

Land Management Options to Increase Income

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Diversification has played an important role on this ranch since the time of its origination. The ranch was primarily purchased with intentions of timber harvesting and processing. Cattle were introduced on the ranch before any timber harvesting occurred, as it took time to construct railroads and a sawmill. Cypress and pine timber were both processed through the family mill. Hunting leases were established in the early 1940's as another alternative source of income. In the 1950's, tomato farmers utilized much of the prairie land. In turn, the land was improved as payment for their lease.

With our family growing, we find it necessary to carry out our ancestors' practices of using different alternatives to increase income. Today, our operation generates income from many different sources.

Cattle

The biggest percentage of our herd consists of commercial cattle. Purebred Brahmans are raised to produce many of our own bulls. We also market Brahman bulls. A purebred Brangus herd is presently being developed to put us in the business of marketing Brangus bulls.

Sawmill

We operate a sawmill where we process cypress timber into mulch, sawdust, and rough-cut lumber. Much of the timber run through the mill comes from outside sources. It is in the plans to put in a dry kiln.

Timber

We manage our pine and cypress timber with help from the Natural Resource Planning Services. Back burning (or cold fire) methods, combined with intense harvesting programs, are practiced to

support natural regeneration of the timber.

Hunting

Approximately 85% of the ranch is leased out for hunting. The game is managed by family members. Hunting provides an excellent source of income. We are currently developing a trophy hunt program which will be separate from the leases.

Sod

Floritam sod has become a valuable resource. This requires intense management to produce a quality product. Marketing possibilities should be observed before planting. Bahia sod is harvested for cash flow purposes or pasture renovation.

Landscape

The harvesting of cabbage palms, as well as wax myrtles and a variety of native grasses, has created another option.

Farming

Watermelon farming has been beneficial to us in numerous ways. Breakeven crops can still be considered a profit because of the improvements made on the pasture land. Risk management practices have enabled us to be successful with our farming operation.

Forages

We feel that our forage program is the backbone of our operation. A variety of grasses and legumes have been established to give us what we consider to be a well-rounded, diversified forage program. We market these forages primarily through grazing.

Under good weather conditions, other options become available. The options include seed

harvesting of bahia, rhodesgrass, millet, and a variety of legumes. Hemarthria hay has also been marketed. Bahiagrass sod could be included as part of our forage program, as well.

We are fortunate to be located in an area where

many land use options are available. Primarily, we like to consider ourselves cattlemen. However, this is the nineties, and cattlemen need to take advantage of all opportunities available on their operation.