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New Year New Habits!

Week one of Farm Financial Skills is under our belts. With all this talk about recordkeeping, it's got me thinking of how I can improve my own records.

Although it can seem a bit cliché, the New Year is still a great time to make some financial resolutions when it comes to recordkeeping. Perhaps you are preparing taxes and somewhat regretting putting off recordkeeping or organizing your financial paperwork in 2019. This regret could be exacerbated if you are conducting a year-end review for both personal finance and business.

Make a commitment to start the year off on a better foot by creating attainable goals.

*Do one thing at a time:* It is daunting to think of all the ways we could have been more proficient in our financial recordkeeping. Instead of letting all these thoughts overwhelm you, start with a pen and paper. Make a list of truly manageable goals such as going through the pile of receipts on your desk.

*Set a time and limits:* It is quite possible you don't have an entire afternoon to commit to this endeavor right away. But you might have 30 minutes on a Tuesday night or Sunday afternoon. Pick a time and set a timer. Remove distractions by turning off the TV and silencing your phone. Work on your chosen task for that length of time. You'll be surprised how much you can accomplish with an uninterrupted half hour! Then mark it off your list- a satisfying task in and of itself. Spending even 30 minutes once or twice a week entering transactions into Quicken or getting your financial documents in order will really add up by year's end.

*Set reminders:* The days and weeks go by fast. When you find a time that works for your schedule, put it on your calendar so you are reminded each week to tackle a few financial tasks.

*Don't get discouraged:* Habits don't form overnight; they take time. Dr. Phillippa Lally, a psychology researcher at University College in London, studied new habits and found that it takes about 2 months to form new behaviors once we begin taking on a new task. So set your expectations accordingly and give yourself some grace. According to her study, "missing an opportunity to perform the behavior did not materially affect the habit formation process." Which is to say, it's okay to mess up a few times. Forming new habits is not an "all or nothing" process. If you need some motivation, consider this article your inspiration for the New Year!

If you have made other goals, such as putting more emphasis on saving for retirement or getting out of debt, Quicken can help with that, too. The 2019 Quicken for Farm/Ranch Records manual is online and includes instructions for using those features in Quicken. It can be found at the Oklahoma State website: <http://www.agecon.okstate.edu/quicken/download.asp>.

David G. Hallauer  
District Extension Agent  
Crops & Soils/Horticulture

***(Less Than) 60 Days***

As Farm Bill informational meetings concluded this week, the big take home message was: there are a lot of farms to get signed up before the March 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. For the record, the 60 days was January 15<sup>th</sup>, and doesn't account for weekends – making the deadline much closer than we'd like to admit! To help you with program election decisions, a number of resources have been made available from the K-State Agricultural Economics Department.

The first is a 'tradeoff' spreadsheet. It compares potential 2019/2020 ARC county level payments with PLC payments for every state, county, and covered commodity for which FSA has released data. Want to know where you might start to see an advantage to one program over another? This spreadsheet is a visual representation showing when each program might pay.

The second are publications that provide Marketing Year Average (MYA) price projections from several sources. One publication shows projections from K-State, with data on year to date grain sales. For example, when confirmed for December, we'll know a price on almost 40 percent of the year's corn sales as it pertains to the MYA price. A second publication adds projections from multiple USDA sources and the Food Animal Policy Research Institute at the University of Missouri, including prices for the *next* marketing year.

If you want to run calculations yourself, the site includes links to online tools from the University of Illinois and Texas A&M plus a link to the Illinois spreadsheet comparison tool. Both will help you sort out the potential payments under each program.

Slide sets and publications shared at previous Farm Bill meetings are posted on the site, including a frequently asked questions publication and another that outlines terminology used in the Farm Bill. Yield update spreadsheets and a spreadsheet to show what payments were made during the last Farm Bill cycle are available as well.

The 'one stop shop' for Farm Bill information can be found at [www.agmanager.info](http://www.agmanager.info) . Select the Ag Policy tab and 2018 Farm Bill Resources. Need help with navigation – or want to chat about election options? Contact a District Office or e-mail me at [dhallaue@ksu.edu](mailto:dhallaue@ksu.edu) .

***Horticulture Workshop – February 3<sup>rd</sup>***

The first of a set of quarterly horticulture informational workshops is kicking off the 2020 season on Monday February 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Delaware Township Library in Valley Falls. The free workshop will run from six to eight p.m. and is open to adults and youth ages twelve and older.

We'll kick off with an introduction to soils and hit on topics through the evening like composting and starting plants from seed. We'll even have a presentation on good bugs and bad bugs to help you sort out what might be a 'keeper' in the garden, versus something you'd rather get rid of. Local Master Gardeners and Extension personnel will lead the sessions.

RSVP's are requested by Friday, January 31<sup>st</sup> so we can get a count for handout materials. For details or to register, contact the Oskaloosa Office of the Meadowlark Extension District at (785) 863-2212 or e-mail me at [dhallaue@ksu.edu](mailto:dhallaue@ksu.edu)

January 17, 2020

Cindy Williams  
Meadowlark Extension District  
Food, Nutrition, Health, and Safety

No news from Cindy this week.

January 17, 2020

Nancy Nelson  
Meadowlark Extension District  
Family Life

No news from Nancy this week.