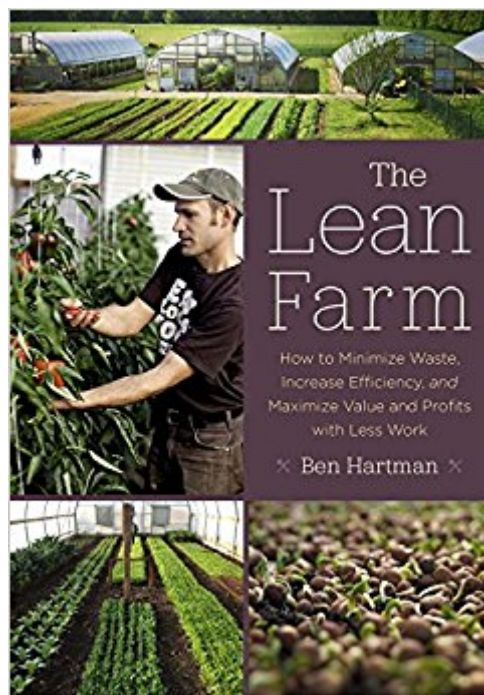




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The Lean Farm: How To Minimize Waste, Increase Efficiency, And Maximize Value And Profits With Less Work



Synopsis

A practical, systems-based approach for a more sustainable farming operation To many people today, using the words “factory” and “farm” in the same sentence is nothing short of sacrilege. In many cases, though, the same sound business practices apply whether you are producing cars or carrots. Author Ben Hartman and other young farmers are increasingly finding that incorporating the best new ideas from business into their farming can drastically cut their wastes and increase their profits, making their farms more environmentally and economically sustainable. By explaining the lean system for identifying and eliminating waste and introducing efficiency in every aspect of the farm operation, *The Lean Farm* makes the case that small-scale farming can be an attractive career option for young people who are interested in growing food for their community. Working smarter, not harder, also prevents the kind of burnout that start-up farmers often encounter in the face of long, hard, backbreaking labor. Lean principles grew out of the Japanese automotive industry, but they are now being followed on progressive farms around the world. Using examples from his own family’s one-acre community-supported farm in Indiana, Hartman clearly instructs other small farmers in how to incorporate lean practices in each step of their production chain, from starting a farm and harvesting crops to training employees and selling goods. While the intended audience for this book is small-scale farmers who are part of the growing local food movement, Hartman’s prescriptions for high-value, low-cost production apply to farms and businesses of almost any size or scale that hope to harness the power of lean in their production processes.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Booklist- "The concept of 'lean' manufacturing originally began during the 1980s in Japanese auto factories, such as those owned by Toyota, and it embraces a work ethic of eliminating as much waste as possible to give consumers the best value for their purchase. Using his own Clay Bottom Farm in Indiana as a proving ground, Hartman adapted this lean philosophy to support a thriving business, growing and selling enough specialty produce to support himself and his wife by harvesting only a single acre of land. In this lucidly written, well-organized guidebook, Hartman lays out the fundamentals of lean farming for any grower hoping to follow his example, from limiting materials and transportation needs to more efficiently using staff member talents. Along with many useful charts and photos, Hartman includes 10 case studies from his own farm, illustrating how trimming away unneeded practices led to big production gains. Although Hartman's target audience here is organic, small-scale growers, anyone involved in a larger agribusiness owned operation will find his advice remarkably useful and ultimately very profitable. Ben Hartman is diversified farming's Dean of Lean. He walks the talk, sharing insights on how lean principles helped his farm and how they can help yours. Lean is the epitome of efficiency, an essential ingredient of any successful farm. Richard Wiswall, author of *The Organic Farmer's Business Handbook* "With lean principles, what's good for the farm is even better for the farmer. As we invite new farmers back to the land, into vacant lots, and onto rooftops, we have to give them the tools for success and the ability to sustain. Lean farming won't leave you trying to turn a farm into an automotive factory, but you will get a whiff of what it means when the rubber hits the road." Philip Ackerman-Leist, author of *Rebuilding the Foodshed* "Farming is not just a business, but it's still a business, and Hartman's application of Toyota's efficiency principles to the farm is nothing short of profound. As I read this fantastic book, my mind literally skipped from procedure to place on our farm with new ideas on how to create efficiencies. The Lean Farm should be dissected, digested, and discussed--then applied--on every single farm: big or small, wholesale or retail, livestock or produce. It would make all farms more profitable, productive, and pleasurable." Joel Salatin, owner of Polyface Farm, author of *You Can Farm* and *Folks, This Ain't Normal* "Anyone who thinks lean is only for a factory should read this book. Ben Hartman, with simple but eloquent prose and delightful figures and photos, demonstrates how all aspects of lean can apply to farming, a process of growing

