



Lesson Plan: The Grain Game

Courses: Agricultural Business / Agriscience / Introduction to Agriculture

Grade Level: 9-12

Lesson Length: 60 minutes

Topic: Corn marketing decisions under changing market conditions

Essential Question

How can a producer use market information, personal outlook, and a disciplined sales plan to make grain-marketing decisions when future prices are uncertain?

National AFNR Standards Alignment

Applicable AFNR Connections

- Agribusiness Systems ABS.04.03 Identify and apply strategies to manage or mitigate risk.
- Agribusiness Systems ABS.05.01. Determine the role of markets, trade, competition, and price in relation to an AFNR business sales and marketing plan.
- Career Ready Practices CRP.05.01. Assess, identify, and synthesize the information and resources needed to make decisions that positively impact the workplace and community.

Learning Intention

We are learning to use market information and sales plans to make and explain grain marketing decisions when future prices are uncertain.

Success Criteria- I can:

- Use the information available in each round to explain a sell or hold decision.
- Calculate sales revenue, cumulative sales, and average selling price accurately.
- Follow the game rules and account for all 100,000 bushels.
- Evaluate a decision using what I knew at the time, rather than the final price.

Materials Needed

- Grain Game 2026 presentation
- One Grain Game scoring sheet per team
- Calculator for each team
- Pens or pencils
- Projected presentation and screen
- Optional team name cards or small whiteboards

Facilitator note: The Grain Game is a classroom simulation. Its information, dates, and prices are game inputs for student decision making and should not be presented as current market advice.



Vocabulary

Grain Marketing	Bushel	Cash Price
Supply	Demand	Market Outlook
Sell	Hold	Revenue
Cumulative Total	Market Risk	Marketing Plan

Lesson Sequence at a Glance

Time and Lesson Component	Purpose / Facilitator Focus
5 min Introduction	Introduce the marketing challenge and decision-making focus.
7 min Rules and Team Setup	Name farms, distribute score sheets, and explain game constraints.
30 min Seven Pricing Rounds	Review each market update, decide to sell or hold, and record sales.
10 min Final Math	Calculate total revenue and average selling price.
8 min Debrief and Closure	Compare strategies, evidence, uncertainty, and lessons learned.

Bell Ringer / Opening Prompt (5 Minutes)

Display or read the prompt:

“If you knew today’s corn price but could not know future prices, what information would help you decide whether to sell now or wait?”

Students briefly list two pieces of information and one personal factor that might influence the decision. Use responses to introduce market analysis, uncertainty, and the difference between a reasoned decision and hindsight.

Direct Instruction and Game Setup (12 Minutes)

Grain Marketing Context

- The activity asks students to make decisions about when to sell based on the information provided or their own judgment.
- Supply, demand, farmer activity, weather, crop expectations, exports, and personal outlook may influence a marketing decision.
- A strong classroom explanation focuses on the quality of the decision process, not only on which team earns the most revenue.

Game Rules

1. Form teams and name each farm.
2. Each farm begins with 100,000 bushels of corn to market and a starting corn price of \$4.00.
3. There are seven pricing dates: September 1, September 30, January 3, March 31, June 15, July 15, and August 15.
4. At every date, if the team decides to sell, they must sell at least 10,000 bushels, including August 15.
5. All sales must be made in 10,000-bushel increments.



6. Any unsold bushels must be priced in the final period, and 100 percent of the grain must be sold by August 15.
7. At each round, teams review only the information revealed for that date, decide how much to sell, and record the transaction before the next round.

Guided Practice (5 Minutes)

Model how to complete one row of the scoring sheet without choosing a strategy for students.

Scoring-Sheet Field	How to Complete It
Bushels Sold	Record the bushels sold during that pricing round.
Price	Record the price presented for the current date.
Total Bushels Sold	Add the current sale to all previous bushels sold.
\$\$\$ from Sale	Multiply bushels sold by the current price.
\$\$\$ Total	Add the current sale revenue to all previous revenue.

Check before continuing: The team's cumulative bushels sold must never exceed 100,000, and the remaining bushels must allow the team to meet the required minimum sale in each remaining round.

Interactive Activity / Laboratory (30 Minutes)

The Grain Game: Seven Pricing Rounds

For each round, reveal the market information and current price from the presentation. Teams discuss the information, choose how many bushels to sell, record the decision, and briefly write the strongest reason for the choice.

