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# FOOD FOR AMERICA

## Presenter's Guide

### An educational program about agriculture for students in grades 1-6

#### The FFA Mission

FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success through agricultural education.

#### The Agricultural Education Mission

The mission of Agricultural Education is to prepare and support individuals for careers, build awareness and develop leadership, for the food, fiber and natural resource systems.



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The National FFA Organization affirms its belief in the value of all human beings and seeks diversity in its membership, leadership and staff as an equal opportunity employer.

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# Introduction

Ask elementary students about agriculture and they'll probably conjure up images of something like "Old MacDonald's Farm." Chances are they don't think about the processing, services, regulation, marketing and many other facets of the industry of agriculture. This lack of knowledge about agriculture has been termed "agricultural illiteracy" by the National Academy of Sciences and is turning into a very real problem.

Food For America, a program of the National FFA Organization, is designed to help you introduce first-through sixth-grade students to the fascinating world of agriculture. The program includes:

- this *Presenter's Guide*,
- a video to introduce elementary students to agriculture and to Food For America;
- a *Teacher's Guide* copy master for the elementary teachers with whom you will be working;
- step-by-step lesson plans to help teachers incorporate the study of agriculture into existing curriculum areas;
- a promotional brochure copy master;
- recognition certificate copy masters.

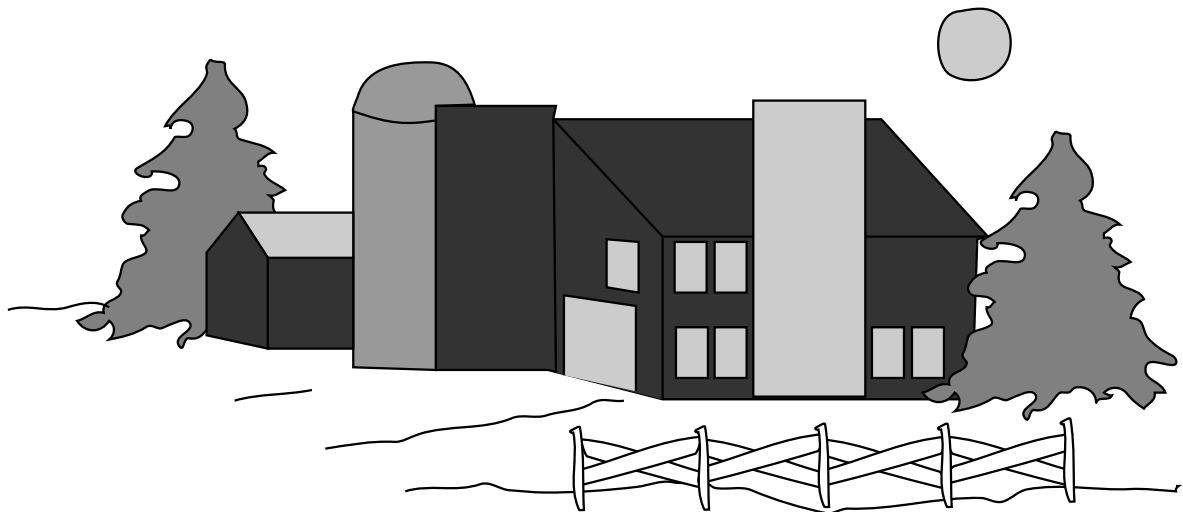
The program is designed to make today's elementary students more aware of the world of agriculture and how it affects their daily lives. One of Food For America's primary objectives is to promote agricultural literacy among today's students. To accomplish this task, agricultural information in this teaching package is integrated into existing curriculum – such subjects as math, social studies and science. Through this interdisciplinary approach, students will learn about crops and livestock, processing and marketing, nutrition and the environment.

Your job is to introduce the program and get the students excited about agriculture. You and your group will visit elementary classrooms and give a 30-45 minute presentation about agriculture. You may be the first people who have ever really talked to the students about this topic. The impression you make will be an important one. This guide will help you prepare for your presentation and tell you what to expect from elementary students.

A group conducts most presentations with each participating member contributing a part to the overall effort. However, a single person can make a presentation. Both group and solo presentations offer advantages, and either can be effective. The key is adequate preparation. Read on to find out how to make a good first impression and successfully introduce the Food For America program.

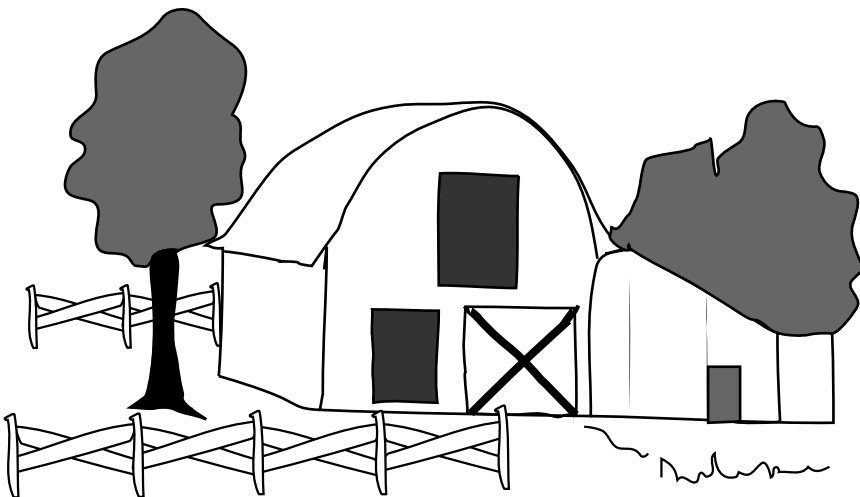


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# Getting Started

The Food For America program gives you a chance to help younger children in your community understand more about agriculture and why it's so important to them. The complete Food For America package has three parts:

- this FFA *Presenter's Guide*, which gives you basic background information;
- a *Teacher's Guide*, which provides step-by-step lessons for students in primary and upper elementary grades, including student Activity Sheets for each lesson;
- a videotape that gives an overview of Food For America and introduces key concepts that will be reinforced in other lessons.

