

“The Family Farmer” Digital Game - Student Activity

(<http://thefamilyfarmer.com/>)

Introduction

The Family Farmer is an interactive documentary game accompanying the feature length film The Family Farm. The game challenges visitors to create and manage their own virtual farm, raising awareness to the large and small issues specific to family farms, of which there are fewer and fewer in Canada. The game presents the daily reality of farmers by addressing topics such as crop selection, pollution, financing and food distribution in a fun and simple interface. (from The Family Farmer website)



Before the Game – Minds On

As a class discuss the any or all of the following:

1. Have you ever lived on or visited a farm? If so, describe the farm and your experience.
2. What is a “family farm”? What is a “corporate farm”?
3. What is a Farmers’ Market? Have you ever visited a Farmers’ Market? Why do Farmers’ Markets exist?
4. Does anyone want to become a farmer? Why or why not? What questions do you have about this profession?

Using your money wisely is a key part of The Family Farmer game. Before you start the game, it is helpful to understand some key financial terms. Using your own knowledge and the internet, define the following key words (hint - these words are mostly money-related):

Key Words	Definitions
Capital	
Mortgage	

Key Words	Definitions (continued)
Invest	
Debt	
Tax incentive	
Grant	
Down payment	

During the Game - Action

Feel free to play through the game more than once to try different approaches and to complete all of the questions below. Go to <http://thefamilyfarmer.com/> and follow the on-screen prompts to begin the game. Make sure to read about whatever options you have available to you. Knowing your options might affect your choice.

Age

1. What was the average age of farmers 20 years ago? _____
2. What is the average age of farmers today? _____
3. Why do you think the average age of farmers is increasing?

Did You Know?

4. In addition to farming, what are some of the other roles family farmers take on?

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Choosing a Fertilizer

5. Select the “Read More” options for both the Organic and Mineral/Synthetic fertilizers. Using your own knowledge and/or the internet, define the following key words:

Key Word(s)	Definition
Fertilizer	
Organic fertilizer	
Mineral and synthetic fertilizers	

6. Which fertilizer option did you choose? _____

7. Why did you make this choice?

Trout Stream

8. What choice did you make to try to help the fish return to your stream?

Remaining 3 Acres of Land

9. What did you decide to plant on your remaining acres of land? _____

10. What is the advantage and/or disadvantage of the crop you chose?

Select the "Learn More" tab and watch the short video.

Where to Sell your Produce

11. Where did you decide to sell your produce? _____

12. What is the advantage and/or disadvantage of your choice?

If applicable, select the "Learn More" tab and watch the short video.

To Sell or Not...

13. Did you decide to sell your farm or not? _____

14. What were the results of your decision?

Family Vacation

15. Where did you decide to go for your family vacation? _____

16. How important was money for you in making this decision? Explain.

Renewable Energy

17. Use your own knowledge or the internet to define the “renewable energy”:

18. Based on your choice, complete the table below:

Energy Source	Definition	Pros	Cons

The Final Spins

19. Briefly describe one other challenge you faced in trying to complete the final spins of the game. How did you handle the challenge?

Final Score

Sustainability (low, medium, high)	Happiness (low, medium, high)	Bank Account (coins out of 4)	Workload (Xs out of 4)

After the Game - Consolidation and Connection

As a class or in small groups discuss any or all of the following:

1. Near the start of the game it was stated that a family farmer must also take on the role of a financial manager. What challenges did you come up against that stretched your budget?
2. How successful were you in managing your money throughout the game? Explain.
3. Compared to a typical corporate farm, what are some of the advantages of a family farm? Disadvantages?
4. How might family farms serve to strengthen local communities?
5. What are some things we can do to support family farms?
6. Go to <http://goo.gl/fcvlyP> and search for Farmers' Markets in your area (you can search by city or postal code). Explore the other regions in Ontario (North, Central, East, West). In terms of the number of farmers' market available, how does the North region differ from the other 3 regions? Why do you think this is?
7. How do Farmers' Markets connect us to family farmers?
8. After playing the game have you changed your mind at all about becoming a farmer or not? Explain.
9. Give the game a score for the following:
 - Educational value: 1 2 3 4 5 Explain your score.
 - Game value: 1 2 3 4 5 Explain your score.
10. What changes would you recommend for the game?