The objectives of this lab exercise are: (1) to learn about some of the megatrends that will affect U.S. agriculture over the next few decades, and (2) to analyze how an individual farm has responded to one or more of these trends.

A. Megatrends in the 21st Century

Farmers in the 21st century must adapt to changing conditions in order to be successful. Dr. David Kohl, professor of agricultural economics at Virginia Tech University, often speaks about the future of agriculture. Go to the Top Managers web site at www.topmanagers.ca to hear a 14-minute interview with Dr. Kohl about megatrends that will affect North American agriculture.

When you get to the web site, do a Google search on David Kohl and open the first link (megatrends) to listen to the interview. Or, just type in the complete URL:


Click on Watch, then Feature Interview if you have a fast Internet connection; if not, click on Listen.
1. Choose one of the megatrends discussed by Dr. Kohl and summarize his comments about it.

2. How do you think this trend will affect farmers in your home state or country?
3. Briefly describe another major trend that you see in agriculture besides those discussed in the interview.

B. How a farmer responds

1. Find an article in a farm magazine, newspaper or other publication that describes a farm’s response to a particular trend or change, either actual or potential. Possible sources include:

   - Successful Farming, Wallaces Farmer, Farm Journal, the Farm Bureau Spokesman and other farm magazines that can be found in Departmental reading rooms, in the main library, or at home.

   - Internet sites such as www.agriculture.com/ag/sfonline/, www.agweb.com, or www.farmprogress.com.

   Alternative: write about an actual farm with which you are familiar that has responded to a trend in agriculture. This could be a relative, neighbor or your own family’s farm.

2. List below the title of the article, the name of your source and the date of publication. If you choose the alternative, list the name of the farm or farmer if you are writing about a farm with which you are familiar.

3. Describe the trend or change addressed by the farm in a few sentences.
4. What actions did the farm take to respond to this trend?

5. Where did they go to obtain information or advice?

6. Which of the following farm types most closely describes this farm? (circle one)
   a. Large volume, narrow margin producer
   b. Small volume, wide margin producer
   c. Specialty product or service
   d. Part-time farming operation

   Explain why you chose this answer.

7. Does this farm have any strategic alliances with other farms, processors or input suppliers? If so, describe them. Include such things as leasing agreements, production contracts or partnerships.