



RECORD KEEPING FOR AGRICULTURAL ENTERPRISES

Best practices and practical templates

A farm-level approach

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Structure of the presentation

01 What farm record keeping means

02 How records support agricultural production

03 Why accurate records matter

04 How to keep records current

05 Common types of farm records

06 Templates and applications

07 Key takeaways

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Good records connect the whole farm

From field activity to financial decisions, every reliable record strengthens the enterprise.









Farm records turn daily activity into usable evidence

Farm record keeping is the systematic practice of documenting and organizing essential information about farm operations.

It captures:

- **Financial activity** — income, expenses, assets and obligations
- **Production** — crop yields, livestock performance and input use
- **Resources** — labour, equipment, water, feed and maintenance
- **Compliance** — health, safety, environmental and certification records

The result: better decisions, stronger productivity and improved profitability.

Accurate records keep the farm running smoothly

Whether the farm is small or commercial, current records help the owner or manager:

- **Coordinate operations** — keep crops, livestock, labour and equipment working together.
- **Connect production to finance** — understand what activities cost and what they return.
- **Plan with confidence** — use accurate history to budget, invest and allocate resources.
- **Protect continuity** — keep the business moving when people or circumstances change.

Accurate records improve decisions and efficiency

Improved decision-making

Reliable information reveals what is working, what needs attention and where the farm should invest next.

Example

Compare yields and production costs before choosing the next crop plan.

Enhanced efficiency

Accurate records help streamline routines, reduce waste and make better use of time and resources.

Example

Match feed and water schedules to actual livestock needs.

Accurate records protect compliance and continuity

Compliance

Complete records help the farm meet food-safety, animal-health, environmental and certification requirements.

Example

Maintain the evidence needed for Good Agricultural Practices and inspections.

Business continuity

Clear, current records help the farm recover quickly from disruption and reduce reliance on one person's memory.

Example

Keep operations moving after a disaster or an unexpected staff change.

Five habits keep farm records accurate and current

1 Choose a system that works for you

Use paper, spreadsheets or an application that matches your needs and comfort level.

2 Set aside dedicated time

Build record keeping into a daily or weekly routine.

3 Use a consistent format

Record the same information in the same way so it is easy to find and compare.

4 Keep everything organized

Store records in one accessible location with a clear filing structure.

5 Ask for help when needed

Seek advice from other farmers, advisers or specialists before gaps become problems.

Common farm records — Part 1 of 2

1. Financial records

Income, expenses, receipts, invoices, loans, assets and tax documents.

2. Crop production records

Planting, inputs, harvests, rotations, pest management and field history.

3. Livestock records

Births, health, breeding, production, feed use, weight and growth.

4. Labour records

Employee details, roles, hours, training, payroll and compensation.

Common farm records — Part 2 of 2

5. Equipment and machinery

Purchases, use, repairs, maintenance and depreciation.

6. Inventory

Seeds, feed, fertilizer, pesticides, stored products, tools and equipment.

7. Environmental and compliance

Soil tests, water use, irrigation, regulations and certifications.

8. Field and farm maps

Field layouts, crop locations, rotations, buildings and irrigation systems.

Excel-based templates and farm-record applications

01 Basic farm-record template

A simple starting point for income, expenses and production entries.

02 Advanced linked workbook

Connected sheets for farms that need more detailed tracking and analysis.

03 Farm-record applications

Explore mobile tools that support routine capture while working on the farm.

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Lucerne vs. Cabbage Production in Botswana

3-Year Financial & Operational Breakdown under Drip Irrigation

Sensitivity Analysis & Market Price Volatility Mitigation Strategy

Based on accurate records

3-Year Financial & Operational Baseline

Lucerne (Perennial Fodder)

High Initial Capital: Year 1 setup requires P55,000/ha due to high-density drip line spacing for uniform root coverage.

Declining Operational Cost: Drops to P22,000/ha in Years 2 and 3 with zero subsequent land prep or replanting needs.

