



TRACKING GROUP FINANCES

ALL FARMERS, CT RIVER VALLEY, MA

Summary

Accurately tracking money between group members who share expenses and/or market together can be cumbersome, even for people who regularly use computers and do calculations. This spreadsheet makes the job more manageable. Staff or farmers only need to enter “raw data” and the spreadsheet will calculate the rest automatically. This may be an especially useful tool for farmers who are going into business together, as in an LLC or cooperative. Two spreadsheets are given, depending on how farmers have agreed to share expenses.

Who made this guide?

This teaching resource was developed by All Farmers and enhanced in collaboration with the Institute for Social and Economic Development (ISED). From 2015-2017, ISED partnered with refugee farmer training programs throughout the country to support the design of new and shareable teaching resources for culturally and linguistically diverse farmers. To access the whole list of newly developed teaching resources for refugee and immigrant farmer training programs, follow this link to the [‘New American Resource Library’](#). For more in-depth explanations of the teaching approaches and activities used in these materials, you can refer to this [Teaching Handbook: Refugee Farmer Training](#)

Audience (TA or Tot)	TA (Technical Assistance for farmers) and/or Tot
Language and Literacy Level	High literacy levels required English level is adaptable (You can translate text into any language to be more user-friendly. Keep the English words as well, so the document is still useable by an English-speaking accountant. See “Background Material” for instructions to edit spreadsheet.)
Farmer Experience	Some
Pre-Requisites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive financial literacy curriculum (Core 1-3, Farm Tax Preparation) • Comfortable with computers and typing • Basic to intermediate Excel use • Reading a grid
Region or Climate	Any
Program Structure	Any with multiple farmers who may share expenses based on land use and/or bulk buy supplies, and/or who market collectively
Season	Best before the season starts
Time	This is not for the faint of heart. Take time yourself to learn the spreadsheet and try examples. Plan on 45-60 minutes to introduce the tool one-on-one, and a minimum of one additional follow-up session (30 minutes) and providing frequent hands-on support throughout the season.
Staff and Interpreters	Interpreter needed, or teacher in farmer language for all but fluent farmers
Additional Supplies Needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Computer • Excel file
Background Material	<p>The Excel file use advanced formulas to make automatic calculations, and tools like Data Validation and Conditional Formatting. All formulas, lists, and some formatting is locked to minimize the chance of users accidentally deleting or changing important information.</p> <p>Columns with a blue heading are for entering “raw data.” Any column with an orange heading populates automatically.</p> <p>If you need to make a change to a locked cell, please save a copy of the file before you do so, just in case. To unlock a sheet, go to the “Review” tab and select “Unprotect Sheet.” The password to unlock any sheet is “unlock”. When you are done, make sure that you protect the sheet again with the password “unlock”.</p>

TEACHING MATERIALS INCLUDED

Excel Files with the following sheets:

1. Farmer Info
2. Sales Accounts Info
3. Farmer Payments
4. Sales
5. Group Expenses
6. Individual Expenses
7. Balance Sheet Farmers
8. Balance Sheet Group
9. Tax Info for Farmers
10. OVERVIEW

CORE SKILLS IN THIS LESSON

- Reading a grid
- Basic computer use
- Navigating Excel
- Typing
- Entering data in Excel
- Finding data in Excel

ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTION

The Excel file use advanced formulas to make automatic calculations, and tools like Data Validation and Conditional Formatting. All formulas, lists, and some formatting is locked to minimize the chance of users accidentally deleting or changing important information.

Columns with a **blue heading** are for entering “raw data.” Any column with an **orange heading** populates automatically.

If you need to make a change to a locked cell, please **save a copy of the file before you do so, just in case**. To unlock a sheet, go to the “Review” tab and select “Unprotect Sheet.” The password to unlock any sheet is “unlock”. **When you are done, make sure that you protect the sheet again with the password “unlock”.**

1. **Farmer Info:** this sheet captures basic information about each farmer in the group. Up to 50 farmers can be entered. If multiple farmers share a plot, only use one of their names for the group. The names you enter here will automatically populate columns and drop-down lists elsewhere in the Excel file. Do not try to manually enter farmer names in other places.
2. **Sales Accounts Info:** this sheet captures basic information about each customer of the farm. The account names you enter here will automatically be added to a drop-down list on the Sales sheet. Do not try to manually enter account names in other places.
Be sure to enter whether a sale has been paid in full and deposited. This information is used later on the Balance Sheet Group sheet to track how much money is still owed to the group from customers, and if any sales money has not been deposited.
3. **Farmer Payments:** enter payments that farmers make to the group on the left-hand side. “Farmer Name” “Payment Type” and “Deposited?” are all drop down lists. Conditional formatting is used

under “Deposited?” to highlight deposits that haven’t been made yet to the group bank account.

