts reviewed here by and large include each of the key elements—identification of stakeholders, development of vision/mission and goals/strategies, analysis of external and internal environment faced by the food and agriculture industry, and crafting a formal strategic plan.

Any strategic planning process requires a full understanding of the current situation and operating environment. Strategic plans in Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, and Kentucky for instance conducted comprehensive economic reviews of agriculture in their respective states. Such reviews helped set the stage for crafting focus strategies. Furthermore, these comprehensive analyses formed the basis for selecting measures that provide benchmarks to chart progress for the plan.

Each of the strategic planning efforts had a vision statement that underscored how they envisioned the future for agriculture. In most cases, the vision was distilled into short, pithy statements as:

“To develop the conditions that will enable our agricultural sector and our rural communities to prosper.” Kentucky Agricultural Council

“To be the global center for food and agricultural innovation and commercialization.” Indiana State Department of Agriculture

“To be a global leader of profitable food and agricultural production.” Illinois Agriculture Vision, Illinois Farm Bureau

Such visions propelled each of these strategic planning processes into crafting a strategic plan with overarching goals, focused strategies, and actionable activities connected to each strategy. Most plans had five to seven strategies touching on all aspects of the food and agriculture industry and its rural context; common themes ranged from farm land preservation (in urbanizing states as Maryland and New Jersey), workforce development and education, and regulatory

concerns to business environment, market development, innovation and university-driven research, and rural community viability.

A list of action steps or activities accompanied each strategy. In many cases, the “who” was to do “what” was explicitly stated, helping to ensure a level of continued responsibility and ownership for the collaborative effort.

Implementation and Evaluation

Creating the plan—while requiring a huge effort and commitment—is only a start. Plans require implementation; otherwise they become meaningless collectors of dust on the shelves of administrators. Most of the plans reviewed have implementation strategies in place with specific programmatic directives, timelines with target dates, and tangible measures to evaluate progress. Some strategic planning efforts are less explicit than others. For instance, Iowa AgSTATE’s vision for agriculture and rural Iowa has all the elements of a strategic plan but provides little directives beyond its action statements. No timetable or evaluative measures were issued in the plan. Illinois and Wisconsin strategic planning efforts are similar in scope—detailed in strategic development but sparse on implementation and evaluation.

In contrast, Kentucky, Indiana and Ohio view their strategic plans as “living documents.” Each state has implementation plans and evaluative measures in place to measure progress in their strategic agriculture planning efforts. Of the three, Kentucky has the most detailed and aggressive implementation plan in place; for instance, timelines for achieving a majority of goals and actions require effort in 2008, 2009 and 2010 in order to meet the benchmarks that have been set.

Table 2a: Strategic Agriculture Plans of Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa

Strategic Agriculture Plan	Illinois	Indiana	Iowa
Plan	Vision for Illinois Agriculture	Possibilities Unbound--The Plan for 2025: Indiana Agriculture's Strategic Plan	Vision for Agriculture and Rural Iowa in 2015
Principal author/sponsor	Illinois Farm Bureau/Illinois Agriculture Legislative Roundtable	Indiana State Dept. of Agriculture	Iowa AgSTATE (Agricultural Thinkers Acting Together Strategically)
Date of report	April 2008	June 2005	December 2005
Website/Weblink	www.illinoisagriculturevision.org	www.in.gov/isda	www.econ.iastate.edu/outreach/agriculture/agstate/
Stakeholder groups	Illinois Dept. of Agriculture, Illinois Farm Bureau, Univ. of Illinois, other food & ag organizations	Indiana Dept. of Agriculture, Agricultural Advisory Board, Purdue University, other food & ag organizations	Iowa Dept of Agriculture, Agribusiness Assoc. of Iowa, Iowa Farm Bureau, Iowa Dept. of Economic Development, Iowa State University, other food & ag organizations
Plan mission/purpose	Illinois to be global leader of profitable food and agricultural production	Indiana will be the global center for food and agricultural innovation and commercialization	To empower Iowans to lead the world in responsibly produced food and agricultural products to not only meet, but exceed the demands of our customers; dedicated to identifying challenges and opportunities in Iowa agriculture, then recommending changes to help state achieve greatest benefit
Brief synopsis	Overall intent of this industry-wide effort is to build upon the inherent strengths and to increase the competitiveness of Illinois food and agriculture within the global marketplace	Several critical forces are at work today that are fundamentally restructuring the food and agriculture system. The traditional system has served Indiana well in the past. It is now the state's responsibility to reappraise and reinvent that foundation to meet the needs of Indiana agriculture and help guide agriculture well into the future.	Identify ways to capitalize on Iowa's tremendous ability to produce commodity crops and livestock, while identifying ways for smaller, more specialized agriculture operations to thrive
Broad policy goals	Grow agricultural production and exports to top three ranking in the US through the growth of both commodity and value-added production; enable food manufacturing growth to top three ranking in US; and lead US as alternative bio-based outcomes leader through adoption of new technologies.	Current strength in the production of traditional crop and livestock commodities as well as hardwoods needs to be maintained; more importantly, this strength is to be utilized to advance new market developments and research and development opportunities.	Goals center around several themes, namely: a new attitude, producer profile, agriculture business, a clean environment, technology & infrastructure, quality of life, and public policy