## Why Agriculture?

Why should young people learn about agriculture? Agriculture affects all of us, including elementary students, every day. The food we eat, the clothes we wear, the houses in which we live, even some of the medicines we depend on, are all part of agriculture. With fewer Americans involved in production agriculture than ever before, most young people no longer have relatives who farm and consequently have little opportunity to see production agriculture firsthand.

Furthermore, the study of agriculture provides an excellent opportunity to incorporate environmental education.



People must depend on limited resources to produce the basics of food, clothing and shelter. Through careful stewardship of the land and natural resources farmers are helping to preserve the complex ecosystems that have allowed our society to develop and flourish.

## What's In It for You?

By sharing your knowledge about agriculture, you will help young people understand the world around them. When children are educated about agriculture, they'll be more positive about the industry.

Food For America gives you a chance to use your presentation and people skills. Elementary school students look up to you. They see you as a role model. So when you come into their classroom to talk about agriculture, they'll listen. In a few years, many of them will want to join FFA, too.

Food For America can also help your chapter. Your classroom presentation will generate positive public relations. In fact, your local newspaper or television station may be interested in doing a story on your activities.

## How Food For America Works

Food For America is a two-part program. FFA members visit elementary school classrooms with an exciting lesson that introduces students to basic agricultural concepts. Teachers expand and extend students' understanding of agriculture with lessons and activities taken from the *Teacher's Guide*.

Teachers are more likely to use lessons from the Food For America *Teacher's Guide* if the program that you bring to the school is exciting and innovative. When you visit the classroom, therefore, your role is crucial—you are creating the excitement and interest that will make teachers and students want to use many of the lessons in the *Teacher's Guide*.

## Organizing Your Materials

Protect your originals. The materials in this notebook will serve as your "copy masters" for several years, so you will want to protect them. Never write directly on this master set of materials. When you work with the schools, you will give every teacher the full set of teaching materials. It becomes their lesson plans and textbook as they incorporate lessons about agriculture into their curriculum.

Once you know how many teachers you will be working with, you can begin preparing the instructional materials. Ideally, you should give each teacher a complete set of materials for both grade levels so teachers may choose the activities and Activity Sheets that are best suited for their class. Teachers will be less likely to use the materials if they are poorly photocopied. You may want to have a professional photocopy or print shop help you prepare the *Teacher's Guides*.

Is there a local copy shop or printer who might help? Will a local business sponsor the cost of having the materials professionally reproduced? How about resources available at your school— is there a good photocopier you can use? Whatever method you choose, make sure each set of materials is clean, complete and in order.

#### Create a working notebook.

Make a copy of the originals to create a Food For America working notebook. Your notebook will become the place to store ideas and resource information. You will be able to use it as a reference tool— and your information will be easy to find. Every time you come across a newspaper clipping, teaching idea, informative fact or hands-on activity that might add to Food For America, file it in this working notebook. Also, jot down ideas suggested by elementary teachers to make the program even more meaningful through the years. Write *only* in this notebook.

#### Create a planning notebook.

This notebook will have the details of your chapter's Food For America activities. It will include a section for the names, addresses and phone numbers of principals and teachers you are working with, as well as any notes you make in conversations with them; a list of agricultural producers and agribusiness representatives working with Food For America, as well as a description of how they might contribute; planning materials for large-scale events; and, finally, a record of all the presentations you have made. Anyone who picks up this notebook should be able to see what your chapter has done as well as the planning and resources that went into these activities.

## When to Use Food For America

Food For America can fit into the curriculum throughout the school year. But to make sure that teachers have time to incorporate the lessons from the *Teacher's Guide*, we suggest that you schedule your first visits early in the school year.

Other times teachers might be interested in a Food For America visit include:

- FFA Week;
- Farm-City Week (the week before Thanksgiving);
- Agriculture Week;
- in the spring—this may be an especially good time for an activity like planting a garden.

You may want to consider visiting a school twice. On your first visit, you'll present an exciting introductory lesson about agriculture. Later in the school year, after teachers have had a chance to use some of the lessons with their classes, you can return with a culminating activity. This might even be an event for several classes or the entire school. This would be a perfect time to bring animals and farm machinery for the children to see.



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# Setting Goals

To be successful, your Food For America program needs to be planned well. First, organize the group that will carry out the project. Who will actually be involved in conducting Food For America? Make sure each team member understands the purposes of the program. Next, set some goals. What do *you* hope to accomplish through Food For America? What students do you hope to reach? Is it possible to reach every elementary school in your district or county? Do you want to work with sixth graders, or would you prefer to work with younger students? Is there an urban school that might appreciate or need the information even more than a rural one? You may have to narrow your “target audience” to the number of classes you have the power to reach.

