

A FARMER'S SAY >
By Michael J. Ssali

Why it is important to keep records

A prudent farmer keeps a record of what takes place on his farm in order to have a clear picture of its performance in terms of profits and losses.

There ought to be a record of money spent on farm inputs like feeds, fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides and other items as well as a record of sold items such as milk, eggs, birds, animals, crops and others. There should be a record of assets like the number of his animals or birds or fruit trees, tools, furniture, structures, and vehicles, if any.

The farmer should record overhead expenses such as the money paid to the vet doctor, laborers, transportation of inputs and farm produce.

Personal expenditure, like money spent on children's school fees, other family needs, and social activities like an evening out with the spouse or a friend in a restaurant or a local bar should be recorded.

Most farming households feed on the items grown on their farms. It would be good to estimate the monetary value of the items consumed and to have them recorded as well. A farmers' group should once in a while invite Book Keeping experts to teach members how to make proper farm records.

Records make it easier for the farmer to evaluate the performance of his farm. The farmer with well-kept books is in a better position to detect thefts or misuse of inputs and farm products. He thinks twice before spending money because he is guided by a clear record of his income.

Money lending institutions such as banks prefer to deal with farmers who have well-kept records. In case of the farmer's death the children can equitably share the profits when there are well kept books instead of subdividing the piece of land.

Some farmers keep weather records by marking the days it rains and when it does not. In their groups farmers should even buy such equipment as the rain gauge, thermometer, barometer, and wind vane, to keep accurate weather recordings over a period of years to guide them in determining the best months to plant their crops.

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