



Farm management software guide

The ultimate guide to farm management software

 **TELUS**® Agriculture

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Congratulations!

You've taken an important step towards improving the management of your farm.

Today, several factors influence farming, including advancements in technology and the ever-changing challenges posed by weather, commodity prices and consumer demands.

The adoption of time-saving, profit-increasing farm management software is not only for the tech-savvy – for today's progressive farmer, it's becoming a must-have to thrive in the rapidly evolving world of agriculture.





The implementation of farm management software can be a real game-changer as it allows you to automate several processes from work planning to monitoring and logistics.

So whether you're a farmer trying to optimize fertilizer usage or a smaller hobby farm, this guide will explain what farm software is and the steps you can take to make the switch.

In Canada, 66.3% of farms reported using technology on their operation.

2016 Census of Agriculture

Quick definitions



Inventory management

The process of keeping inventory levels, raw materials and other products, including fertilizers, pesticides, fuel or seeds, accounted for and in stock.

Third-party advisors

Third-party advisors – agricultural advisors include accountants, brokers, grain marketers and agronomists, among others. Third-party advisors are generally recognized as qualified to perform the tasks for which they have been engaged.

Succession planning

The process of leaving the farm to the next generation and preparing them to succeed as operators.



Making the transition

While a notebook and spreadsheet have been farm management tools for years, using them to manage your business is becoming a thing of the past – there are more efficient and effective solutions out there, such as farm management software. While flexible, notebooks and spreadsheets have some drawbacks as primary business management tools. Some of those drawbacks include:

No backup system

Lost notebooks, an unexpected tragedy or loss of a family member could mean the permanent loss of important records.

Time wasted

Transferring records from a notebook to a spreadsheet at the end of a work day takes up time that could be better spent business planning or relaxing with family

Difficulty with instant access

Have you ever tried pulling a report from a notebook? It's tedious and labour intensive. Instant access to visual data allows for quicker and critical decision-making.

Poor quality record-keeping

Records stored in your head, 12-hour-plus days out on the farm, home late after a long day. Sound familiar? It's tricky to remember what happened 10 hours ago let alone when it's +40 degrees Celsius and you've just finished a day outside.

Tougher sharing capabilities

It's difficult to share information from your notebook with a team member across the farm or your advisor who lives hours away. Yes, you can email it to them – but it could end up being hours after they've requested it or you may even forget.

The next generation

Succession planning is challenging enough but it can be even more difficult to pass on the deep knowledge of a farm business if it's only stored in your head and hundreds of old notebooks (that could be lost).

"When I lost my husband, I had to decide if I would keep farming or not. Thank goodness, all the records are digitized. It makes it easier to go back and look at what was done in the past and plan on how to do better in the future." - Bobby Donovan, farm management software customer



Recommended Reading

[How farmers are using farm management software to support their operations](#)

Notebooks and spreadsheets don't always cut it



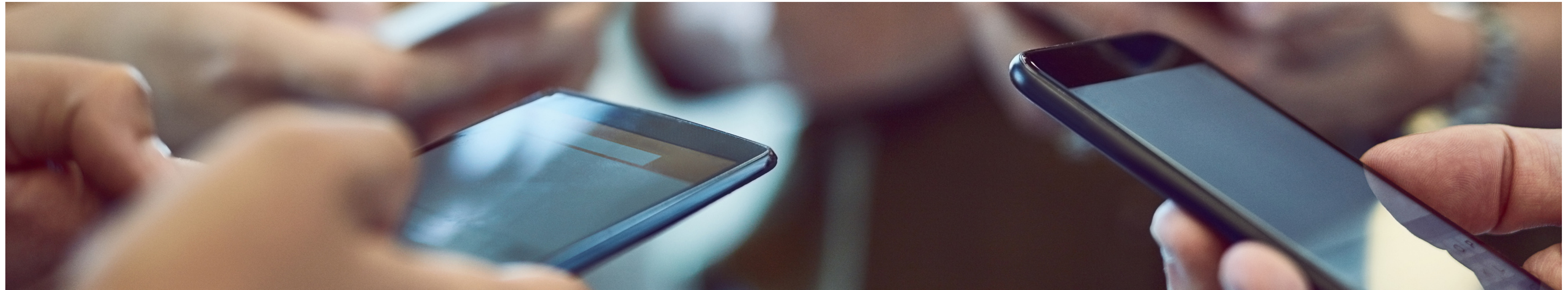
Drawbacks of notebooks

Drawbacks of notebooks

- Potential of lost records with critical information
- No ability to derive insights
- Transferring information is difficult
- Makes it challenging to collaborate with on-farm team and third-party advisors

Drawbacks of spreadsheets

- Time-consuming data entry
- Difficult to derive insights
- If the computer crashes, spreadsheets are lost
- Spreadsheets aren't always user-friendly



What is farm management software?

