Developing Countries Farm Radio Network

# Pack 11, Item 1

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**Good farm records: a key to higher profits, part 1: Getting started** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Information on this topic was requested by DCFRN Participants in Cameroon, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guyana, India, Lesotho, Malawi, Nepal, Philippines, Swaziland, Taiwan, Uruguay, and Zambia.

Presenter: George Atkins

**Special note**

Before using the information in this item, please read the notes at the end concerning related DCFRN items.

**Suggested introduction**

We at this radio station are part of a world-wide information network that gathers farming information from developing countries all over the world. It's the Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency, Massey Ferguson, and the University of Guelph.

Through this Network, we bring you information on ways to increase food supplies for your family, or to sell—ways that other farmers have used successfully.

Today let's talk about some first steps toward a better farm family income. Here's George Atkins.

**GEORGE ATKINS:** One day, on a very hot afternoon not long ago, I was visiting with a farmer and his wife. Their home and everything around it were clean and tidy. They had a sow, some good chickens, and a nice garden. It was easy to see that they work very hard.

As we talked, they told me they've noticed that some other farmers make more money than they do. They asked me why this might be. Before answering, I began asking them questions about their farming.

I asked them about how much time they spent weeding and cultivating their crops.

I asked them when their sow would be giving birth to her next litter of baby pigs.

They were not able to answer my questions. They just didn't know.

Let's remember these people as farm family "Number Two," because earlier that very day, in the morning, I had visited with a different farm family—we'll call them family "Number One." At their place, it was quite different. They *were* able to answer my questions, and if they weren't quite sure, they'd look at notes they had made on a calendar on the wall, or in a box of papers they kept in a special place in their home.

This family was making a lot more money than family Number Two. In fact, this farm family Number One had told me they thought that their good farm records help them more than anything else to make more money in farming.

They told me farming is their business and that, just like people who are in business in town keep records, they also keep careful records.

Well, later in the day when I was with farmer Number Two and his wife, I suppose you can guess what my answer was when they asked me why some other farmers make more money than they do. Of course I told them about farmer Number One whom I had met during the morning. I told them how I had asked him when his sow would be having her baby pigs. I told them he had gone to the calendar and had looked to see the date he had marked when he took his sow to the boar to be bred. He had marked the calendar that very day. He knew that a sow has her baby pigs about 114 days after breeding, and he had counted 114 days later on the calendar and he had marked that day too, so he was able to tell me just about when he expected the pigs to be born.

If you keep pigs, that's important to know, so you can get a nice dry pen prepared for your sow to have her babies in; and to be around and do what's necessary to make sure she doesn't step or lie on them.

Farmer Number One always had good luck with his baby pigs. He seldom lost any because he always knew when to be ready for them.

When I told farm family Number Two about this, they said they had never done that. They did have a calendar, but they had never thought about keeping a record of when their sow was bred and when to expect its baby pigs to be born. Because they didn't know this for sure, the young pigs were often born before proper preparations had been made and, almost always, one or two or even more of their baby pigs would get stepped on, or crushed to death by the sow.

So while family Number Two nearly always lose baby pigs, family Number One, with the help of the records they keep, have hardly ever lost any. That's one reason why they make more money than family Number Two.

If you keep any kind of livestock, don't you think it's a good idea to write down on a calendar when your cow, your goat, or your sow is bred so you can be ready for the young animals when they are born? Perhaps you do this already. Perhaps you do keep a record of breeding dates for your animals. If you do, you may be making more money from your livestock than farmers who don't keep those records.

But have you noticed, I've been talking about keeping records in your farm business? And I've given just one example of some important information you can write on a calendar. There are other records too that you could mark on a calendar—when the rainy season began, when you sold an animal, how much money you got for it—things like that, things that you may need to remember later.

But thinking about this, let me mention two very important things about keeping farm records.

First: The main reason for keeping farm records is to help you remember things you will need to know later. Because of this, the best time to make the record is right away, when it's fresh in your mind. It's easy if it's done right away. (It was very easy for farmer Number One to mark that special date on the calendar on the very day he had his sow bred; then to count the next 114 days and mark the date to expect his little pigs to be born). In many families, it's the younger people who write or mark down the record. This is a good way for them to become interested in the farm family business.

Second: The records you keep must be accurate or they will be no good. If farmer Number One had not marked the calendar on the correct date, or if he had not counted the other days correctly, he wouldn't have had the right date marked for the baby pigs to be born. So records must be accurate.

Those are two very important points:

First, It's easy for you or someone else in the family to make the record right away, when it's fresh in your mind, and

Second, be sure your records are accurate; don't ever make a record that's not right.

Now there are several different kinds of records you can keep that will help you make more money in your farming business. Today we've talked about one of them—marking important information on a calendar. That's a good way to get started keeping farm records.

Serving Agriculture, the Basic Industry, this is George Atkins.

**Sources of information**

Better Farming Series No. 26 ‑ The Modern Farm Business (55 pages), available from Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome, Italy. (Published by arrangement with the Institut africain pour le developpement economique et social (INADES), BP 8008, Abidjan, Ivory Coast.) <http://www.fao.org/3/a-bp062e.pdf>