

# COW OF A GAME

## Summary

Students buy inputs and add value them for resale. They rearrange the letters of input words eg *green grass* and *many cows* to make output words eg cream. It's fun.

## Focus

This activity can

- practise literacy and numeracy skills
- illustrate how businesses must react to changes in costs and prices
- focus on value adding in the dairy industry

The game can be modified to focus on a range of industry sectors, as with the game which inspired it *Alphabet Forests (NZ)*.

For example

1. You could buy the input words: *Pasteurisation Centre* (\$200) and *Hay Bales* (\$150)
2. To create outputs like Butter (\$350) and Cheese (\$200), making a \$200 profit.

To maximise profits students will learn to react to changes in costs and prices and make clever mixes of inputs to add value, while being careful to minimise waste, i.e. left over letters.

## Preparation

- Schedule the game over three or four sessions as a trial. Some teachers have run the game as a competition over a full term.
- There is no room for confusion.
- You must conduct a demonstration first.
- At first keep clarifying terms such as input and output.

Make ample copies for handouts and sign money to validate it as currency.

Organise a pair of scissors and glue stick for each team.

Select two student helpers, with strong literacy and numeracy skills and brief them on their roles as 'Market Brokers'; one will sell Inputs and the other will buy Outputs.

## Process

### Session One

1. Hand out money and equipment to teams. Explain the game, using examples. Key points are
  - Each team is a family farm trying to maximise profit, while competing with other farmers.
  - Allocate \$500\* to each team for buying inputs, eg hay. (\*working capital).
  - Inputs are brought at the *input market* from the **Input** Student Broker.
  - They cut up the input words to make output words, the letters of which must be glued together.
  - Outputs are sold to the *output market* to the **Output** Student Broker according to the current price.
  - Prices for inputs and outputs will change twice during the game - once with a warning and once without warning – i.e. market forces.
  - Teams will be fined \$600 if they 'pollute' their area, i.e. make a mess on the floor etc.
  - Cheating of any description will incur a \$3000 fine.
2. Provide each team with copies of the input prices and output prices sheets.
3. Set up market brokers at desks out front, with signs
4. Provide brokers with price sheets and cash
5. Provide Input Broker with copies of input sheets
6. Allow students 20 minutes to buy inputs rearrange into new words and sell them to the output market. (Sellers will receive cash for their output words).

7. At the end tell teams to put left over inputs (incomplete words & letters) other sheets and equipment in an envelope you provide.

**Debrief** quickly by comparing profits and discussing the lessons learnt.

Do **not** introduce too much terminology or concepts till the second session.

## **Session Two**

1. After several minutes of trading, change the prices *without warning*. Simply display the new prices and tell the students to write them on their Price Sheets. You can be scientific about these price changes or totally arbitrary.
2. Make sure you take the following into account:
  - Whatever you do, make sure the input prices are lower than output prices.
  - Ensure *some* input words are higher than other input words; same with output words.
  - You don't necessarily change all prices; sometimes it is best to make a dramatic upward or down ward shift in two or three prices.
3. Ensure that students understand that the new prices immediately apply. Even if they have completed unsold output words, they can only sell it for a new price, unless they want to keep it and see what happens in the next session, when there will be another price change.
4. Explain that in the next session they will be given five minutes warning of the price change.
5. Conclude the session in the same way as the first, only focus some discussion on the effects of the price changes and what they learnt from this.

## **Session Three**

1. Remind students that the prices will change again in this session and that they will be given five minutes notification. This will be the final price change during the game.
2. After ten minutes of trading, announce the new prices will be revealed in five minutes time. Quickly ask if they have ideas about what may happen if the market changes in different ways. Share some of the speculation and get the groups back to work.

3. Announce the price changes and ask the students to note them on their Price Sheets. Remind everyone that the new prices immediately apply.
4. Complete trading by
  - ❑ Giving teams warning that both markets will cease trading in five minutes.
  - ❑ Asking students to total their cash in hand.
  - ❑ Displaying the profits of each group.

### **Review and Reflection**

Start the debriefing with a focus on **content** i.e. business matters. Conclude with a focus on **process** i.e. how the learning activity was undertaken.

Completing Student Handout questionnaires individually and then as teams will stimulate discussion. See debriefing handout.

### **Variations and Extensions**

- a) Change the industry, eg mining and forestry.
- b) Increase the number of price changes. Make all changes either with or without warning.
- c) Have set limited times when groups can only buy and sell.
- d) Allow groups to trade inputs (redundant letters) with one another.
- e) Provide a prize for the winning team.

## Handout - Input prices

PRICE SHEET
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INPUTS WHAT YOU BUY AT	Initial price	New price	Final price
• Many cows	\$100		
• Pasteurisation centre	\$200		
• Green grass	\$50		
• Hay bales	\$150		

## Student Handout - Output prices

OUTPUTS	Initial price	New price	Final price
Cheese	\$200		
Butter	\$350		
Cream	\$150		
Yoghurt	\$500		

## Handout - Inputs

INPUTS SHEET
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(Cut them out)

MANY COWS	PASTEURISATION CENTRE	GREEN GRASS	HAY BALES
MANY COWS	PASTEURISATION CENTRE	GREEN GRASS	HAY BALES
MANY COWS	PASTEURISATION CENTRE	GREEN GRASS	HAY BALES
MANY COWS	PASTEURISATION CENTRE	GREEN GRASS	HAY BALES
MANY COWS	PASTEURISATION CENTRE	GREEN GRASS	HAY BALES
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MANY COWS	PASTEURISATION CENTRE	GREEN GRASS	HAY BALES

## Handout - Reflection

- a) Is there enough value-adding in our area?
- b) Making a profit is hard because
- c) The good thing about working for myself is...
- d) The good thing about working for others is...
- e) Adding value to produce is important because...

**People understood what we were trying to do**

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

**We helped each other a lot**

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

**We could have done much better**

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

**We all did the same amount of work**

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

**One or two people made all the decisions**

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

**We planned before we bought each input**

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

**It was fun**

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

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