and selling living things. The mysterious uniqueness of farming under constantly changing conditions became clear as Ben learned to understand his customers and his value streams to increase value and eliminate waste. And lean reinforced, rather than replaced, the strong social values of the Hartman farm.

—Jeffrey Liker, author of *The Toyota Way* “Farmers are good at farming—it is what they enjoy doing! At the same time, planning, organizing, and working out everything most efficiently is often not done as easily. The Lean Farm will help us all easily increase flow, production, and income. It is a treasure trove of possibilities without the need for increased investment!”

—John Jeavons, author of *How to Grow More Vegetables*, executive director of Ecology Action, and developer of sustainable, biologically intensive mini-farming “If you want to see, right now, what food farming will look like in the coming years, this is the book for you. Using the kind of super-efficiency that new-age manufacturing has perfected, author Ben Hartman describes, in great detail and with superb illustrations, how he and his wife reduced their farm size from three acres to one and still make a decent living on it.”

—Gene Logsdon, author, *The Contrary Farmer* “We give every new employee a copy of Ben’s writing to study. Adopting lean principles has been critical for bringing organization, focus, and harmony to our 100-acre fully diversified vegetable farm. A place for every thing, and every thing in its place is a refrain we repeat over and over.”

—Pete Johnson, organic farmer and owner of Pete’s Greens, Craftsbury, Vermont “Clay Bottom Farm is a gem of a place in northern Indiana, where we are repeatedly told that you need a thousand acres to make a living as a farmer. Ben Hartman and his wife Rachel disprove this conventional wisdom every day by managing a thriving farm business, not on a thousand acres, but on just one. In *The Lean Farm*, Ben explains how their elegant approach can be applied by anyone. His writing, like his farm, is clean, well organized, and easy to follow—but his ideas are revolutionary. *The Lean Farm* is one of the most original and innovative books on food and farming to come out in the last decade.”

—Steve Hallett, Professor of Horticulture, Purdue University, and author of *Life without Oil* and *The Efficiency Trap*

Ben Hartman grew up on a corn and soybean farm in Indiana and graduated college with degrees in English and philosophy. Ben and his wife, Rachel Hershberger, own and operate Clay Bottom Farm in Goshen, Indiana, where they make their living growing and selling specialty crops on less than one acre. Their food is sold locally to restaurants and cafeterias, at a farmers market, and through a community-supported-agriculture (CSA) program. The farm has twice won Edible Michiana’s Reader’s Choice award. *The Lean Farm*, Ben’s first book,

won the Shingo Institute's prestigious Research and Professional Publication Award. In 2017, Ben was named one of fifty emerging green leaders in the United States by Grist.