One suggestion is to target one primary grade and one upper elementary grade. For example, you might decide to work with second graders and fourth graders. The principal of an elementary school can probably offer some suggestions about which grades would be especially interested in a presentation. For example, many fourth graders study state history, so a lesson on agriculture in your state would fit in well. Once you have chosen your grade levels, schedule presentations to all classes in those grades.

Make a photocopy of the Goals Worksheet. List all the things you want to accomplish through Food For America. Once you’ve completed your goals planning, be sure to file the worksheet (or at least a copy of it in your Food For America working notebook.)

Once you have established your goals, create a plan for reaching them. Here’s a four-step plan that may help you.

## Step 1. Set your goal

Your goal is to reach students in grades 1-6 with information about agriculture.

## Step 2. Form a Plan

- Contact your school principal to discuss your project and get approval. Ask for a letter of support that your chapter members can take with them.
- Contact the principals of elementary schools in your district. (See the sample letter, page 9.) Ask for their help in introducing Food For America to teachers in their buildings.
- Are there other school, community or agriculture groups that can help? Reach out to involve these organizations.
- Do some research—what do teachers teach about agriculture? What would they like students to learn?

## Step 3. Act

- Chapter members (or others who are participating in the activity) should duplicate the *Teacher’s Guide* for each teacher participating in the project.
- Assemble the materials you’ll need for your presentation.
- Practice your presentation several times before you do it for students.

## Step 4. Follow up

- Agriculture and kids make a newsworthy combination. Let the local press know about Food For America. You’ll find a sample press release on page 19.
- Plan additional awareness activities for your chapter. Write articles for your school newspaper or your local newspaper, conduct a peer education campaign, or develop other activities to promote agricultural literacy.
- Plan follow-up activities with teachers. See pages 14-15 for suggestions. Write thank-you letters to everyone who helped with your Food For America project.



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# Planning Food For America Activities–Goals Worksheet

## Step 1. Set Your Goal

Our goal is to reach students in \_\_\_\_\_ grades with information about agriculture.

## Step 2. Form a Plan

What to do \_\_\_\_\_

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When to do it \_\_\_\_\_

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Person responsible \_\_\_\_\_

## Step 3. Act

What to do \_\_\_\_\_

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When to do it \_\_\_\_\_

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Person responsible \_\_\_\_\_



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## Step 4. Follow up

Things that worked well \_\_\_\_\_  
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Things to change another time \_\_\_\_\_  
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Ways to follow up with other teachers \_\_\_\_\_  
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Sept. 25, 200\_

Dr. Betty Smith, Principal  
Turner West Elementary School  
2407 N. Townsend Ave.  
Anytown, TN 12345

Dear Dr. Smith:

*Thank you for talking with us about the Food For America program. As we told you, Food For America teaches elementary students about agriculture while also helping teachers with existing curriculum in math, science, social studies and language arts.*

*We're enclosing several brochures that provide additional information. We are looking forward to our meeting on Tuesday at 3 p.m. in the Teacher's Lounge at Turner West School. Please give the extra brochures to the second and fourth grade teachers in your school and invite them to attend our meeting. We plan to bring several members of our presentation team.*

*We're looking forward to meeting you and the teachers. If we may provide any further information before our meeting, please call us at 553-1234.*

*Very sincerely yours,*

*LaToya Richardson  
Food For America Chairperson*

*Michael Brown  
FFA Advisor*

## Planning the Presentation

To reach the students you've targeted, you will need to work with their teachers and principals. Starting with your Goals Worksheet, begin contacting the principal at each elementary school with which you would like to work. This call can be made either by the group leader (FFA advisor) or the Food For America committee chair.

1. Call the principal. Call to briefly introduce yourself and Food For America. Then, arrange an appointment to discuss the possibilities for presenting the program in his or her school. In this meeting, encourage the principal to include teachers of your targeted grade level or other teachers who might be interested. Ask the principal how many faculty members might be interested in the program.

2. Write a letter and prepare brochures. Before the meeting, make several copies of the promotional brochure included in these materials. After you've carefully copied, trimmed and folded the brochures, send several to the principal along with a letter confirming your appointment. In the letter, ask the principal to give the extra brochures to the teachers who will be attending your meeting (see sample letter). Include at least as many copies of the brochure as the number of faculty members the principal indicated might be interested in Food For America.

The letter should be signed by the group leader (FFA advisor) or can be co-signed by the group leader and the Food For America committee chairperson. Be sure to mention in your letter the number of people you will be bringing to the meeting. It is wise to have two or three members of the presentation team at this initial meeting.

3. Prepare copies of the *Teacher's Guide*. As the meeting with the principal and



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teachers nears, prepare several copies of the *Teacher's Guide*. Make sure you have enough *Teacher's Guides* to give a copy to each teacher attending your meeting.

## Meeting the Principal and Teachers

Now it's time to launch your Food For America program. When you leave for the elementary school, make sure you take:

- extra copies of the promotional brochure;
- enough copies of the *Teacher's Guide* for the teachers you expect (and at least one extra);
- your Food For America planning notebook;
- photocopied samples of activities and Activity Sheets;
- several members of your presentation team.

The first impression the principal and teachers may have of your organization and the Food For America program could occur at this initial meeting. You can make a solid, professional impression by being on time, dressing neatly and introducing yourself with a smile and a firm handshake.

You asked for this meeting, so lead the discussion. Explain Food For America—what is it and how students can benefit from the program. Teachers are busy with their lesson plans and existing activities. You will need to explain how Food For America can excite students and help them with the subjects they already are teaching— geography, math, social studies, science and language arts.