Approximately 40% of farms use at least one type of farm data software; of farms using any software, one-third use multiple platforms simultaneously

Purdue University Center for Commercial Agriculture

Farm management software can help improve management practices, from compiling a jobs list to more top-level requirements, such as crop planning for the upcoming season. It can also work to simplify your day-to-day operations, lessen frustrations and provide actionable, data-driven insights that help lead to more profitable and efficient business decisions.

Whether you're looking to spend more time with family, easily share information with your farm team or make more informed decisions, farm management software can work in your favour.



Is it right for my business?

Implementing a new process in your business is always an important decision. You may question whether you need farm management software and if it will help with your business requirements.

Here are a few questions you can ask yourself to determine whether farm management software will be useful for you and your farm operation:

- Could you be making more informed decisions on-farm, based on historical records, trends and reports, if you had them on-hand?
- Are you struggling to keep accurate historical records?
- Are you frustrated by not being able to get timely, correct information to your advisors?

- Are you struggling to allocate (as a farm manager) or receive (as a farm worker) accurate, specific tasks on a timely basis?
- Could you be generating more profit?
- Are you struggling to get reports to your third-party advisors

If you answered “yes” to any of the above questions, good news: farm management software could help you and your operation.



Notebooks and spreadsheets don't always cut it

Problem #1

Previously struggled with team members spraying the wrong field

Solution

Assign tasks to team members with exact GPS coordinates and spraying instructions – captured in one place

Result

Save time, reduce waste and increase operational efficiencies by aligning your team and tasks through to-do lists tagged to locations across your farm

Problem #1

High production costs and demand for increased profitability

Solution

Easily compare profit margins across your crops and fields to make better plans for your farm

Result

Know your sales position at-a-glance and record variable and fixed costs to help calculate your margin and break-even prices

Problem #1

Difficulty with record-keeping and tracking inventory

Solution

Plan and track all on-farm activities and important field-level information, from field-specific fertilizer blends to overall crop mix

Result

Easily access field and crop information wherever you are and efficiently record movement of inventory across your farm

What are the benefits?

The benefits of a farm management software range from immediate, such as saving time and accessing key insights quickly, to longer-term benefits like yield potential, easier decision-making and potential of higher profit. You'll discover the advantages gained by using farm management software increase over time.



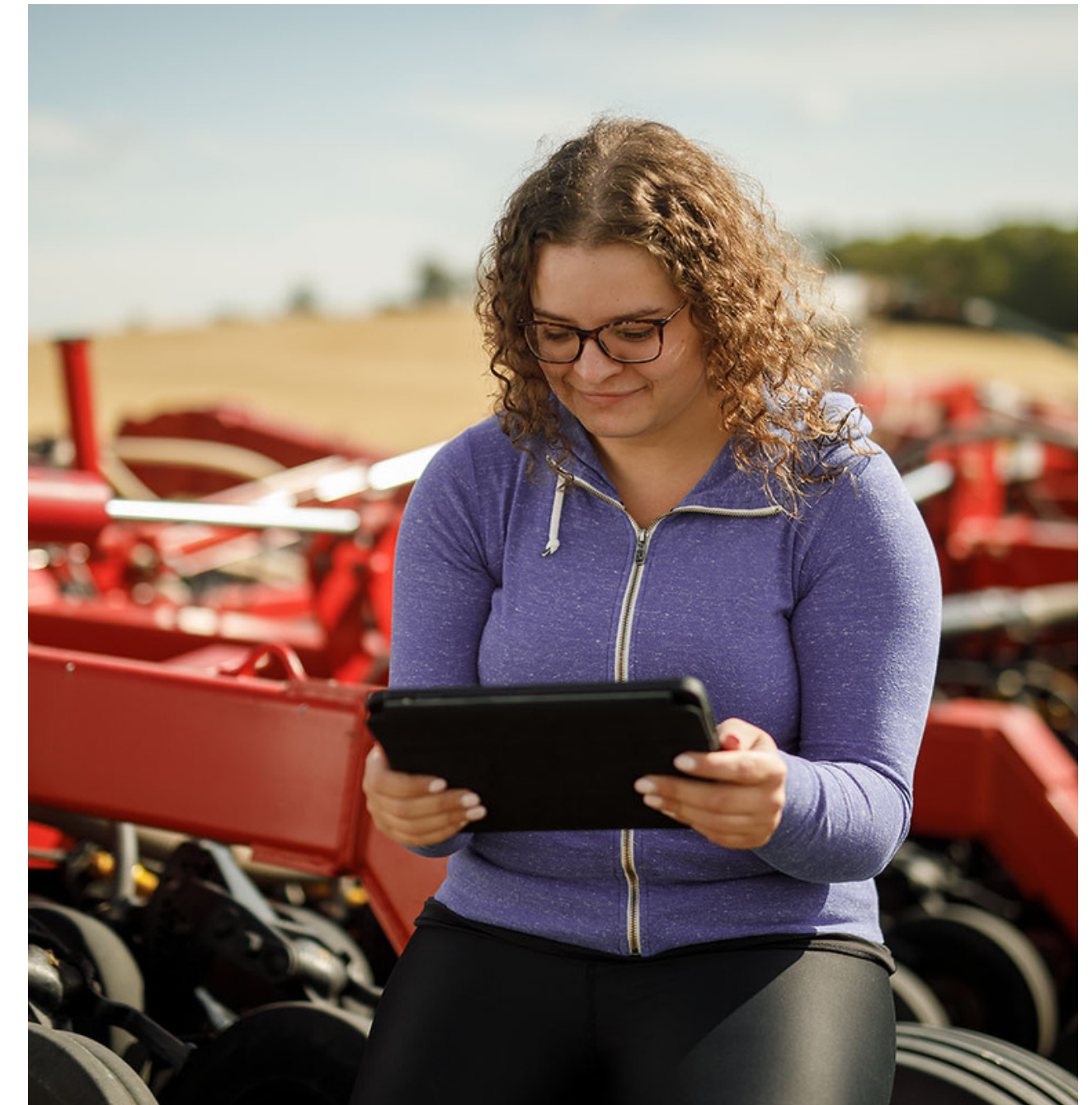
- Manage your farm information on-the-go with less data entry and more efficient workflows
- Review and act on your agronomy, budget and crop marketing plans
- Collaborate with your team and business partners in real-time
- Assign custom permission settings to expose any area of your farm to each added user