Table 2a: Strategic Agriculture Plans of Illinois, Indiana, and Iowa (continued)

Strategic Agriculture Plan	Illinois	Indiana	Iowa
Strategies associated with goals	Attract and train the necessary human and capital resources to support initiatives aimed at growing the food and agriculture industries; Create a favorable business environment to nurture economic development in the state; Improve community viability; Advance intellectual and innovation resources; Act as a catalyst in forming strategic partnerships aimed at growing and sustaining the food and agriculture industries	Increase cost competitiveness of Indiana's hardwood products; maximize Indiana's competitive advantage in ag-derived energy; ensure that agricultural regulatory standards are science-based; double hog production by adopting breakthrough technologies; lead nation in identifying diversification strategies; incubate innovative food products; and establish a State leadership role in formulating US agricultural and trade policy.	Goals and strategies are essentially synonymous
Actions/methods	High priority actions include assessment of workforce skills for enhanced development; expand leadership programs; develop public/private partnership to promote image of food and agriculture sector in metro regions; provide incentives for innovation in food & ag sector;	Actions include establishing an Ag Advisory Board and Ag Foundation with a \$25 million fund to advance research and outreach efforts; develop marketing plan; develop bioenergy task force; increase pork processing and packing capacity; establish an upstream research team; and develop an Indiana ag trade task force	Listing of detailed action steps under each goal/strategy
Expected outcomes	Growth in ag production and trade; commodity and value-added production to top three ranking in US and leadership in bio-based energy	Measured success based on growth of agriculture and agribusiness economy, its overall share in Indiana, and increase in value-added food mfg.	An agriculture industry and rural Iowa consistent with futuristic vision
Timetable for plan	No timetable provided	Specific annual timetable from 2005 to 2025	2015 is target year, but no timetable
Measures utilized to track progress	No measures provided to track progress or measure success	Measures utilized are jobs and wages in ag production and processing and net farm income and contribution to gross state product	No measures provided to track progress or measure success