Give each educator attending a *Teacher's Guide*. Get the principal and teachers excited with sample class room activities and Activity Sheets. To emphasize the depth and soundness of the program, share

several photocopied samples from your Food For America planning notebook. Do not give out originals! Ask for the teachers' input and stress that each program will be developed with individual teachers to best meet the needs of their specific classes.

Hopefully, you will get the "okay" to proceed at this meeting. Sometimes, educators may need time to think it over. If they wish to discuss it further, thank them for their time and follow up with a phone call to see if there is interest. If you've received the go-ahead, schedule another meeting to plan Food For America with the teachers with whom you will be working.

## Working With Students

Elementary school students are active and inquisitive. They respond best to activities that involve them in hands-on tasks. The lesson we have suggested includes many opportunities for students to take an active part in the lesson. Get as many students as possible involved in your presentation— don't just choose whoever has a hand up first.

Keep your presentation fairly brief. Children have short attention spans— the younger the student, the shorter the time you should plan. As a guideline, consider about 30 minutes for grades 1-3 and no more than 45 minutes in grades 4-6. Within that time, change activities as often as you can.

You may feel as though you are repeating yourself, but reiterate key points during the presentation. Children will best remember what they've experienced, seen or heard several times.

The best lessons will involve *active* learning. You might take jars of various crops and by-products from different species of livestock so students can actually see and feel agriculture. You might even demonstrate how to thresh grain from a wheat head or shear a lamb. Ask the teacher for advice on what to do so that all students can have the best experience and yet stay under control.

If you do bring materials to share, make sure you have enough for all students. Hearts will break if two or three students don't have soybean seedlings or certificates to take home to mom and dad.



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## Working With Teachers

Teachers today are extremely busy. They have very little time to add extra subjects to their curriculum. You can provide an invaluable resource to teachers. You know about agriculture. You have access to resources they might not know about. You have the Food For America *Teacher's Guide* to offer them.

When you meet with teachers, give them an idea of what you plan to do in their classroom. Ask for their advice. Will this activity work with their students? Can you make the presentation in the classroom, or do you need to move to another area of the school?

Once you have a date for your presentation, spend time preparing thoroughly. Poor preparation is the fault most often cited by elementary teachers when they evaluate the Food For America program.

You may want to make a special effort to reach special education teachers. The kinds of hands-on activities that you can bring to the classroom are especially appealing to children with disabilities.

## Making the Presentation

Many teachers will want you to teach at least one Food For America lesson in their classroom. FFA students who have done this report that it is a lot of work and a lot of fun.

The key to success is preparation. No matter how much you know about agriculture, if you don't prepare, your presentation will suffer. When you have spent the time needed to prepare your lesson, you will speak with confidence and enthusiasm. Your lesson is almost certain to be a success.

Pages 12-14 include a sample script for what you might say. Use it as a guide, but don't memorize it or—worse yet—read it to students. After you review the script several times, practice your presentation, using only the notes you make of important points.

Before you go into the classroom, you might videotape yourself. Check to see that you are:

- \_\_\_\_\_ speaking slowly, clearly and loudly;
- \_\_\_\_\_ using sincere, enthusiastic body language;
- \_\_\_\_\_ dressed in a way that is appropriate (wearing your FFA jacket);
- \_\_\_\_\_ using only words that elementary school students will understand—or defining new words they might not know;
- \_\_\_\_\_ involving students by asking for their participation, comments and questions;
- \_\_\_\_\_ handling your props with ease.

If you are demonstrating agricultural products to the students, think about how you can make sure students can see and feel them. You might pass samples around. Or, you could set up shallow boxes of samples at children's height.

In some cases, you might expand your demonstration, showing students how to thresh grain from a wheat head or shear a lamb. Ask the teacher how to handle the situation so that all students can see and hear and yet stay under control.

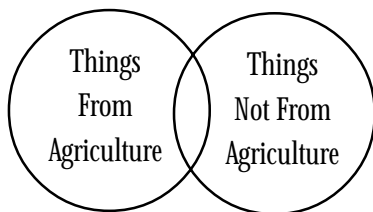


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# A Lesson for You to Teach: Agriculture in Our Classroom

This lesson is a good way to introduce the Food For America program to students and teachers. You'll help students see how much agriculture there is in their everyday lives. Once they understand that, they'll understand how important agriculture is. In this lesson, you'll introduce yourself and your chapter to the students. Then you'll ask them to work with you to look at items found in their classroom and decide whether or not they came from agriculture.

To do this, you'll create a Venn diagram on the classroom floor. Educators like to use Venn diagrams because they help students learn how to sort items into different categories. This is a skill that is emphasized at the elementary school level. The Venn diagram consists of two overlapping circles. Each circle represents a different category. If an item can be in more than one category, it is placed in the area where the circles overlap. Students will like this activity because it's active. They'll be finding things, making decisions and putting them where they belong.



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You will end the session by talking to students about agriculture in your area and showing them samples of what is grown and raised where you live.

## How to Do It

1. First decide how many people will go to the school to present the lesson—a teaching team of three or four is probably best.
2. Schedule a planning session for your teaching team. Make a copy of this lesson plan. Have everyone read it before the meeting. Then decide who's going to do what in the presentation. Dividing the presentation up is probably best.
3. Read the list of needed materials. Make the hoops and signs for the Venn diagram.
4. Collect the rest of the props you'll need. Make one person responsible for that task.
5. Make an appointment with the teacher for your presentation. Tell the teacher it will probably take 30-45 minutes. Go over what you'll be doing in class.
6. On presentation day, check to see you have all of your props. Arrive at the school on time.