I was fortunate enough to receive this book a few days ago as a Christmas gift. I read it cover to cover and really enjoyed it! I appreciated many aspects of the book: the clear writing style, the clean lines of thought, the unique application of lean concepts, the colorful photos, and the intriguing references to other seminal lean books. Since lean is very contextual when it comes to implementation, I was delighted to find much detail on precisely how lean was applied at Clay Bottom Farm. Ben effectively describes both the overarching strategies and the specific tactics that were applied over the years. These will help spark lean deployment ideas at other farms for sure. I started to get a bit concerned when the discussion of cost cutting surfaced since lean is NOT another management driven cost cutting program. But Ben effectively addressed my concerns by adding his thoughts on this in "Lean Overreached" and "Lean for More Than Profit." I have seen lean reduced to just cost cutting which resulted in bad, long-term business consequences. As Ben explains, lean is a complete culture change where "respect for people" is paramount and where daily and long-term continuous improvement is knitted into the very fabric of the organization. Excellent book. Way to go Ben and team! (By the way, this is my first book review ever.)

As a small organic vegetable farmer I have always found the task of efficiently organizing the business operations of the farm somewhat confounding. Many times I have been frustrated with working long hours into the evening, an employee who did not finish a task the way I asked, or growing a beautiful crop that no one wants to buy. The Lean Farm concisely introduces farmers to a valuable tool for streamlining farming operations and focusing your business on producing what is valuable to your customers. Lean manufacturing is a tool used by gigantic corporations to compete in the global marketplace, so I was wary of its applicability to a small farm context. However, the author makes a strong case for utilizing lean in farming or other small business settings. He even discusses many of the caveats that would naturally occur to a small farmer trying to adopt lean, such as letting your values influence how you implement the concept so that you achieve greater sustainability as well as profitability. The Lean Farm is a great read and well worth adding to your farming library. It will probably be most helpful to farmers or other small business people with at least a few years' experience who are struggling to make it all come together. Although it has many interesting glimpses into the author's farming practices, this book does not attempt to be an

introduction to farming. If you are reading it as a beginning farmer, The Lean Farm should be one of many texts you read, though it may end up being the most valuable to the success of your business. I also think this book would also serve as a good introduction to the concept of lean for someone outside of the farming profession. The author provides some of the history and context of lean manufacturing including original Japanese terminology, as well as discussion of other prominent lean texts and guidance for further reading on the subject.

Many would be farmers start off with more of a philosophy than a business plan. Very few folks have the resources to operate a farm full time without the farm turning a profit. If you aren't careful, a small operation will work you to death. This excellent little book takes a total quality approach to farming while minimizing wasted resources; the most important savings (as far as I am concerned) is labor. If your operation is working you from daylight to dark and you are making less than minimum wage, this book is just what you need to get on track! Even if you are a successful farmer, I'll bet this book contains a few tips and tricks that can help you streamline your operation without hurting your bottom line.

Excellent book. I find that it has changed the way I perceive the world - not just my farm. I find myself analyzing so many processes - not just farm chores. I come from a software development background, and I have the urge to send this book to some of my old managers. I quote it often. This book would help anyone, including homesteaders in any business or repetitive project, in my opinion.

After working under a lean style in mining I never thought of applying it to my new endeavour. A well written, easy reference book, with plenty of examples, the lean farm is a fun ride to a better life. Do more with less, use what you need, get rid of the burden of gadgets and earn more while saving are just some of the ideas in this book. Worth twice the money on the first read and I tag it covert to cover twice in three days.

Overall I thought it was a good book, what I felt stopped it from being a 5 star review, is I didn't feel it was great throughout the entire book. The information on the 5S highly valuable, the case studies were good, though I would have like to have seen more on farm examples of perhaps other market farms instead of dairy farm from Denmark. Also the last part chapter 12 - on mega farms, is kinda like preaching to the choir. You figure most folks who get this book are typically going to be either

market farmers, or small animal producers. I'd say it was worth the money, there were valuable examples that we'll put into use on our farm.

Great book that will make you think about your processes. I made quite a few planning changes on the farm while I was reading this. It makes you think about wasted motions in all your work.

I like the book so far some of the information is repetitive but overall the book will help me, if I can understand the instructions provided.

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