

Game Proposal: Buy the Farm

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Game Overview

"Buy the Farm" is a Windows-based, real-time strategy, life simulation game about farming, resource management with a bit of humor thrown in. The purpose of this game is to entertain and educate the player using farming and resource management. The anticipated rating is E10+ and the game is presented from a third person point of view. To win the game, the player must pay off the mortgage on the farm.

Basic storyline

Our hero, the farmer, has decided to move out to the country from some fresh air and quiet living and has purchased a farm. Little does our hero know that farming is difficult. The farm has a well which can be used for irrigation. The player starts with very few tools and has a small amount of money left over to use to buy seeds to start a farm. The player must protect the garden, sell the harvest and reach the final goal, which is to pay off the mortgage on the farm.

Major challenges player must overcome

There are many obstacles that stand in the way of the player achieving the final goal. Pests and unwelcome visitors, such as rabbits and deer will thwart the player. Keeping everything properly irrigated is also important. Too much water, or too little water can kill your crops. Drought is also a possibility and will require the player to use more water from the well. Use too much water and the well will dry up. When pests arrive, pesticides will need to be used, but they will need to be purchased. Deer and rabbits can be killed with the rifle, but you'll need to buy bullets.

Settings

1. Farm
 - 1.1. Farm house - this is where you live. If you hire workers, they'll need a place to live, too. The player will need to expand their house to accommodate more workers as the game progresses.
 - 1.2. Plot of land and adjacent fields. A single person can only maintain a so many plots of land. Eventually, the work will become too much and the plot of land can only be maintained by hiring help.
 - 1.3. Well - this is used for irrigation
 - 1.4. Transportation - this starts out as a truck, but you can upgrade to a rhinoceros.
2. Town
 - 2.1. Supply store - this is where you purchase seeds, feed and materials for thwarting deer and rabbits. You can also buy pesticides here. Organic pesticides are more expensive but your harvest will be worth more.
 - 2.2. Weapons shop - if you decide that killing deer and rabbits is the way to go, this is where you can buy weapons and ammo.
 - 2.3. Bank - this is where you pay your mortgage or acquire new plots of land.

2.4. Market - this is where you sell your harvest and talk to other townspeople.

Characters

The main character is our hero, the farmer. The player can pick any name they like. The player will be able to control the look of their avatar but there are no special skills to pick from.

Non-player characters:

1. General store owner. This is the character you interact with to purchase supplies
2. People at the market. There will be a bunch of people to talk to and they can give you tips on how to win the game
3. Banker. Go see the banker to pay the mortgage
4. Elephant. This is meant to be humorous - you can buy an elephant and it will irrigate for you.
5. Rhinoceros. More humor - you can buy one and use it instead of a truck.
6. Deer and rabbits - they'll eat some of your crops, so you'll have to figure out how to get rid of them. You can build fences, or you can shoot them.

Structure

The game is organized into seasons. Each season you are supposed to grow a crop and sell your harvest. Your ability to perform the "maintenance", such as watering, fertilizing, weeding and vermin control has a direct effect on the size of your harvest and how much money you can make. In an effort to simplify the game and make it accessible to 10 year olds, market forces such as supply and demand will not be taken into account. The size of your harvest is always directly proportional to the amount of money you make.

Gameplay

1. Inventory:
 - 1.1. Money. There will be three meters:
 - 1.1.1. Bank account balance.
 - 1.1.2. Under the table balance. This is the amount of money the player has hidden at the farmhouse or on them at any given time.
 - 1.1.3. Amount of debt left to pay off.
 - 1.2. Seeds. There will be a separate screen that can be activated that shows the number and types of seeds the player has in stock
 - 1.3. Equipment. The equipment will be stored at the farm and will be visible on screen and can be used and activated by clicking on the equipment
2. User interface. This will primarily be the mouse. The player will click on locations to visit or on objects or people with whom to interact. Interactions will be context sensitive. For example, if you click on a farm hand, a list of possibilities will present itself. Many farm hands can be selected at once by dragging a box around a group.
3. Time is denoted by the various seasons. All seasons are growing seasons.
4. Irrigation. Crops must be watered or they will die. The player must be careful because too much water will kill your crops. The player will have access to a moisture meter for each field with an optimum level displayed for each field.
 - 4.1. Dig ditches. This provides the water with a path from the well or nearby river to the crops.
 - 4.2. Install sprinkler systems. Hoses can be run from the well to sprinkler systems to more effectively water the crops.
 - 4.3. Carry buckets of water. This is the initial method for getting water to crops. The player will want to upgrade the well as soon as possible.
 - 4.4. Buy an elephant. Humor is important. And elephants are cool. Using an elephant to water your crops is totally impractical, but these elephants are cheap and are fueled by a small bag of peanuts. These elephants also walk lightly and will not smash your crops. They also scare off deer and rabbits.
5. Plant crops. This is first step to making money.
 - 5.1. Initially, the player will need to dig holes with a shovel to plant the seeds. This is tedious and will take a lot of time.