## Teaching This Lesson

1. *Introduce yourself to the students.*

"Hi! My name is \_\_\_\_\_  
(name)

and this is \_\_\_\_\_,  
(name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(name)

and \_\_\_\_\_.  
(name)

We are from the \_\_\_\_\_  
(organization)

\_\_\_\_\_.

Does anyone know who is involved in FFA?"

*Be sure to ask the students to raise their hands if they begin to shout out answers. This will help you stay in control of the group.*

## Materials You'll Need

Two large circles about 4' in diameter. You could create the circles out of rope, colored yarn or plastic tubing.

Three pieces of colored paper. On one, write "Things From Agriculture." On the second, write, "Things Not From Agriculture." On the third, write, "Both."

A pair of blue jeans

A pair of scissors

A pencil

Raw cotton or a cotton boll

Samples of raw products grown in your area with, if possible, some finished agricultural products made from them. (For example, wheat and bread.)

“You’re right. FFA is an organization for students who are planning a career in some part of agriculture.”

2. Write the word **AGRICULTURE** on the chalkboard. Say, “In fact, that’s why we’ve come to your class- to talk to you about agriculture. Who can tell me what this word means?”

Students will probably give you a variety of answers—from tractors to cows to products that may be raised in your area.

“All of your answers are good ones. Agriculture includes many things we use every day. Almost all of the products we use for food, clothing and buildings or houses can be traced back to an agricultural beginning. As we talk about agriculture in today’s lesson, we’re going to be talking about three different things:

- plants grown on farms;
- animals raised for food and other uses;
- products from trees.

“Who raises the products we use for food and clothes and other things? Farmers and ranchers. When you think of farmers, I’ll bet you think of barns and cornfields and cows and pigs and Old MacDonald. But did you know there are farmers who raise fish? Farmers who raise trees? You’re going to learn that there are many kinds of farmers—and that many products come from agriculture.”

3. Say, “Let’s take a look at some of the things in your classroom that come from agriculture—and some that do not.”

*If possible, push the students’ desks into a circle so that all students can see clearly. Lay out your Venn diagram on the floor of the classroom.*

4. Hold up the pair of blue jeans.

“Does this come from agriculture? (Let students answer yes or no—and tell why.) Yes, it does. The blue jeans are made from cotton, which is then spun and dyed. The cotton is the raw material. The blue jeans are the finished product.”

*If you have located some raw cotton or a cotton boll, show it to students. Pass it around and let students feel it.*

“We’ll put the blue jeans in the circle marked “Things From Agriculture,” because it is based on an agricultural product.”

Ask a student to put the blue jeans in the appropriate circle.

5. Hold up a pair of scissors.

“Does this come from agriculture? (Let students answer yes or no—and tell why.) No, it doesn’t. Scissors are made from metal. Metal is mined from the ground. We’ll put the scissors in the circle marked “Things Not From Agriculture,” because it does not come from agriculture.”

*Ask a student to put the scissors in the appropriate circle.*

6. Hold up the pencil.

“Does this come from agriculture? (Let students answer yes or no—and tell why.) Some parts do—for instance, the wood in the pencil comes from agriculture. Other parts don’t—the lead and the eraser. We’ll put the pencil in the place where the circles overlap, because it is partly from agriculture and partly not.”

*Ask a student to put the pencil in the appropriate place.*

3. Now ask students to choose other things they see in their classroom. Decide as a class whether they came from agriculture or not. Have students put them in the appropriate places on the diagram.

Here are some examples of things students might identify:

Piece of clothing for example, a sweater— Have the students read the label. If it is 100% cotton or wool, it is from agriculture. If it is 100% polyester, it is not. If it is a blend, it may be partly



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from agriculture. This is a good time to help students see that agricultural products and non-agricultural products are used together.

- Food items — From agriculture
- Lunch bag — From agriculture
- Wooden ruler — From agriculture
- Metal ruler — Not from agriculture
- Computer — Not from agriculture
- Leather shoes — From agriculture
- House plants — From agriculture

8. *Discuss the diagram and what it teaches.* You might say:

“Look at all the things in your classroom that come from agriculture. Agriculture is much more than something to eat.”

9. *Talk about agricultural products grown or raised in your area.* Ask students what they’ve seen growing or being raised in your area. Write the list on the board.

*Bring out your samples and talk about each.* If possible, show students what the products look like in raw form, then as a finished product. For example, you might bring in a sheaf of wheat, some wheat kernels, flour and bread. Young children find it fascinating to see how a product is made into something that looks very different from the original.

10. *Give the teacher a copy of “Agriculture in My Area” for each student.*

They can complete the sheet by writing a story or drawing a picture about agriculture in your area.

Students may want to take the Activity Sheets home with them. Or, the teacher could choose some for a display in the classroom. In that case, you might leave behind some agricultural products to make the display more interesting.



11. *Thank the students and the teacher.*

“It’s been fun being here with you today. I hope you’ve learned more about where we get our food and fiber products. We’ll be glad to answer any question you may have.”

*Give students a certificate of participation. Use the copy masters on pages 9 and 10 of the Teacher’s Guide to make the certificates.*

“You can color these certificates and then take them home. There is a message about this program on the back of the certificate for your parents.”

“Thank you for your time. Have fun learning more about agriculture with your teacher.”