Stable Monthly Revenue: Yields a predictable P88,000/year net margin from continuous 3-to-4 week cutting cycles.

3-Year Cumulative Profit: P190,000/ha with a low-risk profile serving the constant livestock fodder market.

Cabbage (Annual Horticulture)

Lower Initial Setup: Year 1 infrastructure requires P35,000/ha due to wider row spacing for standard drip lines.

Repetitive Cyclical Inputs: Demands P42,000/ha annually in operating inputs plus P8,000/year for seasonal drip tape replacements.

High Immediate Cash Flow: Delivers an efficient P88,000 in Year 1, stabilizing at P85,000/year in subsequent years.

3-Year Cumulative Profit: P258,000/ha but carries a higher risk profile from seasonal market over-saturation and pest vulnerability.

Drip Infrastructure Impact: Achieves a 40% reduction in irrigation water costs, which is critical for dry-season farming in Botswana. Enables direct fertigation (liquid fertilizer application) which drives down manual labour costs and maximises nutrient uptake for both crop types.

Price Sensitivity Analysis (3-Year Cumulative Profit)

Market Dynamics & Profit Volatility

Market Price Variations: Evaluated across -30%, Baseline, and +30% shifts to simulate Botswana's localized supply shocks.

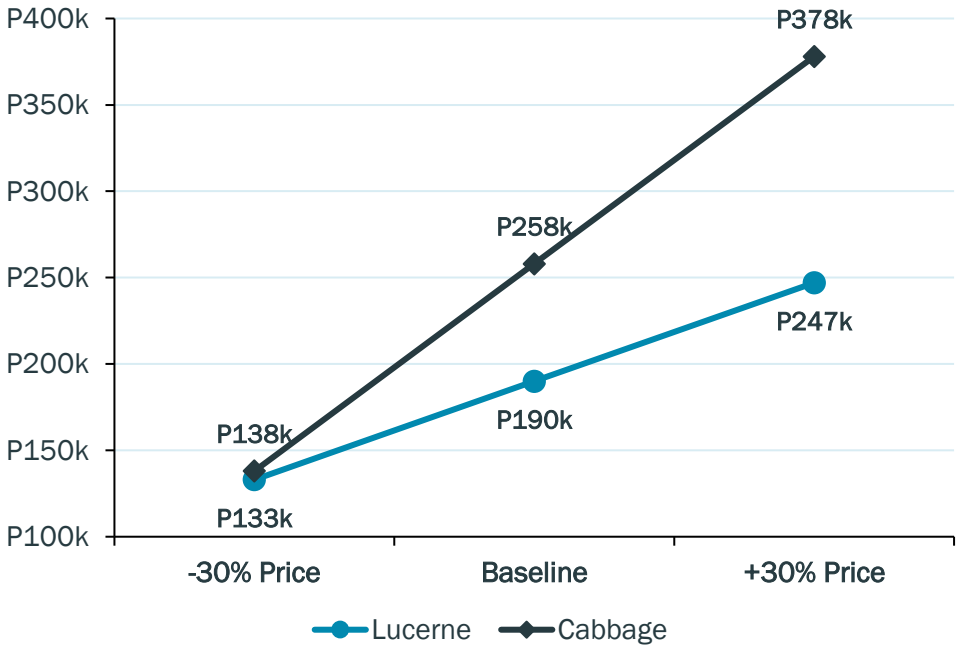
Lucerne High Stability: Cumulative profit drops to P133,000 (-30% price drop) and scales up to P247,000 (+30% price surge). Highly insulated due to steady commercial livestock feed demand.

Cabbage Severe Volatility: Cumulative profit drops aggressively to P138,000 under a -30% price slump caused by border openings or harvest gluts, but rockets to P378,000 during local supply deficits (+30%).

Strategic Insight: Lucerne functions as a low-risk financial hedge with high downside protection, while Cabbage represents a volatile, high-reward cash crop.

Diversification Rule: Applying a 70% Lucerne and 30% Cabbage land ratio effectively covers operating leverage while positioning the enterprise for peak cash windfalls.