- 5.2. The player will be able to purchase equipment to till the land and seed spreaders. This will increase the number of seeds the player can plant and will increase yields.
 - 5.3. Prior to planting a crop, the player can choose to fertilize the field. This will increase the yield. Fertilizer can be purchased at the general store.
 - 5.4. Any given field can only hold so many seeds. The player could spend all of their cash on seeds, but can only plant what a field can take.
6. Maintain fields
 - 6.1. Keep vermin away from crops, either by making fences or shooting them. Making takes more upfront resources but makes the fields easier to maintain. Shooting them is cheaper up front but ultimately requires more work.
 - 6.2. Keep irrigation going correctly. Too much or too little irrigation kills your crops. The player needs to keep track of moisture levels. If a season has heavy rain, then less irrigation will be needed. If there is a drought, more irrigation will be needed. The game could throw a really, really heavy rainy season at the player and this could cause a crop to die.
 - 6.3. Eliminating insects. Beetles and other insects can eat your farm. Pesticide can keep them away. The player has a choice of organic or inorganic methods. The organic methods cost more but raise the selling price of your harvest.
 - 6.4. Tasking your staff. You can task the staff with field maintenance. Anything the player can do themselves to maintain fields is available to staff. This includes shooting vermin. But the smart player will have them build fences as this means less staff will need to be hired.
7. Harvest and sell the crops
 - 7.1. The player must harvest the crops and load them into the truck.
 - 7.2. Take the crops to market and sell them. This is fairly simple - the size and type (wheat, corn, grapes, etc.) of the crop and organic vs conventional is taken into account and the price is determined. The player will have to take the money to the bank for it to reflect in their balance. The player can just hold onto the cash and not go to the bank, but they risk being robbed or having their farmhouse burn down.
 - 7.3. Once the player is at the market, mingling with the townspeople is encouraged as they can provide valuable information. Information about the weather, pests and farming tips will be given.
8. Banking / Farm Upgrades
 - 8.1. Paying the mortgage. The player will need to go to the bank and pay the mortgage each season. It is possible to skip a couple of seasons but if the player skips too many, the bank will foreclose. It is also possible to work out a deal with the bank if the player is short on funds.

8.2. Farm upgrades

8.2.1. Adding an additional plot of land. This allows the player to plant larger or more diverse crops. However, larger plots of land require more staff, which is an additional cost.

8.2.2. Adding on to the house. This allows you to house additional staff.

8.3. Depositing money. When the player is paid for their harvest, the money is not automatically deposited. The player will need to take the money to the bank and deposit it. Alternatively, the player may want to avoid the bank and keep the money in hand. The player can still buy supplies and upgrades from the various stores but the player could get robbed or their house could burn down and they could lose the money. The reason for holding on to the money is in tight money situations. If the player goes to the bank, they will be forced to pay the mortgage.

9. Shopping for supplies and tool upgrades

9.1. General Store. The following can be purchased:

9.1.1. Seeds: wheat, corn, flax, cotton, barley, grapes, apples, oranges

9.1.2. Hoses - used for running lines to sprinklers

9.1.3. Sprinklers - improved watering

9.1.4. Electric pumps to pump water to the sprinklers

9.2. Farm equipment store

9.2.1. Soil prep equipment - tilling, fertilizing tools.

9.2.2. Planting equipment - seed spreaders.

9.2.3. Harvesting equipment. Some things will have to be harvested by hand, but wheat can be harvested with equipment.

9.3. Gun shop

9.3.1. Rifle - Allows you to shoot vermin at long range.

9.3.2. Shotgun - shorter range than a rifle, but can take out a bunch of rabbits at once.

9.3.3. Plasma rifle -- nothing beats killing vermin like a good old-fashioned plasma rifle. Unlimited ammo, but pretty pricey. Just imagine a team of field hands nuking Thumper and Bambi.

10. Win / Lose conditions

10.1. The player loses the game when the bank has foreclosed on all of the player's property. When the player is behind by four payments on a piece of property the bank will foreclose. This allows the player to stop paying on a parcel of land and have the bank foreclose on just that piece of property. When the player loses the house, the game is over.

10.2. The player wins the game when the mortgage is paid off. When the player adds adjacent plots of land to the property, the debt will increase.

Audio and video

Video

The general look of the game will be 2 1/2 dimensions. The graphics will not need to be that realistic and sprites can be used for the characters.

Audio

The following library of sounds will need to be compiled:

Sound effect library will need to include:

1. Shoveling
2. Planting
3. Shooting
4. Fence building
5. Farmhouse expansion
6. Workers talking
7. Tilling the earth
8. Applying pesticide
9. Characters walking
10. Watering
11. Driving the truck
12. Money changing hands (cha-ching, clink clink)
13. Elephant sounds when elephant is watering the crops and chasing off vermin
14. Winning sound when the mortgage is paid off
15. Losing sound when the bank forecloses.

Special elements:

1. Terrain - the terrain will be flat. It will turn brown during a drought, green when the drought is over. It will always be daytime. Farming at night is not too much fun.
2. Sky - not visible.
3. Water
 - 3.1. Rivers - Nothing too fancy. No animation. They will need to be more interesting than just going straight through the farmland. Rivers will shrink in width when there is a drought.
 - 3.2. Rain - this will be a simple effect where the rain is overlaid on top of the scene. The entire scene will darken when it is raining.
4. Structures
 - 4.1. Farmhouse
 - 4.2. General Store
 - 4.3. Gun Shop
 - 4.4. Bank
 - 4.5. Equipment Shop
5. Plants
 - 5.1. Trees - orange trees, apple trees and random trees to spice up the terrain.
 - 5.2. Farm plants - wheat, flax, grapes, cotton, barley.
6. Characters
 - 6.1. The main character - the farmer
 - 6.2. General Store owner
 - 6.3. Gun Shop owner
 - 6.4. Banker
 - 6.5. Equipment shop owner

6.6. Numerous people at the marketplace with whom to interact

6.7. Workers

7. Animals

7.1. Deer

7.2. Rabbits

7.3. Elephants

7.4. Birds