## You Can Do Much More

This initial presentation should be just the beginning. You can make a real impact on what elementary students in your community learn about agriculture by creating an active partnership with teachers in the classroom.

Here are some things you can do:

1. Line up guest speakers for the classroom. Teachers like to have interesting people who are good with youngsters visit their classrooms and share what they know. However, they probably don’t know how to find key people in agriculture in your community. For example, you could find several local farmers who would be willing to go into the classroom to talk about what they grow and how they do it. A large-animal veterinarian would be of great interest to students. You may be doing a work placement in some part of the agriculture industry. Talk to your boss about coming to the classroom. If there is a state or national forest in your area, you could invite a forester to talk about natural resources and the environment.

Think about people in agricultural businesses that are not production agriculture. Talk with your FFA advisor, or use the Yellow Pages to find people in agribusiness that might be willing to visit classrooms.

For a list of State Coordinators for Agriculture in the Classroom, contact:

AITC  
Room 4307, South Building  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20250-0991

- In your planning notebook, list possible interesting speakers, their names, addresses and a little description of what they might do in the classroom. You could set up a separate committee to do this research by contacting each individual. Then share the list with teachers and let them decide who they would like to have visit their classrooms.
2. Plan a field trip. Field trips to visit all the resource people you have identified would be very interesting to students and teachers. As you contact resource people, discuss the possibility of their hosting a field trip as well as visiting classrooms.
  3. Share your knowledge of elementary students with presenters. If you have worked with a particular class, share your information about students' interests with presenters. If presenters are visiting the classroom, help them think about things they could bring with them to show students.
  4. Think about what you are doing in FFA. You may be involved in horticulture, aquaculture, science, food safety or other projects. If the subject is exciting for you, it will be exciting for younger students. Offer to share your specialized knowledge with teachers and students.
  5. Work with other organizations within your school and community. If your school has an FHA/HERO chapter, you may want to do joint activity on food safety or nutrition. You could work with your local 4-H club to highlight agriculture in your community. Agricultural organizations such as the Farm Bureau and state commodity groups may already have identified agricultural producers who are willing to talk to students.
  6. Work with the Agriculture in the Classroom program. This program is designed to introduce young people to our food and fiber system. Contact the state coordinator and see how you can work with this person. A list is included in the *Teacher's Guide*.
  7. Plan special events. With your FFA chapter or working with the groups mentioned

above, consider planning a special agriculture day for a school or a grade. This could be done at the school or at the fairgrounds. Plan hands-on activities for the children. Have as many different presenters as possible. You need to plan this activity well in advance, and work closely with the schools to be sure you choose a time that is convenient for teachers.

8. Present a day on the farm. Field trips are an effective way of introducing young children to agriculture. Spending "A Day on the Farm" can be a rewarding activity for students and sponsors alike. However, this type of event takes a major effort.

Here are some questions to consider when planning a day on the farm:

- a. At what location will our "Day on the Farm" be held?

Choose a farm or ranch that represents a successful, modern agricultural operation. The roads should allow easy access for school buses come rain or shine, and clear directions should be provided.

To simplify exhibits, the farm should have many of the animals, buildings and equipment you want to display. A large shed would be handy if your plans don't call for cancellation in case of rain. There should be bales or benches for children to sit on, especially if they'll be eating lunch, and easy access to rest-room facilities.

Also, electricity must be available if some of the exhibits require it.

Today, many classes include children with disabilities. Check with teachers to see if special accommodations are necessary for students in wheelchairs or with other physical challenges.



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- b. How will children be sure to see everything?

Stations through which small groups of children can rotate are recommended. A teacher or chaperone might divide the children into groups of five to ten students before leaving the school. Nametags representing different crops and livestock would add to the spirit of the day, help children stay in groups and let sponsors call on students by group name. Schedule the length of time each group will spend at each station and how the groups will rotate to see everything. Children's attention spans are short, so consider a maximum of 15 minutes at each station.

- c. How can we best teach the students at the stations?

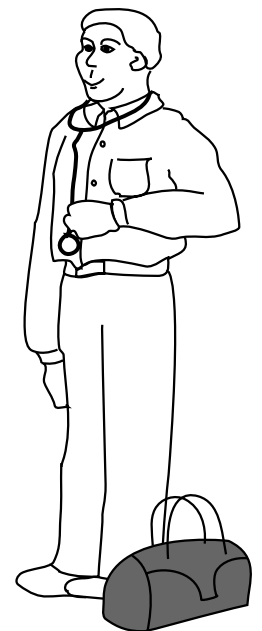
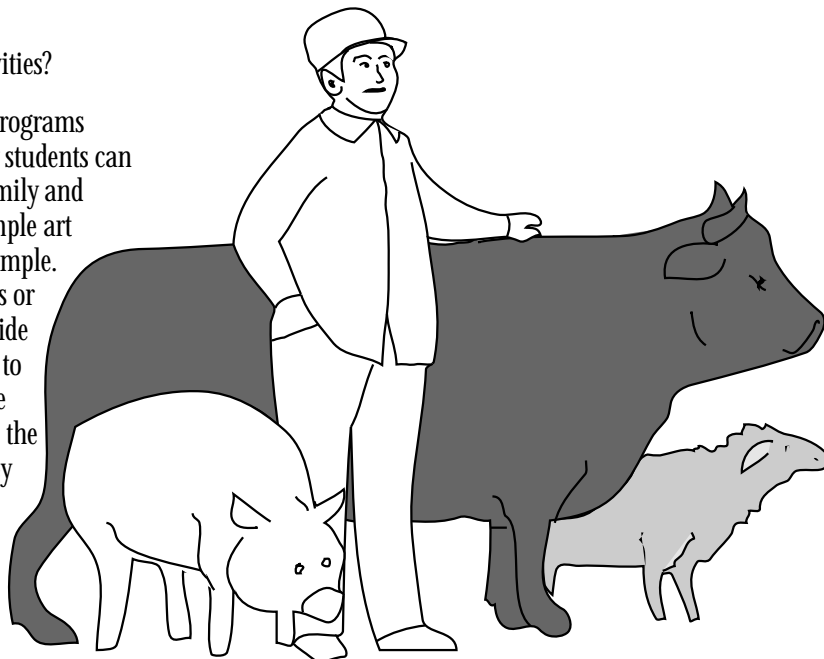
Get the students involved if at all possible. Let them run their hands through the soybeans, bottle feed the calf and sit on the tractor. Plan ahead to have plenty of helpers to make this experience safe. Also, explain information at the stations in terms children can understand. Point out that an acre is about the size of a football field and a combine costs about as much as a house. Practice the presentation at each station so it runs smoothly.