Be sure to enter whether a payment has been deposited. This information is used later on the Balance Sheet Group sheet to track how much money has been received but not yet deposited. Enter payments made from the group to farmers on the righthand side. This would be used, for example, when a farmer has a positive balance because of sales or overpayment.

4. **Sales:** enter group sales here. Most columns are drop down menus. While you don’t need every column (i.e. Type & Account) entering this data may help you evaluate your marketing strategy later. “Sales Category” options match Schedule F income categories. Entering this information helps to streamline filing taxes. Options preceded by an * are less common categories.

In this sheet, group sales can only be divided by how many “shares” of sales a farmer is attributed. For example, one farmer contributed 2/3rds of vegetables to a market. She would get two shares and the other farmer would get one. There would be three total shares available (“Total Number Shares”). To attribute shares to a farmer, put their share number (numeral) under their name and in the same row as that sale.

“Total Shares Remaining” calculates automatically. This should be zero if all shares have been attributed accurately.

5. **Group Expenses:** enter all expenses that farmers intend to share (according to land usage) on this sheet. Select the expense category from the drop-down menu. Expense categories match categories on Schedule F and selecting categories as you go will streamline filling out taxes at the end of the year.

This sheet can also be a useful budgeting tool!!! Please see more on that below.

6. **Individual Expenses:** are expenses that farmers pay according to their use. For example, farmers may buy 50 lbs. of bean seeds collectively, but one farmer may buy half of the bag and the others split the remaining cost.

This sheet uses the same “shares” method as the Sales sheet. So, if as a group they order 112 flats of seedlings, the total number of shares is 112. When each farmer’s share has been entered, the Total Shares Remaining should be 0.

7. **Balance Sheet Farmers:** this sheet is completely auto-calculating. It is a good sheet to review overall how a farmer is doing. If they owe money to the group, their balance will be negative and will show in red. If they are OWED money, their balance will be positive.

8. **Balance Sheet Group:** this sheet is completely auto-calculating. It is a good sheet to review overall how the group is doing financially. If they owe money to the group, their balance will be negative. If they are OWED money, their balance will be positive.

The balance shown will be different than what is “in the bank” if any sales or farmer payments haven’t been deposited. You can see the total of pending deposits at the bottom of the sheet.

9. **Tax Info for Farmers:** this sheet summarizes individual farm income and expenses according to the current categories in Schedule F. Please see the Farm Tax Preparation workshop for more information.

10. **Overview:** this sheet houses a few of the drop-down menu lists. The name of each list is in bold at the top of the list. Do not edit this sheet unless you are sure of what you are doing

SUGGESTED TEACHING METHODS

1. Start by explaining what this sheet does, and why it is useful. Give the farmer a simple, verbal narrative before they even see the spreadsheet.
2. Ask them how they have kept records in the past. What has worked? What was difficult? Find out their experience with computers and Excel. If they don't have much experience, **this is not the spreadsheet to start with**. You will have to build up their skillset with simpler spreadsheets first, or consider tracking finances for the farmer(s) yourself.
3. Go through the sheets one at a time. Start by showing the farmer each sheet, and what it generally is for.
4. Then go back and show how to enter a few examples that they can relate to. Help them enter the information in the correct cells. Show them how calculations change based on the information that they enter.
5. Take breaks. Come back to the material when they're fresh.

Role play

- Tell the farmer the "story" of different income and expenses. Throw in a few funny or even absurd examples. You'll keep the practice more interesting, and can illustrate how the sheet works with extreme examples. Maybe the group sells \$2,000 worth of flower heads to a boutique caterer, but loses the check!

Oral drills

- Farmers should be familiar with the sheet names, income and expense categories, as well as any other words that are used.

Sequencing and Matching

- Make index cards of one color with the names of the different sheets written on them. Make index cards of a different color with items they would need to enter, and have the farmer match the item cards with the right sheet. You can do the same thing with information they may need to find.