

Lesson B6–1

Describing Ethics in Agribusiness

Unit B. Employability in Agricultural/Horticultural Industry

Problem Area 6. Exploring Ethical Issues

Lesson 1. Describing Ethics in Agribusiness

New Mexico Content Standard:

Pathway Strand: Ethics and Legal Responsibilities

Standard: XII: Know and understand the importance of professional ethics and legal responsibilities.

Benchmark: XII-A: Apply knowledge of professional and workplace ethics and legal responsibilities to organize guidelines for workplace conduct.

Performance Standard: 1. Demonstrate awareness of legal responsibilities for different roles and functions within organizations. 2. Research local, state, and national sources to identify the legal bodies that regulate the desired career. 3. Discuss ethical responsibilities in the workplace.

Student Learning Objectives. Instruction in this lesson should result in students achieving the following objectives:

1. Define and explain ethics in agribusiness.
2. Explain areas where ethics are important in agribusiness.
3. Examine the role of values in ethics.

List of Resources. The following resources may be useful in teaching this lesson:

Ensminger, M. E. and R. C. Perry. *Beef Cattle Science*. Danville, Illinois: Interstate Publishers, Inc., 1997.

Hunter, Sharon, et al. *Developing Leadership and Personal Skills*. Danville, Illinois: Interstate Publishers, Inc., 1997.

Lee, Jasper S., et al. *Introduction to Livestock and Companion Animals*, Second Edition. Danville, Illinois: Interstate Publishers, Inc., 2000.

List of Equipment, Tools, Supplies, and Facilities

Writing surface
Overhead projector
Transparencies from attached masters
Copies of Student Lab Sheet

Terms. The following terms are presented in this lesson (shown in bold italics):

Conflict
Conflict resolution
Ethics
Ethical issues
Honesty
Integrator
Values
Work ethic

Interest Approach. Use an interest approach that will prepare students for the lesson. Teachers often develop approaches for their unique class and student situations. Two possible approaches are included here.

Approach One: *Waste Disposal*—Ask students this question: “How are wastes from factories and farms disposed of?” Have them suggest a few ways and develop a short list on the writing surface. Be sure the list includes “dumping into streams,” “composting,” and “recycling.” Next, have students assess which approaches are ethical in the disposal of wastes. Have them select approaches for disposing of the wastes that are generated in the local community. After discussion, move into the objectives for the lesson or move on to the second interest approach.

Approach Two: *Animal Well-Being*—Ask students this question: “What is the meaning of animal well-being?” Allow students to suggest answers, and structure a definition on the writing surface that includes “caring for animals so that their needs are met and they do not suffer.” Ask students to explain how animal well-being relates to ethics. It relates because of the concept of distinguishing between right and

wrong. Indicate that making the best choices is a part of ethics. Move into the objectives and content for the lesson.

Summary of Content and Teaching Strategies

Objective 1: Define and explain ethics in agribusiness.

Anticipated Problem: What is ethics and why is ethical behavior important in agribusiness?

- I. **Ethics** is an area of philosophy that attempts to help people understand which actions are right and which are wrong. It shapes our system of moral standards or values that applies in all human activities. Ethics uses reasoning as the basis for questioning actions.
 - A. **Ethical issues** are areas of choice in which people are trying to make the best decisions. Issues have at least two sides or possible solutions. Deciding which solution is ethical is a continuing process in which new information may result in a change in position on an issue.
 - B. Many new ethical issues have arisen over the industrialization of farming. Industrialized farming means that methods are sought to maximize production while minimizing cost and labor. Automation and computers have played a major role in recent changes. Industrialized farming is large-scale and resembles a factory setting. The trend toward larger, “industrial farms” continues today. With this trend, several ethical issues have been raised.
 1. Small farms have been bought out and formed into larger farms.
 2. Farm owners have been displaced without other job skills.
 3. Water, air, and other resources in some communities have become polluted.
 4. Production occurs in a controlled environment of high intensity.
 5. Local governments have provided tax incentives for larger farms and agribusinesses.
 6. Some individuals have become concerned over the conditions in which animals are kept in industrial farm operations.
 - C. Much of the animal and crop production today is through agribusiness integrators. An **integrator** is an individual or business entity normally engaged in processing that attempts to control the farm production of animals and crops. Contracts are signed with growers that provide specific details on most all aspects of production. Integrators may own sources of inputs, such as feed and animals, and provide supervision to the farm to insure that all aspects of production are being followed. Some people have ethical concerns about the roles of integrators; others feel that integrators perform an essential role in producing large quantities of products at a lower price. (Integrators have been especially powerful in the poultry industry.)
 - D. An issue that has emerged in recent years focuses on ethics in exhibiting livestock at shows. The ethical issues deal with what is right and wrong in preparing an animal for a show. Some animals have been given substances in order to gain desired growth and per-

formance. Some people see this a unethical, while others do not see how this differs from administering medicines to help animals resist disease or other practices in providing care for the animal.