- d. Do we need additional activities?

Some "Day on the Farm" programs include a hands-on activity students can take home to share with family and friends. This might be a simple art project, for example. Some teachers or sponsors provide activity pages to students before they arrive at the farm. As they visit the



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stations, the students learn the answers to fill-in-the-blank questions on their pages. The answers may be provided verbally or on posters.

- e. What are our responsibilities?

As the sponsoring group, you are responsible for carefully planning a fun, safe day for the students. Walk through the stations and plan for worst-case scenarios. By planning to avoid problems, they will be less likely to occur. Have the farm family check with their insurance agent regarding liability insurance in case of an accident. Answer student's questions accurately. If you don't know, admit it rather than provide wrong information, but volunteer to find the correct answer and get back to them. Plan stations that give students an idea of the wide scope of agriculture. Include information about marketing, processing and services provided to the farmer, not only production agriculture.

Be sure you arrange to take pictures during the day. Invite your local newspaper and television station to be part of your "Day on the Farm."

With careful planning, your "Day on the Farm" can provide students with an excellent educational experience they will remember for a long time.



# Activity Sheet –Agriculture in My Area

The things that grow or are raised in my area are:

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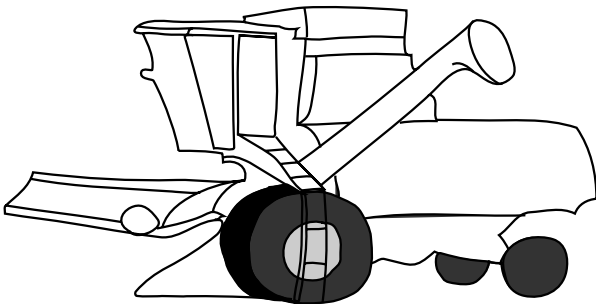
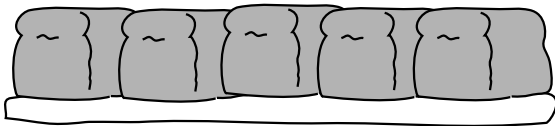
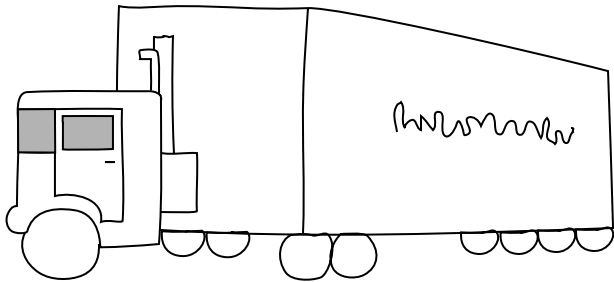
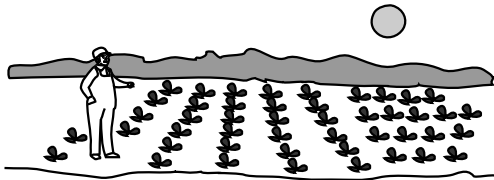
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Here's a story or poem about agriculture in my area. (You can write about one product or many.)



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# Public Relations

Food For America is an important and worthwhile activity, so let others know you're involved through public relations activities. You've already worked with the teachers to survey the wants and needs of the students and developed a Food For America program to meet those needs. Now, tell others.

Public relations is simply promoting goodwill between a group and the community. Public relations activities related to Food For America might include newspaper news releases and photos, radio and television interviews and a bulletin board previewing the program for students. Of course, the overall impression you make as a group and as individuals as you present Food For America is part of public relations, too. Your enthusiastic presentation, professional appearance and well-accepted program will help people develop a positive image of your group.

Public relations activities can help others, those who didn't actually take part in Food For America, better appreciate the program and your group, too. Make sure parents receive the message explaining this program and who presented it to their children. Let the school board know how you helped with this educational program. Include an article in your school newspaper. Tell others in the agricultural community what you've done.

## News Releases

Usually the easiest way to reach a large number of diverse people is through the mass media. This primarily means newspapers, magazines, radio and television.

Many newspapers and some magazines, especially local or specialized publications, will print articles submitted by organizations. People enjoy reading about worthwhile groups to follow what they are doing in the community.



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New stories should be submitted in the form of news releases. News releases need to be written in the same professional manner as a news article. Publications are hesitant to print news releases that are poorly written or are full of mistakes.