Date	Price	Information Provided	Decision Prompt
September 1	\$4.00	A bumper U.S. corn harvest is expected; South American supplies are tight and support U.S. exports; new price lows put pressure on farmers while soybean prices appear relatively attractive.	Sell now or hold until the end of the month?
September 30	\$4.20	Low prices are limiting farmer selling; early Midwest harvest results are mixed but generally good; ethanol and export business are stronger than expected.	Sell now or hold through the rest of the calendar year?
January 3	\$4.50	The U.S. crop is not as large as earlier estimated; South American corn is off to a rough start; some farmers are selling to generate cash flow.	Sell now or hold until the end of March?
March 31	\$5.00	Corn rebounds after a lower-acreage Prospective Plantings	Sell now or wait until planting is finished?



		report; South American weather is not great; farmers still hold sizable old-crop inventories; bird-flu concerns affect broiler production.	
June 15	\$5.20	June is among the warmest on record; exports remain strong although South America appears to have a good crop; the bird-flu issue is receding.	Sell now or wait until July 15?
July 15	\$5.00	U.S. weather now looks favorable through harvest; farmers are beginning to sell old-crop bushels; South America's corn crop also looks good.	Sell now or hold another month?
August 15	\$4.50	An August crop report contains bearish yield surprises; the rest of the growing season looks favorable; South American production is larger than expected.	Sell the balance of the crop.

Team Decision Routine

8. Read the new market information and identify signals that might support selling or holding.
9. Review bushels already sold and bushels remaining.
10. Choose the number of bushels to sell while following all game requirements.
11. Record the price, cumulative bushels, sale revenue, and cumulative revenue.
12. Write a one-sentence reason for the decision before the next price is revealed.

Final Math (10 Minutes)

- Verify that total bushels sold equal 100,000.
- Add all sale-revenue amounts to determine total grain revenue.
- Calculate the team's weighted average selling price: total revenue divided by 100,000 bushels.
- Check the arithmetic with a second team member.
- Prepare a 30-second explanation of the farm's marketing approach.

Debrief and Discussion (8 Minutes)

- Which market update had the greatest influence on your team's decision?
- When did your team rely more on the information provided, and when did it rely more on personal outlook?
- How did the required minimum sale affect your strategy?
- Did your team spread sales across dates or concentrate them? What tradeoff did that create?
- Which decision was reasonable at the time even if a later price made it look less successful?
- How could a written marketing plan help a producer make disciplined decisions?

Assessment

- Facilitator observation of team discussion, rule compliance, and use of market information.



- Accurate completion of the scoring sheet after each pricing round.
- One-sentence rationale recorded for each decision.
- Participation in the final strategy explanation and debrief.

Exit Ticket

- Name one market factor that influenced a sale or hold decision.
- Explain one advantage of selling grain across multiple dates.
- State the weighted average selling price for your team.
- Describe one decision your team would keep and one decision it might reconsider, using only the information available at that point in the game.

Support

- Provide a calculation guide with the formulas for sale revenue, cumulative revenue, and weighted average price.
- Assign roles such as market reader, recorder, calculator, rule checker, and spokesperson.
- Use a 100,000-bushel visual divided into ten 10,000-bushel blocks so students can track remaining grain.
- Allow teams to use calculators and check one sample calculation with the facilitator.

Enrichment Activities

- Ask students to graph price by date and mark their sales quantities.
- Compare the team's weighted average price with the starting price and the highest price in the simulation.
- Require a written marketing policy before the first round, then evaluate whether the team followed it.
- Have students calculate the proportion of the crop sold at each date and explain the risk-management logic.

Closure (3 Minutes)

Revisit the essential question:

How can a producer use market information, personal outlook, and a disciplined sales plan to make grain-marketing decisions when future prices are uncertain?

Ask each student to share one word or phrase that describes an effective grain-marketing process, such as “discipline,” “information,” “diversification,” “risk,” “math,” or “patience.”

Extension Activity

- Create a hypothetical grain-marketing log that records dates, quantities, prices, reasons, and reflections.
- Career Exploration: Identify careers connected to grain origination, merchandising, commodity marketing, market analysis, and producer services.
- Communication Practice: Prepare a short explanation of the team's marketing strategy for a farm owner or business partner.

Facilitator Preparation Notes

- Open the presentation and scoring sheet before class and confirm that each team has a calculator and writing tools.
- Reveal one pricing round at a time so teams cannot use future information.
- Set a consistent discussion limit for each round and require a recorded decision before advancing.



- Check cumulative bushels after each round to prevent teams from creating an impossible remaining balance.
- Focus the debrief on decision quality, evidence, risk, and discipline rather than treating the highest revenue as the only successful outcome.
- Retain the scenario's supplied dates, prices, and market facts exactly when facilitating the game.

References & Supporting Resources

- **University of Minnesota, Center for Farm Financial Management.** *Commodity Challenge*. A "Fantasy Grain Marketing" educational activity that uses cash, futures, and options quotes for corn, soybeans, and wheat and is identified as a National FFA Endorsed Activity. Commodity Challenge [commoditychallenge.com]
- **University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources.** *Marketing in a New Era (MINE)*. A commodity-marketing simulation developed to help beginning and intermediate grain and oilseed marketers build marketing skills through simulated cash, futures, and basis markets. Marketing in a New Era [ianrmedia.unl.edu]

This GROWMARK lesson incorporates established grain-marketing concepts and simulation-based learning approaches. The instructional sequence, student activities, decision-making exercises, questions, and classroom application have been developed for the GROWMARK lesson plan library.