

10 Steps for Conducting Research on Your Farm or Ranch



Lesson 1 Worksheet

Identify Your Research Question

The full workbook is available online or to order in print at www.sare.org/research-workbook.

ASSIGNMENT

The following questions will help you refine the question that will form the basis of your research project. These assignments are just for you and anyone you choose to share them with, so please complete them as thoughtfully as possible, and don't hesitate to go back and change answers as you work through the lessons. Use the self-evaluation questions in the next section to help make sure you get the most out of this assignment.

1. List a few sources of information about the topics related to your problem or question. Remember, this can include both publications and people—yourself, your neighbors, or others in the farming community. The more, the better! Remember to keep track of these resources for your reference and for citation later on. Your project journal would be a great place for this information.

2. Consider including SARE's database of funded projects (projects.sare.org) in your background research at this time. This is particularly important if you're using this workbook because you plan to apply for a SARE grant. If you find useful information or inspiration, take notes in your project journal. List a few of the relevant project number(s) and title(s) here too, so you can easily reference them again.

3. Summarize what you learned from all the resources you've found that helps you think about potential solutions to your problem. You can be brief here if more detailed notes are in your project journal.

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4. Does the information you found in published or online resources align with your own observations or those of your neighbors? If not, how can this be explained? Note that any differences between your experiences and the generally accepted assumptions could point to an important research question.

5. Do you feel you've identified an area where the available information doesn't adequately answer an important question? Describe this knowledge gap.

6. If you found an answer to your initial question, are there any follow-up questions you could address with your project?

7. Before you move on to Lesson 2, state your research question as clearly as possible. Keep in mind that your project can and will evolve as you move forward.

ASSIGNMENT SELF-EVALUATION

1. Do you feel confident that you have a sense of the state of knowledge surrounding your question?
☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Do you feel there's more you should understand before you move on?
☐ Yes ☐ No