A news release should have a lead paragraph that captures the reader's attention. It needs to tell the five W's – what is going on, who it involves, when and where it will be, and why it is happening. The purpose of the story is to get the reader interested in your project.

## Before the presentation

For a "precede" (a news release distributed before the event), explain interesting activities the children will complete during Food For America. Quote a group leader on why the program is being implemented, and quote a teacher about why elementary students are participating. The precede should be mailed at least one week before the event. After you have mailed the releases, call reporters in a few days to invite them to cover your event.

## After the presentation

In case media representatives from all your outlets aren't able to attend, write a "follow-up" news release immediately after the event. A follow-up explains what happened. Quote the students about their reactions to the program and what they learned.

Timeliness is extremely important since "old news is no news." Talk with the editors and news directors ahead of time to learn how and when you can get this information to them.

Refer to the sample news releases in this section. Of course, you should personalize them for your local Food For America program. Refer to *The FFA Reporter's Handbook* for more specific guidelines about writing news releases. Photos should be included with follow-up releases when you send them to publications. Check with the editor first, but most publications prefer black-and-white photos at least 3 X 5 inches. Action shots that tell a story are best. You have many opportunities for eye-appealing

photos with a Food For America program—a child sitting on a tractor seat, children eating butter they’ve just made themselves, children planting seeds. If someone from your group can’t take photos, ask for help from the school newspaper photographer or journalism teacher. Again, refer to *The FFA Reporter’s Handbook* for helpful hints if you’re handling the camera.

## Radio and Television

Just as you can increase your chances of being covered by the local newspaper by sending a news release, you can increase the possibility of appearing on the local television or radio newscast by contacting your local news directors. Food For America combines youth and agriculture – and that attracts your local television stations.

Contact the news or farm director to talk about possibilities. Community programs on local

cable television stations are often looking for interesting interviews. If you plan a special day, you’ll be able to offer television stations wonderful visuals.

## Other Public Relations Tools

Service clubs in your community might want to know what you’re doing with Food For America. Share this project with your local Chamber of Commerce, the Lions Club, Rotary, Business and Professional Women and other groups.

A bulletin board or booth in the school or a local business window might also show others what you’re doing. Perhaps you could conduct demonstrations in a local community event (whether it’s a Fun Fair, Back-to-School Night or another event), Food For America should be there, too.

### Precede

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Contact: Jane Smith

624-1255

#### FOURTH GRADERS TO ENJOY “DAY ON THE FARM”

Fourth grade students at Grand Elementary School will experience a “Day on the Farm” on May 15, 2001, courtesy of the Watertown FFA Chapter. The day will be held on the farm of Ernest and Joy Larson.

“Today’s children do not always know where their food and clothing come from,” says FFA Chapter President Josh Benson. “Our goal is to help students understand our food and fiber system.”

During the day, children will have a chance to bottle-feed a calf, climb on a tractor and see how the Larsons use computers to manage their farm.

The special activity will be a culmination of the chapter’s Food For America program. Throughout the year, chapter members have visited classrooms to help children learn more about agriculture.

### Follow up

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Contact: Jane Smith

624-1255

#### ELEMENTARY STUDENTS ENJOY “DAY ON THE FARM” COURTESY OF FFA

Fourth grade students at Grant Elementary School enjoyed a “Day on the Farm” on May 15, 2001, courtesy of the Watertown FFA Chapter. The day, which helped students understand more about where their food and clothing comes from was held on the farm of Ernest and Joy Larson.

Eight different exhibits, each staffed by a member of the FFA chapter, allowed students to get a close-up view of agriculture today. They ran their hands through soybeans. They bottle-fed a calf. They climbed on the Larson’s tractor and learned about farm safety. The day concluded with a special treat – an ice cream cone for each student.

“Before we began learning about agriculture in our class,” said fourth grade teacher Elizabeth Johnston, “some of my students thought that food came from the grocery store. This field trip helped them see the important role that agriculture plays in their everyday lives.”

FFA Chapter President Josh Benson noted that the “Day on the Farm” is just one part of the chapter’s Food For America program. “Throughout the year, members of our chapter have visited classes to teach children more about agriculture,” he said.



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## Evaluation

Evaluation is an important but often overlooked final step of any project. During your four-step planning process, you are asked to think about the things that went well, the things you'd like to change and other comments that will make future projects run smoothly or more effectively.

Several weeks after you visit a classroom, contact the teacher.

Here are some questions you should ask:

- What were your goals for Food For America in your classroom?
- Did the introductory information you received give you a clear understanding of Food For America?
- What are your comments about the introductory presentation? How could it be improved?
- Have you used any lessons from the *Teacher's Guide*? Which ones?
- Have you used the video with your students?
- Are you interested in scheduling a further classroom visit by the Food For America team?

Keep written records of the teacher's comments in your Teacher Resource Notebook. They'll help you improve your presentation for the next time.

## Wrapping Up

No project is complete until the thank-you notes are sent. A Food For America program requires the time and talents of many people. Be sure to thank all those who helped make it possible. Let them know how much you appreciate their help.

The names and addresses of those you need to thank should be included in your planning notebook. Be sure to thank each classroom teacher for cooperating with you. Mail all thank-you notes within two weeks.

Most importantly, thank the national sponsor that makes the Food For America program possible. Write:

National FFA Organization  
Food For America  
6060 FFA Drive  
PO Box 68960  
Indianapolis, IN 46268-0960



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