Use class discussion and TM: B6–1A to summarize the meaning of ethics and define key terms. Ask students to identify appropriate examples currently in the media of ethics related to agriculture and agribusiness. Indicate that the choices people make are always important. Use LS: B6–1A on “Ethical Decisions.” Form the class into small groups and have each group assess the appropriateness of particular actions. Afterward, have each group report their feelings to the class.

Objective 2: Explain areas where ethics are important in agribusiness.

Anticipated Problem: What are examples of important areas of ethics in agribusiness?

- II. Ethics in agribusiness involves all areas of endeavor. Most activities are closely related to agricultural/horticultural production.
 - A. Honesty—**Honesty** means that a person or agribusiness practice is truthful and trustworthy. Being dishonest means that lies and deceit are used in dealing with others. Most agribusinesses cannot stay in business long with customer relationships that are not honest.
 - B. Steward of the environment—Helping maintain a quality environment is a responsibility of all people. Polluting the environment is damaging to the health of all people and other organisms and to a sustainable future. Many agribusinesses take practices to assure that the environment is not damaged by their products and wastes.
 - C. Accuracy—All dealings should involve accurate information.
 - D. Quality products—All products should measure up to acceptable standards and not create harm or a hazard. For example, food products should be wholesome and free of disease agents and impurities.
 - E. Concern for the future—Ethical behaviors demonstrate concern for the future. Some people are concerned about the treatment of animals, loss of the rain forests, genetically altered foods, and degradation of the land due to construction work, dumping industrial wastes, and build-up of pesticides.
 - F. Honoring a contract—Agribusinesses and producers often have contracts specifying the kind of supply to be provided or crop to be produced, when it is to be delivered, and the price for the transaction. All involved need to fulfill the contract agreement.
 - G. Political involvement—People sometimes use influence to gain personally favorable decisions that may not be good for the overall society. Contributions may be made by powerful business owners to government officials to sway votes on agricultural issues. Political involvement should support the overall welfare of society rather than the special interests of a few individuals.

Discuss the meaning of these areas with the class. Identify any additional areas using student input. Have students indicate why these areas are important. Use TM: B6–1B to summarize major points.

Objective 3: Examine the role of values in ethics.

Anticipated Problem: What is the role of values in ethics?

- III. **Values** are the personal standards that influence decisions and way of living. Values have a major role in ethics.
- A. Ethics is based on a system of values. Individuals who are responsible for leading agribusinesses need to have certain ethical traits.
 - 1. Honesty—An honest person does not cheat, steal, or lie.
 - 2. Truthful—Truthful means that what a person says conforms with reality.
 - 3. Respect—Respect is providing the proper courtesy and acceptance of other people.
 - 4. Self-respect—Self-respect involves individuals holding themselves in high regard.
 - 5. Fairness—Fairness involves being unbiased and honest in dealing with other people.
 - 6. Respect differences—People vary widely in many ways. Ethics involves respecting the differences that exist among people.
 - B. Resolving differences is important in ethical behavior. Conflicts sometimes arise. A **conflict** is a difference of opinion between two or more people. **Conflict resolution** is using techniques that allow people to quietly solve problems. How people go about handling differences and conflicts depends on their values and is reflected in the approaches used. Unfortunately, violence is often used to settle differences. Violence is not an appropriate response to differences.
 - C. Work ethic is also a part of values in the United States. Opinions about work vary but in general, work is viewed as a natural and essential part of life. **Work ethic** is belief in the benefit and importance of work. Being productive, being at work on time, having good relationships with coworkers and putting in top effort are key in the value of work in the United States.

Present the background information on ethics in agribusiness. Have students form cooperative groups to research ethics in agribusiness. Have one group for each of the following: values, conflict and conflict resolution, and work ethic. Use the Internet as well as the library for information. Once the information is gathered, students should prepare a presentation to the entire class. Use TM: B6–1C to summarize major points.