Cumulative Profit Curve (BWP)

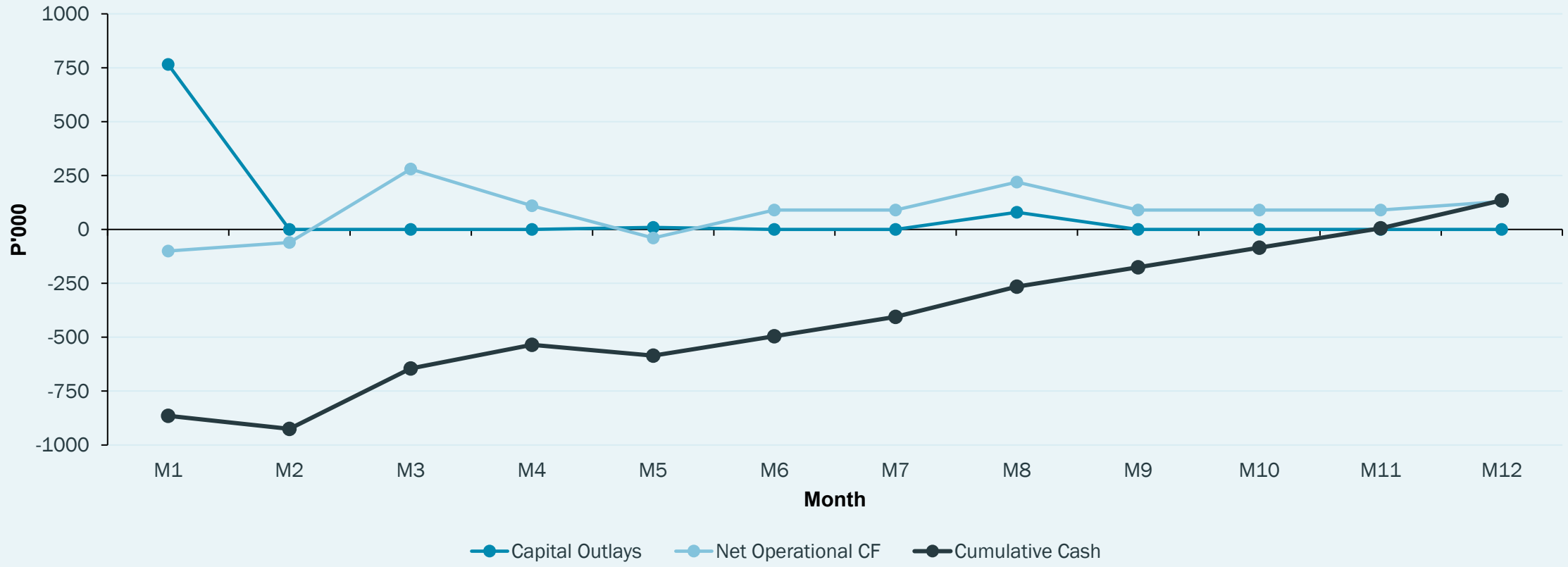


Profit gap widens: P5k → P68k → P131k

Year 1 Month-by-Month Cash Flow Forecast (10 Ha)

Operational Cash Flow Insights:

- Months 1–2: Deepest cash deficit due to upfront capital layout (P765,000 combined drip system installations and primary inputs).
- Months 3–4: First cash injections materialize as Cabbage Cycle 1 harvest hits the market, stabilizing liquid capital.
- Months 5–12: Lucerne reaches full cutting maturity, delivering steady, bulletproof monthly revenue of P80,000 to cover operational costs.



Three things to remember

01

Records improve decisions

Track operations, finances and key performance information to act with confidence.

02

Records protect the enterprise

Accurate information supports efficiency, compliance and continuity when conditions change.

03

Digital tools make records useful

Use templates or applications to capture consistently, analyse performance and improve profitability.

Thank you

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to start and grow sustainable farm enterprises.



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