Table 2b: Strategic Agriculture Plans of Kentucky, Maryland, and New Jersey

Strategic Agriculture Plan	Kentucky	Maryland	New Jersey
Plan	A Pathway for Kentucky's Agriculture and Rural Communities: 2007 to 2012 Strategic Plan	A Statewide Plan for Agricultural Policy and Resource Management	Strategic Plan
Principal author/sponsor	Kentucky Agriculture Council, Task Force on the Future of Agriculture	American Farmland Trust/Maryland Agricultural Commission	New Jersey Dept of Agriculture
Date of report	December 2007	June 2006	December 2004
Website/Weblink	www.kyagcouncil.org	www.mda.state.md.us	www.nj.gov/agriculture
Stakeholder groups	Kentucky Agriculture Council, Kentucky Dept of Agriculture, University of Kentucky and fifty other food & ag organizations	Maryland Dept. of Agriculture, other food & ag organizations	New Jersey Department of Agriculture and other food & ag organizations
Plan mission/purpose	Increasing the net income of farm households across the Commonwealth in the post-Tobacco Buyout era; strengthening the quality of life in rural communities; and furthering the diversification of the Kentucky farm economy.	Overall purpose of the plan is to enhance, protect, preserve, and sustain the viability and profitability of Maryland's agricultural industry	New Jersey's agricultural and food industry will be productive and profitable while protecting natural resources that sustain it, benefiting the overall environment, and supporting the health and welfare of general public.
Brief synopsis	Establish a consensus agenda that will address ways to help advance all of Kentucky's agricultural producers, processors, supporting agribusinesses, and its rural communities. Given the unique nature of its transition from tobacco, exceptional focus is on the Agricultural Development Fund as a catalyst for change and innovation in Kentucky agriculture.	Future of agriculture in Maryland over the next ten years with particular focus on specific actions that can be undertaken in less than five years. The plan addresses current conditions in agriculture and encourages the next generation of Maryland farmers and promotes their success.	New Jersey Department of Agriculture's mission is inextricably linked with the vision of a productive and profitable food and agricultural industry. The strategic plan is reevaluated every few years to ensure that goals and efforts are in response to changing dynamics in agriculture and overall economy.
Broad policy goals	There are six broad topic areas: Agricultural production and consumer marketing; Agri-energy development; Education; Public awareness and advocacy; Rural communities-quality of life, conservation and leadership development; and Agricultural development fund and supporting governmental actions	The three broad policy goals are: enhance profitability for farming enterprises; ensure an adequate base of agricultural land; and advance research, education, and adequacy of agriculture.	Seven strategic goals include preserve farms and promote viable ag industry; protect and conserve natural resources; protect producers and consumers by ensuring safe, high quality ag products; support and expand innovative ag developments; promote agricultural education and awareness; and enhance well-trained and motivated workforce.

Table 2b: Strategic Agriculture Plans of Kentucky, Maryland, and New Jersey (continued)

Strategic Agriculture Plan	Kentucky	Maryland	New Jersey
Strategies associated with goals	Encourage continued diversification of Kentucky's agricultural product array; develop successful renewable energy industry utilizing agricultural resources; increase scope and depth of K-12 educational curriculum about agriculture; increase professional development opportunities for farmers and ag-related workers; raise level of awareness within public and policy makers of agriculture; and encourage regional agricultural development projects through funding of Agricultural Development Fund.	Specific recommendations and action steps surrounding profitability include improving marketing and access to markets; provide business development assistance; and reduce the tax burden on agriculture. For ensuring an adequate agricultural land base: focus on stabilizing the land base; encourage agricultural stewardship; and strengthen and protect the right-to-farm. Advancing research, education, and the advocacy of agriculture focused on directing university research to enhance viability and support and encourage the next generation of farmers.	Goals and strategies are essentially synonymous in this strategic plan.
Actions/methods	Each goal is linked with a number of action items with benchmarks with directives and a timetable.	Actions include establishing a model agricultural enterprise zone, increase state funding for marketing, create a center for beginning farmers and enterprise development, encourage on-farm and small-scale processing for Maryland products, enact statewide tax relief for agriculture, ensure full funding of Maryland's land protection programs, and increase funding for ag. conservation.	Listing of detailed action steps under each goal/strategy with specific performance measures annually.
Expected outcomes	Desire of the Task Force is strategic plan which will increase net farm income & ensure a sustainable infrastructure on which Kentucky farmers will depend. Only in this way can we provide the incentive for young farmers to remain in agriculture in Kentucky	Commission wants to make the plan's vision a reality. Request for Governor to appoint an Implementation Committee to review key recommendations and identify priority areas for action as funding, legislative/policy, marketing/promotion, and university research and education.	An agriculture industry and rural Iowa consistent with futuristic vision
Timetable for plan	Specific timetable from 2007 to 2012	No specific timetable given in plan other than finding doable tasks within the next five years.	Biennial plan: 2004-2006
Measures utilized to track progress	Annual report card in place to measure progress	No measures provided to track progress or measure success.	Performance measures tied to each goal/action to help ensure success of plan.

