

Land & Water fact sheet

Record keeping

What is it?

Record keeping is required in all businesses to help demonstrate compliance with certified systems and legislation. It is also required to efficiently keep track of costs, farm activities and milestones toward production goals.

A grower operating a small business has a greater degree of control over daily activities, therefore paperwork may be considered less important than for a bigger business, however all business operators have obligations to keep a minimum amount of records and when it comes to tax time good records are invaluable. The business owner needs to establish for themselves what kind of records they need to keep and how they intend to organise these records.

There are a number of standard activities that can be recorded however, with an effective and useable record keeping system you may feel encouraged to expand the records you keep.

Records can be categorised according to function:

Quality Assurance (QA):

Quality assurance records are something that many of you may be familiar with such as:

- fertiliser and chemical usage
- traceability
- harvest and packing
- internal audit/ mock recall
- residue testing, microbiological testing, chemical testing
- training.

Many quality assurance tests will provide you with records that will collect useful data.

Workplace Health & Safety:

- inductions/training
- records of incidents and follow-up action
- records of visitors and contractors on farm
- records of regular inspections
- maintenance and repairs of machinery
- chemical safety records.

For the benefit of you and your staff, WHS records should be kept. This will encourage updating of any training that is required for farm workers.

Environmental assurance

Environmental assurance records monitor:

- rainfall
- water quality
- soil erosion
- soil carbon
- wind speed/direction
- temperature.

You may already keep track of some of these records such as rainfall. Keeping a range of records will help you to improve drainage systems, water storage and may also be used to look at what other crops may be suitable to your specific conditions. These sorts of records could influence what you choose to plant in the future.

Record keeping continued

How does it help me?

Keeping records of the many farm activities may seem time consuming. However, once an effective and efficient record keeping system has been established, the reward of your hard work will be the useful information you have collated which will help your decision making.

Record keeping can assist in management decisions that could help increase productivity and profitability of your farm. Record keeping can also help you plan for future growth of your business.

Save time

Working with an efficient record keeping system will save you time. Have a proper working space dedicated to record keeping and paper work; this will make it easier to approach the task.

Keep organised

Having your records well organised will allow retrieval of information easily. When it is time to re-order stock or equipment it is easy to refer to the previous order.

When implementing a new project it is a good to keep records of successes and failures. Previously recorded data will be able to tell you what changes have occurred since trying a different type of timed irrigator for example.

Book keeping

Many of you may prefer to do your book work by hand. This method is fine. This system allows you to easily access previous records as you walk around the farm. You can also note down any other details that you may find beneficial down the track.

One problem with only keeping your records in a book means that you may need to still transfer this data into information to make it useful. Once a simple spreadsheet is made in a program such as Microsoft Excel™ then the data can be manipulated without having to spend time transferring information and measurements from one

page to another. If you are not already using them, it might be an advantage to become familiar with computerised systems. There are many courses and self-taught courses that help you to use many of these useful programs. There are several tailor-made farm software packages that can help organise your record keeping.

Software packages

There are many established software developers that have created easy to use programs that have been tailor made for farmers to manage their records. Farmplan is one example.

Whatever way you choose to keep records of on-farm activities, it is important to be able to turn that data collected into useful information that will benefit you in the long term.

To find out more about Farm Management Systems contact Growcom on 07 3620 3863 or visit www.growcom.com.au

References

<http://www.farmplan.com.au/works.htm>

<http://www.agdata.com.au/index-tess1.php?ItemNo=1027>



Level 1/385 St Paul's Tce Fortitude Valley 4006 | PO Box 202 Fortitude Valley QLD 4006 | Tel: 07 3620 3844 | Fax: 07 3620 3880 | Email: growcom@growcom.com.au