Review/Summary. Summarize the lesson by asking students to explain the content of each objective. Be sure to reinforce the desired ethical behavior in agribusiness and the values on which it is based. Review the terms by calling on various members of the class to explain the terms as related to agribusiness. Give students time to discuss and reflect on the lesson.

Application. Students can apply ethics and values in their supervised experience, FFA participation, and dealings with other students on a daily basis in the school. Application can also involve the following activity using the attached lab sheet:

Ethical Decisions—LS: B6–1A

Evaluation. Evaluation should focus on student achievement of the objectives. Ethics can be demonstrated in daily living activities. A written test can be used to assess student knowledge of the terms associated with ethics. A sample written test is attached.

Answers to Sample Test:

Part One: Matching

1=g, 2=d, 3=c, 4=f, 5=h, 6=a, 7=b, 8=e

Part Two: Ethical Issues

The student should select one ethical issue and indicate if the action is (or could be) right or wrong and justify their selection.

Test

Lesson B6–1: Describing Ethics in Agribusiness

Part One: Matching

Instructions: Match the term with the correct response. Write the letter of the term by the definition.

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| a. ethics | d. conflict resolution | g. honesty |
| b. ethical issues | e. integrator | h. work ethic |
| c. conflict | f. values | |

- _____ 1. Personal characteristic involving being truthful and trustworthy.
- _____ 2. Using techniques that allow people to quietly solve problems.
- _____ 3. A difference of opinion between two or more people.
- _____ 4. Personal standards that influence the decisions and actions of people.
- _____ 5. Belief in the value of work.
- _____ 6. A philosophy that helps us understand right and wrong.
- _____ 7. Areas of choice in which people try to make the best decisions.
- _____ 8. An individual or agribusiness who attempts to control farm production.

Part Two: Ethical Issues

Instructions. Select one of the issues below and describe the best choice in dealing with the issue. Circle the choice number that you select.

Choice One: Injecting the muscles of meat animals with vegetable oil to gain the appearance of redder meat.

Choice Two: An integrator dictating to the grower the kind of housing to be provided for chickens on a poultry farm.

Choice Three: Adding water to beans in the canning process.

Choice Four: Claiming that flowers in a florist shop are American-grown when in fact they have been imported.

Ethics and Ethical Issues

Ethics—making choices between right and wrong actions.

Ethical issues—areas in which people are trying to make the best choices.

- **Each issue has at least two sides or points of view.**
- **Making choices is a continuing process in which new information may result in a change in position on an issue.**

Ethics in Agribusiness

Honesty—being truthful and trustworthy.

Steward of the environment—helping maintain environmental quality.

Accuracy—all dealings involve the best available information; accurate information.

Quality products—all products should measure up to standard and reflect good value.

Concern for the future—actions should support a sustainable environment.

Honoring a contract—all agreements are fulfilled exactly as specified in the contract.

Political involvement—should support overall welfare of society.

Values and Ethical Behavior

Values—personal standards that influence decisions and way of living.

Values include:

- **Honesty—does not cheat, lie or steal.**
- **Truthful—what a person says conforms to reality.**
- **Respect for others—provide courtesy and acceptance of other people.**
- **Self-respect—holding oneself in high regard.**
- **Fairness—unbiased dealings with others.**
- **Respect differences among people—appreciating and using diversity in a positive manner.**
- **Acceptable conflict resolution—solving differences of opinion among people in an appropriate, non-violent manner.**
- **Work ethic—belief in the benefit and importance of work; being productive, being on time, having good relationships with coworkers, and putting in top effort are key.**

Lab Sheet

Ethical Decisions

Purpose:

The purpose of this activity is to help you develop skills in choosing ethical courses of action by assessing situations involving “right and wrong.”

Materials:

- Lab sheet
- Writing utensil

Procedure:

Several areas are listed below that involve making ethical decisions. Indicate if you feel it is “okay” or “not okay” to take a particular course of action. Place a check in the blank that indicates your choice. Write a short justification of your decision.

Area	Okay?	Not Okay?	Why? (Your justification)
1. Adjusting scales so that a pound weighs exactly 15 ounces.			
2. Storing eggs in an unrefrigerated area before selling.			
3. Providing clean drinking water for animals.			

4. Using drugs on animals so that they grow faster.			
5. Adding artificial vitamins to feed to promote animal health.			
6. Draining engine oil onto the ground.			
7. Providing employees with non-paid vacation time.			
8. Submitting government tax forms after the deadline.			