Table 2c: Strategic Agriculture Plans of Ohio, Oregon, and Wisconsin

Strategic Agriculture Plan	Ohio	Oregon	Wisconsin
Plan	Ohio Agricultural Roadmap: Establishing a 25-year Vision for Ohio's Agbioresource Sector	Strategic Roadmap 2005	Future of Farming and Rural Life in Wisconsin: 2007
Principal author/sponsor	Ohio Farm Bureau Federation	Oregon Department of Agriculture	Wisconsin Academy of Arts, Letters & Sciences
Date of report	September 2005	2005	August 2007
Website/Weblink	www.ofbf.org	www.oregon.gov/oda	www.wisconsinacademy.org
Stakeholder groups	Plan was collaborative partnership with Ohio's agricultural producers, farmer representative organizations, agribusiness, Ohio General Assembly, Ohio government agencies, and universities.	Oregon Department of Agriculture with advisory panel, State Board of Agriculture	Numerous academic, non-profit organizations, state agencies, and agriculture and food enterprises in Wisconsin
Plan mission/purpose	The vision statement for the strategic plan is set in 2030 with the "agbioresource industry's ability to enhance the health, the environment and the economic well-being of Ohio's citizens through leveraged diversity, flexibility and a positive business climate. A vital part of Ohio communities, the agbioresource industry is embraced for its positive contributions to local concerns and recognized globally for its quality and cutting-edge products.	ODA has a three-fold mission, namely promoting and developing the economic viability of agriculture; protecting Oregon's agricultural natural resources for present and future generations; and ensuring Oregonians receive quality food products that are safe and wholesome	Public policy program whose goal is to bring together Wisconsin residents with experts and diverse set of stakeholders to explore the state's potential for economic and sustainable growth through agriculture.
Brief synopsis	Opportunity for the industry to critically evaluate Ohio agriculture's opportunities and challenges for the next 25 years, to determine a desired future as an agbioresource sector, to identify obstacles that might hinder attainment of this desired future, and to lay out a roadmap that leads to the desired future	The strategic road map implies that ODA's destination includes an economic future for Oregon agriculture, a sustainable natural resource system that protects those key ingredients for a sound agricultural economy, and a food supply that maintains its integrity with all consumers of Oregon products	Examines current status and trends in agriculture and rural life, explores constraints and opportunities, and develop specific action and policy recommendations leading to a more sustainable, diverse, and economically viable future for Wisconsin's agriculture sector and rural communities.

Table 2c: Strategic Agriculture Plans of Ohio, Oregon, and Wisconsin (continued)

Strategic Agriculture Plan	Ohio	Oregon	Wisconsin
Broad policy goals	The specific goals of the project were: identify and evaluate Ohio's unique strengths in a global economy; identify the drivers of change impacting Ohio agriculture's present and long-term future; develop a unified 25-year strategic roadmap; identify contributors to an Ohio business climate for continued success of the agricultural industry; prepare Ohio agriculture to meet change; and strengthen the connection between consumers and the agricultural industry.	Key strategies listed in the roadmap include: helping agriculture succeed economically; helping agriculture succeed environmentally; responding to pests, diseases and other threats to agriculture; ensuring safe food and protecting Oregon consumers; making it easier to do business with ODA; and serving the regulated community.	Four broad policy themes are covered in the report: community life; food systems; land use and conservation; and production agriculture and forestry.
Strategies associated with goals	Key issues and actions are grouped under seven themes: a changing perspective; building on Ohio agbioresource's strengths; connecting with the consumer; improving Ohio's business climate; working with government; benefiting from education, research and technology; and enhancing our environment and natural resources.	Goals and strategies are essentially synonymous in this strategic plan. For each of these core strategies, ODA presents current activities and guiding principles, strategic priorities and new initiatives, and measurements for progress.	Under community life are health care, education, government; food systems include innovation; land use and conservation include working lands preservation, sharpening existing land use tools, protecting precious resources; and production agriculture/forestry include helping mid-size farms, rural labor, federal policy, and regulations.
Actions/methods	Each goal is linked with a number of action items with benchmarks with directives and a timetable.	Listing of detailed actions under each goal/strategy.	Listing of detailed action steps under each recommendation.
Expected outcomes	A healthy, vibrant food and agriculture industry that benefits all Ohio citizens.	ODA's destination includes an economic future for Oregon agriculture, a sustainable natural resource system that protects those key ingredients for a sound agricultural economy, and a food supply that maintains its integrity with all consumers of Oregon products.	A viable and sustainable agriculture and rural life in Wisconsin.
Timetable for plan	Timetable from 2005 to 2030, but no specifics	No specific timetable given in plan.	No specific timetable given in plan.
Measures utilized to track progress	No specific measures in place to track progress and measure success	No measures provided to track progress or measure success.	No measures provided to track progress or measure success.