



Chapter 1

Business Management

Decision Making

Prior to planting, the strawberry grower must make some major decisions as to the site, soil type, cultivar, acres to be planted, plant spacing, equipment, marketing, and long-term dollar investment. These decisions will have a lasting effect on his or her success in later years. The return on investment will depend on management of the planting.

The relative efficiency of farm size should be considered. Small plantings of two to three acres are suggested for getting started. If certain annual crops are already being produced, your present equipment may be adaptable to strawberry production without additional expense.

Larger plantings may require an investment in specialized equipment, such as planters and irrigation. Large acreages, however, require more hired labor and supervision. Commitments to other crops and development of markets are important considerations for scheduling your time and investment.

Limiting Factors

The management of strawberry production does have limiting factors in terms of climate, site, soil, spacing, cultivar, and money. An operation will proceed at the rate imposed by the most limiting of these factors. The management of weeds, insects, diseases, irrigation, and fertilizer is not fixed. These factors can be controlled when timely measures are taken. Many useful guides, such as spray bulletins, production manuals, economic

reports, and soil and leaf testing, are available to answer management questions. Useful references will be suggested throughout this publication.

Strawberry production, like any complex enterprise, will have problems that require action. A systematic approach to problem solving is preferable to meeting problems haphazardly. Before taking action to correct problems, a grower should consider the possible results of his or her actions. A grower must develop realistic prioritized goals. Look at alternative actions and/or alternative crops as to investment in labor, capital, and land.

Record Keeping

As appropriate software is developed, growers will increasingly turn to the computer for aid in decision-making. Computers are capable of storing accurate and up-to-date weather and financial data. Information, such as temperature, humidity, wind speed, and evaporation, can be automatically accumulated into a computer, and the timely application of pesticides, mulches, and irrigation can be predicted.

Because strawberry production involves a large investment over a long term, more financial record keeping will be essential for grower analysis as well as for a database to obtain a loan from financial institutions. Keep records for each block (unit) of strawberries. A block should be plants of the same age and cultivar. Thus, a 2005 planting of Allstar is a block, and a 2006 Allstar planting is another block.