- Add trusted service providers for expert insights and service tracking to help resolve crop issues faster and with more accuracy
- Monitor and analyze both farm activities and costs to help improve efficiency
- Access farm records to make more informed and strategic decisions, helping to increase both productivity and profitability



- Access historical field data including crop type, seeded acres, variety, budget, agronomic yield and rotations
- Access yield analysis report to understand performance for future planning
- Easily capture and update inventory transfers from one location to another

- Share reports with your off-farm partners
- Know your sales position at-a-glance
- Access accurate equipment maintenance records so you know what has been worked on and when
- Monitor total production, summarize budgets and net profit



“Trying to share information and better understand what (my dad) was doing and what needed to be done is why I started to seek out (farm management software) – something that we could both use for record-keeping. We needed a centralized place where I could reference stuff without having to go to him all the time.”

- Abby Majerus, farm management software customer



Recommended Reading

[Five key advantages of digitizing your farm records](#)

I don't have time to learn new tech



There is a common misconception that adopting new technology takes a lot of time. Farm management software and their customer support teams are dedicated to helping smooth out the onboarding process of new customers with demos, trials, online tutorials and how-to videos.

A major benefit of farm management software is time saved – so the sooner you make the most of it, the better. Within a year, a new software tool that saves ten minutes a day could buy back more than a week of working days.



Recommended Reading

[Are you too busy to implement new technology?](#)

56.2% of farm operations used computers or laptops on their operation for farm management, while 42.9% of operations used smartphones or tablets for those tasks. 2016 Census of Agriculture

A few essentials



Farm management software has features that can be used periodically, seasonally, and some that can be used every day. You'll know best what specific features you want in a tool – below are just a few that you should look out for in farm management software:

Both offline and online capabilities

Even if you have great mobile coverage, services go down. It's important that software operates when your phone or tablet device is offline, so you aren't left jumping between new software and your old notebook.

Ease of use

You'll want to ensure the platform is user-friendly and simplifies complicated tasks to match how you plan, work and track production and critical processes.

Cloud backup, privacy and security

Cloud storage lets you access your data from anywhere an internet signal exists. And rest assured, the data entered in your software is yours and yours alone. Data entered into a farm management solution should not be sold or compromised, and be owned solely by you.

Real-time data sharing

This means the software allows immediate sharing of information across the farm with people you choose. It's important that farm management software supports multiple users, which can eliminate confusion and increase productivity.



Recommended Reading

[Farming smarter, not harder: planning for profit](#)



Getting started



Once you've chosen your farm management software, there's one more challenge: implementing it. Here are some pointers to help jump-start your transition from pencil and paper to your new farm management software, whatever size operation you're running.

- Pick a time and make the complete switch
- Don't bounce back and forth between the farm software and your notebook – it only creates headaches down the road
- Make farm software part of your daily routine

“What I love about (farm management software) is that my data – contracts, bin storage, fields – is all in one place available on my phone (or desktop.) In a blink of an eye, I can find what I need.”

- Dean Nelson, farm management software customer

Let's get to work. Together.

Deciding to make the shift from pen and paper to farm management software takes time but will save you time in the end. If you want to learn more about how farm management software could be a good fit for your operation, contact a Decisive Farming by TELUS Agriculture representative or request a free demo of our software.

